

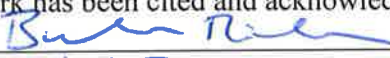
**Consumption Outside The Market: An Ethnography of Consumer Resistance
Among Football Fans.**

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I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of Ph.D (Business Studies) is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

Signed  (Candidate) I.D. No. 51176840
Date 28/8/07

To Catherine, Síofra, Dearbhla, Eoghan, and Colum, and in memory of Dad.

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Abstract.

Consumption Outside The Market: An Ethnography of Consumer Resistance Among Football Fans. (Author: Brendan Richardson. Supervisor: Professor Darach Turley).

This study analysed football fandom utilising an ethnographic approach. Football fandom was selected as a research site for the study because it offered scope to explore for the presence of non-traditional forms of cultural capital (Bourdieu 1984). It also offered scope to explore the extent to which fandom was a form of sacred consumption (Belk *et al* 1989). Ethnography was selected as an appropriate methodology for several reasons. It provided the opportunity to develop a holistic perspective on fandom and it further provided scope to utilise an emergent design approach in the development of a conceptual understanding of fandom. What emerged from the ethnographic investigation of two separate football fan communities was that consumers experience and maintain a sense of the sacred by operating their own unofficial markets in competition with the official market in fan-related goods and services. They also maintain localised systems of cultural capital which allow them to socially construct and maintain a sense of hierophany within their own communities (Belk *et al* 1989), in opposition to the homogenised fan identity proffered by the official market. These systems of cultural capital not only allow fans to experience the sacred but also facilitate their sense of relationship with like-minded others in self-selecting communities of shared taste.

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Consumption Outside The Market: An Ethnography of Consumer Resistance Among Football Fans.

1 Chapter One. Introduction.

1.1 Consumer Resistance.

There are a variety of perspectives on consumer resistance to be found in the literature. It has been conceptualised as conscious defiance of both the market and the notion of marketplace benevolence (Ritson and Dobscha 1999). It is usually understood to mean resistance of the subordinate consumer to the dominant market (Holt 2002, Penaloza and Price 1993). Hogg and Savolainen (1998) conceptualise resistance differently, suggesting that it can be considered as an aversion to the tastes of others. They cite Bourdieu (1984) to argue that a set of tastes is best understood as an aversion to, or distaste for, the identity or identities associated with any conflicting set of tastes. Fournier (1998a) incorporates all these perspectives into a “resistance continuum” with avoidance of distasteful behaviours at the weaker end and active rebellion against the market at the other. Recent work on football fans (Richardson and Turley 2006) confirms the usefulness of this concept of resistance as distaste. However, stronger forms of resistance, involving active ideological antagonism towards the market, have tended to command far more attention in the literature. The liberatory postmodern perspective expresses this interest in particular (Firat and Venkatesh 1995, Holt 2002, Kozinets 2002, Kozinets and Handelman 2004). Intriguingly, this perspective often presents non-activists as passive dupes of the system, without necessarily exploring the consumer behaviour of non-activists to examine whether they are indeed the non-resistant, supine creatures that activists suggest. Are these non-activists really in thrall to the market? Do they always unreflexively consume, or seek to adopt, the meanings the market forces upon them? These are very interesting questions and they certainly merit empirical investigation.

Furthermore, what of other forms of consumer resistance? What of those consumers who experience a hyper-commodification, or market colonisation, of an identity and activity that they had previously considered to be theirs and not the market's? Belk *et al* (1989)

observe that the market is usually perceived as a desacralising threat to sacred consumption. Yet most recent studies of consumer resistance have tended to focus on the phenomenon of ideological opposition to global capitalism (Kozinets and Handelman 2004), rather than build on the work of Schouten and McAlexander (1995), for example. Their research on Harley Davidson bikers found a link between commodification and desacralisation, leading to radical changes in consumer behaviour, including cessation of the consumption activity on the part of some members of the community, but development of closer ties to the official market on the part of others.

This raises the question of how consumers have tried to come to terms with commodification of consumption activities and practices that they hold to be sacred. Even the seminal work of Kozinets (2002) on the 'Burning Man' phenomenon does not address the question of consumer response to specific market encroachments in particular spheres of consumption. Instead it examines the behaviour of a community who share an ideological opposition to the market in general, and who voice their opposition in a rich variety of material and non-material ways. While the tactics deployed by this community, including their temporary operation of an alternative market, are of great interest to consumer research, they are not a response to market colonisation and potential desacralisation of one single specific activity. They are concerned instead with resistance in a broader sense.

Many consumers do not seem to manifest the desire to become involved with such extraordinary forms of resistance. Nor do they seem to display the same concerns as those of stereotypical activist groups. Indeed their refusal to become involved in more active resistance seems to cause no little frustration among activist groups (Kozinets and Handelman 2004). This raises the question, therefore, of how non-activist consumers, those who are regarded as being un-reflexively compliant with the dictates of the market, actually behave when the market encroaches on a particular sphere of consumption they deem to be sacred. How do they resolve the issues that arise out of this potentially desacralising threat? Do they begin to actively resist the market? If so, what forms do such resistance take?

This study explores the experience of two consumption communities who manifest a resistance to specific encroachment by the market on a sphere of consumption that they hold to be sacred. Neither community is concerned in any general sense with the wrongdoings of the 'brand bullies' (Holt 2002). They are concerned rather with the maintenance of their own sense of hierophany (Belk *et al* 1989), their collective feeling of sacredness in relation to the consumption activity shared by members of the two groups. These communities, fans of two different football teams, have developed a remarkable variety of tactics to maintain the sacredness of what they understand to be consumption outside the formal marketplace.

1.2 Origins of this study.

While the questions and issues identified above are clearly of interest, this study did not in fact commence with the aim of investigating them. Rather, football fandom was initially selected as a research site for a variety of other reasons. The passionate loyalty displayed by football fans has, to a degree, played the role of a marketing researcher's utopia in the research of some academics. It had been suggested, for example, that unlocking the conceptual key to fan loyalty could lead to insights which might help to deliver brand loyalty in other contexts (Richardson and O'Dwyer 2003). One particular characteristic of fan loyalty research has been its preoccupation with quantitative explorations of such variables as basking in reflected glory, self monitoring, or levels of team identification (Madrigal 1995, Mahony *et al* 1999, Matsuoka *et al* 2003). These factors, while of interest in themselves, do not necessarily lend themselves to the holistic examination of group dynamics and their effects on fan loyalty. At the commencement of this study, calls were beginning to appear in the literature for research that would investigate such dynamics, and hence provide hitherto un-revealed insight into fan behaviour (Madrigal 2000, Kolbe and James 2000).

In calling for further investigation of group effects on fan behaviour, Madrigal (2000) proposed the concept of group camaraderie as consumable object, and argued that “ultimate loyalty” towards this object arises when it becomes part of the extended self (Belk 1988). He further proposed that team affiliations become resistant to change, because not only the team, but also the fan community, become part of the extended self. This offers a more insightful explanation of fan loyalty than his earlier suggestion that Chicago Cubs fans stayed loyal to a mediocre baseball team simply because they were high identifiers (Madrigal 1995:210). It therefore strongly implies that group processes are central to the formation and maintenance of fan identity.

1.3 Group processes in the consumption of sport.

Holt (1995) and Madrigal (2003) noted that sports stars’ performances are evaluated against norms and expectations developed over time, by means of a process termed consumption as assimilation. These expectations affect fans’ sense of satisfaction with team performance. Group dynamics are central to this process, as they are to other aspects of the baseball fan consumption experience. Consuming as play and consuming as classification (Holt 1995) involve high levels of interaction and identification with one’s fellow fans. Derbaix *et al* (2002) subsequently found that similar group processes play an important role among fans of association football. A sense of community, of group identity, processes, and experiences, may therefore be central to the phenomenon of football fandom, according to the literature.

1.4 Communities of Consumption.

The growing call in the literature on sports fans for exploration of group dynamics coincided with the emergence of new research on communities of consumption in non sport-related spheres. This research highlighted the role played by group processes and relationships in the development and maintenance of not just mere loyalty, but rather a shared passion for the brands and/or activities at the heart of these newly-defined subcultures of consumption (Schouten and McAlexander 1995) or brand communities (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001). Some researchers argued that these relationships owed far more to the desperate craving for social ties typical of postmodern consumers (Cova 1997) than to the brand itself. Others pointed to the iconic significance of certain brands, which made these particular brands far more likely to become the focus of the new communities of consumption that had begun to establish themselves on the socio-cultural landscape (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001). It was apparent from the emerging literature on these communities that some brands or activities lent themselves far more readily to the formation of neotribal configurations than others.

1.5 Research on football fans.

One sphere of consumption that appeared to be characterised by a particularly strong outbreak of neotribal activity was football fandom. Research by King (1995, 1997, 1998) was noted as being of interest for several reasons. He explored not only the reasons for the surge in football's popularity among those he termed the 'new consumer' fans, but he also researched the reaction of the traditional hard-core fans to the influx of these 'new consumers'. He noted in particular that the hard-core fans became very hostile towards the consumption styles of the 'new consumer' fans, and that they consciously changed their own consumption practices to make a clear distinction between themselves and the newcomers. This suggested the presence of a system of cultural capital that was being used to affirm the greater legitimacy of one form of fandom over another.

1.6 Cultural Capital.

The possible presence of a system of cultural capital among football fans was perceived at the outset of this study as very interesting, not least because of the description of fandom by Pierre Bourdieu (1984) as something fundamentally lacking in legitimacy. Bourdieu dismisses fandom as a form of “spurious participation which is merely an illusory compensation for dispossession by experts” (1984:386). It is so low in cultural capital as to more or less lack it altogether. Such an interpretation of fandom is not at all incompatible with the popular stereotype of fans as unreflexive idiots who spend vast amounts of money on tasteless, extortionately priced football shirts, and who sometimes behave with an appalling lack of decorum. Yet King’s research clearly contradicts this stereotype. It also demonstrates the presence of a sophisticated system for maintaining clear social distinctions between traditional hard-core fans and ‘new consumer’ fans, thus providing further evidence that contradicts Bourdieu’s viewpoint.

Additional evidence for the presence of a system of cultural capital among sports fans is provided by Holt’s (1995) research on baseball fans. Holt’s argument that a system of cultural capital was an intrinsic part of the consumption of baseball gives rise to the possibility that the concept of cultural capital as a means of understanding popular consumption has been greatly under-exploited in the literature. This, along with Bourdieu’s failure to empirically investigate fandom before dismissing it so abruptly as “spurious participation”, suggested that an investigation into the possible existence, nature, and scope of a system of cultural capital among football fans should yield much in the way of a contribution to the literature on consumer behaviour. Finally, it was also felt at the time of commencing the current study that a completely insufficient level of theoretical attention had been paid to sports fans in the consumer behaviour literature, outside of Holt’s work. Some attention had of course been paid to sports fans in the sports marketing literature. While this research raised interesting questions, such as why fans are so loyal, it was quite apparent that these questions might be more readily answered by the adoption of more holistic research methodologies. With the occasional exception, such as Holt’s (1995)

work on baseball fans, any marketing research on fans seemed to utilise quantitative methodologies exclusively.

1.7 Initial Research Question and Methodology.

The study initially sought to explore the presence and scope of a system of cultural capital among football fans, for the reasons outlined above. Such an exploration would of necessity focus on group dynamics and social interactions among football fans, thereby simultaneously addressing the calls in the sports marketing literature for research attention to this question. The question of which methodology to adopt was guided by a number of criteria. As there was a need to explore group dynamics, it was felt that the methodologies used in recent studies of group consumption should be considered, rather than continue with the non-qualitative approaches that had hitherto dominated the sports fan literature. This pointed to the use of ethnography, as this methodology had been successfully used to investigate the collective consumer behaviours of Harley Davidson bikers (Schouten and McAlexander 1995), skydivers (Celsi *et al* 1993), baseball fans (Holt 1995), and football supporters, for instance (King 1995).

A further reason for the use of ethnography was the manner in which such an approach would facilitate a process of emergent design (Belk *et al* 1989) in the research. An ethnographic approach to the study, involving prolonged participant observation (Stewart 1998) in football fan culture, would, if properly deployed, lead to the identification of other themes and concepts of importance in interpreting the consumer behaviour of football fans. The utilisation of ethnography therefore meant that the investigation would not be confined to the question of cultural capital, but could, if necessary, place greater emphasis on other concepts that provided meaningful insight into the activities of this consumer group.

1.8 Outline of Thesis Chapters.

Ultimately, while the presence of a system of cultural, or more correctly, subcultural capital (Thornton 1995) did prove to be of fundamental importance, the emergent design

approach resulted in the identification of sacred consumption and consumer resistance as central to the interpretation of football fan consumer behaviour. This hopefully vindicated the choice of ethnography as the methodology for the study. A further discussion on ethnography is outlined in Chapter Four, while a more comprehensive description of how the methodology was actually deployed is described in Appendix A.

Chapters Two and Three examine the literature on cultural capital, fandom, and collective forms of consumption. They also examines the literature on the emergence of the 'new consumer' football fan, and explains how the influx of these fans led to a sense of resentment among the 'hard core' traditional football supporters.

Chapters Five, Six, and Seven present the findings from the current study. Chapter Five explains football fandom as a form of sacred consumption, and outlines how the encroachment of the market on this sacred space has brought the first of the study's two fan communities into a position of conflict with the market. It further explains how the consumption of these fans, members of an online community of Liverpool supporters called 'Red All Over The Land', involves the production and consumption of both material and non-material fan consumption objects. Interestingly, the fans perceive the non-material aspects of their fandom to be just as important, if not more important, than the material aspects. The usefulness of non material consumption objects for the fans is considerably enhanced by the relative difficulty marketers experience in replicating and commodifying them. Their relative intangibility greatly facilitates their utilisation as forms of cultural capital (Holt 1998) which allow the hard core fans not only to maintain a sense of distinction between themselves and other fans, but to resist the desacralising threat of the market, and so maintain the sacredness of their own consumption.

Chapter Six explains how both non-material and material consumption objects, and the operation of an unofficial market for these objects, plays a vital role in distancing fandom from the market and marketised identities. It further outlines the role played by this sense of established distance in permitting a certain degree of interaction with the market. The fans do not boycott the market completely, but rather singularise (Belk *et al* 1989) their

consumption in a variety of ways, all of which serve to maintain their sense of hierophany. The community playfully draw from both the official market, and their own unofficial market, to rejuvenate the authenticity and sacredness of their fandom. The very fact that the fans can draw from resources they have produced themselves, in order to celebrate their identity and maintain its sacredness, is one of the key ways in which they can perceive their identity as residing outside the official marketplace. This allows them a certain amount of licence to engage with the official market without being desacralised by it. It is important to clarify that the fans do not engage in the production of their own consumption objects primarily to resist the market. They produce them to express their fandom and maintain its sacredness. Given the encroachment of the official market onto their sociocultural space, their own unofficial consumption objects have also become a resource in the protection of the collective sense of sacredness against this encroachment.

Chapter Six also outlines how the practices of the study's second fan community, the 'lads' of Cork City F.C., compare to the forms of resistance displayed by the Liverpool fans. The Cork City 'lads' find it easier than their Liverpool counterparts to maintain a sense of their identity as one that resides outside the marketplace. Paradoxically, this makes it easier for them to consume official market goods than is the case for the Liverpool fans. The reasons for this are elaborated upon towards the end of Chapter Six, which concludes by posing the question of how the Liverpool fans manage to maintain a sense of relationship with a team composed of multimillionaire footballers, supported not only by them but also by millions of 'new consumer' fans worldwide.

Chapter Seven begins by confronting this question. It demonstrates how fans go about maintaining their sense of relationship not only with the team, but more fundamentally with each other. It explores the role played by habitus (Bourdieu 1984) in further concretising these relationships and confirming for the fans that their identity is not only a non-marketised one but that it is sacred and unique. It therefore concludes the presentation of findings that are specific to this study, leaving issues of generalisability, or, more correctly from the point of view of ethnography, perspicacity (Stewart 1998), for consideration in Chapter Eight.

Chapter Eight considers the wider conceptual implications of the study's findings. It locates these findings in the literature on consumer resistance. It argues that much of the recent literature on this topic fails to account for the co-existence of resistance and positive relationships with marketers among consumers. It explains the reasons for the co-existence of consumer resistance on the one hand, and symbiotic relationships with marketers on the other, within communities of consumption. It suggests that the simultaneous co-presence of resistance and consumption within these communities is readily understood if we think of consumer resistance as something sometimes more concerned with the maintenance of a sense of hierophany on the part of consumers, rather than ideological resistance to the market *per se*.

Chapter Nine concludes the thesis. It outlines the main findings and identifies some interesting questions for further research work. The discussion on methodological limitations of the current study is covered in Appendix A, which provides a detailed outline of all aspects of the implementation of the ethnographic methodology as deployed.

2 Chapter Two. The Habitus of the Football Fan – An Exploration of the World and Lived Experience of Football Fandom.

2.1 Introduction

What does football fandom mean? What does fandom mean? Why, in contemporary, postmodern society, where it is often more fashionable to be ironic and detached, rather than passionate about something, do so many consumers get excited about what after all is just a group of sweaty men kicking a football around a field? What is it about football that facilitates this process of ‘forgetting’ to be detached? How can we get excited about something that, as Gary Lineker suggests, always comes down to the same thing in the end:

“Football is a game played by eleven men against eleven where Germany always win on penalties.”

Of course the fact is that Germany do not always win on penalties. The attraction of football lies partly in its very unpredictability (Bromberger *et al*, 1993). The facts may suggest that, over time, success tends to be monopolised by the bigger, more powerful teams, but fans can always take pleasure in the possibility of an upset, because on a given day anything can happen. That the triumph of the weak over the strong occurs so infrequently, only serves to make such rare triumphs all the more mythical, all the more appealing, all the more magical (Portelli 1993:85).

Sport’s unpredictability, then, helps it retain our interest. This may help explain the notion of football as an acceptable repository for the kind of passionate behaviour that might not be acceptable elsewhere. The extent to which fandom can be described as a collective phenomenon is yet another factor which may have great significance in explaining its popularity among consumers. This raises the question of which theories of collective consumption might be applicable to fandom. Finally, within these communities, fan

groups, or social collectives, the processes that effectively guide, shape, maintain and propagate collective forms of consumption are clearly of importance.

2.2 The world of football fandom.

In looking at football fandom, we very quickly become aware of certain aspects of the folklore or mythology that surrounds it. One of the most important beliefs in the collective consciousness of football fans is the central role that football plays. For example, we are advised that:

‘If your work interferes with your football, give it up’
(Russell, 1999:15)

Of course, nothing is as important as football. The significance of this old saying lies in its implicit suggestion that football fandom, because it transcends work, is sacred. Football allowed working class men to believe that there was more significance to life than the mundane daily grind of five and a half days a week of a monotonous, physically demanding job. It arguably fulfilled an important, even a sacred (Belk *et al* 1989) role in their lives.

For the contemporary fan, such a belief may well serve a number of important functions. It can provide the fan with a strong sense of identity (Elliott and Wattanasuwan 1998, Kozinets 2001), which may in turn play an important role in the maintenance of mental and spiritual well-being. Even for fans who think otherwise, this powerful myth allows them to temporarily believe (during those sacred times set aside for, or devoted to football) that nothing else matters this much. All fans may temporarily embrace this disjuncture (Arnould and Wallendorf 1994) between what they say and what they actually experience once the match actually starts. This myth therefore plays a central role in delivering the catharsis, or emotional release that remains one of the deepest pleasures of football

fandom. To quote former Liverpool manager Bill Shankly, “it’s not a matter of life or death, it’s far more important than that”.

2.3 Loyalty and beyond

The second founding belief of football fandom is that it entails undying, unswerving, passionate loyalty to one’s team. What benefits might fans derive from such loyalty or perhaps more accurately, from the belief that they are loyal? One theory that offers potential insight here is Fournier’s (1998b) brand relationship quality framework with its emphasis on the importance for the consumer of factors such as commitment. Remaining committed to the brand helps the individual to maintain their sense of self as an individual with particular qualities, including backbone, sticking power, and lack of fickleness. While Fournier’s research offers potential insight at the individual level we must also consider the function of continued loyalty at the group level. One possibility is that continued loyalty to the brand, or in the case of fans, the team, is indicative of the desire or need to remain a part of the social collective, whether that be the membership reference group, aspirational reference group, or a form of postmodern consumption collective such as brand community (Muniz and O’Guinn 2001), subculture of consumption (Schouten and McAlexander 1995), or postmodern neo tribe (Cova 1997, Maffesoli 1996, Crawford 2000). Loyalty to the team may only be a secondary issue; the underlying or more fundamental desire is to remain within the community. Loyalty to the team is desirable because it offers ongoing access to community membership.

2.4 It's a man's game

Bromberger *et al* (1993) argue that part of the reason for football's popularity may be its status as the only truly universal referent for men. Apart from North America, association football is universally seen as an acceptable and natural interest for men (Bromberger *et al* 1993:115). Russell, in examining the notion of football as a 'man's game' suggests that the attitudes and emotions expressed within football overlap considerably with characteristics traditionally considered to be representative of authentic masculinity (1999:17). Such characteristics include the "celebration of physical strength, loyalty to 'mates' and to a specific territory". He also suggests that even the British style of play, with its emphasis on strength and aggression, "is rooted in a particularly British notion of manliness". Football has traditionally been perceived, not only as an appropriate reward for working men at the end of the working week (1999:18), but also as a safe site, perhaps even the only safe site, for men to express their emotions in public (1999:17).

The contemporary culture of football fandom therefore owes much to a time and an era when participation in terrace culture was predominantly a 'man's game'. Some of the values of this culture, such as unswerving loyalty, live on in today's style of fandom. Other values and practices, such as participation in football hooliganism, or a belief in football fandom as the exclusive cultural territory of male fans, have thankfully been marginalised. Factors such as personal participation and loyalty, however, continue to play a prominent role in determining fan authenticity, or to express it in emic terms, determining whether someone is a 'real' fan.

2.5 Being a 'real' fan

The notion of authentic fan identity is replete with clichés and is a frequent source of argument among football fans. There may not be as many definitions of 'real' fandom as there are football fans, but there are certainly numerous terms used to communicate the notion of *inauthentic* fandom. It is therefore important to establish one's own credentials by clarifying that one's identity is not that of a fair weather 'day tripper' or 'barstool fan'.

Arguably what is at issue here is the desire for social distinction. Fans tend to exhibit a preference for behaviours that signal greater authenticity than those of other groups. Different groups of fans display very strong motivation to make clear the distinction between themselves and other less authentic fans (King 1995, 1997 and 1998).

Even the academic literature on football fandom has at times attacked or questioned the authenticity of some categories of fan, and attempted to privilege others (Giulianotti 1999). On the other hand, writers such as Crawford (2000), in seeking to uphold the authenticity of 'new consumer' fans, reject the notion of hierarchies of authenticity. Whether such hierarchies could have any basis in objective fact is a question that lies beyond the scope of this study. Instead this study is concerned with the role that these perceived hierarchies of authenticity play in determining the consumption behaviours of fans. The evidence suggests that they play an influential role. 'New consumer' fans seem to perceive other fans as more authentic in certain respects, and tend to modify their own behaviour in order to increase their own levels of authenticity, their own levels of cultural capital. The mantra 'You're not a real fan unless you go to the match instead of just watching it on TV...' has achieved popular currency (Richardson 2004). For example, if the belief that only the 'real' fans actually *go* to 'live' fixtures causes some consumers to change their behaviour, and to go to games, or even develop an aspiration to attend games, then we can legitimately speak of a hierarchy of 'authenticity' within fandom, a hierarchy of authenticity that will enable us to explain and predict the behaviour of football fans. The presence of contested notions of authenticity resonates with Bourdieu's (1984) theory of distinction as an appropriate conceptual basis for the study of football fans as consumers.

2.6 Habitus, Cultural Capital, and the 'Pure Gaze'

The notion of the 'pure gaze' (Bourdieu, 1984:5) is central to Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital as a means to maintain social distinction. It is the deployment of this gaze that determines whether an object or activity possesses 'legitimate' cultural capital or not. The pure gaze, therefore, is nothing less than a particular way of perceiving every object

and every activity from an aesthetic, critical and detached perspective. Objects or activities that readily lend themselves to this manner of perceiving will be high in legitimate cultural capital. This explains the placing of great works of art or pieces of classical music high in the hierarchy of legitimate cultural capital, while anything that smacks of the popular, that does not require any intellectual ability to be enjoyed, will be correspondingly low in cultural capital.

How food is cooked and presented becomes the issue, rather than whether food is available. Everything is considered in the abstract rather than the concrete. Crucially, this way of perceiving lends itself to the maintenance of social distinction. To quote:

“The denial of lower, coarse, vulgar, venal, servile -in a word, natural - enjoyment ...implies an affirmation of the superiority of those who can be satisfied with the sublimated, refined, ... distinguished pleasures forever closed to the profane. That is why art and cultural consumption are predisposed, consciously and deliberately or not, to fulfil a social function of legitimising social differences” (1984:7).

Thus in order to maintain one's own social position (or in order to avoid jeopardising it) one must self-impose certain restrictions with regard to both taste and behaviour. One must self-regulate and maintain an appropriate detached stance, an acceptable 'pure gaze'. One must concern oneself with aesthetics and consume in a detached and critical manner. This gives rise to the question of how one actually learns to consume in this way, and this leads to the consideration of what Bourdieu terms 'habitus', the nature and meaning of which will now be explored.

How does one acquire the ability to perceive that certain activities or things are inappropriate to one's social station, are lacking in good taste? How does one acquire the ability to distinguish that which is tasteful or appropriate from that which is not? The answer for Bourdieu lies in the social habitus of the individual. In other words, it is a question of background, of social class and the education and knowledge that is acquired both consciously and unconsciously as a result of membership of one's own specific social class. It is thus the inevitable outcome of social conditioning:

“class habitus ...(is)... the internalised form of class condition and of the conditionings it entails” (1984:101).

Although Bourdieu (1984:1) commences by suggesting that the influence of habitus is strongest in relation to legitimate or high culture (the arts, the works of the great composers, and so forth) he argues that it manifests itself in all aspects of consumption, including food and clothing. The manner in which one consumes is determined by one's habitus. Those with a socially privileged background, with an upper class habitus, will adopt an intellectual approach to consumption. This approach, the so-called 'pure gaze', is deemed to be intrinsically superior to the alternative, unsophisticated ways of the lower classes. Thus whatever the activity, one does it in a sophisticated way, be it appreciation of the arts, the collection of antiques, or basic everyday activities:

“...the principles of a 'pure' aesthetic...(apply)... in the most everyday choices of everyday life, in cooking, dress, or decoration, for example” (1984:40).

Popular activities or destinations are scorned perhaps because they offer no means to practice distinction; they offer no opportunity to consume in an intellectual way, they are mere profanities and could not be appreciated in an aesthetic sense. There is no possible aesthetic framework with which to consume, hence not only do they have no positive value, but they are also potentially contaminating and shameful.

The effect of habitus, as Bourdieu says, is to confer a set of “programmes for perception” (1984:1) on the individual such that they unconsciously and naturally acquire an innate sense of what is tasteful to (or appropriate for) members of their habitus, and what is not. The effect of habitus is therefore to confer a consistency of disposition towards any and every object or activity. The upper class social habitus

“...results from *unintentional learning* made possible by a *disposition* acquired through domestic or scholastic inculcation of legitimate culture. This transposable disposition,

armed with a set of perceptual and evaluative schemes ...available for general application, inclines its owner towards other cultural experiences and enables him to perceive, classify, and memorise them differently...some only see 'a Western starring Burt Lancaster' (but) others 'discover an early John Sturges' ...in identifying what is worthy of being seen and the right way to see it they are aided by their whole social group (which guides and reminds them with its 'Have you seen...?' and 'You must see...?') and by the whole corporation of critics mandated by the group to produce legitimate classifications and the discourse necessarily accompanying any artistic enjoyment worthy of the name" (Bourdieu, 1984:28).

2.6.1 Popular tastes and the "deep-rooted demand for participation".

Popular tastes, of course, are different, arising as they do from an alternative habitus. Bourdieu explains the popular aesthetic in terms of the tastes of the mass audience which "identifies better with simply drawn situations and characters than with ambiguous and symbolic figures and actions" (1984:32). There is "a deep-rooted demand for participation" and a hostility towards experimentation - cinema movie plots, for example, should always have happy endings and so forth – though there may be a willingness to accept the presence of 'artistic effects' in theatre, for example, provided they "do not get in the way of the substance of the work ... (there is a) desire to enter into the game, identifying with the characters' joys and sufferings" (1984:33). According to Bourdieu this is a form of deliberate naivety based on the premise that the crowd are here to enjoy themselves while someone else provides simple, easily understood entertainment. In contrast to Bourdieu's definition of legitimate cultural capital, popular entertainment is accessible and is therefore easily embraced. Popular entertainment "secures the spectator's participation in the show and collective participation in the festivity which it occasions" (1984:34). The various forms of popular entertainment, such as televised team sports, "offer more direct, more immediate satisfactions...through the collective festivity ...they satisfy the taste for and sense of revelry, the plain speaking and hearty laughter which liberate by setting the social world head over heels, overturning conventions and proprieties" (1984:34). The tastes that

are born out of the habitus of the masses are therefore grounded in immediacy, accessibility, and collective participation.

2.6.2 Taste, necessity, and the rule of habitus in all aspects of life

The prevailing system of tastes within a particular habitus is determined, Bourdieu argues, primarily by the presence or absence of economic struggle, and every aspect of consumption is marked by this distinction between the “tastes of luxury” and the “tastes of necessity”:

“...the basic opposition between the tastes of luxury and the tastes of necessity is specified in as many oppositions as there are different ways of asserting one’s distinction vis-à-vis the working class and its primary needs, or ...different powers whereby necessity can be kept at a distance” (1984:184)

Thus for example, the tastes of the manual worker who ‘wants to be comfortable in his own skin’ will be practical, down to earth, rough and ready, from clothing to table manners to type and level of alcohol consumption: “...(s)ubstance takes priority over form” (1984:197). Examples of how such tastes originate include the struggle to pay the monthly utility bills. Objects priced within a range that does not threaten the household budget are regarded as more appropriate. The result is that “...the ability to manage ...material constraints becomes a primary value. The tastes of lower class consumers are organised to appreciate that which is functional or practical - the taste of necessity” (Holt 1998:7, Bourdieu 1984:177).

At the other end of the scale, quality is regarded as more important than quantity, and etiquette, form and presentation are judged to be critical (Bourdieu 1984, Holt 1998).

Furthermore, far from affecting taste in relation to goods alone, habitus governs everything, provides rules of conduct for all areas of the consumer’s life.

For example:

“the bourgeois male shaves and dresses first thing every morning, and not just to ‘go out’It is the expression of a habitus of order, restraint, and propriety which may not be abdicated” (Bourdieu 1984:196).

This illustrates the all-pervasive influence of habitus. It influences not only taste, what is considered desirable to consume, but it also imposes a code of behaviour. The individual will effectively self regulate his or her behaviour in a manner consistent with the requirements of their habitus. Bourdieu argues that the influence of habitus extends into effectively determining how one conducts oneself in public:

“Ever concerned to impose the indisputable image of his own authority, his dignity, or his distinction, the bourgeois treats his body as an end” (1984:218).

There is a specific bourgeois deportment, which by implication will certainly not permit raucous behaviour in public. Bourdieu suggests that spectating at team sports events would by nature be unattractive to bourgeois consumers because such activity provides no “...guarantee of the rarity of the participants”. Therefore:

“... those who seek to prove their excellence must affirm their disinterestedness by remaining aloof from practices devalued by the appearances of sheep-like conformism ...to distance themselves from common amusements, the privileged once again need only let themselves be guided by the horror of vulgar crowds” (1984:215).

He suggests that habitus helps to explain the absence of crowd trouble at sports events of an individualist nature such as athletics. Athletics events lend themselves more easily by nature to the “role distance”, the aloofness preferred by the bourgeois, while the “accessibility” of team sports “tends to discredit them in the eyes of the dominant class” (1984:214). He does not exclude the possibility that *some* social capital might be derived from either viewing or participating in team sports and accepts that certain values associated with playing rugby, for example, are to an extent also attainable at “the level of

discourse” (1984:213). However, he stresses his belief that the levels of social capital attainable through such activity would be very low by comparison to other more legitimate activities.

2.6.3 The ‘call to order’

How is it that habitus enjoys such an all-pervasive influence on consumers? Bourdieu explains this in terms of the ‘call to order’ (1984:380). It is this social call to order which helps to reinforce the norms and regulations of the habitus. Conduct is governed by a fear of social ridicule, criticism, or embarrassment, and is regulated in accordance with what people of similar status might think of your behaviour.

Consumers with a working class background, according to Bourdieu, will shun the pretentious and scorn the detached disinterested approach of the bourgeoisie. They will stick, furthermore, to the tastes of their class, otherwise their peers will bring them back down to earth; “who does he or she think he/ she is?”

It is possible, in extrapolating somewhat from Bourdieu, that there is some deep-rooted sense of self involved in this process of social preservation, this ‘call to order’. The preservation of a sense of individual and collective identity, in the relative absence of material prosperity, arguably serves an important purpose, the preservation of self-respect and personal and collective dignity. We need only refer to the work of Belk on the notion of the extended self, to see how closely connected personal identity may be to the group or community of which one is a member (Belk, 1988).

If we take the case of an individual who deviates from the prevailing system of taste, this may be seen as a threat to the very foundation of the group’s identity and self respect, and thus may provoke a swift and strong response, grounded in an instinctive need for self-preservation. Bourdieu outlines how social status is defined, and how the ‘haves’ try to preserve and perpetuate their status by utilising cultural capital. Yet while there may be a *recognition* on the part of the have-nots of their inferior status, because they do not have

and cannot possess the material symbols of success and status, and have to settle for cheaper substitutes, ultimately this inferior status is *not* accepted but rejected. Part of the system of rejection may be a rigorous enforcement of the 'call to order'. The call to order is therefore a means of preserving dignity through class based solidarity. A further possibility is proposed by Fiske (1989). A collective sense of ownership of popular culture, among members of the so-called inferior social classes, becomes a further resource in resisting the notion of their identity and status as inferior. However, the concept of cultural capital must be understood before this possibility can be fully considered.

2.6.4 Cultural Capital

What is cultural capital? At first it may seem something of an elusive concept:

“(T)he uninitiated may experience as inadequate and unworthy a satisfaction that cannot be grounded in a meaning transcendent to the object . Not knowing what the ‘intention’ is, they feel incapable of distinguishing a tour de force from clumsiness, telling a ‘sincere’ formal device from cynical imposture”

(Bourdieu, 1984:43).

If you lack cultural capital you lack the means to understand legitimate culture, and you will be unable to appreciate it. You are therefore excluded from the elite, who *do* know how to appreciate it. Bourdieu refers throughout to what he terms legitimate culture, but researchers now believe that cultural capital has a far wider application, and that it offers an appropriate basis for the study of popular culture (Holt 1998, Fiske 1992:33-34).

A central theme for Bourdieu is the notion that those who lack cultural capital will not only be excluded but also feel a resulting sense of anxiety, unease and perhaps embarrassment. If cultural capital is demonstrated through knowing how to hold a proper conversation on antiques, for example, then a consumer who is unable to describe their collection in this way, even though they are aware that such a proper way exists, will display signs of anxiety and/ or embarrassment (Holt 1998). Of course, the acquisition of such specialist

knowledge implies that one has had the opportunity and the time to acquire it. This is not compatible with the working class way of life, where time must be devoted to economic necessities. Legitimate cultural capital is associated instead with “a sort of withdrawal from economic necessity” (Bourdieu 1984:53).

2.6.5 Inherited and Acquired Cultural Capital

Bourdieu states that “(c)ultural ... competence ...remains defined by its conditions of acquisition” (1984:65). In other words, he suggests that there is an important difference between inherited capital and acquired capital:

“The possessors of strong educational capital who have also *inherited* strong cultural capital ...enjoy a dual title to cultural nobility, the self-assurance of legitimate membership and the ease given by familiarity” (1984:81).

Cultural capital may be acquired through education but when acquired in this way will not confer the same degree of self-confidence, self-assurance, ease or composure of conduct, as cultural capital acquired both through education and natural environment, the natural upbringing of the privileged upper class. In other words, there is a “self-certainty which accompanies the certainty of possessing cultural legitimacy” (1984:66). When accumulated levels of cultural capital are low and have been acquired through partial, incomplete, or faulty education, the individual is likely to betray her or himself perhaps by saying the wrong thing as a result of excessive eagerness to belong:

“...(some) betraying their exclusion by their eagerness to prove their membership (in contrast to the well-born, who mask their ignorance by ignoring questions or situations which might expose it)”

(Bourdieu p.84)

2.6.6 Recognition of the legitimate

Bourdieu argues that "...the acquisition of cultural competence is inseparable from insensible acquisition of a 'sense' for sound cultural investment" (1984:85). Therefore an ability to appreciate the works of certain artists, writers, or composers, and an ability to participate in social discourse on such works are signs that the individual possesses 'legitimate' cultural capital. Further:

"... the value of the arts, genres, works, and authors depends on the social marks attached to them at any given moment....the more legitimate a given area, the more necessary and 'profitable' it is to be competent in it, and the more damaging and 'costly' to be incompetent" (1984:86)

Bourdieu indicates that certain activities may *become* legitimate because their complexity lends itself to an intellectual rather than a simplistic, emotional enjoyment. One must know how to interpret jazz music, or know what to look for in films made by a certain director. One must have a way of understanding that separates those who understand from those who do not, separates those who have learned tastes from those who do not, those who are part of a cultural elite from those who cannot appreciate anything but the popular. He accepts that knowledge of sport can constitute a form of cultural capital, but asserts that it is very low down in the hierarchy and that there are far greater social 'profits' to be made from knowledge of avant-garde literature, for example (1984:87). However, critics of Bourdieu have argued that members of the dominant social class in North America, for example, tend not to limit their expressed tastes to legitimate culture, nor do they utilise their knowledge of legitimate culture to exclude others from their social cohort. An ability to aesthetically appreciate the arts is thus, according to Bourdieu's critics, not a key to social or economic advancement (Erickson 1996, Gartman 1991, Halle 1993). Gartman (1991) argues that there is substantial evidence to support the notion of a commonly consumed mass culture that transcends class boundaries, even in the sphere of non-material culture. Erickson (1996) suggests that knowledge of popular culture in general, and often

sport in particular, can be of greater use in securing social and career success, even among business executives. Halle (1993) claims to find evidence of similarity of taste in art across social class boundaries, rather than difference. However, one is struck, when examining his photographic data, by the clearly apparent differences in taste across social class, evident in the differences in interior décor between working class and upper class homes in New York. Certainly there are superficial similarities in the taste for art across social classes, such as for instance a common taste for landscapes, but Halle fails to comment on the apparent class-based difference in terms of *overall* tastes in interior design. This suggests the possibility that an examination of more than one field of consumption might be necessary, in order to assess whether habitus and cultural capital could help to explain American as well as European consumption.

In contrast to the criticisms of Halle (1993) and others, Holt (1998) found that by examining multiple fields of consumption, not only was the influence of habitus apparent, but that systems of cultural capital were used by members of the dominant class to maintain their perceived superior social status, their distinctiveness from the masses, albeit without conscious intent. Holt argues that once members of the working class achieve economic parity with their 'betters', material markers of social status such as large houses, cars, or yachts lose some of their symbolic ability to confer distinction. The elite then seek to retain status through subtle shifts in the exercise of taste. How one consumes, not what one consumes, becomes the true basis for distinction. In this way Holt demonstrates that social class can still act as a meaningful basis for variations in consumer behaviour. The question at hand, however, is not so much whether members of different social economic classes are influenced by habitus or cultural capital, but whether members of *other* types of social configuration proactively utilise knowledge systems not only of what to consume, but more importantly of how to consume it, in order to limit or control access to membership of their group.

The question therefore arises as to whether everyone is concerned with acquiring higher levels of legitimate cultural capital or simply differing forms of popular cultural capital? In the social milieu of popular taste, could it be valid to suggest that such popular pursuits as

football fandom enjoy a greater social currency than classical music or great works of art? Could it be that an understanding of cultural capital in a wider sense can be utilised to interpret the consumption of popular culture? Bourdieu suggests that

“each social space functions both as one of the sites where competence is produced and as one of the sites where it is given its price...one might expect each field to set the highest price on the products created within it” (1984:88).

What is most encouraging about this is the implied possibility that more than one hierarchy of cultural capital exists. In other words, each distinct social configuration will have its own system of cultural capital. Of course for Bourdieu the supremacy of cultural capital as he defines it is unshakeable and underpins all levels of social distinction. Yet here is an admission that not all consumers necessarily feel obliged to acknowledge the cultural capital of the elite, and their own inferior status. They will have their own currency of cultural capital, and it is this currency that is of real value to them. So, while cultural capital may continue to differentiate between social classes this does not exhaust its relevance for this thesis. A number of further issues arise in this context.

The first point is perhaps the most intriguing. Upward social mobility and superior social status and power are still associated with Bourdieu’s system of legitimate cultural capital. Alternative systems of cultural capital do not give access to the upper echelons of society. On this basis there exists the possibility that an elite minority retain the power to define legitimacy for us all. This is a disturbing prospect primarily because in having the power to impose “absolute legitimacy” this elite can realise “maximum profitability on their investments” (Bourdieu 1984:92-94).

Bourdieu suggests that alternative systems can and do develop. If the marketplace does not value a particular group’s cultural competences, they will try to free themselves by producing “another market, with its own consecrating agencies” (1984:96). Even though alternative systems of cultural capital may differ both in origin and in how they define legitimacy, their inner processes are identical. Within each alternative system of cultural

capital, Bourdieu implies that some people have the power, because of their position, to make their tastes “our” tastes; there is such a sense of legitimacy (“self-assurance, confidence, arrogance”) attached to their proclamations that their definitions hold sway:

“The emphasis on manners, and through them on mode of acquisition, enables seniority within a class to be made the basis of the hierarchy within the class; it also gives the recognised possessors of the legitimate manner ...power to recognise or exclude” (Bourdieu 1984:95).

This may prove to be the case across all different social configurations, no matter what the particular system of cultural capital. Senior members of the hierarchy have the power to define what constitutes appropriate manners or dress, for example, and “those who presume to join the group” will have to conform to these standards.

Similarly consumer desire for consumption objects can be explained (Bourdieu 1984:100) through the notion of goods defined not simply in the informative sense that one finds in the manufacturer’s brochure, but rather defined in terms of the possibilities or impossibilities an object might offer within the particular system of cultural capital that applies. Consumers choose to consume certain goods or services predominantly for the cultural capital they expect to accumulate as a result. Within each of the various fields of consumer activity, Bourdieu predicts a degree of fluidity in relation to what possesses the highest levels of cultural capital at a particular point in time:

“It is not only a sense of the right area to invest in (directors rather than actors, for example) ...or ...a sense of the right moment to invest or disinvest, to move into other fields” (1984:92).

What topics should be brought up in conversation? What opinions ought one actually have on these topics? What are the appropriate ways in which one should express these opinions? Bourdieu’s system of legitimate cultural capital suggests that a certain aesthetic distance is appropriate. The tone of the conversation ought to reflect the ‘pure gaze’ rather

than the passion of the fan. While this might be appropriate in some social circumstances and social circles, it might not in others. Here, the passionate commitment of the fan may be regarded as the appropriate norm, rather than the 'pure gaze'. Prior to a consideration of the systems of cultural capital that might apply in such alternative social circles, several further aspects of cultural capital are now considered.

2.6.7 Cultural capital and social discourse

What do we now understand by the term 'cultural capital' in its broader sense? As Bourdieu suggests, it refers to expected levels of social profits (1984:212). The social profits expected from playing or watching rugby, for example, include "the cult of manliness and the taste for a fight, toughness in contact and resistance to tiredness and pain, and sense of solidarity ('the mates') and revelry ('the third half') and so forth" (1984:213) and even for those who watch the game without necessarily playing it, these social profits can be obtained at "the level of discourse", in other words through normal social interaction and conversation.

The prevailing system of cultural capital can effectively dictate even the brands one chooses in order to participate correctly in an activity. Only the 'right' brands of clothing and accessories are acceptable by the bourgeois in the pursuit of an aesthetic consumption of nature. Furthermore, such activities "demand a high investment of cultural capital in the activity itself, in preparing, maintaining and using the equipment, and especially perhaps in verbalising the experiences" (1984:220). Again this illustrates the essentially social nature of cultural capital. Possession of cultural capital confirms one's membership of the group. Possession of greater levels of cultural capital suggests an elevated position in the group's prevailing social hierarchy.

Another aspect of cultural capital is manifested in knowing when to withdraw from an object or activity that no longer confers distinction. Bourdieu (1984:249) speaks of the "...sense of good investment which dictates a withdrawal from outmoded or simply devalued objects, places or practices...an endless drive for novelty (to maintain

distinction?) ('Saint Tropez...has become impossible').” Letting others know that *you* know or agree that St. Tropez has become ‘impossible’ is but one example of the expression of cultural capital through social discourse. Another example is seen in Bourdieu’s description of the intellectuals’ approach to theatre-going:

“They expect the symbolic profit of their practice from the work itself, from its rarity and from their discourse about it (after the show, over a drink, or in their lectures, their articles, or their books) through which they will endeavour to appropriate part of its distinctive value” (1984:270).

Finally we see that some objects, or also perhaps experiences, bestow particularly high levels of cultural capital:

“the objects endowed with the greatest distinctive power are those which most clearly attest the quality of the appropriation, and therefore the quality of their owner, because their possession requires time and capacities which requiring a long investment of time...cannot be acquired in haste or by proxy, and which therefore appear as the surest indications of the quality of the person” (1984:281).

This generates something of a self-perpetuating mechanism regarding whether an object, experience, or activity possesses cultural capital. Only a few have the power to confer the ‘legitimate gaze’ on an object (p.327). Those individuals already highest in cultural capital are effectively those in whom this power rests. They therefore have something of a veto regarding the presence or absence of cultural capital. Finally, compliance with the ‘call to order’ is no less than a self-imposed adherence to the system of cultural capital presided over by the mandated opinion leaders within the group.

2.6.8 Cultural Capital and Cultural Allodoxia

Bourdieu refers (p.270-280) to the ‘dominant classes’ who ‘dress up to go out’ because a night out at the theatre is “an occasion for conspicuous spending”, and this includes buying

the most expensive seats in the theatre. What, however, of those consumers on the periphery, who seek to acquire cultural capital through their consumption, and thereby achieve greater social acceptance, higher social status?

Bourdieu invokes the metaphor of Leopold Bloom to convey the notion of exclusion. Bloom, being both Jewish *and* a member of the petit bourgeoisie is “doubly excluded” from the culture into which he seeks to be integrated “...and therefore being doubly excluded, doubly anxious to be included, he bows, just in case, to everything which looks as if it might be culture and uncritically venerates the aristocratic traditions of the past” (1984:323).

This double anxiety leads, ironically, to self-exclusion – exposing oneself as an outsider through mistaken reverence for the wrong objects or excessive reverence for the right ones. This behaviour, born as it is out of a craving to belong, “...exposes the petit bourgeois to cultural allodoxia, that is, all the mistaken identifications and false recognitions which betray the gap between acknowledgement and knowledge”; in the rush to acknowledge he acknowledges the wrong things, and fails to acknowledge the right things or does not acknowledge them in the right way.

One final point in relation to cultural allodoxia is that this mistaken reverence for what, according to Bourdieu, is not really legitimate, has effectively given birth to a new cultural form, middlebrow culture (1984:327). Even if, as Bourdieu rather harshly suggests, it is born out of allodoxia, it is real. It has taken on a life of its own, in that it has become recognisable as a form of culture. Hence the presence of forms of ‘pop’ culture that are close imitations of ‘legitimate’ art and culture. Crucially, a particular cultural artifact, if popularised and appropriated by the petit bourgeois, can lose its legitimacy. It no longer has distinctive capacities so it is no longer of interest to the cultural elite.

2.7 Fandom, resistance, and the inversion of the ‘pure gaze’.

2.7.1 Bourdieu’s view of fandom: a critique

Bourdieu asserts that in order for something to be ‘legitimate’ it must have qualities that are appreciable through the ‘pure gaze’. In other words it must lend itself to being best interpreted via a sense of aesthetic detachment, itself only acquired through the habitus of the privileged class. Anything therefore that lends itself to ease of understanding, emotion, and lack of detachment, is thus regarded as culturally inferior. Bourdieu therefore sees fandom as inferior and lacking in cultural capital on several grounds. It is not compatible with the deployment of the ‘pure gaze’ (Bourdieu 1984:5) because it is typically characterised by engagement with, rather than critical detachment from the consumption object. It frequently involves getting over excited, and displaying an inappropriate lack of decorum incompatible with membership of the ‘respectable’ classes (Fiske 1989:138, Jenkins 1992:17; Bourdieu 1984:5). It is too closely associated with “lower, coarse, vulgar, venal, servile” pleasures and tastes (Bourdieu 1984:7) to be appropriate for anyone who desires to maintain their distinctive social position as a member of the upper social echelons. Bourdieu further criticises fandom by suggesting that mass produced forms of popular culture act as a form of illusory and compensatory sop for the masses, who consume them passively because these are the only pleasures available to them in a system that denies them access to more authentic forms of cultural capital and discernment.

For Bourdieu, popular entertainment such as television is devoid of anything original, devoid of any artistic merit. It is therefore intrinsically inferior. Those who are entertained assume the role of inactive spectator rather than producer/participant. Not only have TV viewers, fans of popular programmes, been dispossessed of even the intention of determining their own ends, but in their consumption of these mass produced substitutes they recognise and passively accept this dispossession, this exclusion. The fan or ‘militant supporter’ is therefore “locked in a passionate, even chauvinistic, but passive and spurious

participation which is merely an illusory compensation for dispossession by experts” (1984:386).

Perhaps the answer to how Bourdieu drew such conclusions on fandom lies in his fundamental assumptions regarding the effects of ‘distance from necessity’ (Bourdieu, 1984:53). Bourdieu’s argument regarding the effects of distance from necessity is a logical and compelling one. Only those with adequate amounts of free time to devote to the development of sophisticated schemas of consumption could possibly hope to practice more sophisticated, more learned, more aesthetic, approaches to consumption. Members of the working classes, whose time must of necessity be largely devoted to the acquisition of the basic resources necessary for survival, would not have the time to devote to such niceties as the aesthetically correct manner in which to prepare and serve an evening meal. Instead they would regard such concerns as ‘too fancy’ or only being the concern of the upper classes and ‘not for the likes of us’ (Bourdieu p.180-185).

What may have happened with the availability of greater leisure time to devote to the pursuit of *any* sort of cultural activity, however, is that consumers outside of the upper echelons of society are no longer deprived of the time necessary to develop more sophisticated ways of consuming. Consumers now have more time to devote to their interests outside of the workplace. These interests include not just the pursuit of popular culture, but the development of alternative systems for the perception and consumption of the popular cultural products that are available. The experience of ‘distance from necessity’ is no longer the preserve of the social elite. Adequate leisure time is now available for the development of systems of cultural capital within the consumption spheres of lower class habitus.

Bourdieu’s assertions can therefore be challenged on an individual as well as a collective basis. His main assertion with regard to fandom, that it is inherently lacking in legitimacy because of an absence of critical detachment, has been refuted by a number of commentators. In analysing their comments, it is important to record that their rebuttal of

Bourdieu's specific claims with regard to fandom is frequently accompanied nonetheless by an endorsement of his theory of habitus and cultural capital in more general terms.

Fan communities can effectively function as repositories of the alternate systems of cultural capital which Bourdieu himself (1984:88) proposed. The concepts of habitus and cultural capital are particularly appropriate for the study of fandom, because in these particular social configurations, these alternative systems of 'popular' cultural capital "...serve similar functions to those of official cultural capital in the dominant (social) context" (Fiske, 1992:33). Fans are avid producers and consumers of this sort of popular cultural capital, that is, the kind which places a social premium on the kind of insider knowledge or experiences that are of value within the fan community (Fiske 1992, Jenkins 1992).

The work of Fiske (1989, 1992), Kozinets (2001), Crawford (2000), Jenkins, and others (Jenson 1992) not only shows fandom as an active and participatory form of cultural activity, but one where alternative systems of cultural capital play an important role. Far from being some sort of 'illusory sop' or a passive acceptance of inferior social status, fandom would seem to have more to do with a resistance to the notion that being born into the 'wrong' social class somehow renders one inferior (Fiske, 1989 and 1992). Fandom is a manifestation of the collective desire for social inclusion rather than exclusion, and often results in the construction of communities of shared tastes that help consumers to dispel notions of social or intellectual inferiority (Kozinets 2001). It is specifically the development and deployment of these alternative systems of cultural capital that helps to dispel such notions. The literature suggests that fans tend to consume the products of mass culture in quite a proactive and critical manner. They are often *unwilling* rather than *unwitting* consumers of mass produced products (Fiske 1989:23/24). Fans recognise that they may be excluded from possession of some of the indices of 'legitimate' social status. However, rather than passively accepting some externally defined notion of their own inferiority, they actively construct their own systems of cultural capital, status, and taste out of the cultural materials they have access to. Fiske (1989:15) argues that "popular

culture is...the art of making do with what is available". Rather than accept the meanings they are presented with by the mass produced materials of popular culture, fans are highly creative in their use of these materials to come up with their own alternative endings to stories, for instance. Fan communities are therefore characterised by sophisticated structures and practices whereby individualised meanings are negotiated from the original mass produced text (Jenkins 1992, Kozinets 2001).

In order to question whether fandom should be understood as a form of resistance to exclusion from status and legitimacy, some consideration of prior research on resistance would be of benefit. This in turn dictates that the academic literature on subcultures merits discussion.

2.7.2 Subcultures and Resistance

Thornton (1997) asserts that there is no agreed answer to the question of what a subculture actually is. She argues that "subcultures are groups of people that have something in common with each other (...a problem, an interest, a practice) which distinguishes them in a significant way from other social groups" (1997:1). Of course, you could say the same of societies or communities, so what is different about a subculture? She explains that subcultures are not communities as such, but the term has come to mean "social groups which are perceived to deviate from the normative ideals of adult communities ...(and engage in)... shadowy, subterranean activities" (1997:2). Thornton proceeds to argue that

"The defining attribute of 'subcultures'... lies with the way the accent is put on the distinction between a particular cultural/social group and the larger culture/society. The emphasis is on variance from a larger collectivity who are invariably, but not unproblematically, positioned as normal, average, and dominant. Subcultures, in other words, are condemned to and/or enjoy a consciousness of 'otherness' or difference" (1997:5).

The work of the Birmingham School in particular has done much to establish our view of subculture and subcultural participation as primarily being the preserve of working class

youths. This is largely because members of the Birmingham School were to a great degree concerned with the deconstruction of the concept of 'youth culture' as something essentially and inherently problematic (Clarke *et al* 1975). Clarke *et al* (1975) conceptualise youth sub-culture as referring to a specific form of response to "their (i.e. some youths) situation" which only some (youths) took part in. "(M)ost young working-class boys are principally concerned ...with ...how to pass the time" (1975:17). The purpose of this assertion was of course to deconstruct the notion that all youths were engaged in some inherently problematic activity or activities collectively labelled as 'youth culture'. The reality was that only some youths were involved in what should more correctly be termed subculture.

Clarke *et al* further observed that youth subcultures should be understood as sited in relation, or in distinction to, to their parent culture. This parent culture was not the dominant culture of the upper class, but in fact the subordinate culture of the working class. According to Clarke *et al* (1975:43), the working class "have won space for their own forms of life. The values of this corporate culture are registered everywhere, in material and social forms, in the shapes and uses of things, in patterns of recreation and leisure...(t)hese spaces are both physical ...and social ... i.e. the actual neighbourhood environment and the relationships between the people who live there". For the Birmingham School, youth sub-cultures were thus not merely ideological constructs but were about the winning of space – cultural as well as physical, temporal as well as spatial. The definition of subculture has also been strongly associated with the cultivation of differentiated styles. Hebdige (1979, 1997) describes the behaviour of 'spectacular' subcultures in violating taboos, such as the manner in which the punk rock band the Sex Pistols behaved. He argues that the purpose of subculture is to deliberately go against the grain - punk dress styles, for example, that set out to shock. The meaning of subcultural style is therefore about the ability to shock (parents, authority, etc). According to Gelder (1997:145), the Birmingham tradition is clear on "what a subculture was, and what it does – emphasising style, the ability to transform cultural objects or to borrow from other places and other times...(and) engagement in ...(ritualistic) 'resistance'". Youth subcultures had their own styles and rituals which gave them a distinctive identity as a group, so that they

could define themselves as a group and not just a collection of individuals. This conferred a sense of identity and legitimacy, which facilitated a sense of resistance to notions of inferior status on the grounds of class, and a sense of territorial ownership or possession.

However, in a rather depressing analysis, Clarke *et al* (1975) concluded that youth subculture could not resolve the problems of youth. The solutions of subculture were illusory. Mods fetishised their own sense of style at the weekends but had to go back to dead-end jobs on a Monday morning. The ideology of “Skins Rule, OK” expressed hope or nostalgia, rather than reality. The reason for this dismissal of such subcultures as a potential solution to youth’s problems lay in the non-politicised nature of their resistance. The Marxist perspective of the Birmingham School led to writers such as Clarke *et al* (1975) concluding that youth subcultures were ultimately ineffective, because of their failure to engage in class struggle, even if they were regarded as having originated as a reaction against dominant social hierarchies (Goulding *et al* 2002). This dismissal of the effectiveness of subcultures was therefore not grounded in whether subcultural participants felt or experienced any personal benefit from their participation, but on the rather spurious grounds that they did not deliver on a Marxist agenda.

For other scholars who have carried out more recent research on subculture, the question of success or futility is not defined according to the Marxist perspective of the Birmingham School, but rather more from the point of view of the participants themselves. In an interesting critique of the concept of resistance as defined by the Birmingham School, Thornton (1995) queries Hebdige’s interpretation of punk rock as constituting resistance to the mores and conventions of the bourgeoisie. Thornton argues that Hebdige has essentially invented this convenient concept of a shocked bourgeoisie who are the focus of the punks’ resistance, while the reality that Thornton suggests is that punk rock was a resistance not to the dominance of the bourgeois but the banality of disco music. This opens up the conceptual possibility of resistance as something other than class based resistance to bourgeois or capitalist society. Subcultural resistance is reconceptualised by Thornton as a desire to clearly delineate the boundaries between the tastes of members of a

subculture and members of the 'mainstream', to indicate that the difference in identity between subculture and mainstream is substantiated by these differences in taste.

Members of the clubbing subculture make distinctions between themselves and the 'mainstream' Tracys and Sharons dancing round their handbags at the local disco.

“The mainstream is the entity against which the majority of clubbers define themselves. Can the mainstream be a majority??? What is its exact status? ... (M)ore to the point, how does the 'mainstream' function for those who invoke it?” (Thornton 1995)

Thornton distinguishes between micro, niche and mass media and notes how disapproval of something in mass media legitimates it in youth sub-culture. Conversely, approving reports are “the subcultural kiss of death (1995:6)”. Thornton concludes that 'resistance' is not even seen as resistance until mainstream media express their disapproval of an activity.

What, however, is the 'mainstream'? In his analysis of the cult movie subculture, Jancovich (2002) finds that there is no one consistent reading, no one consistent critical style which can truly be described as the alternative school of cinema, so to speak. Reading strategies are instead diverse and contradictory and ultimately the only commonality is found in the mutual opposition to what Jancovich correctly argues is an imagined construct anyway – the self constructed 'bête noir' that is 'mainstream', 'normal', or 'commercial' cinema. Jancovich argues that this construction is incoherent, contradictory, and inconsistent.

What is important however is not that alternative definitions of the 'mainstream' are contradictory, but that they are necessary “in order to provide a sense of subcultural authenticity” to those who perceive themselves as part of a subculture. Wilson (2002) defines the 'mainstream' resisted by members of the rave subculture not as mainstream society in general, but to the mainstream within the world of musical leisure. The mainstream pursuit is the frequenting of drunken disco/ nightclub bars, where the drug abused is alcohol. Ravers in Wilson's (2002) study consciously articulated a resistance to

this mainstream, and explained their consumption in these terms. Clearly the 'mainstream' means what members of a given subculture want it to mean, rather than being in any sense fixed. Thornton (1997) argues convincingly that the 'mainstream' is nothing more than something that is invoked by members of the subculture when they wish to make distinctions between their superior (collectively 'hip') 'ingroup' and some easily derogated 'other'.

Thornton describes rave culture as "not a unitary culture but a cluster of subcultures ... (each of which) maintain their own dress codes, dance styles... and catalogue of ... rituals. Club cultures are *taste cultures*" (1997:200). She says that while this is a youth subculture, she describes it as 'post-Birmingham' in that the cultural consumption of the participants is in no way defined in opposition to either the 'parent culture' or mainstream society in a general sense. It is instead defined in opposition to alternative musical tastes.

Thornton (1995) cites Becker's description of Jazz musicians who saw themselves as 'hip' in contrast to the ignorant 'squares' (the audience) to make the point that what matters is maintenance of the self-perception of being different from the un-cool masses. That was the case for Becker's musicians, and that is the case for the young people in youth rave subculture. There is a desire for distinction, and this distinction is achieved through taste and knowing what is 'hip'. Thornton then invokes Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital to propose that 'hipness' is in fact a form of sub-cultural capital:

"...subcultural capital can be *objectified* or *embodied* ... in the form of fashionable haircuts and carefully assembled record collections....subcultural capital is embodied in the form of being 'in the know' regarding use of ... current slang and looking as if you were born to perform the latest dance styles" (1997:203)

Members of subcultures therefore utilise subcultural capital to practice resistance to alternative tastes, in order to affirm the superiority of their collective sense of identity over that of the 'mainstream'. Consumers can therefore form subcultures that allow them to develop and maintain a positive (collective) sense of self, through collective forms of leisure consumption. Rather than the displaced identity of the skinheads, such postmodern

subcultures are not engaged in a futile effort to hold on to some notion of traditional working class community already irretrievably on the wane, but rather are engaged in the enjoyment of postmodern communities of shared taste (Goulding *et al* 2002). Further conceptual support for the argument that subcultural capital plays an important role in the structuring of collective identity is provided by Hogg and Savolainen (1998). They cite Bourdieu's (1984) concept of cultural capital to argue that a particular 'taste' is primarily a 'distaste', or aversion, for the identity associated with another (set of) taste(s). What is being resisted, then, is not the forces of capitalism or the hegemony of the dominant classes in society, but rather alternative identities given structure and credence through allegedly inferior tastes.

This of course not only differs from resistance as conceptualised by the Birmingham School, but it also differs from our understanding of contemporary ideological consumer resistance to the market. Consumer resistance has also been conceptualised as consumption 'on the edge', that is, defiance of the notion that solutions to all our needs are unproblematically found in the (benevolent) marketplace (Ritson and Dobscha 1999). It is thus often understood to mean resistance of the (subordinate) consumer to the (dominant) market, and this resistance can often be manifested in the form of consumer activism (Holt 2002, Kozinets 2002a, Kozinets and Handelman 2004, Penalosa and Price 1993). In reality, the resistance practiced by many contemporary subcultural participants is not ideological, but rather takes the form of aversion to oppositional taste as described above. It differs from the resistance of consumer activists because it is concerned with issues of distinction and subcultural capital rather than anticorporatism or antiglobalism.

Fournier (1998a) suggests that these alternative perspectives on resistance can be combined to construct a "resistance continuum", moving from "avoidance behaviour" at one end, to acts of active rebellion against the market at the other. At the weaker end of the continuum, consumer resistance can result from the desire for distinction, rather than an ideological opposition to the market *per se*. The purpose of aversion for alternative tastes is

to demonstrate to oneself what one is not (Bourdieu 1984, Hogg and Savolainen 1998). The anti-corporatism of ideologically motivated consumer activists can be located at the so-called stronger end of this continuum.

Contemporary subculture differs, then, in two ways from subculture as defined by the Birmingham School. First, the purpose of contemporary subculture is not primarily to resist *per se*, but rather to embrace the possibilities offered by communities of shared taste, in terms of enjoyment and a sense of creativity, identity, and self-expression (Goulding *et al* 2002). Second, members of contemporary postmodern subcultures such as the rave scene do practice resistance, but this is resistance to oppositional taste realised through the exercise of subcultural capital, and not resistance to the hegemony of some dominant class in society, or resistance to the market (Holt 2002). It can therefore be located at the so-called weaker end of Fournier's (1998a) resistance continuum.

2.7.3 Resistance, pleasure, and fandom.

Having outlined alternative forms of resistance and subculture to those proposed by the Birmingham School we can now consider Fiske's (1989) conceptualisation of fandom as a form of resistance. Fiske (1989) explains the producerly nature of fandom by making an interesting distinction between the different forms of pleasure. He distinguishes between popular pleasures on the one hand and hegemonic pleasures on the other. There are, according to Fiske, two main forms of popular pleasure, namely evasion and productivity (1989:50). Both evasion and productivity are forms of resistance, while hegemonic pleasure, by contrast, is compliant. He conceptualises the pleasures of fandom as being evasive and productive rather than compliant.

Evasive Pleasure.

In order to explain his conceptualisation of evasive pleasures, Fiske invokes both Foucault's notion of self-control or self-governance, and Barthes' distinction between *jouissance* and *plaisir* (Fiske 1989:50-51). The experience of *jouissance* involves a temporary and ecstatic, intensely pleasurable, loss of self-control analogous to the human sexual orgasm (1989:52). The normal sense of self-imposed adherence to social controls disappears in the intensity of the moment. In other words there is a momentary 'evasion' of normal social controls, normal (controlled) identity. *Plaisir*, by contrast, is "more of an everyday pleasure" (1989:54).

An illustration of the difference between popular and hegemonic pleasures is provided in the contrasting meanings derived from the film 'Rambo'. Australian aboriginals derived a popular or resistant pleasure from the image of Rambo rebelling against the white officer class, while by contrast the hegemonic pleasure that Ronald Reagan derived from the same movie was grounded in Rambo's gung-ho, independent and individualistic approach, values comparable to those espoused by the dominant socio-economic class in a capitalist society (Fiske 1989:57).

Fiske also implies that there may be evasive pleasure active in the middle class consumption of football. He describes the glee he took in watching *'The Newlywed Game'* on television as a form of 'naughtiness'. This naughtiness arose out of the fact that it was 'inappropriate' for a member of the middle class intelligentsia to watch such a populist program (Fiske 1989:59). Citing Bourdieu (1984:213-218) he subsequently argues that cheering and jeering at sports events are typical forms of working class participation, as is the wearing of team colours (Fiske 1989:89/90). The conclusion that middle class indulgence in such behaviours is therefore a form of evasion is inescapable. It is enjoyable, it is highly pleasurable because it provides a release through the 'naughty' evasion of the normal social restrictions, the normal Foucauldian gaze, the normal appropriate behaviour for a member of the 'respectable' classes.



In a related argument, Kozinets suggests that for some fans, the crossing of the “boundary into stigmatised consumption seems to provide the thrill of the forbidden” (2001:76). While Kozinets was specifically concerned with the motivations of *Star Trek* fans, his findings may be symptomatic of a wider tendency on the part of consumers to derive pleasure from being ‘naughty’, from doing something inappropriate. In the context of football, clearly an interest in football does not constitute stigmatic consumption in Kozinets’ sense. Some of the behaviours associated with football fans, however, *are* to a certain extent stigmatised or even taboo in most social contexts. The freedom to behave in ways that are normally stigmatised may therefore help to explain the pleasure that consumers derive from football. Fiske also suggests that football is particularly orientated towards feelings of release, because in contrast to other sports such as archery or athletics, it lacks their sense of individual military style discipline. Whereas other sports have order, football has disorder (Fiske 1989:79).

These arguments are therefore supportive of not only the notion of football as a form of catharsis, but a doubly pleasurable form of catharsis precisely because of this pleasure of evasion, this ‘naughty’ deviance or indulgence in behaviour inappropriate to one’s social class or habitus of origin.

Productive Pleasure.

Fiske interprets De Certeau’s concept of textual poaching as deriving a subversive pleasure through a re-reading, or even re-writing of the text. If we reconsider the example of the Australian aboriginals for a moment, we can see their adaptation of the ‘Rambo’ text, that is, their assignment of a meaning to the text as contrary to that of the original intention of the movie makers. The practice of feminist fans of the popular TV show *Charlie’s Angels*, represents another example of textual poaching. These fans typically cease watching the show before the closing sequence begins. While the body of the show features the angels asserting their superiority over male villains, they usually submit to the patriarchal figure of Charlie in each closing sequence. Fans are ‘poachers’, poaching from the terrain of mass-produced culture and ‘stealing’ only those parts of the text that can be re-read or re-

written in a manner agreeable or acceptable to the fan community. This gives the fans feelings of 'producerly control' (Fiske 1989:108,109) over these texts.

Jenkins (1992) further suggests that such practices can result in a much greater sense of ownership on the part of the fans. Having participated together in textual poaching, or 're-writing' the text, they feel they 'own' the characters in a soap opera. This can result in trauma for the fans on those occasions where their favourite characters are written out of a script by the producers (Jenkins 1992:24). Of course, this vulnerability to the decrees of producers emphasises the subordinate position of fans, and the practice of textual poaching is therefore a tactic of empowerment, representing their resistance to this subordinate position.

Another difficulty that results from this subordinate status is the threat posed by the commercial activities of the producers to the sacredness of the TV series or its characters. This has already resulted in a sense of desacralisation for some fans, but has led other fans to make efforts to re-sacralise their fan community through the development of new fan practices (Kozinets 2001:82). The purpose of these practices is again to assert the feelings of producerly control outlined by Fiske, thereby distancing the fan identity from the profaning influence of the market.

The status of football fans as similarly subordinate, and in a sense at the mercy of the club owners, who can choose to sell a beloved star player to a rival club, for example, is beyond doubt (King 1995, 1997, 1998; Taylor 1991, 1992; Portelli 1993). Portelli's (1993:82) suggestion that this subordinate status can breed resentment helps to explain King's (1997, 1998) finding of the negative attitudes of the 'lads' to the new consumer fans. The 'lads' lack the power to compel the club to keep ticket and merchandise prices at reasonable levels, so the merchandise and those who can afford the new higher prices become the focus of some of their resentment (King, 1997:339).

This resistance-orientated view of fandom fails to acknowledge the at times symbiotic nature of the producer-fan relationship. Without the financial and other resources the

producer commits to the production process, there could be no text in the first place. The acceptance of a symbiotic relationship does seem to be present among football fans, who acknowledge that clubs sometimes need to sell players to raise money, and that the money spent on merchandise does go towards strengthening the team, even if the 'suits' are still demonised as greedy corporate types who are 'ruining the game' (King 1997, 1998). However the extent to which football fans engage in textual poaching, a typical fan practice in other fan cultures, has not been fully addressed in the literature. There are football fan practices, such as the production of fanzines that often criticise these 'suits', which are analogous to textual poaching in some respects. This renders it possible that something analogous to the practice of textual poaching (Jenkins 1992) might well exist among football fans.

Overall, the problem with defining the pleasures of fandom primarily in terms of resistance, as Fiske does, is two-fold however. First it imposes one particular resistance paradigm (that of resistance to hegemony) on cultural or subcultural participation in fandom, without asking the question as to whether this is (or was) the intention of the participants (Wilson 2002). Second, it overlooks alternative conceptualisations of pleasure which possibly do far more to explain why consumers engage in fan activities in the first place. This is not to say that the concept of fandom as a producerly activity is not potentially useful, but rather to say that fans may engage in producerly behaviours for reasons other than resistance. Fiske's perspective on fandom is too restrictive and it is therefore necessary to consider additional perspectives on consumption as pleasure, in order to better understand fandom.

In the first instance we can note Belk, Ger, and Askegaard's (2003) assertion that consumption has become increasingly playful in recent years. They cite for example Holt (1995) and Celsi *et al* (1993) as evidence of this, although the question may well be asked as to whether consumption became increasingly playful, or our conceptualisation of consumption became broader and thus increasingly embraced playful activities. In fact when looking at the wider literature on pleasure, it becomes apparent that precise definitions of pleasure are not overly common. Chaouli (2005), for example, refers to the

“pleasures of the narrative experience” and also “aesthetic pleasure” and so on, but never defines exactly what he means by ‘pleasure’. Holbrook *et al* (1984) offer a more useful contribution to the discussion in their definition of playful consumption as part of a spectrum of consumption activity that includes hobbies, sport, and so forth. It involves the expenditure of time on activities that produce experiences inherently enjoyed for their own sake. There are a variety of ways of referring to such experiences, including the idea that they are “inherently pleasurable”. In other words, there are inner consequences to expending time on playful activities. These consequences include felt internal states such as “pleasurable” and enjoyable. Holbrook *et al* (1984) cite Csikszentmihalyi (1975) to help explain that “flow experiences (are) so enjoyable that ... the doing is the thing”.

In building on this idea of consumption for the sake of pleasurable, enjoyable experience, Jantzen *et al* (2004) cite Hirschmann and Holbrook (1982), and Holbrook and Hirschmann (1982), to argue that consumers want to feel certain emotions and to experience certain things. Consumers enter into particular activities, therefore, in order to experience inherently rewarding, internally felt states. Holbrook and Hirschmann (1982) explain that the outputs of this type of consumption activity include forms of pleasure such as fun and enjoyment. They further elaborate that “one’s purchase decision is obviously only a small component in the constellation of events involved in the overall consumption experience”.

Of course the degree of pleasure can vary from mild to intense. Holt (1995) explains that there can be more than one form of positive emotional state for baseball fans, such as on the one hand the relatively mild aesthetic pleasure experienced in appreciating the fluidity and skill of the players, and on the other hand the relative ecstasy of being present to witness a double home run. Holt (1995) describes other pleasant sensory experiences associated with attending a ball game, such as savouring a cold beer on a hot day, to illustrate another of the milder forms of pleasure associated with baseball fandom. Another form of pleasure is that of the pleasure of anticipation. Experiencing a delay of some kind in consuming a pleasurable product can increase the vividness of imagined consumption and make both anticipation and eventual consumption more enjoyable (Nowlis *et al* 2004).

Other forms of pleasure are more intense in nature. Hirschman and Holbrook (1982) draw parallels between forms of consumer experience that generate extreme emotional arousal, such as a rock concert or football game, and the experience of sexual intercourse. Perhaps this analogy proves how difficult it is to articulate a combined feeling of pleasure and excitement. The thrill of the hunt (Elias and Dunning 1993), combining the up-and-down excitement of the chase with the eventual ecstasy of the kill, is arguably a more apt analogy for the experience of attending a football game, with its fluctuating levels of excitement, than the analogy suggested by Holbrook and Hirschmann (1982).

Hopkinson and Pujari (1999) classify “thrill seeking” as an hedonic motive for initially taking part in kayaking. They cite Celsi *et al* (1993) in elaborating that thrill seeking is replaced by pleasure and transcendental flow as consumers of skydiving become more experienced. Celsi *et al* (1993) assert that the evolution of hedonic motives among skydivers follows a trajectory from thrill seeking through pleasure and fun to experiences of flow. The initial ability of the skydiving experience to thrill the participant with a combination of adrenaline and fear gives way after a time to a sense of pleasure and fun. The hedonic motivation to continue with skydiving eventually evolves into one of enjoyment of transcendent flow. This is because as the individual achieves mastery of the activity, they are freed from the constant self-awareness that would otherwise inhibit transcendent flow.

Clearly a number of studies of consumer behaviour make reference to this concept of flow. The author of the concept, Csikszentmihalyi (2000), defines it as “the holistic sensation that people feel when they act with total involvement” (2000:36). Flow is difficult to sustain – if, during the experience, the thought occurs to you that “it is only a game” then flow is lost (2000:38). Flow can only be experienced where there is a balance between the skills of the individual and the relative difficulty of the challenge he or she faces. As Csikszentmihalyi (2000:89) explains:

“To slip into the flow channel at all, then, an individual must attain certain levels of experience, skill, and conditioning appropriate to the challenges before him”

Watching television (2000:147) is deemed to be a 'microflow' activity rather than one characterised by full, or 'deep flow' activities such as rock climbing, performing surgery, or playing chess (p.158). One of the conclusions reached by Csikszentmihalyi is that activities performed by people in lower socioeconomic groups may also yield flow experiences, even though there are fewer skills required than the skills necessary for playing chess or performing surgery (2000:182). It is interesting that Csikszentmihalyi does not include fandom as an activity where 'deep flow' experiences might be possible. However, if merely watching television can be classified as a form of 'microflow' activity, then it inherently follows that being a spectator at a sporting event, and becoming caught up in the excitement of the occasion, must at least constitute some degree of flow. As the experience of flow is inherently pleasurable, this in turn suggests that one of the factors in explaining sustained involvement in fandom could be the enjoyment of the flow experience. Experiencing a sense of shared flow with other consumers may also confer an additional benefit – that of a sense of access to fan communities. A shared sense of play and commonly held enthusiasm thus appear to have an important role in contemporary consumption collectives.

2.8 Fandom and Community.

2.8.1 Fandom and the Collective Experience of Emotions

While the collective experience of emotion is regarded by some as central to a sense of community (Maffesoli 1996), not all commentators view public emotions favourably. Bourdieu's distaste for emotional rather than detached consumption is obvious. He rejects the passions of the mob in favour of the calmness of the aesthetically detached critical style of 'legitimate' consumption. Yet popular consumption is frequently accompanied by strong emotions. Must it be accepted that yielding to emotion is somehow inferior, and that popular pleasures that involve an emotional component are rendered culturally inferior by this very emotionalism?

Jenkins (1992), Maffesoli (1996), and Cova (1997), argue that the presence of strong emotions is a positive and not a negative aspect of fandom and the consumption of popular culture. The emotions and passions at the heart of fandom are central to and inseparable from the benefits, the pleasures, the meaningfulness and the sacredness fandom confers on those who partake in it. Interestingly, Jenkins records that the practice of emotional detachment is a relatively recent one in the history of aesthetics, and is in conflict with “broader currents in aesthetics which embraced rather than rejected strong emotions” (Jenkins 1992:61).

Furthermore, the literature on neotribalism suggests that shared emotions, rather than connoting something negative or inferior, can become a force for what Maffesoli (1996) defines as *re-ligare*; they are the ties that bind postmodern consumers together and enable them to experience the sacredness that is community. For Maffesoli, the playful activities of fans are a form of “aesthetic participation” in fan communities that serve to remind us “that something like the ‘community’ has existed, does exist, or will exist” (Maffesoli, 1996:49). In other words, while fandom is a form of play, it is an inherently meaningful one because it serves to provide consumers with a sense of community, a sense of belonging. Participation in communities that centre around a shared consumption of, or devotion to, mass produced products and/ or shared activities is therefore not an ‘illusory sop’ but something that gives real meaning to the lives of consumers. Furthermore while these communities can have symbiotic relationships with marketers (Schouten and McAlexander 1995) they usually retain the right to develop their own perspectives and practices on how products, brands, or activities ought to be consumed. The motivation to fall in with the community consensus on such perspectives and practices is explicable by virtue of the desire for community, the “desperate search” (Cova, 1997) for meaningful social links, on the part of the postmodern consumer.

It is interesting to note that some social configurations seem to be more open than others to the acceptance of new members. This may be because they seek to perpetuate identity through expanding the size of the group. What is sought is perpetuation of the cherished

identity, so there is an active programme of evangelisation into the 'right' or 'legitimate' way of doing things (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001). Alternatively, sometimes the method of choice for perpetuating the cherished identity is the approach of exclusivity, where the group continues to deny authenticity of membership to others. Both practices may be different forms of the same underlying goal, to protect and perpetuate the sacred identity of the group (Belk *et al*, 1989). Here it is the group identity that is sacred, and there are alternative approaches taken to protect it, to try to keep it sacred, such as evangelisation on the one hand or exclusion on the other. The possibility that the group's system of subcultural capital (Thornton 1995) could play a central role in maintenance of such a sacred identity is of great interest.

Having a shared perspective on what constitutes the right way to consume a brand or activity essentially allows the group to differentiate between those who are legitimate members of the community and those who are not. This is important because it helps to protect the collective sense of consciousness of kind (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001), that allows members to imagine that they are all part of an authentic community, with a collective desire to self-perpetuate. A collective sense of cultural or subcultural capital is therefore fundamental to the perpetuation of community identity. A demonstration of strong emotions and passionate commitment in relation to the brand and/or activity does seem to play an important part in facilitating community members' experience and perpetuation of consciousness of kind. There must be enthusiasm so that there can be re ligare. A sense of emotion would therefore seem to be an inherent part of these systems of group-specific cultural capital. This is not enough in itself to clarify the nature and variety of the various forms that communities of consumption can take, so the next concept to consider is that of the new communities of consumption. This should subsequently permit a more in-depth analysis of the type of consumption community fandom actually represents.

2.9 The New Communities of Consumption

In recent years, the level of research attention paid to group consumption has dramatically increased. Cova's reference (1997) to the neglect of "non-individual phenomena" now seems out of date, given the level of research attention communal consumption has deservedly begun to receive. Similarly, the more recent claim that the concept of community has rarely been mentioned in consumer behaviour (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001:412) is no longer accurate. Several works in particular can arguably be credited with bringing the significance of community for consumer behaviour to the fore. These are Schouten and McAlexander's (1995) research on the Harley Davidson subculture of consumption, the concept of brand community as developed by Muniz and O'Guinn (2001), and Maffesoli's work on the phenomenon of neo tribalism (Maffesoli 1996, Cova 1997).

2.9.1 Neotribalism

Cova (1997) provides a useful analysis of the debate as to whether postmodern consumption resides primarily in the individual or in the community. He refers initially to the process of 'egocentration' by which he means each individual becoming more and more free of social links to others. Society and consumption have become fragmented. Along with this fragmentation, however, there is another process at work, that of social recomposition. As each individual becomes, in a sense, free of what we might term historically conventional social links or constraints, rather than the expected "triumph of individualism (Cova 1997:300)", there is a growing tendency towards a recomposition of social collectives.

This movement toward social links differs from the previous format of social links or ties. Instead of being based on what Cova refers to as archaic social bonds, this social recomposition is grounded in an emotional free choice. Membership of neo tribal communities is freely chosen, on the basis of attraction towards communities that share the same values and passions as each other. Cova asserts that consumers are increasingly

drawn towards like-minded others, who share their passions, their interests, and their values. Cova's notion of postmodern tribes draws directly from the work of Maffesoli (1996). Maffesoli begins his work by stating his intention to present the evidence that contradicts the notion of individualism (1996:9). Rather than postmodern society being about "withdrawal into the self", there is a tendency towards a sort of tribalism, the spirit of which is based "on the spirit of religion (*re-ligare*)" (1996:40), by which he means a sort of binding force, ties that link or bind people to each other. This is not religion in the sense of formal doctrine or credo, but rather a 'civil religion'. Furthermore, such 'civil religion' "is difficult to apply to an entire nation (but)...can be easily experienced at the local level....and (in) special groupings...and the solidarity it leads to becomes concrete" leading to such things as uniformity in dress and other tastes (1996:41).

These 'special groupings' include rastas, skinheads, and also occupational communities such as computer engineers (Cova 1997:301). Cova speaks of individuals sharing "strong emotional links, a common subculture, a vision of life". It is these emotional links, this sense of shared vision, that provide the ties that bind of which Maffesoli speaks. Furthermore it is in this sense of shared passions that we find the central meaning of neo tribalism (Maffesoli 1996:28). This is reflected in the various examples of neo tribes referred to by Maffesoli (1996), Cova (1997), and others (Crawford 2000). Examples of neo tribal groups without a sense of shared passion do not seem to exist. Thus fans at a sports match provide a perfect example of this social configuration, because of the visible presence of this shared passion (Shields (p.ix, preface to Maffesoli 1996)). Ice hockey fans (Crawford, 2000) and soccer fans (Alabarces 1999, Cova 1997) provide further examples. Other cases of neotribalism that reflect the centrality of shared passions include 'green' political parties, the 'natural food' movement, and so forth (Maffesoli, 1996:34).

The desire for affiliation to such groupings has its roots in "the obvious dehumanisation of urban life". It is these dehumanising processes that are "...giving birth to specific groupings for the exchange of passion and feelings" (Maffesoli 1996:42). As Cova says, it is a "consequence of the decomposition of traditional communities" (1997:305). There is a sense, a common experience, in the growing absence of traditional community structures,

of a “desperate search” for social links (Cova p.302). This search *is* desperate because of the inherent human need, not only to express emotion, but also to express the capacity for emotion, and to share both these emotions and this capacity for emotion with others. A shared social space that offers the opportunity to express emotion, to share emotion, to demonstrate and preserve the capability to be emotional, is therefore greatly to be valued. The ‘decreased emotional involvement in (traditional) public life’ dictates that these neo tribal affiliations, gathered around such social spaces as “the guru, the local celebrity, the football team” (Maffesoli 1996:42) can take on great importance and become the site of considerable emotional investment for the individual (Cova 1997). Taken in conjunction with the inherent human propensity to form social groupings, the human ‘combining instinct’ (Pareto, cited by Maffesoli 1996:80), this certainly suggests that such neotribal communities play a central role in the lives of postmodern consumers. This implies in turn a willingness on the part of members to adapt to the behavioural norms of the group, in return for the feeling of belongingness derived from such adaptation (Crawford, 2000).

There is a growing awareness on the part of postmodern consumers that the desire for a meaningful existence cannot be satisfied by individualised consumption. It is participation in “one or several communities of reference which will give meaning to ...life” (Cova 1997:307). Thus the desire for meaningful existence is deeply linked to a desire for community in the mind of the consumer, a community of shared ideals, a shared vision, a shared passion. Consumption of certain brands may therefore be important as a means of achieving this social link (Cova 1997:307). Thus, consumers will value any object that implies membership of the community. Cova (1997:305) sees membership of the community of Olympique Marseille supporters as purchasable for this reason, for example.

2.9.2 Neotribalism and the desire for distinction of identity

This desire for a meaningful existence is fundamentally linked to the need for a distinct identity. Maffesoli speaks of the “process of identification” (p.136) and suggests that “the many ecstatic forms of contemporary effervescence (including sport) ...delineate a

territory” to which people affiliate. People affiliate around such ‘territories’ because they are a reflection of “the desire to leave one’s mark, to bear witness to one’s durability...to serve the collective memory that defined it” (p.137). As Cova states:

“(W)hat seems always at stake is the person in their independence and their distinction compared with others...(the postmodern individual)...has ‘become their own Pygmalion’”(Elliott, 1993, cited by Cova, p.305)

In other words, postmodern consumers are constantly trying to re-construct their own identities, trying to aestheticise their own consumption. The specific choice of neotribal community is therefore as much an assertion of independence, a choice of distinctive identity, a manifestation of the desire for distinction, as it is anything else.

Finally, the inherent human need for identity as well as community, in leading to the ‘desperate search’ for social links culminating in the discovery of a community of like-minded others and participation in this process of *re-ligare* points towards the sacredness (Belk *et al* 1989) of these communities for their members.

2.9.3 Nature and structure of neotribal communities

How well-defined are these social configurations? How formally structured are they? How long do they last and how do they impact on consumption? First, neotribes are ephemeral and unstructured by nature (Crawford 2000:70, Maffesoli 1996:143, Cova 1997:300). This ephemerality can be explained partly in the ongoing tendency of postmodern consumers to re-shape the self. The lack of formal structure perhaps facilitates the freedom to come and go, meaning that these communities are in a constant state of flux. This renders them somewhat unstable. Individuals are free to belong to more than one community. They may flit from one to the next, yet can still invest a considerable part of the self in the group. The “mainspring” therefore liberates as well as binds. You are free to wear other masks at other times (Maffesoli 1996:147), that is, you are free to participate in other neo tribal communities, act out the different roles involved, and to move back and forth between

these communities, as well as to revert at other times to individualised or even traditional pre-modernist community consumption (Cova 1997). The metaphor of mask is significant because it is not only purchasable but discardable.

Another fundamental factor in explaining the relative instability of these communities is their foundation on emotion (Maffesoli 1996:14). This is not difficult to understand – even shared emotions are still, after all, emotions. Emotions by their nature are transient.

A key determinant of the longevity of the tribe, therefore, is the extent to which genuine rituals are present. Rituals can bring the social collective into the presence of the sacred, through feelings of transcendence, flow, and *communitas* (Belk *et al*, 1989).

Wherever well-established rituals that lead to communal experiences of intense emotions are present, the tribe will be more robust. It is strengthened through every experience of collective emotion, and it is through the presence or absence of rituals that the opportunities to experience collective emotions arise. Where there are frequent experiences of collective emotion, there will then be a far greater sense of felt or imagined community. This explains the difference between the relatively robust neotribalism of football supporters and the relatively short-lived cult of Princess Diana, for example. The public unity in grieving for Princess Diana was perhaps a classic illustration of the very ephemeral quality such neotribal configurations can sometimes have:

“we can occasionally see ‘instantaneous condensations’...which are fragile but for that very instant the object of significant emotional investment” (Maffesoli p.76).

Those neotribal communities that go on to develop stronger socialisation processes and structures will only be found where the opportunity for communal emotional investment repeats itself again and again through well developed rituals, such as those practiced at football matches, or indeed other events such as rock concerts, *Star Trek* conventions or even party political conferences.

While a lack of structure weakens the community’s power to discipline its members (Crawford 2000:70, Shields p.xi, preface to Maffesoli 1996), these communities do have

“strong powers of integration and inclusion, of group solidarity. These powers are displayed and actualised in initiatory rituals and stages of membership. As the highest social good, the members of *tribus* are marked by it - wearing particular types of dress, exhibiting group-specific styles of adornment and espousing the shared values and ideals of the collectivity” (Shields (in Maffesoli 1996, p. xi)).

The power of the community resides in the degree to which the individual desires to belong. The stronger the desire to belong, the greater the self-imposed willingness to “participate in the collective spirit” that is, participate in the rituals (Maffesoli 1996:140). In fact the life span of the tribe depends on the “degree of investment of the protagonists”. The degree to which one belongs depends also on one’s acceptance or rejection of the initiation rites or rituals: “...the ritual, by reinforcing the feeling of belonging, can ...thus allow groups to exist” (1996:140).

Cova cites several studies (for example Ferratori 1993) that examine the phenomenon of the return of ritual, but ritual outside the context of formalized religion. What we see here, he argues, is a modified form of religion, a “new rituality”, improvised but non-institutionalised, a “sort of faith without a dogma” which performs the important linking function discussed above. Humans are linked with each other through this common faith, these common rituals. They therefore act as an effective substitute for the dogmatic institutionalized religions of modernity. Religion is not on the wane but instead has metamorphosed into neotribal beliefs, values, and practices. Not all neotribal groups survive, but some do survive for long enough to “assume the various stages of socialisation” (Maffesoli 1996:143).

It is thus highly plausible that the strongest forms of neotribal community are those with the most strongly developed rituals, both in terms of the history of the ritual, the depth and intensity of emotion or passion associated with the ritual, and the degree to which all members willingly participate in the ritual. The greater the sense of distinctive identity, the more intense and well-established the rituals, the greater the feelings of sacredness, and the more strongly developed the internal system of cultural capital may be.

2.9.4 Rituals and the Collective Self.

It is readily apparent from the literature that rituals play a central role in the development and maintenance of a sense of collective identity among members of consumption communities. In order to understand why this is the case, it is helpful to consider the conceptualisation of rituals as discussed in the literature on consumer behaviour.

One of the first serious attempts to conceptualise consumer ritual was undertaken by Rook (1985). He explains that “ritual action is designed to conform to stereotyped scripts, and acting in conformity with a prescribed script is considered to be intrinsically rewarding” and also that “a ritual tends to be performed in the same way each time it is observed, so ritual events function as mnemonic devices that elicit specific thoughts and sentiments”. The four components or elements of ritual experience are ritual artefacts (often with “specific symbolic messages...integral to the ritual experience”, a ritual script, which guides the use of the ritual artefacts, ritual performance role(s), and a ritual audience. A ritual consists of an episodic string of events, and ritual behaviour proceeds in a fixed order (Rook 1985). Ritual behaviour involves a set of behaviour patterns, expressed in formalised scripts, which are individually internalised or formed in norms by tacit consent (Cheol Park 1998, Rook 1985). Furthermore, not only can the name of a ritual have great symbolic significance, but so can every article and gesture used in its’ performance (Turner 1969), so these artefacts, scripts, and behaviours can take on a great deal of importance.

While rituals are characterised by repetitiveness, this does not mean mechanical repetition without (spiritual or emotional) meaning. Ritual behaviour can create new emotions and meaning each time the ritual is performed (Cheol Park 1998, Rook 1985). Those involved in performing rituals are inclined to be deeply absorbed in them, so rituals therefore involve a sense of personal immersion (Cheol Park 1998, Rook 1985). Rook also observes that part of the purpose of ritual can be to promote nonambiguous communication, and that “ritual practices solidify religious doctrines”. Rook goes on to quote Geertz (1968);

“It is in ritual ...that somehow the conviction is generated that religious conceptions are veridical and religious directives are sound. It is in some form of ceremonial form...that the moods and motivations which sacred symbols induce in men...meet and reinforce one another”

Given the inherent meaningfulness of rituals, it is unsurprising that if variation in content or sequence arises, such variation is often met with considerable resistance (Rook 1985). Ritual helps to define the sacred and set it apart from the profane (Shrum 2004). Rituals help consumers to disengage from the profane and access the sacred (Goulding *et al* 2002). Correct observation of rituals is thus bound up with notions of what is considered sacred and this helps to explain why resistance to change manifests itself, should anyone attempt to make changes to the ritual script, or unilaterally seek to introduce changes to the list of ritual artifacts, for example. However rituals are not impervious to change. Rook (2004) asserts that rituals can become more elaborate over time, or they can mutate, or they can eventually fade and die. Evaluation of the vitality of a ritual can be ascertained by assessing “the nature and extensiveness of artifactual consumption, the presence or absence of a well-defined ritual script, the clarity of participants’ ritual role perceptions, and the presence or absence of a well-defined target audience beyond the immediate participants” (Rook 1985). Thus rituals can and do change over time (Sandikci and Ilhan 2004), due to changes in any or all of the above elements, but resistance to change should not come as a surprise. Rituals play a major part in collective understandings of not only the sacred, but identity in general. Hence changes to rituals may be perceived as attempts to change a collectively held sense of identity and this again can result in resistance to any perceived changes in ritual practice.

Football fandom would appear to be highly ritualised when we consider that it is both highly externally (high procedurality, typicality, and repetitiveness) and internally (high levels of sincerity, symbolism, immersion, and formality) ritualised (Cheol Park 1998, Rook 1985). Sports fan ritualization is defined by Chun, Gentry, and McGinnis (2004) as

“the process in which an individual acquires (the identity of) ritualized sports fandom through continued fan ritual engagements”. Hence the role and identity of sports fan is developed through participation in fan rituals (Chun, Gentry, and McGinnis 2004).

Holt (1995) also points out that a variety of consumption practices enable consumers to integrate self and consumption object. These practices include consumption rituals (Rook 1985), self-extension processes (Belk 1988), and McCracken’s (1986) personalizing rituals, so the dominant role played by ritual in development of the perception of self as fan is readily apparent.

McCracken (1988) provides an interesting analysis of how the relationship between ritual and identity works in practice. He firstly discusses how meaning is transferred from the socio-cultural world to specific consumer goods, and then how meaning is transferred from goods to the individual consumer. Cultural meanings can be substantiated through the symbolic meaning of material goods (McCracken 1988:75). Material goods acquire their meanings through processes of meaning transfer such as advertising or the fashion system. These meanings, once transferred to material goods, are subsequently transferred again, this time to the end consumer, via a variety of symbolic actions or rituals:

“Symbolic action, or “ritual”, as it is more conventionally called, is a kind of social action devoted to the manipulation of the cultural meaning for purposes of collective and individual communication and categorisation”

(McCracken 1988:84)

These rituals are therefore an effective way to manipulate cultural meaning. Meaning assignation can take place through exchange rituals such as gift-giving, for example, but also through possession rituals and other ownership rituals. All these rituals, when repeated and invested in emotionally, have the purpose of transferring the symbolic properties of the good to the individual so that the individual can have a sense of ownership or acquisition of the desired symbolic property (1988:87) - so the meaning can be said in that sense to be

transferred from the good to the individual. Cultural meaning and personal sense of identity are merged, via ritual, to form a new sense of self.

McCracken argues that “it serves us well to see consumers as engaged in an ongoing enterprise of self-creation....(t)he self, language, and society are all created and sustained only as a result of deliberate and continual efforts” (1988:88) and that ritualised consumption of consumer goods is central to this process. The consumer is:

“...someone who is engaged in a “cultural project” the purpose of which is to complete the self. The consumer system supplies individuals with the cultural materials to realise their various and changing ideas of what it is to be a man or a woman...a parent, a citizen, or a professional. All of these cultural notions are concretised in goods...it is through their possession and use that the individual realises the notions in his own life ...in normal situations...the individual uses goods in an unproblematical manner to constitute crucial parts of the self and world”
(McCracken 1988:88).

If such repeated rituals, therefore, have the effect of transferring the symbolic properties of goods to the individual so that the individual can, in a sense, symbolically complete their desired sense of self (Elliott and Wattanasuwan 1998), then surely in the same way participation in group rituals will confer a feeling of belonging to and identifying with the group (Otnes and Scott 1996). Elliott and Wattanasuwan further assert that without social affirmation of meaning transfer, ritual alone would not suffice for it to take place. Consumers need to have this new element of self concept socially acknowledged and accepted by other consumers, before it can be fully embedded in their sense of self. This provides clarification of the relationship between ritual and identity in brand communities¹ (Muniz and O’Guinn 2001), for example. Community activity provides for meaning transfer via participation in rituals, but also provides social affirmation that the meaning has indeed been incorporated into the self.

¹ Brand community is discussed in further detail below.

Meaning transfer can also take place without the involvement of material goods. Consider for example the tendency of football crowds to respond in a highly ritualised manner to the decisions of the referee (Richardson 2004). Even in cases where the player's offence may be clearly visible, fans can react almost violently to a referee's decision if it goes against their team. This highly ritualized, emotionally charged response is a form of learned behaviour, where the group has effectively self-regulated and engaged in a ritualistic response deemed appropriate in this type of situation (Crawford 2000:161).

Football fans may also enjoy such rituals, because they effectively constitute a 'script' (Rook 1985), ritualistically acted out every week, and the regular acting out of this script may have a cathartic effect as an antidote to the stresses of postmodern life. The referee's decision, and maybe even the match result, has not necessarily gone the fan's way, but she or he has still had the benefit of participation in the ritual. The details of the script may vary little from week to week, but acting out the fan role helps the consumer to affirm, or reaffirm, their sense of self. Joint participation acts as an affirmation, a reassurance, of belonging to the community (Crawford 2000, Richardson 2004).

Fans in general can feel a strong sense of ownership, because of the ritualised participatory nature of their practice of fandom. It is striking how media fans feel a character in a soap opera belongs to them and not the producers (Fiske 1992:40), not unlike the sense of ownership football fans have towards 'their' (not the Board's) club (King 1995, 1997, 1998; Taylor 1992). Fiske explains this in terms of Bourdieu's conceptualisation of the refusal in a subordinate habitus "...to distance the text and the artist from the audience" (Fiske, 1992:40). Thus fans can revere the object of fandom but still feel that they own it (Fiske 1992:41). This is also reminiscent of members of brand communities (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001), such as the Saab owners who felt that they and not the corporation were the ones who really understood what the brand was about. This is not to say that fan communities are effectively brand communities, but rather to point to the similarities that certainly appear to be present not only among fan communities and brand communities, but also across other forms of consumption community.

Other theoretical perspectives on the effects of ritual include Fournier's model of consumer-brand relationships (Fournier 1998 (b)). While Fournier's model is concerned with the quality of the dyadic brand-consumer relationship, the model can easily be adapted to help explain not only the attachments that can form between the consumer and a particular community, but also the processes by which these attachments form, and by which community membership becomes more deeply embedded in the consumer's self-concept.

Interdependence between consumer and brand is illustrative of both the formation and process of attachment. The higher the degree of interdependence, the stronger the relationship. High interdependence is characterised by frequent interactions with the brand, such as usage of the brand in regular consumption rituals. Interdependence research suggests that the more a relationship is woven into the fabric of daily life, the greater the endurance capacity of the relationship becomes (Fournier 1998(b)). By extension, it is therefore possible that participation in regular communal consumption rituals will increase the level of interdependence between consumer and community. The more frequently repeated the rituals, the stronger the relationship will be, particularly where these rituals are associated with sacred meanings.

Fournier also measures consumer/brand relationship quality in terms of self-connection, that is, the degree to which the brand delivers on important self-identity concerns or themes. The stronger the level of self-connection, the stronger the quality of the brand-consumer relationship. Again by extension, where the brand, community, or activity are seen as delivering on key themes of self-identity or self-expression we are more likely to see strong bonds between consumer and community. Where the brand is also the focus of love and passion, Fournier's first facet of brand relationship quality, such consumer-community bonds will be even stronger and community identity will be more firmly embedded in the individual's self-concept.

Fournier's notion of commitment is of great interest in relation to brand community, because commitment seems to be a key factor in determining whether or not someone is an

authentic member of the brand community (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001:419). Being able to demonstrate high levels of commitment over an extended time frame is therefore likely to provide the consumer with particularly high levels of cultural capital within the community.

The final two facets of Fournier's framework are intimacy and brand partner quality. Brand partner quality focuses on the consumer's perceptions of the brand's *overall* performance in its role as partner in the relationship. With regard to intimacy, it is argued that as personal experiences of the brand accumulate over time, via grooming rituals for example (Rook 1985), a brand relationship memory develops. From this, intimate personalised meanings develop, feeding a relationship culture. This cultural context supports the stability of that relationship for the future. In fact, such personal experiences, many of which may be ritualised, may act as an important source of cultural capital. Sharing personal stories that celebrate the history and culture of the brand is a prominent ritual within brand communities, and is a particularly important form of cultural capital which enables the storyteller to secure or enhance their social status within the community (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001:422). Muniz and O'Guinn suggest that brand communities are more likely to exist around brands that are consumed in public (2001:415). This might be explained in terms of an association between public consumption and the presence of collective rituals. The presence of such rituals should result in a stronger mutual identity. Of course brands can be consumed in public without collective rituals being involved, but in the absence of such rituals, brand community is far less likely to exist.

Thus we can conclude that there is considerable evidence in the literature for a strong causative relationship between ritual and identity, at both the individual and, more importantly for the current study, the group level. Participation in rituals effectively concretises the sense of chosen identity and makes it more real, more authentic, for the consumer.

2.9.5 Ritual and the Sacredness of the Tribe.

Maffesoli (1996) frequently uses the term 'puissance', by which he means the inherent energy and vital force of the people, as opposed to the institutions of power (1996:1). He subsequently defines puissance as 'will to live' (1996:31). In other words it is a sort of life force, present in the people. He argues that there is a sort of divinity present in the coming together of the people, referring to Durkheim's concept of the 'social divine' (1996:4). There is for Maffesoli a puissance in sociality, in people gathering together, and he argues that a "genuinely holy dimension to social relationships" is manifesting itself in these new social congregations. These social relationships are sacred (1996:21). Furthermore it is the rituals and the relics of these new communities that render them visible and thereby bring the sacred within our grasp:

"...it is striking that in popular religion especially it is very difficult...to draw the distinction between customs and canonical rituals. Thus, just as the liturgical ritual renders the Church visible, custom makes a community exist as such...it was by ritually exchanging relics that the various local churches were constituted as a network. These relics are the bond that held a small community together, allowing them to unite and, in so doing, to transmute 'the distance from the holy into the deep joy of proximity'" (1996:21)

Clearly for Maffesoli "the sharing of passion" is sacred. The popular is always about passion, popular revolution is about passion and popular religion is about passion. The masses are moved by their feelings, which is partly why the 'intelligentsia' have looked down on them. This sharing of passion, this sharing of sentiment, constitutes for Maffesoli "the true social bond" (1996:43).

Maffesoli explains Morin's concept of "aesthetic participation" (1996:49) in terms of a freedom to participate and then withdraw. So, for a time, you can enter in to the ritual and while at some level you know that it is a game, nevertheless there is something in the human spirit that resonates quite deeply with this process. It is a means of accessing the sacred, the 'puissance', the life force. Because you are passionate, you are alive. This can only be fully experienced through participation in the neotribal community, the community

who through the communal rituals enter into passion with you (1996:66). This 'sense of play' is therefore a fundamental and necessary part of humanity. We *need* the game. In the context of the current study, the particular game is football, but consumers engage in other games as well. Of course the shared ritual practices of neotribal communities will have the effect of mutual reinforcement of belief in the doctrines of the tribe (Rook 1985), hence, in the context of football fandom, for example, the importance of displaying strong emotions while taking part in rituals of support for the team.

It must therefore come as no surprise to see Maffesoli refer in the negative to "the scorn heaped by Pierre Bourdieu on the cultural jargon and the bric-a-brac of notions constituting popular know-how" (1996:56). Clearly Maffesoli chooses to endorse popular culture as practiced by fans of popular television series such as *Dallas*, and disagrees with the dismissal of popular culture as illegitimate or inferior. For Maffesoli, it is certainly no 'compensatory sop', but it is sacred and resonates with the essence of life itself.

2.9.6 Neotribalism and Group Narcissism.

One dimension of neotribalism which is particularly indicative of the influence of the 'new habitus' is group narcissism (Cova 1997:300, Crawford 2000:225-256). In order to participate properly in the rituals, the correct costume must be worn, for example:

"...the person plays roles...within the various tribes in which the person participates. The costume changes as the person, according to personal tastes...takes his or her place each day in the various games of the *theatrum mundi*" (Maffesoli 1996:76)

Furthermore the point of such costume wearing, arguably extending beyond garments to include face painting and indeed every aspect of the appearance, is to take part more fully in the game of collective self-admiration, to belong more fully to the tribe:

“The cult of the body and other games of appearance have value only inasmuch as they are part of a larger stage in which everyone is both actor and spectator ...it is a question of a stage ‘common to us all’” (Simmel, cited by Maffesoli 1996:77)

Again we are confronted with the knowledge that while it is ‘only a game’ it is very much a part of this process of tapping into the life force, of experiencing the sacredness of *puissance*, of accessing the sacred feelings of ecstasy, flow, and *communitas*. It is partly through this group narcissism that these consumers help to construct the consumption object (Holt 1995). Crawford, for example, observes that the narcissism of the crowd, their costumes and performance reflect their consciousness of the fact that they themselves were part of the spectacle (Crawford, 2000:161). Adoption of the communal costume is an essential part of the mutual preservation of collective self-admiration. The community needs to convince itself of its own beauty, in order to retain a sense not only of itself as a community, but one that is more attractive than the other alternative choices that present themselves to the postmodern consumer. Without communal acceptance of, and obedience to, the tastes of the new habitus in relation to dress and behaviour, there is no spectacle, there is no emotional experience to be consumed, and there is no community. This explains the willingness to self regulate, the self-imposed acceptance of the ‘call to order’.

This group narcissism serves a further purpose in that it is a basis for distinction and thus reflects the desire of the postmodern individual for both distinction and community. The wearing of the appropriate mask is desirable because it satisfies this desire, it distinguishes the wearer from other groups (Maffesoli 1996:92-93) and also strengthens the community bond, because, of course, it reinforces “the feeling of participating in a collective body” (1996:118). Last but not least the wearing of certain masks permits the wearer to indicate that they “belong to a place, a group, or a local personality who thus becomes an eponymous hero...(i)t remains to *participate* in the glory and the wrath of the master...I am from his clan, his group” (1996:119).

Finally, even mediated exposure to unifying objects can have a strengthening effect on the tribe. Not only can particular images or icons serve as a locus around which the tribe can

affiliate, but technology can have the effect of bringing such images into closer proximity. The “televised image will be part of a tactile, emotional, and affectual experience; as a result, it will strengthen the tribe as such” (Maffesoli 1996:138).

The “feeling of tribal belonging” (Maffesoli 1996:139) is rendered even stronger once interactive technology becomes available. It probably contributes to a stronger sense of imagined community when the opportunity to interact with fellow members presents itself. Physical proximity is therefore no longer necessary for membership. It can be realised through the medium of the internet, for example (Cova 1997:300).

Rituals, then, play a fundamental role in concretising feelings of community among members of consumption collectives. The effects of shared meanings and practices in relation to ritual artefacts and ritual scripts (Rook 1985) is to confer a sense of belonging and to facilitate a change in self-concept, to include membership of particular consumption collectives in the consumer’s sense of identity. This does not necessarily mean that every single form of postmodern consumption collective enjoys a dominant role in the life of its members however. The degree of personal involvement and commitment to these collectives can vary, and seems to be highest within subcultures of consumption (Schouten and McAlexander 1995).

2.9.7 Subcultures of Consumption.

An alternative model of postmodern consumption collective is that of the subculture of consumption. The key differences between the concepts of neo tribalism and subculture of consumption are found in the contrasting social structures of the two configurations. While both configurations arguably replace social class as the basis for categorisation of consumer behaviour, subcultures of consumption are far more rigid in their social structures, and impact to a much greater extent on the lives of their members (Muniz and O’Guinn 2001). Like neotribal groups, the subculture of consumption is characterised by self-selection, by a definition of self not in terms of social class or ethnic background, but

rather in relation to a community with whom there are shared passions, a shared ethos or value system (Schouten and McAlexander 1995). Members of a subculture of consumption, rather than conforming to what might be expected of them, given for example their demographic profile, engage in patterns of consumer behaviour and choice that clearly distinguish them from their social class of origin. Consumers define themselves not according to sociological constructs but “in terms of the activities, objects, and relationships that give their lives meaning” (Schouten and McAlexander 1995:59). Subcultures typically have well-developed, hierarchical, social structures, where one’s position is to a large extent a function of how deeply the participant embraces the lifestyle and values of the subculture (Schouten and McAlexander 1995:48). Subcultures have a simple, concentric, social structure, whereby members of the so-called ‘inner circle’ or ‘hard core’ practice practically a full time commitment to the styles and ideology of the subculture, while the outer ‘soft core’ is formed by individuals whose commitment to the ethos and lifestyle is less all-embracing.

One characteristic of neotribalism that apparently contrasts with the make-up of subcultures of consumption is accessibility. Anyone can become a member of a neotribal group, by buying the correct mask. This is not so within the Harley Davidson subculture of consumption, or HDSC. For example, within the HDSC a variety of derogatory terms are used to describe other Harley owners or ‘wannabes’ who are not accepted as authentic bikers. These include RUBies (Rich Urban Bikers), SEWERS (Suburban Weekend Riders) MUGWUMPS (My ugly Goldwing was upsetting my peers), and HOOTS (‘Have one on order, true story!’). These terms are part of a subcultural value system that dictates that simply being able to buy a Harley does not make you an authentic biker (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995:49). New members of the HDSC must pass through ‘prospect’ status prior to acceptance.

Something that is somewhat reminiscent of neotribalism is the presence of group narcissism. Adherence to the correct ‘biker’ appearance was not only for the purpose of affirmation of membership, but also to enjoy the admiration of aspirants and wanna-bes

(Schouten and McAlexander 1995:50). Riding Harleys *en masse* is also an act of performance for an audience (Schouten and McAlexander 1995:46).

Similarly the presence of elements of sacred consumption permeates the HDSC. The experience of *communitas* is but one example (1995:51). The phenomenon of *kratophany* (Belk *et al* 1989) is another, though this is present in a particularly pronounced form in the HDSC. Belk *et al* (1989) explain *kratophany* as something that indicates the terrible power of sacred objects. Such objects must be approached carefully and correctly, showing the correct degree of deference, or highly negative consequences can ensue. The biker's Harley Davidson is his and his alone. Other bikers are not to touch it without permission, for fear of violent reprisals (Schouten and McAlexander 1995:51).

To what extent does evidence of a system of cultural or subcultural capital present itself in the HDSC? Schouten and McAlexander do not explicitly refer to 'cultural capital' but they arguably provide numerous examples of its existence within the subculture. The social leverage of consumption objects and/or activities, for the attainment or maintenance of social distinction, is indicative of the presence of a system of cultural capital (Holt 1998). Bikers use apparel, tattoos, collectibles and of course their own customised motorcycles as a means to stimulate conversation about the HDSC 'faith' and in an effort to "elevate their own relative (social) status" within the group. This is strong evidence for the existence of a well-developed system of cultural, or perhaps more correctly, subcultural capital, within the HDSC. It is interesting to note that it is usually those who are lower in the internal social hierarchy who are most active in this respect (Schouten and McAlexander 1995:51).

With respect to *habitus*, it is readily apparent that members of the HDSC demonstrate an adherence to the behavioural norms and tastes of the group. There is an acceptance of, and indulgence in, behaviours that would be unacceptable elsewhere, for example women flashing their breasts or male bikers riding in nude convoy at a biker rally, in response to a group of women holding up a sign that said "Show yer pee-pee-doodle" (Schouten and McAlexander 1995:53). Perhaps fortunately, these are relatively infrequent behaviours. Other more moderate behaviours and a conformity to communal tastes and preferences

suggest not only the presence of a particular habitus but an acceptance of its dictates; almost a call to 'dis'order, perhaps.

It would be disingenuous to suggest that the HDSC habitus is always expressed through extreme forms of behaviour. It is expressed in many other ways. In fact, as a true habitus, it acts as a consistent guide to behaviour and tastes, covering practically every aspect of behaviour and taste. The theme of patriotism, for example, prevails throughout, and other examples of consistency of taste include the preference for modified exhausts to give the requisite "loud, throaty, rumbling sound that Harley owners prefer" (Schouten and McAlexander 1995:53).

In accepting that the 'hard core' members of the HDSC do indeed live their bikerdom as a way of life (Schouten and McAlexander 1995, Muniz and O'Guinn 2001), it is surely permissible to argue that the habitus of the HDSC in this, its fullest sense, is a 'true' habitus. What, however, of the weekend bikers? Is their form of HDSC participation closer in fact to neotribalism than subculture? Such speculation lies firmly outside the scope of the present study. What is interesting however is the notion that HDSC participation does not always have to be a full-blown way of life, that in fact it can act as a temporary sanctuary, a gateway to *temporary* transformation of the self.

The Harley Davidson motorcycle, for HDSC participants, personifies or symbolises a sense of personal freedom. While this freedom is linked to freedom in the broader patriotic American sense, it is also grounded in a sense of liberation from convention and the norms of social respectability. This dual meaning is described as the dominant value in the ethos of the subculture (Schouten and McAlexander 1995:51). As we know, this extends to the freedom to behave in particular ways, or even create a temporary alter ego, in the context of group consumption practice such as a biker rally, that would be unacceptable outside the subculture (Schouten and McAlexander 1995:53). Exercising this temporary persona also bestows significant benefits, such as catharsis, *communitas* and flow, on even the 'weekend' HDSC participant. This deeply refreshes all members of the HDSC, because it

permits them to set aside the stresses of everyday life and indulge in the duality of freedoms signified by that most iconic of brands, the Harley Davidson motorcycle.

2.9.8 Brand Community: Additional Considerations.

Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) define brand community as a specialised, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand. At the centre of such a community is a branded good or service. Central to the concept of brand community is that it demonstrates the typical characteristics of communities in general: "it is marked by a shared consciousness, rituals and traditions, and a sense of moral responsibility" (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001:412).

Shared consciousness, or consciousness of kind, is described as "the intrinsic connection that members feel toward one another, and the collective sense of difference from others not in the community". It is further described as a "shared consciousness, a way of thinking about things that is more than shared attitudes or perceived similarity". Shared rituals and traditions "perpetuate the community's shared history, culture, and consciousness". Muniz and O'Guinn do not expand on the role played by rituals in the absorption of meaning into the self concept, but, as the above discussion has shown, rituals are of great importance in the development of an understanding on the part of the consumer that she or he has absorbed the meanings of community identity into the self. The strengthening effect that joint participation in rituals has on community bonds in neotribalism is also possibly explained through the opportunity such participation provides for access to sacred feelings of flow and *communitas* (Belk *et al* 1989). Participation in joint rituals helps individuals to feel that they belong to a group that really exists (Maffesoli 1996:140). Repeated participation in such rituals provides an ongoing maintenance of sacralisation (Belk *et al* 1989).

2.9.9 Consciousness of Kind and the Maintenance of Sacred Identity.

In considering the question of why consumers might be attracted towards brand community, let us consider again the role that postmodern forms of community play, or the benefits that they provide, to the postmodern consumer. Of course there is a natural human inclination to affiliate, and the brand at the centre of a brand community means that such affiliation is focused on a common interest. However the underlying benefit or purpose of brand communities goes beyond mutual interest in a brand. It serves as a form of social space quite similar to the neotribal community in that it answers the desperate search for social links spoken of by Cova. In other words “ brand communities are a response to the postindustrial age. Consumers seek communal affiliation and are likely to foster it wherever they can” (Muniz and O’Guinn 2001:426). It also provides an equally valued affirmation of chosen identity or self-concept. It may be an innate quality of human beings that the sense of self cannot really exist until it has been externally affirmed in this way, that is socially, in social relationships (Elliott and Wattanasuwan 1998). Brand communities thus serve a vital role in the affirmation of identity.

Traditionally, place of origin has been a fundamental part of self. Belk’s seminal work on the extended self places neighbourhood at the community level of self- definition, while products come under the individual level (Belk 1988). As opportunities to practice or live out self definition through traditional community or family of origin are reduced, through moving away from family, home town or city to pursue a career opportunity, for example, it is surely conceivable that other ways of exercising or boosting one’s sense of self, one’s self definition, might become more salient. This suggests that membership of a brand community might actually become more meaningful or important to the individual, precisely because it has effectively become a central part of their identity, their self-concept. This in turn motivates the individual to protect, preserve, and propagate the community and its identity.

Given all of the reasons described above for the importance of group identity for consumers, any external threats to the distinctive group identity, such as people using the brand for the wrong reasons, or incorrect performance of brand rituals (Rook 1985), may therefore provoke a backlash because they conflict with community norms and constitute an abuse of the sacred (Belk *et al* 1989). If there is a risk of desacralisation, if the 'totem' around which the community is gathered is abused or profaned in any way, the very existence of the community is endangered. Strong derogation of 'false' users of the brand must therefore come as no surprise. To clarify this point, the concept of consciousness of kind is now discussed in more detail, with a particular emphasis on the notion of legitimacy. Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) define consciousness of kind as follows:

"Members feel an important connection to the brand, but, more importantly, they feel a stronger connection toward one another. Members feel that they "sort of know each other" at some level, even if they have never met"

This imagined knowledge of each other is provided by the presence of certain social cues. Knowledge of, and appreciation for brand history, brand rituals and traditions, are all signs of legitimacy. Of course they are also forms of cultural capital. It is in mutual recognition of this communal system of cultural capital that members recognize each other:

"Legitimacy is a process whereby members of the community differentiate between true members of the community and those who are not...in the context of brands this is demonstrated by "really knowing" the brand as opposed to using the brand for the "wrong reasons." The wrong reasons are typically revealed by failing to fully appreciate the culture, history, rituals, traditions, and symbols of the community. Brand communities are generally open social organizations in that they do not deny membership, but like most communities they do have status hierarchies.... anyone who is devoted to the brand can be a member of the community, regardless of ownership. However, the devotion to the brand must be sincere and for the right reasons. Differentiating between those who are true believers in the brand, and those who are merely opportunistic is a common concern voiced by brand community members" (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001:419)

Those who are *not* committed to the brand, who do not demonstrate an appreciation for the community's rituals, traditions, and values, are not legitimate members of the community. As such they are a threat to its existence, a threat to the identity that is of such value to the group. They are therefore to be denigrated, as the alternative is to accept the inferiority of the group's own identity. Rather than begin to question one's own identity, it is more natural to denigrate the other users as illegitimate or unauthentic. The group's internal system of cultural capital will therefore be utilised to buttress the distinctiveness and authenticity of their identity, and denigrate other users by highlighting their lack of authenticity, their lack of legitimacy.

For similar reasons the notion of oppositional brand loyalty comes as no surprise either. Opposition to competing brands, and users of competing brands, serves the useful purpose of identity clarification. We know the better who we are, through pointing at those we are not. Inter group conflict can occur but only within certain rules or enacted rituals (Maffesoli 1996:142). This conflict is typically enacted through ritual denigration. Other brands and their users will be denigrated as illegitimate, unauthentic, lacking in quintessence (Belk *et al* 1989) for exactly the same reason outlined above; protection of group identity. The criticism of those who buy the right brand but do not give it the required commitment (Fournier 1998b) could just as easily be transferred to users of other brands, for example. Again the internal system of cultural capital will be utilised to make these distinctions more concrete. Utilisation of such systems is clearly not confined to brand communities, but also manifests itself in other forms of postmodern community such as subcultures of consumption. We now turn to Social Identity Theory as a useful further explanation of the need for members of postmodern communities to assert distinctions between themselves and other groups.

2.10 Social Identity Theory.

In our discussion of the various forms of postmodern community, we have seen numerous instances of conflicting ideas of authenticity, with regard to identity and practice. As Bourdieu suggests:

“it is rare for the social homogeneity of the practitioners to be so great that the populations defined by the same activity do not function as fields in which the very definition of the legitimate practice is at stake. Conflicts over the legitimate way of doing it...almost always retranslate social differences into the specific logic of the field” (1984:211)

Thus, for example, the debate as to who is a member of the HDSC and who is not, who owns and uses a Saab automobile for the ‘right’ reasons, and who does not. The suggestion has also been made that in identifying and derogating non-members and inauthentic practices, the internal system of cultural capital will be used to facilitate both the identification and derogation processes.

In addition it should be noted that group members will quite readily amend the system of cultural capital if necessary, in order to facilitate these processes and maintain the social distinctiveness of the group. This is achieved through adjusting their tastes and communicating such adjustments to each other, using the existing perceptual schemas of their habitus as a guide to what is appropriate and what is not:

“ (a) sense of good investment which dictates a withdrawal from outmoded or simply devalued objects, places or practices...an endless drive for novelty (distinction?) (‘Saint Tropez...has become impossible)’ (Bourdieu 1984:249)

Such “(e)xplicit aesthetic choices are in fact often constituted in opposition to the choices of the groups closest in social space, with whom the competition is most direct and most immediate” (Bourdieu 1984:60). They are made with a view to preserving inter-group distinction. In circumstances where group members find themselves obliged to make the same choices as non-members, the emphasis shifts towards a distinctive manner of

consumption. Ironic humour, such as self-deprecation, might be used to legitimise participation and preserve the social distinction, if visiting a 'popular' holiday destination for example (Holt 1998). Alternatively, the emphasis might be placed on the ability to appreciate an object or activity from an aesthetical, critical perspective rather than a naïve one (Bourdieu 1984:4/5).

Having established that cultural capital is used as a means to resolve conflicts over notions of identity and practice to the group's satisfaction, we now turn to the concept of social identity theory (Aharpour 1999), to further explain why such conflicts are resolved in the manner that they are. According to social identity theory, we define ourselves not only in terms of individual characteristics but also in terms of the groups that we belong to. More people tend to define themselves in terms of the groups they belong to than "in terms of their personal characteristics" (Aharpour 1999:2). Social Identity Theory (SIT) is concerned "with the phenomenon of ingroup bias, which represents those situations where people differently evaluate their ingroup relative to the outgroup (the ingroup is usually evaluated more positively)" (Aharpour 1999:3).

Traditionally, SIT research focused mainly on self esteem as a motivating factor, but differences in motivation for identification vary across groups. There are other factors at work besides maintenance of self-esteem and this leads to "differences in the feeling and expression of intergroup conflict" (Aharpour 1999:4). Social identity is that part of individual self-concept derived from knowledge of membership of a particular social group or groups, along with the significance attached to such membership (Aharpour 1999:11) and is frequently associated with derogation of those 'other' groups closest to one's own social space:

"...the most effective way of maintaining a positive social identity ... will be the derogation of the other element of the comparison: the outgroup"

Being able to identify with, or maintain identification with, a particular social group is often a highly desired outcome, hence the ongoing nature of such derogation. Significantly, the presence of intergroup similarity is likely “to have the effect of threatening the group identity by affecting its distinctiveness and hence its positivity. As a result, a group should tend to protect itself from too much similarity by derogating the outgroup and eventually engaging in a conflictual relationship” (Aharpour 1999:12).

SIT also predicts the existence of alternative identity management strategies. Social mobility (Aharpour 1999:16) means that people can change groups to move from a group with a negative identity to a group with a positive identity. Alternatively, group members can act together to change their group, so that the existing group can provide a positive social identity, or group members’ self esteem can be protected, without change becoming necessary, provided that a “high level of...(ingroup) homogeneity” can be used to project a “distinctive group image” (Aharpour 1999:28).

This latter strategy calls to mind Bourdieu’s account of how the ‘call to order’ functions in exactly this way for groups who might otherwise be labelled as ‘inferior’. The ‘call to order’ protects homogeneity, homogeneity confers unity, group cohesion, distinction, and pride.

The dimensions along which comparison is made with the outgroup may therefore be redrawn. Characteristics where the outgroup may be superior will be downplayed in importance and there will be an assumption that all group members perform strongly along the lines of the chosen, highly rated attributes or characteristics. Also, of course, the particular outgroup will be perceived as homogenous on the basis of those traits deemed to be part of their social identity (Aharpour 1999:29).

Applying this to the concept of legitimacy within brand communities raises a number of points. It would explain the importance of believing that fellow members of, say, the Apple Macintosh community share one’s characteristics, and it would also explain the fervent

belief that there was something defective about non-Macintosh users. It also explains why a user of the brand is not necessarily a real member of the community unless they can actually demonstrate the correct characteristics:

“If a target member, who in reality is not a real member and does not possess all the ingroup characteristics, is accepted into the group erroneously, the effect is considered deleterious as it undermines the homogeneity of the group...introduces potentially undesirable features that could be misassociated with the whole group...reduces the distinctiveness of the ingroup.” (Aharpour 1999:32)

This is a valuable insight because it explains why those who from the very beginning do not display the ‘correct’ behaviours are immediately excluded. It potentially explains the probation period HDSC neophytes are subject to, and it forces the question as to why some communities are different. Some communities display proselytising behaviour, for example, which on the surface would seem to contradict the above theory, or at least suggest the presence of alternative motivating factors which actively encourage the recruitment of neophytes even if they do not initially possess all the required characteristics.

According to Aharpour the purpose or function of ingroup identification for football fans is to be part of a collectivity, to share common interests with a large number of people and “to feel supported in the display of intergroup behaviours considered inappropriate by other people” (Aharpour 1999:228). A degree of scepticism may be in order at her suggestion that intergroup differentiation for football fans is motivated primarily by issues of self esteem. A variety of factors, including playfulness, may provide a better explanation. Derogation of opposition fans is a ritual greatly enjoyed by football fans, and it is one that is firmly embedded in the football fan habitus (Marsh *et al* 1997). If self-esteem is therefore a factor for fans in denigration of outgroups, the more likely scenario is that it is only one of a number of factors in causing fans to engage in such behaviour. Furthermore it does not apply universally to all fans. In Aharpour’s defence, she does not seem to believe that it is the chief motivator for ingroup bias and outgroup denigration by football fans.

The anxiety of football fans to assert a distinction between themselves as real fans and others as inauthentic fans (King 1995, 1997, 1998) is not unlike the practice of members of the HDSC or Saab brand communities in differentiating themselves from those who use the same brand, but are deemed to be using it for the wrong reasons. While we might understandably be inclined to think of football fans distinguishing themselves from the supporters of other teams, King suggests that many fans are also anxious to distinguish themselves from people who support the same team as themselves, but support it in the wrong way (King 1995, 1998). Again these distinctions are made on the basis of 'authenticity' as defined by the ingroup, and thus are probably asserted by leverage of internal systems of cultural capital. SIT theory thus appears to offer an explanation for the utilisation of cultural capital as a means not only for the assertion of social distinction but also to preserve the sacredness of collective identity. What may also be at work is nothing less than an attempt to maintain the sacredness of a particular identity.

2.11 Consumer Culture Theory.

A further attempt at the conceptualisation of group consumption is that of Arnould and Thompson (2005). It should be noted that the concept of consumer culture theory overlaps with the conceptualisation of group consumption, rather than being concerned with it and nothing else. CCT theory is in fact concerned with four different cultural domains, namely consumer identity projects, marketplace cultures, the sociohistoric patterning of consumption, and mass-mediated marketplace ideologies and consumers' interpretive strategies. The concept of marketplace culture in particular is based on the notion of consumption as a form of collective cultural production. Arnould and Thompson (2005) tend to view marketplace cultures as being oppositional to the market in nature, generally speaking. This overlaps somewhat with their fourth domain within CCT, which includes a conceptualisation of consumers' interpretive strategies as part of a defiance of dominant consumerist norms. However, it would be misrepresentative of CCT theory to describe it as being exclusively concerned with resistance to the market and consumerist norms. It is also concerned with studying the role played by the market in the facilitation of postmodern consumer identity projects, for example. A more in-depth consideration of

CCT theory lies beyond the scope of this study. However, as it represents an attempt to produce a unifying conceptualisation of consumer behaviour, it is not inappropriate to make reference to it here, particularly given the attempt of CCT theory to make sense of collective forms of opposition to the market and mainstream sensibilities. Indeed the collective opposition expressed by some football fans to the marketisation of football fandom is a fundamental theme of Chapter Three of this thesis.

2.12 Summary.

This chapter has introduced a number of concepts. It includes an analysis of Bourdieu's (1984) theory of cultural capital, arguing that while this theory is fundamentally accurate in its portrayal of processes of social distinction, Bourdieu himself applied it incorrectly to the phenomenon of fandom. Fans can develop their own systems of cultural capital that help them contest notions of inferior identity status. The discussion further showed that fandom allows consumers to experience a sense of community with each other. The systems of cultural capital manifested among fan communities have some parallel in various forms of collective consumption, such as neotribalism, subcultures of consumption, and brand communities. All these configurations are of interest because they illustrate the overwhelming importance for consumers of consumption as a means to the attainment of social bonds. These bonds should be understood as so important for some consumers that they constitute a sense of sacred identity.

Furthermore the sheer importance of these collective identities for consumers means that the internal, group-specific systems of cultural capital referred to above are proactively used to preserve and perpetuate these group identities. Members of these communities will utilise these internal systems of cultural capital to discriminate against anyone who manifests inauthentic behaviours, and exclude such consumers from membership of the group. However, consumers who display the requisite levels of passion for, and commitment to, the correct forms of group rituals and other activities will have consciousness of kind bestowed upon them by the community. This ensures the preservation of the group's sense of sacred identity.

The chapter also discusses the question of how pleasure is defined in the literature on consumer behaviour. An understanding of the nature of pleasure is important in any examination of collective forms of consumption, because it helps to explain consumer motivation for both initial interest in, and prolonged commitment to, collective forms of consumption activity. Chapter Two therefore establishes that this motivation has several main dimensions to it. Collective forms of consumption are pursued because they are pleasurable and because they confer a strong sense of community identity on participants. Very often, contemporary forms of collective pleasure-seeking also enable consumers to experience a sense of the sacred. Furthermore, consumer rituals play a vital role in determining the extent to which consumers can enter into and experience a sense of such sacred and pleasurable collective identities. The meaningfulness of these identities can ultimately be such that competing forms of identity are derogated, utilising group-specific systems of subcultural capital, hence the presence of what Fournier (1998a) terms resistance at the weak end of the resistance continuum. The chapter concludes by making a brief reference to CCT theory.

3 Chapter 3. Fandom, Authenticity, and the New Consumption of Football.

3.1 The 'lads' and the 'new consumer' fans.

Just as bikers at the core of the Harley Davidson Subculture reject the notion that their imitators could possibly be authentic bikers, the Manchester United hard core 'lads' (King, 1995, 1997, 1998) question the authenticity of other categories of football fan, in particular those who fall into the category of "new consumer fans". The "new consumers" crave official club merchandise, such as replica shirts and other items (King, 1998:200). They are motivated quite probably by the opportunity such consumption gives to categorise themselves in relation to society, to define or redefine their own identities (Elliott and Wattanasuwan, 1998). Perhaps in many cases they are anxious to symbolically self-complete (Wicklund and Gollwitzer, 1982), not just as football fans, but as fans of a particular club. They are recognizable, according to the lads, by their wearing of official replica kits and their passive behaviour at football matches. Typically the passive behaviour of the new consumer fans includes a failure to join in the pre-match drinking, and a complete lack of participation in the ritual singing of traditional songs during the match (King, 1998:155). The lads therefore utterly reject the notion that these new consumers of football could in any way be authentic fans of their club, even though they claim to support the same team. This rejection is very similar, if not identical, to HDSC members' rejection of RUBIES or Saab community members rejection of yuppies. The new consumers allegedly display an ignorance of sacred traditions, rituals, and community practices. They are perceived as a threat to the sacredness of fan identity because they do not display appropriate behaviours indicating that its sacredness is genuinely understood (Belk *et al* 1989), but more fundamentally because they behave as if the identity is a mere commodity that can be bought with filthy lucre. They are thus a fundamental threat to the distinctive identity of the group, and therefore an identity management strategy is required to reassert the group's sacred social status.

As we might expect, the internal system of cultural capital therefore seems to be manipulated to place an emphasis on things that only members of the lads' group could know or respect or practice properly. This manipulation of the system of cultural capital is arguably a sophisticated form of sustaining ritual (Belk *et al* 1989:25-27) to perpetuate the sacredness of the group and its fandom-related activity (in this case of supporting Manchester United).

The Manchester United lads' rejection of the notion that there is any particular identity expressed in wearing, for example, a Manchester United replica teamshirt, is one possible manifestation of this. When faced with a choice between on the one hand a financially induced desacralisation of their fandom, or on the other hand the chance to protect the sacred through decreeing that the replica shirt no longer possesses cultural capital, they predictably choose the latter option. In fact, the lads make a particular point of attending matches dressed in designer labels such as Ralph Lauren, to make clear the distinction between them and the ranks of the replica kit-wearing inauthentic 'support' (King, 1998: 56).

King's research, of course, was confined to supporters of Manchester United, and we should not expect all aspects of Manchester United lad culture to manifest themselves at other clubs. Hence the wearing of replica shirts at other clubs might be completely acceptable even among hard-core fans. The labelling of new consumer fans as inauthentic, passive, couch potatoes (Redhead 1993:6) lacking in true passion for the game is, however, a widespread one even in the academic literature. Giulianotti, for example, is among those who allege that nouveau supporters are getting match tickets "at the expense of dedicated fans" (Giulianotti, 1999:80).

There is a huge irony in the fact that it is these traditional football fans who have helped as much as any marketer to create the mythical image of football, an image that has proved so attractive to the new consumers and led to their demand for both replica shirts and match tickets. The lads' active and highly involved form of fandom has helped to construct the consumption object (Holt 1995), which doubtless has contributed to making attendance

at a match a more magical (Arnould and Price 1993) or sacred experience (Belk *et al* 1989) for the new consumer. Yet while many of the lads find it increasingly difficult to pay for, or even obtain, match tickets, their places in the ground are easily filled by the legions of new consumers (King 1998:160) eager to advance from the mere mediated consumption experience of satellite television to the more authentic lived experience of actual match attendance, subsequently interlacing the two forms of consumption to further the construction of their chosen self images (Elliott and Wattanasuwan 1998:135).

In this way the new consumers possibly achieve something of an authentication of their own fandom, through the meaning transfer processes and rituals explained above. The cultural meaning of 'passionate football fan' is transferred to the replica shirt by mass media repetition of images associating the good with this meaning. The 'new consumer' fan buys the shirt to purchase the cultural meaning it symbolizes along with the feeling of community affiliation it bestows. This sense of the cultural meaning becomes more deeply embedded in their identities through execution of various fan rituals such as wearing it to a game, joining in the celebrations when a goal has been scored, and so on.

While this makes their fandom real in a sense, it also leads to conflict because what has transpired may be a form of cultural allodoxia (Bourdieu 1984:327). Given that the new consumer fans are relatively unaware of the subtleties and nuances of fandom as practiced by the lads, it is more than likely that their practices have resulted in the emergence of a new cultural form of fandom, one that is quite real to its participants even if it does not with meet the approval of the more traditional fans.

Actual match attendance has always been regarded as a distinguishing mark of the truly authentic fan (Giulianotti, 1999:105). Therefore new consumer fans possibly utilize it as an identity management strategy, to move from a group of inferior social status (armchair fan) to one of higher status (matchgoing 'real' fan) (Aharpour, 1999:16). When they attend matches in person, however, their inappropriate behaviours not only cause irritation but are perceived as a potentially desacralising threat to fan identity. This results in a change in fan practices on the part of the lads who are anxious to assert that there is a difference between

their sacred identity and that of the new consumers (King 1995, 1998). What presents itself, therefore, is nothing less than a conflict between a traditional identity on the one hand and a marketised identity on the other. The lads reject Cova's (1997) proposed fan identity project; the new consumers embrace it.

3.1.1 The Rise and Rise of 'Fantasy Football'.

To consider the factors behind the emergence of these new consumers and why their marketised expression of fandom conflicts with the lads' notions of fan identity, the discussion now considers some of the wider developments both within and outside the game that led to the growth in demand for football among the new consumers.

The initial catalyst for this growth in popularity was sparked off in the mid nineteen eighties, at a time when the public image of football was very poor. It was at this time that the concept of a 'Super League' took hold of the imagination of a small number of top English football clubs, the so-called 'big five', which at the time included Liverpool, Arsenal, Manchester United, Everton and Tottenham Hotspur. It was envisaged that such a 'Super League' would enable football to market itself more effectively, thereby gaining much needed increases in revenues (King 1995, Haynes 1997:135/136).

While the clubs pondered the establishment of such a 'super league', other forces were also considering the future of the game. King argues that "the new consumption of football only came into existence ...insofar as football was highlighted as an area of concern by the government, media, and judiciary" (King, 1995:111). Football was in fact targeted for reform even before the Hillsborough Disaster of April 15th, 1989. There were several reasons for this, football hooliganism being perhaps the main issue. As the national game and a repository of national identity in the U.K., it was deemed unacceptable both by government and the judiciary that hooliganism be allowed to continue to affect the image of football, and by extension, the image of Britain. Football had to be made respectable. Families had to be attracted to live football, as they would provide a stabilising influence inside football stadia. Those stadia therefore had to be made safe and attractive for respectable middle class families (King, 1995:118). The young working class male, a

potential 'yobbo', was therefore a potential target for exclusion. The prevailing mood in the media, as in government, was one of reform. Market forces and professionalism were to be brought to bear on every aspect of life including the national game. Football had to be turned into a commodity that would be attractive for middle class consumers.

For the club owners, this was an attractive and necessary proposition in any case, given the state of the game's finances. The very nature of football fandom was to be redefined. Football was to become a leisure product, part of the mainstream of the entertainment industry (King 1995:158). Of course in order for football to become respectable for the middle classes, to become legitimate (Bourdieu 1984) it would have to receive the imprimatur of the appropriate legitimising agencies (King 1995:142/143). The broadsheet newspapers' endorsement of the project was crucial for King, who argues that they threw their weight behind the project and helped to thereby ensure its success. Two of these newspapers, *The Times* and *The Sunday Times*, were owned by Rupert Murdoch, who also owned Sky Sports Television. King argues that there was therefore an additional motive on the part of these newspapers to ensure the success of the new commercialisation project. The stage was therefore set for the formation of a new 'Super League' made up of clubs who would play their matches in newly refurbished, family friendly, all seater stadia.

In normal circumstances, given the traditional preference of many fans for standing together on the terraces, the abolition of terracing and the introduction of gentrified, family-friendly, all-seater stadia might have encountered considerable resistance, resistance that might have succeeded in derailing or at least altering the course of the commercialisation project. The subsequent course of events meant that these were not normal circumstances.

3.1.2 Hillsborough (Sheffield), April 15th, 1989.

On the morning of April 15th 1989, thousands of Liverpool fans set off on the journey to Hillsborough to see their team take on Nottingham Forest in the semi-final of the FA Cup.

Thanks to a combination of errors, negligence and incompetence on the part of the authorities, overcrowding in the enclosed central section of the terrace at the Leppings Lane end of the stadium caused a crush that resulted in the deaths of nearly 100 people. Football fans the world over were united in grief. Anfield, the famous old stadium of Liverpool Football Club, became a shrine, a memorial to the fans who lost their lives, as supporters of all clubs came to pay their respects, leave flowers and tie their football scarves to the railings or the crash barriers on the Kop. Fans across Europe paid their respects in different ways. In Italy, the supporters of AC Milan, instead of holding a minute's silence before kick off, spontaneously began to sing 'You'll Never Walk Alone', the anthem of Liverpool F.C. When the Taylor Report was eventually published and recommended the abolition of terraces and crowd control security fences in the interests of supporters' safety, the legacy of Hillsborough thus rendered the introduction of all-seater stadia uncontested as an issue. Football supporters were not in the mood to contest it. The memory of Hillsborough was too fresh in the collective consciousness of fans (King 1995).

3.1.3 Other factors in the commercialisation of football.

While the deaths of the Liverpool fans also contributed to a decline in desire for confrontational hooligan related styles of fandom among hard-core fans, Redhead (1993:8) suggests that the fusion of pop music culture with football fan culture also had an important effect on fan behaviour. Many of the dj's and members of bands who were popular at the time were also fanatical football fans, and huge numbers of football fans were also fervent music fans. This resulted in a blurring, for a time, of the distinction between music and football fandom, and a blurring of behavioural distinctions in line with this. A sense of the carnivalesque began to permeate the previously partisan and aggressive terraces of football stadiums. According to Haynes (1993:24) what the fans now wanted was to dress up, perhaps pop an 'e' tab instead of getting drunk, and take part in celebratory rather than confrontational fandom. This new culture of the terraces was further reflected in the emergence of the fanzine movement. Haynes (1993:20-23) credits the disasters that occurred in the 1980s (the fire at Bradford City in which a number of fans died, the Heysel Stadium disaster of 1985 and the Hillsborough disaster) with being partly

responsible for the development of this movement. The fanzines were a popular response to the negative image of football fandom in the mainstream media, reflecting the fans' need to have an outlet, to make their voices heard when most mainstream media at the time seemed to depict football fans as troublesome hooligans (Haynes 1993). Boyle (1995:160) argues that the media were perceived as setting the agenda and the parameters regarding the discussion of football-related issues. The fanzines therefore attained a cult status as an important alternative communication channel for fans. Redhead (cited in Giulianotti 1996:49) suggests that fanzines were part of a wider movement in football fan culture. There was "a new individualistic hedonism with illicit drugs and dance music at the fore ... (which)... was a major catalyst in this new fan fraternalism...fanzine ...culture (took up the)... role of lampooning football's negative side."

Thus there emerged a form of fan behaviour that has clear parallels with the various practices of media / sci-fi fans. Football fanzines are a form of resistance through which official 'truths' and official culture are questioned or rejected, and the fans' point of view is promoted as an alternative (Fiske 1992:31-34, Giulianotti 1999:62-64). Fiske defines fanzines as important 'secondary' texts through which shared meanings and perceptual schemas for consumption of the 'primary' text, the object of fan adulation itself, are developed and negotiated.

Returning to the topic of the wider changes in fan culture at the time, Redhead (1991:155) credits the decrease in violence on the terraces directly to ecstasy use and 'rave' culture. Groups of young men from rival cities were now too caught up in their mutual interest in rave music and soft drugs to want to confront each other in the traditional manner of the football hooligan. In fact before the emergence of the 'new consumer fan' of the mid to late 1990s, there was the 'new wave' fan of circa 1990 who did not wear a scarf but might wear a pin badge, bought fanzines but not official programmes, and crooned along to "We're all blissed up and we're gonna win the Cup!" It was also around this time that fandom embraced a new 'carnavalesque' style; Manchester City fans developed the practice of waving inflatable bananas, and West Ham fans celebrated in carnival style as

their team lost 4-0 to Notts Forest in the 1991 FA Cup semi final – truly a ‘new’ kind of fandom had arrived (Redhead 1997:157).

The hedonism and narcissism of this era was expressed not only at club level, but also (perhaps more noticeably from the media’s and football authorities’ point of view) by fans of international teams (Giulianotti 1996:79, Giulianotti 1999:59-61, Giulianotti and Armstrong 1999:29-40). This fan practice of the carnivalesque as demonstrated by, for example, the ‘Tartan Army’ (supporters of the Scottish national football team), involved “ostentatiously gregarious and sporting behaviour” similar to that of the Danish ‘roligan’ soccer fans. In other words it meant being consistently good-humoured, very colourful (face paint, replica shirts, headgear – the more ostentatious the better), quite boisterous but typically very well-behaved (Giulianotti, 1996:86). The Danish ‘roligans’ first came to prominence at the 1992 UEFA European Championship Finals. Their boisterous but friendly form of celebratory, participatory fandom filled TV screens throughout the tournament as the Danish team went all the way to the Final, where they beat Germany two-nil. Similar images of Dutch and Irish fans were prominent in much of the media coverage of the 1988 European Championships and 1990 World Cup (Giulianotti 1999:40).

The behaviour of these fans, and the images such behaviour provided, were seized on and appropriated by delighted football authorities and marketers who correctly saw an opportunity to develop this into a marketable image. The media-friendly behaviour of the carnivalesque fans meant that marketers now had an attractive image with which to embellish their new product. The FA Premiership kicked off in August 1992. Within a short space of time, it had succeeded in attracting the new consumer fans.

3.1.4 Constructing the New Consumer Fan as ‘Other’

King (1995, 1997, 1998) defines the new consumer fans as essentially those who are compliant with the new commercialism in football. He makes no distinction in this regard between fans who have only recently begun to attend matches, and fans who may have

been attending matches for years, but who display the same forms of consumer behaviour as the recent arrivals, such as regular purchases of official merchandise, wearing of replica shirts, and relatively sedate behaviour.

The accusation that football has been 'gentrified', and has become "the property of middle class culture" (Giulianotti, 1999:35) is a relatively widespread one, as is the stereotyping of the new fan as inauthentic and ignorant of any understanding of what it truly means to be a fan. Like any good stereotype, careful selection of illustrative cases might make these arguments compelling at a superficial level. It is probable, however, that they more accurately reflect a felt need for social distinction, a felt need for maintenance of the sacred, and the protection of deeply embedded and deeply felt constructs of individual and group identity on the part of the traditional hard core fans. The new consumer fan arguably fulfils the role of the 'other' so as to clarify the group's own sense of identity (Aharpour 1999). In any subculture of consumption 'other' is usually carefully constructed in ways that privilege ingroup practice and emphasise the inferiority of the outgroup by comparison (Jancovich 2002, Thornton 1997, 1995, Wilson 2002). Stereotypes such as the new consumer fan as described by the lads (King 1995) therefore need to be questioned rigorously rather than taken at face value.

3.1.5 The Identity and Heritage of the 'New Consumer' Fan.

The stereotyping of the new consumer fan as passive or ignorant, parvenu to the football fan landscape courtesy of a replica team jersey and satellite dish, is now discussed. Russell (1999:21) and Haynes (1997) both provide useful accounts of how changes in transport infrastructure and broadcasting have shaped football fandom in Britain. First radio and then television broadcasts made it possible to follow the fortunes of teams other than the local club side. Of course it also contributed to the popularity of the bigger teams such as Arsenal, Manchester United or Liverpool, because their games were broadcast more frequently than those of the other clubs. With the advent of improved infrastructure such as motorways, and more widespread car ownership, by the nineteen sixties it had become feasible to support these more glamorous teams in person. The bigger clubs thus began to

draw on a 'live' support base far beyond their local catchment areas, and it became far more commonplace among fans to support a team other than the local side. Neither the idea of the 'non-local', or the 'armchair' fan are new. Nor is mediated consumption necessarily the passive or inauthentic experience that Bourdieu in general suggests, or that Giulianotti or Redhead depict. Research suggests that in fact it is often a meaningful, active, and engaging experience whether in relation to football (Haynes, 1997:192; Crawford, 2000:48/49), or indeed other categories of fan activity, such as science fiction or soap operas (Fiske 1989:123). Labelling the practices of others as inauthentic arguably says more about the needs of the labeller, without necessarily establishing whether a hierarchy of authenticity really exists in any objective sense.

3.1.6 Match of the Day

The following quotation is taken from the BBC's website:

"Welcome to Match of the Day, the first of a weekly series on BBC Two. This afternoon we are in Beatleville..."

And so an institution was born, as the words of the legendary Kenneth Wolstenholme opened the first-ever Match of the Day on Saturday 22 August, 1964."

The now familiar theme music was not in fact to be adopted for another four years, but from the very beginning 'Match of the Day' took up the broadcasting baton from radio coverage of football, and redefined, even transformed, the relationship between football and its fans (Haynes 1997:54). The programme, according to Haynes, developed "a style which has become an archetypal method of packaging recorded highlights of football." Every successive improvement in broadcasting technology had an effect on viewers' perceptions of the game (Haynes 1997:60, 65). The introduction of the 'action replay' from different camera angles, and expert studio analysis of highlighted segments from matches helped both to educate the consumer and give them a sense of their own expertise, their

own mastery. It was now possible to critically review the decisions of referees for example (Haynes 1997:76).

Along with the pictures came the words. The parameters of the analytical vocabulary of the football fan were set by the expressions and phraseology of a surprisingly small number of men. Kenneth Wolstenholme, for example, delivered the BBC's television commentary for 23 FA Cup Finals. John Motson (or 'Motty' as he is popularly known), having worked in print journalism, joined the 'Match of the Day' staff in 1971, and is still employed, at the time of writing, as a football commentator by the BBC. Thus televised football came in a package with not only a particular set of phrases but also a particular set of values, delivered by a small number of commentators, so that a player or team could be described as having delivered "a workmanlike performance" for example. Alternatively if the commentator thought a player was lacking in courage he might be described as "lacking bottle" (Haynes 1997:91). While by the mid nineteen nineties the perceived inanities and inadequacies of football commentary had caused it to be parodied on TV shows like *Fantasy Football* (Haynes 1997:104) its contribution to fan culture endured. It provided much of the founding vocabulary for social discourse on football.

Russell (1999) argues, for example, that journalists employed "an unchanging set of stylistic devices" to describe the annual rite of the FA Cup Final. This amounted to practically a ritualised, almost liturgical language used on an annual basis to describe the sacred moment of winning the FA Cup. This consistency of description was, effectively, an annually renewed template for appropriate fan behaviour. It constituted a guide as to how fans were meant to celebrate, what fans were supposed to do. In reporting on FA Cup-winning celebrations, a particular style of reportage was used, claims Russell, "to suggest an undifferentiated level of enthusiasm throughout the local community" (Russell 1999:19). Russell cites Hill (1996) to argue that this amounted to the presentation of an 'idealised community'.

In considering Russell's comments, it should be kept in mind that for many years the FA Cup Final was the only match shown live in its entirety on television. Thus many fans'

visual, mediated experience of live football in the nineteen sixties, nineteen seventies and nineteen eighties was based on a small number of football matches which themselves had great significance in the English domestic football calendar. Furthermore, these occasions were usually celebrated in a carnivalesque manner where fans actually attending were quite possibly concerned with image management (Giulianotti, 1996:244-246) on the big day. Fans attending the Cup Final therefore may have had narcissistic concerns such as which set of supporters could create the greater spectacle, generate the better atmosphere and so on. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the televised spectacle of the crowd on such occasions might therefore have been quite different from the behaviour of the crowd at less glamorous 'bread and butter' fixtures. The resulting mediated mental picture of fan behaviour, in the minds of many consumers, was thus a highly selective one.

Furthermore, what fans of televised soccer usually got to see the rest of the time was mediated highlights of the most dramatic incidents from matches usually involving only the most successful clubs. These matches would normally have the highest levels of support, to ensure good audience figures. This constituted a highly selective presentation, with multiple layers of mediation. The first layer of mediation was the choice of match or matches to be televised, the second was the choice of incidents to show as part of the highlights, and the third was the selection of incidents for action replay or post match analysis in the television studio. What might be the most influential of all the mediative influences was the commentary itself. The commentary provided the fans with the vernacular they needed in order to be able to participate comfortably, and possibly even with a sense of self as expert, in social discourse on football (Haynes 1997).

Many fans therefore only got to see crowds at big games, and then only got the chance to observe fan reactions to those particular highlights that the programme producers had deemed most dramatic and useful for programming purposes. Even the names of the programmes, such as 'The Big Match' or 'Match of the Day' indicate the selective nature of the process. Finally, the crowd at the match would themselves probably be more 'up for it' than usual, having been informed that the match was to be featured on TV.

It is therefore contended that contemporary fan behaviour is therefore based to some extent on imagined notions of fandom developed historically from such selectivised highlights. When Sky Sports emerged and presented fans with images of football fandom as carnivalesque, this was easily and readily absorbed, because it was building on a foundation that was already in place. This foundation as described immediately above is a major component of the habitus of new football fandom. Even the decision as a boy of which team to support and which team shirt to buy was susceptible to the glamourising influence of television, suggesting that the choice would be limited to only a small number of teams (Haynes 1993:66).

Of course, broadcast media, while an important part of this habitus, were not the only influences. Newspapers, magazines and comics promoted football to successive generations of boys (Haynes 1993:56). Another important part of the schoolboy subculture of football were bubble gum football cards and Panini football sticker albums (Haynes 1993:65). The middle class consumers who have recently populated the football fan landscape are therefore, it is suggested, not complete football naifs. Many of them already had strongly developed preconceived positive constructs in their minds with regard to football, prior to becoming new consumer fans. They already had perceptual programmes, mattering maps where football was associated with fuzzy, warm, nostalgic feelings that had to do with schoolboy sticker albums, Roy of the Rovers comics, and being allowed to stay up late to watch *Match of the Day* on TV. Thus once football re-emerged as a culturally legitimate activity, its explosion in popularity was less explicable in terms of a whole generation embracing it for the first time, but more through its re-establishment in a more prominent and favourable location on their mattering maps (Grossberg 1992:56-58). The new consumers of football would therefore appear to have come into the game with a strong sense of themselves as fans.

While the possibility certainly exists that many of the new consumer fans were genuinely trying to move from a predominantly mediated to a less mediated form of fandom, theirs was a limited knowledge when it came to behaviour within the football stadium. In terms of knowledge of appropriate behaviours, this new wave of fans had very little to go on

beyond the marketised images of fan practice presented to them by the official market. This suggested that in order to be a real fan one had to buy the shirt, wear the facepaint and so on. Participation in 'Mexican waves' was also easily replicated, but the passive behaviour scorned by King's lads may have been due as much to lack of knowledge of the words of football songs as much as anything else. The new consumer fans may have craved alternative ways of expressing their identity as real fans, but the only ways they could visually and materially declare this identity were through the offerings of the market. The behaviour of the new consumer fans therefore came across to the traditional die hards as an exhibition of the belief that fandom could be bought, and this made conflict inevitable.

3.1.7 Mattering Maps and the Popularity of Football.

It has been suggested above that the sudden increase in the popularity of football might be accounted for in terms of the improvement in stadium facilities, the increased marketing effort, and also a sense of nostalgia on the part of new consumer fans who were happy to embrace (or in some cases *re*-embrace football), once it had been given legitimacy and become fashionable. It has also been suggested that football seems to have attained a favourable location on consumers' mattering maps (Grossberg 1992).

The term 'mattering maps' has been used a number of times in the text without detailed clarification, so some elaboration is perhaps overdue. Mattering maps (Grossberg, 1992:56-58) function as something of an internal prioritisation scheme which helps consumers to navigate their way around the cultural landscapes in which they live. They help to determine the choice of hobbies, brands, interests, or values that should be prioritised, or 'invested' in. The mattering map is therefore a system for the making of personal emotional, psychological, and social investment choices. It is very much analogous to what Bourdieu means by cultural capital, whereby we choose the option that we feel offers the highest levels of social and cultural capital, the strongest opportunities for distinction. Having decided that something really 'matters' the consumer will subsequently be very strongly committed to it.

Grossberg proposes that different people might have very different ideas with regard to just how much something matters. This is explained in terms of their level of interpretive resources, which differ from person to person, depending of course on their level of expert knowledge of the field in question (Grossberg 1992:53). This implies that a fan with a higher level of knowledge or experience of the 'text' will have a different interpretation and also by implication a qualitatively different experience of, for example, watching a match than the fan with less knowledge or experience. Furthermore Grossberg uses the term 'affect' to describe how important not only the object or activity might be to the individual fan but also to describe how important individual aspects of that activity might be (Grossberg 1992:57). Grossberg argues that some forms of popular culture can achieve the status of fundamentally necessary investments; such investments are more likely to stand the test of time:

“For the fan, specific cultural contexts become *saturated* (this writer's italics) with affect. The relations within the context are all defined affectively, producing a structure of 'affective alliances'...the apparatus (i.e. the context) as an affective alliance, itself, functions as a mattering map within which all sorts of activities, practices, and identities can be located” (Grossberg 1992:59).

We should further understand the concept of mattering maps as indicating not only, for example, that football fandom is important or worthwhile, but that some fans will find particular aspects of that fandom very important, while others may not. Within the world of football fandom we might therefore expect to find mattering maps that vary from one group or category of fans to the next.

Grossberg argues that individuals may become fans only to the extent to which they need to be; not every consumer needs to become or remain an avid fan, to satisfy whichever emotional needs or drives they might have. Some people may derive a great deal of pleasure or self-affirmation from their fandom, while others may have other sources of affirmation, possibly being fans for pleasure only. Different people have different needs and this simple truism should not be forgotten simply because we are talking about football

fandom. Fiske's assertion (1992:33) that fan knowledge, for example, can function as a form of cultural capital and therefore act as a major source of self esteem must be viewed in this light. Fan knowledge is clearly not necessarily a major source of self-esteem for everyone. Therefore no audience of popular culture should be thought of as a "...homogenous entity; we have to take seriously the differences within and between the different fractions of the popular audience" (Grossberg 1992:53). Also, in acknowledging that audiences for specific forms of popular culture are heterogenous, we must avoid celebrating the category of the elite fans at the expense of the other groups or categories, or we risk failing to understand the nature of the differences between the various groups and possibly the nature and meaning of their experiences as well. Grossberg concludes that being a fan, having this sense of something that 'matters', is "a necessary relationship" because

"...one cannot exist in a world where nothing matters ...what we describe today as a 'fan' is the contemporary articulation of a necessary relationship which has historically constituted the popular (e.g. labor, religion, morality and politics)...there is no necessary reason why the fan relationship is located...on the terrain of commercial popular culture ...(b)ut ...for the vast majority of people in advanced capitalist societies, this is increasingly the only space where the fan relationship can take shape ... It is here ...that we seek ...to construct our own identities." (1992:62/63)

In other words being a fan (and in the context of the current study, a football fan) is the contemporary channel of choice through which huge numbers of consumers derive an ongoing sense of meaningfulness and identity, and this in turn is one of the reasons why football's current popularity shows no signs of abating.

Fandom, and participation in fan communities, has a number of benefits besides access to meaningfulness at an individual level. There is a great deal of emotional benefit derived from feeling that you are not alone, that like-minded others exist who share your values and interests. This greatly validates the fan, not only through validation of the particular aspects of identity associated with the values and practices of the fan community but also

through the simple fact of community membership, a satisfying of the postmodern desire to belong (Jenkins 1992:23, Muniz and O'Guinn 2001, Kozinets 2001, Cova 1997).

These emotional and psychological benefits are illustrated particularly well through the practice of fan gossip (Jenkins 1992). Gossip with other fans of soap opera or science fiction for example, is arguably more beneficial than ever in the postmodern context and constitutes a major motivating factor for fans to become involved in fan communities:

“Gossip builds common ground between its participants, as those who exchange information assure one another of what they share (i.e. what they have in common)...the function of television talk within the fan community (may be that)...(i)n an increasingly atomistic age, the ready-made characters of popular culture provide a shared set of references for discussing common experiences and feelings with others...the fans' common interest in the same programme sparks conversations soon drifting far away from the primary text that initially drew them together.”
(Jenkins 1992:80)

Football, of course, lends itself very easily to social discourse of this sort. As Kenneth Wolstenholme suggests, football is a game of opinions:

“we could argue for half an hour...and that's the lovable thing about the game (Haynes, 1997:91)”

3.1.8 Tribal Identity

That football fandom bestows a sense of belonging to a tribal community is well documented in both the academic and popular literature (Aharpour 1999:152, Boyle 1995:25, Merkel 1999:55-57, Giulianotti 1999:10). This collective identity is reinforced and reproduced through the wearing of team colours and participation in fan rituals, as well

as the systems of club rivalries that exist throughout the world of football. For FC Barcelona the role of the 'other' is played by Real Madrid (and vice versa). For Liverpool supporters it is played by Manchester United, and so on (Giulianotti 1999:10). Having a rival group to play the role of the other affirms the group's sense of its own distinctive identity (Aharpour 1999). The 'other' is also a threat to the status of the community, which of course being an external threat reinforces the strength of the community bond (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001). This helps to explain why football fandom is such a well defined group phenomenon. The system of rivalries provides a ready-made basis for definition of distinctive group identities, and an external threat which acts as a rallying call for the community. In all such cases affiliation to the tribe of choice arguably helps to answer the craving of the postmodern consumer for social relationship. It fulfils the desire to belong.

Not only can participation in football fandom affirm collective identity and belonging, but it does so in very specific ways. Fans' association with or belief in their team's particular style of play (Bromberger *et al* 1993) demonstrates just one of the ways in which football fan communities can function as communities of taste. The particular styles of play associated with certain teams are credited with forming a key part of the identity and culture of the supporters:

“Every great team ...is known for its style of play, perceived by the fans as a representation of a specific collective existence. This style, which the fans take pleasure in identifying with, does not always correspond to ...the practical reality of the footballers ...(tactics and personnel can change from year to year)...but rather corresponds to the stereotyped imaginary through which a community identifies itself ...the local style is part of a 'collective imaginary'” (Bromberger *et al* 1993:119/120).

It is also suggested that this imagined style does not have to match reality because its purpose is to suggest:

“not so much the way in which men live, but the manner in which it pleases them to recount their way of life” (Bromberger *et al* 1993:120).

This notion of *imagined* style is significant because it points to the role played by football as a tactic for the achievement of displaced meaning (McCracken 1988). As the concept of displaced meaning may help to explain both the enduring popularity of football, and the passions it arouses, it is discussed in more detail below.

3.1.9 Displaced Meaning and the consumption of football

For McCracken (1988:104), “...(c)onsumer goods are bridges to ...hopes and ideals”. All communities share ideals, notions of how life ought to be. Given that the reality of our day to day existence often fails to live up to these ideals, we are faced with a choice between ‘displacing’ our ideals or accepting that they do not exist. Since a belief in ideals and a better way of life is of fundamental importance to both cultures and individuals, we reject the notion that they do not exist. Instead we ‘displace’ them:

“Confronted with the recognition that reality is impervious to cultural ideals, a community may displace these ideals. It will remove them from daily life and transport them to another cultural universe, there to be kept within reach but out of danger. The displaced meaning strategy allows a culture to remove its ideals from harm’s way” (McCracken 1988:106)

What cannot be proved in the ‘real’ universe now exists in the safe, protected environment of this other cultural universe, and because it exists there, it takes on greater credence. McCracken provides a number of examples of such alternative cultural universes, which serve to clarify the concept of displaced meaning:

“the continuum of time is, for instance, often made the location of a ‘golden age’ (where)...social life is imagined to have conformed perfectly to cultural ideals” (McCracken 1988:106)

The alternative to locating an ideal in the golden past is to locate it in the “glorious future”. McCracken suggests (1988:107) that in some ways this is even more suitable because there is as yet no historical or empirical evidence that could contradict these idealised

possibilities. Examples of both practices abound not only at the group but also at the individual level. Consumers engage in this strategy of displacement by construing a 'golden era' (that perfect holiday, that perfect childhood summer) in their own lives where the ideal was a reality. They do not want to diminish the ideal or suggest it does not really exist, so they displace it. Preservation of the belief that such happiness is possible means that only the present is inadequate. This allows the ideal to be protected and preserved.

This strategy is practiced across space as well as time, celebrity worship being a perfect example (McCracken 1988:109). We find people who we believe embody our ideals, suggesting that perfection is achievable. McCracken argues that "quite astonishingly unhappy situations can be made tolerable through the judicious displacement of certain hopes and ideals" but that "individuals and groups who give up their displaced meaning are promptly moved either to consuming despair or fierce rebellion", which for McCracken illustrates the "terrible power" of displaced meaning.

Is it possible to bring these displaced meanings back into the 'here and now'? McCracken argues that consumer goods can act as 'bridges' from the culture of the everyday to the alternative culture where the ideal resides. Goods can therefore become a bridges to "an idealised version of life as it should be lived" (McCracken 1988:110). Similarly, anticipation of possession of these goods can act as a bridge because with such anticipation comes anticipation of the possession of not only the object, but the ideal that it represents.

McCracken argues that there are certain characteristics of physical goods that make them particularly suitable as bridges. Goods are 'concrete and enduring', for example, so they give substance to the ideal; if the "rose covered cottage" exists then so does the perfect spouse and so on (McCracken 1988:114). This has significant implications for football fandom. It points to the rallying power of a club crest, a club scarf or club jersey, which for group members can allude to a glorious past where the ideal, such as the correct style of attractive, attacking football, was a reality. The club crest represents not only that glorious past but also the glorious future. It is a bridge to the displaced ideals of the fan community.

Such shared symbolic meanings within a group will buttress fan loyalty and help to explain how such loyalty is sustained through periods devoid of success on the playing field.

The subsequent achievement of success does not mean the permanent relocation of the ideal back to the real world where it cannot be adequately protected. Instead it is transferred once more (McCracken 1988:112). Again in the case of the football fan community this is given expression through shifting aspirations. Good teams might win one championship, but only great teams retain a championship the following season. Speculation follows speculation in a never-ending transfer of displaced meaning, so that the ideal is not exposed to harsh and iconoclastic reality. This helps to explain the never ending speculation of football fans and the endless repetition of 'if onlys'. Consider for example the ideal world represented by saying "if only Gordon Banks hadn't missed that match against West Germany" (Portelli, 1993:84). Displaced meaning is therefore a ubiquitous strategy for the preservation of dreams and ideals, and may even be quite beneficial for mental well-being, acting as it does to safeguard not only our ideals but our chosen identities, our sense of who we are.

To express this in terms of cultural capital, the possession of particular experiences, or 'concrete' artefacts relating to those experiences will have high levels of cultural capital and high levels of sacredness for the community because of the displaced meanings they represent. For Liverpool fans this could mean the experience of having attended the 2005 European Cup Final in Istanbul, or possession of the ticket stub that confirms and substantiates the ideal that really existed on that particular occasion. Bridges to equivalent displaced meanings for supporters of Manchester United would be ticket stubs or perhaps match programmes from the 1999 Champions' League Final, and so on. Such artefacts would act as bridges, and sources of cultural capital, for traditional and new fan alike.

3.2 Concluding Note

The attraction of football fandom for consumers has hopefully become clearer, as are the reasons why they can feel an authentic sense of belonging to a tribal fan community,

centred around a particular football team. The relative lack of match-going experience of some fans, that is, the new consumer fans, has resulted in their relative inability to replicate traditional fan practices. The desire on the part of the new consumer to do the right thing is difficult to achieve in practice, because of a relative lack of mechanisms to ensure that they learn the correct songs, for example. Also, observational learning alone cannot guide them as to when certain songs ought to be sung, because such group behaviours require the kind of internal knowledge that only comes with the habitus of the more traditional fan. The traditional fans fear that the market is destroying the activity they love. The question of how they are responding to the incursion of marketised versions of fan identity, through changes in their own behaviour as consumers, is therefore of immediate interest.

While doubtless some of the new fans may not want to 'do the right thing' so to speak, because of a difference in taste, or conflicting ideas in relation to appropriate behaviour, many of the new fans may well have a desire to participate, because such ritual participation amounts to deeper authentication of their membership of the community. They therefore turn to accessible symbols of fan identity such as official football merchandise and participation in marketised forms of fan discourse such as football phone-in programmes on television and radio.

Through the 'call to order', the necessary patterns of behaviour are reinforced. Wear the colours, buy the merchandise, sing the more easily learned chants, and so on. The willingness with which the 'call to order' is obeyed also helps to preserve the sacred nature of the consumption experience, and of course the sacredness of the identity of the group. Being part of the fellowship to whom the sacred has been made manifest, it behoves the new consumer to do what is necessary to maintain their felt sense of hierophany (Belk *et al.*, 1989). It might only be a game but it is through this game that the sacred is communally accessed.

Sadly for the new consumers their practices are construed as forms of cultural allodoxia by the traditional hard-core fans. Bourdieu's conceptualisation of allodoxia was expressed in terms of self-exclusion from membership of the desired social group by the unknowing

performance of inappropriate behaviours. He did however point to the development of an alternative form of culture, middlebrow culture, as an outcome of this allodoxia. In a similar process, the activity of the new football fans may ultimately result in the development of an alternative fan habitus, given expression through practices and tastes that may be high in cultural capital for new consumer fans but will be low in cultural capital for other, more traditional football fans. A new form of fan community may well be emerging, one which Crawford suggests is neotribal rather than subcultural in nature (Crawford 2000:145). Within this community there is an awareness of the 'gaze' of other fans, a more narcissistic sense of self as not only spectator but spectacle, and a willingness to self-regulate, to conform to the behavioural and spectacular norms of the group because this ensures ongoing membership of the community (Crawford 2000:161).

The suggestion that new consumer fans are not real fans is clearly nonsense. In all probability they are simply practicing a different form of fandom (King 1995, Crawford 2000), one that is authentic, meaningful, and sacred for them. The premise of such authenticity must be accepted if we are to gain any real understanding of this emerging form of postmodern consumption (Grossberg 1992, Crawford 2000). This new community of neotribal fans is likely to have its credentials questioned by the hard-core traditional fans, who may well have adopted numerous changes to their own consumption practices to maintain the sacredness of their identity as football fans. The only satisfactory way of clarifying the extent to which this has indeed occurred, and to investigate all the above probabilities, is to carry out an empirical investigation of the consumer behaviour of one or more groups of fans. The methodology for this empirical investigation is therefore discussed in Chapter Four.

4 Chapter Four. Methodology.

4.1 The adoption of ethnography as the methodology for the study.

The question immediately arises as to why ethnography was chosen as the methodology for this study. In the first instance, there was a desire to take an holistic approach. Methodologies typically described in the marketing literature on sports fans lacked the necessary holistic stance to move our understanding of the consumption of sports fandom substantially forward. Rather than attempt to study individual variables such as self monitoring (Richardson and O'Dwyer 2003), or basking in reflected glory (Mahony *et al* 1999), it was felt that fan behaviour should be studied in the context of the overall fan environment. This meant that the methodology for the study should allow the researcher to study consumer intentions and actions in the contexts in which they were taking place (Schwandt 2000:191, 193, Ozanne and Hudson 1989:2, Sherry 1991). Ethnography therefore immediately presented itself as a possible methodological alternative, which would permit such an holistic contextual approach to the study of football fandom. Essentially the need for such an approach comes from the belief that "culture/society is an integrated whole and ...individuals can only be understood within the context of that whole" (Stewart 1998:6). Therefore the researcher must seek to attain a comprehensive understanding of the world/ life setting of the consumers under study. Hence the need for a methodology such as ethnography that would facilitate such an understanding.

The appropriateness of ethnography as an approach for this type of study is further endorsed by its utilisation in studies of group consumption (Celsi *et al* 1993, Schouten and McAlexander 1995, Holt 1995, King 1995, Crawford 2000). Holt's (1995) study of baseball fans is of particular interest in that it was the first study of sports fans in the consumer behaviour literature to utilise ethnography as its methodology. Ethnography has now become a widely accepted methodology in the consumer literature not only for the study of football fans (Derbaix *et al* 2002) and media fans (Kozinets 2001), but for collective forms of consumption in general (Arnould and Price 1993, Belk and Costa

1998). Finally it was also felt that ethnography would permit an emergent design (Belk *et al* 1989) approach to the research. This, along with the general endorsement in the consumer literature of ethnography as a suitable methodological option for the investigation of group consumption, led to the decision that it represented an appropriate choice for the current study.

4.2 Ethnography: Methodological Issues.

Ethnography is concerned with data collection and recording of human behaviour in a natural setting. Furthermore it is concerned with producing interpretations that the intended audience find credible. To quote Arnould and Wallendorf (1994:485): “In everyday life culture’s mechanisms usually remain unarticulated by the participants”. The goal of the ethnographer is to identify and decipher these mechanisms, and produce an interpretive description that can be regarded as credible, or as Stewart says, that has veracity.

4.2.1 Validity and veracity

Generally speaking, in the evaluation of positivist research, validity is concerned with the question of whether the researcher has actually measured what they think they have. Stewart adapts this to the more suitable question for ethnographers of whether they have really observed what their descriptions claim, that is, have they achieved verisimilitude, or to put it another way, veracity (Stewart 1998).

4.2.2 Veracity and methodological requirements. Prolonged engagement, or immersion, in the field; and participant rather than non-participant observation.

The primary method of ethnography, prolonged participant observation, flows from the requirement for veracity. Arnould and Wallendorf (1994:485) define participant observation to mean long term experiential participation in the specific context under study. One benefit of such long term immersion is the increased likelihood of being present at events of great significance in the lives of those under study. Being present and even participating in these so-called revelatory incidents can lead to interpretive insights that

otherwise may not have occurred to the researcher (Belk *et al* 1989:1). While engaged in participant observation the question arises as to the extent to which the participant observer should actually participate, rather than simply observe 'over the shoulder of the native participant'. Some anthropologists believe that "it is not sufficient to interview actors to understand their culture" (Stewart 1998:25). It is not enough to witness a variety of performances - you also have to experience culture personally:

"Moreover, because culture is not homogenous, but is distributed across diverse social contexts, the ethnographer needs experience in multiple contexts" (Stewart 1998:25).

Involvement can range from the identity of Peripheral Member Researcher through Active Member Researcher (sharing for a time in the activities and goals of the population under study) to Complete Member Researcher, who has converted to an insider, or native, role, though researchers can, it is held, retain sufficient detachment so as not to be 'true CMRs' (Stewart 1998:23). Becoming an active participant, rather than remaining merely an observer, effectively gives the researcher the opportunity to undergo the experience of a novice or apprentice and consequently much deeper insight can be obtained - "the tacit knowledge that the novice acquires is...much more central to insider culture than is knowledge that can be transmitted explicitly" (Stewart 1998:24).

The possibility of potential deficiency in explicit transmission of knowledge is of great concern to the ethnographer. Clearly ethnography is not limited to observation for data collection purposes, but can also rely on ethnographic interviews. There is evidence to suggest that ethnographic interviews can be distorted in content, in that what is described can be to some extent what the informant would have liked to experience rather than what actually happened (Arnould and Wallendorf 1998:490). This need not necessarily result from a deliberate intent to mislead, but that can of course sometimes be the case. In either case the remedy is the same. Verbal report data should be combined with data from long-term participant observation prior to the development of any definitive interpretation. Of course such participant observation enhances the ability of the researcher to assess whether the interview data 'feels right' (Arnould and Wallendorf 1998:493, Wallendorf and Belk

1989:80). Given the possible deficiencies in verbal data, Stewart argues that “we should treat all explicit knowledge as...probably remote from that employed in practical activities under normal circumstances” (1998:26). There is a danger, as we have seen already, that in the course of being formally interviewed actors will give an account of how they believe things ought to be, hence the need for the researcher to observe events for himself or herself. It is important, moreover, for the same reasons, to attempt to gain access to the ‘behind the scenes’, or ‘backstage’ activities of actors, where their behaviour is likely to be more natural.

This is yet another argument in favour of active participant observation, as opposed to peripheral or non-participant observation. Over the course of time participant observers are more likely to achieve some degree, at least, of social acceptance by the group, resulting in social invitations of a more informal nature and thus conferring opportunities for this type of access. Also the quality of verbal data offered is likely to be better; greater opportunities will present themselves for capturing ‘speech-in-action’ (spontaneous utterances from group insiders to each other), given the more relaxed setting. In other words there is a need to capture and evaluate verbal data across all relevant contexts (Stewart 1998:27).

4.2.3 The search for disconfirming observations, or negative case analysis.

Multiple methods and data sources are particularly useful “in the search for disconfirming data” (Stewart 1998:28). The search for disconfirming data is an important weapon for the ethnographer. As patterns and then themes begin to emerge from the data, it becomes vital to seek out such disconfirming observations. Wallendorf and Belk refer to this as negative case analysis (1989:73). The objective of such analysis is to, if necessary, reject earlier interpretations in favour of new interpretations that provide a better fit to all the data. If one is ultimately left with one or more disconfirming observations that do not seem to fit into any overall pattern these should be recorded so that other researchers can investigate them further.

4.3 Further issues with Ethnography

In selecting ethnography as a methodology, the doctoral candidate must also be aware of the conflicting ontologies underpinning alternative possible approaches to ethnography. The unproblematic way in which ethnographies are frequently presented in the consumer research literature often belies the very real tensions between the different schools of thought that exist on ethnographic writing. The notion that the participant observation method can be followed and then the findings unproblematically written up comes under attack again and again in the writings of postmodernist ethnographers (Marcus and Cushman 1982, Van Maanen 1988, Geertz 1988).

Geertz (1988:83), for example, in critiquing the work of Malinowski, describes Participant Observation as a wish and not a research method. He goes on to claim that ethnographers have been bequeathed a literary dilemma – Participant Description - instead of a research method – Participant Observation. Similarly Hammersley's (1990) criticism of theoretical, or as it is better known, 'thick' description, must be considered. He claims that, rather than successfully portraying "the phenomenon of interest in its own terms" ethnographic reports have depended on judgements about relevance – and that these judgements "rely, in turn, on the purposes which the description is to serve". He further claims that "commitment to the reproduction model obscures...the relevances that structure ...accounts", and suggests that this in turn can result in ethnography becoming a vehicle for ideology.

Stanley (1990) critiques aspects of Hammersley's argument, such as his representation of ethnography as "a contemporary flight from ...positivism". Clearly Hammersley is erroneous here, in that ethnography, albeit in different forms, is accepted as a research method both by positivists and postmodernists. Stanley goes on to claim that ethnography reveals rather than conceals the problems Hammersley raises. She further asserts that "the

prime audience for ethnographic work is...the academic community; for ethnography to pass muster it has to be written and presented in academic terms, not those of the studied community". Stanley argues that the ideal of 'thick description' is usually not attained in practice. She addresses Hammersley's concern with ethnographies being affected by relevancies by arguing that such relevancies are collectively arrived at, and that they should not be seen as individualised. She suggests that ethnographies must be written to satisfy the concerns of the academic community and that ethnographic descriptions, by their nature, *are* theoretical (Hammersley suggests that they are not).

It is unproblematic to agree with Stanley that ethnographic descriptions are theoretical in nature, but it is not possible to accept her suggestion that objective involvement cannot be separated from subjective, because to do so would amount to a rejection of realist ontology (Stewart 1998:12-14). This is not for one moment to suggest that subjectivity and bias do not exist. The question is one of whether or not the researcher believes that objective descriptions can be constructed. In other words the debate largely centres around the question of whether methodological techniques can be used to reduce bias and construct an objective account. Contemporary realist ethnography asserts that if empirical work is carried out in the right way, objective theoretical descriptions of reality can be constructed (Arnould and Wallendorf 1994, Stewart 1998).

4.3.1 The construction of realist accounts

"By far the most prominent, familiar, prevalent, popular ...form of ethnographic writing is the realist account of a culture...a single author ...narrates the realist tale in a dispassionate, third person voice. On display are the comings and goings of members of the culture, theoretical coverage of certain features of the culture, and usually a hesitant account of why the work was undertaken in the first place"

(Van Maanen 1988:45)

Historically, ethnography has tended to take the form of the realist account. How, then, are realist ethnographic reports constructed? Van Maanen outlines and critiques a number of conventions in their construction. The first of these is experiential authority:

“Only what members of the studied culture say and do, and, presumably, think, are visible in the text...(a) good-faith assumption surrounds realist tales ...this assumption of good faith permits readers to hold the attitude that whatever the fieldworker saw and heard during a stay in the studied culture is more-or-less what any similar well-placed and well-trained participant observer would see and hear...Ironically, by taking the “I” (the observer) out of the ethnographic report, the narrator’s authority is apparently enhanced, and audience worries over personal subjectivity become moot” (Van Maanen 1988:46).

He says realist ethnographers allow the representation to stand for itself (“‘The X do this’ not ‘I saw the X do this’” (Van Maanen 1988:47) The tendency is not to say precisely what the field experience consisted of, but instead to make this representational statement. Similarly, Marcus and Cushman (1982) refer to the “unintrusive presence of the ethnographer in the text”. Personal narration is absent, the narrator is present only as “the collective and authoritative third person”. This approach, described as being that of “the omniscient author” has the effect of heightening “the sense of scientific objectivity projected by the text” (Marcus and Cushman 1982:32). Marcus and Cushman argue that this contributes to the severing of what the author knows from how he knows it, which, according to Geertz, leaves the reader “unable to recover the immediacies of field work for empirical reinspection (Geertz 1988:6)” and therefore presumably unable to assess the verisimilitude of the work. For Marcus and Cushman, ethnographic reports suffer from a lack of transparency. We are to assume that “The ‘X’ do this” but we are not (or perhaps in the past, before the advent of confessional realist accounts) told how often the ‘X’ were actually observed “doing this”. The prevailing style (in relation to interpretive omnipotence) is such that the interpretation is:

“...made compelling by the use of a string of ...axioms and theorems that work logically to provide explanation. Each element of the theory is carefully illustrated by empirical field data. The form is aseptic and impersonal, but it is convincing insofar as an audience is willing to grant power to the theory” (Van Maanen 1988:51).

Van Maanen also claims (1988:54) that “footnotes and theoretical asides are orchestrated to support a particular interpretation”. Marcus and Cushman (1982:35) describe this as the convention of embellishment by jargon. Van Maanen goes on to claim that data that do not fit in are simply culled from the account (1988:53), and that only supporting data is included. His underlying argument is that separation of methodology from final ethnographic account produces non-transparent ethnographies that cannot be relied upon, because there is insufficient communication in relation to how the data was generated.

Marcus and Cushman (1982) refer to this as ethnography’s “veil of public secrecy”. They further state (1982:30) that the “poor articulation of standards” in relation to how ethnography should be carried out has caused fundamental problems with the evaluation of ethnographies. How could work be assessed when there was neither a detailed articulation of how it complied with standards, or an agreed written understanding of what those standards were. Instead, the reader is meant to make an assumption of good faith, provided that certain conventions, such as the provision of high levels of cultural detail, are adhered to in the text.

4.3.2 Provision of cultural detail.

“The marshalling of a very large number of highly specific cultural details...has been the major way in which the look of truth (verisimilitude...) has been sought in ...(ethnographic) texts (Geertz 1988:3)”.

The higher the level of detail, the better, to facilitate the provision of “total ethnography” and give the impression of an in depth focus on everyday life situations (Marcus and Cushman 1982). Alongside the requirement for cultural detail is the convention of providing some “direct indication of fieldwork conditions and experiences”, again in detail “as a sort of covering legitimacy under which specific arguments and claims of evidence could be made” (Marcus and Cushman 1982). Marcus and Cushman criticize these conventions, arguing that they are designed to give the appearance of holism, rather than genuinely providing it. This conflicts directly with the realist viewpoint, however. Realist ethnography is fundamentally concerned with genuine holism, not mere stylistic tricks to give an impression of holism (Stewart 1998:5).

4.3.3 Whose Viewpoint Is It Anyway?

One of the most important conventions in realist ethnography is the presentation of the native point of view. Marcus and Cushman (1982) observe that realist ethnography has always claimed that it is presenting the native’s point of view, while in fact presenting the viewpoint of the ethnographer on the viewpoint of the native. They effectively see the researcher as someone incapable of perceiving the native culture in any way other than through the lens of their own (that is, the ethnographer’s) culture. Van Maanen accepts that realist ethnographers have taken this criticism on board but is unfortunately dismissive of their manner of doing so:

“To do ethnography in the realist mode these days is to offer the perspective as well as practices of the member of the culture ...retelling informant stories allow highly personalised and unique experiences to enter into the realist tale. This is, of course, a breach of realist conventions, and such breaches are typically few and far between, introduced perhaps to keep readers awake and the realist tale alive” (1988:50).

In criticising another realist convention, the stylistic extrapolation of particular data, Marcus and Cushman argue that “the fieldwork on which any (realist) study was based was (always) necessarily severely restricted, both spatially and temporally” but that “the style of reportage was always pushed firmly toward generalisation” (1982:35). This criticism does not hold up when assessed against the rigorous criteria for realist ethnography.

As Stewart (1998) points out, realist ethnography can only claim to have veracity if it delivers on such criteria as adequate periods of time being devoted to participant observation. One useful key in determining appropriate duration of fieldwork effort is uncovering “the length of the cycle over which the phenomenon of interest manifests itself” (Wallendorf and Belk 1989:71). It should be evident from the ethnographic report what the relevant time frames are, from the native point of view, and then the question of adequate temporal commitment is easily assessed. This in turn should provide the ethnography with some degree of transparency in relation to how perspectives *of* action, perspectives *in* action and perspectives of relevatory incidents (Belk *et al* 1989) were acquired (Arnould and Wallendorf 1994). It thus provides the reader with an accurate understanding, from both an etic and native point of view, of not only how often relevatory incidents take place but what they actually mean. This in turn helps to establish the veracity of the work. Marcus and Cushman go on to dismiss *all* presented data in traditional realist ethnographies (fieldnotes, photographs, methodological appendices) as symbolic devices, used by realist ethnographers as a means of legitimising their interpretations of the culture. This superficial dismissal of the work of realist ethnography

is rather unfortunate, because it undermines Marcus and Cushman's overall contribution to the methodological literature.

4.4 Where do we go from here? Writing A Realist Ethnography.

There does seem to be a consensus that realist ethnography displayed, in its earlier developmental stages, a lack of transparency in fieldwork as a method. So, as Moeran (2005:200) asks, how should the ethnographer proceed? Does 'one' detach oneself from the report, relate the native point of view, and then provide an omniscient interpretation, in the realist style so strongly criticised by Marcus and Cushman (1982) and others (Geertz 1988)? Or should 'I' "slip into confessional mode", showing my biases, my flaws, the shocks and surprises I received while en route to the final interpretation of the culture?

Even for the realist ethnographer, there is much to be guided by in Van Maanen's note of "what constitutes a minimally acceptable table of contents for an account of fieldwork. Authors must discuss their pre-understandings of the studied scene as well as their own interests in that scene, their modes of entry, sustained participation or presence, and exit procedures; the response of others on the scene to their presence (and vice versa), the nature of their relationship with various categories of informants; and their modes of data collection, storage, retrieval, and analysis" (Van Maanen 1988:93-94, cited by Moeran 2000:201). A confessional account can thus be produced to stand alongside the realist tale (Van Maanen 1988:75). Van Maanen notes (1988:81) that such a confessional is now more or less *de rigeur* in a fieldwork dissertation, usually as a separate appendix, and that is the approach that will be taken here, with Stewart's (1998) description of the trail of the ethnographer's path as a guide to its production.

This ethnographic report conforms to the "house norms" of contemporary realist ethnography (Van Maanen 1988:27). Just as the fieldwork for this thesis has been guided by Arnould and Wallendorf's (1994) and Stewart's (1998) endorsement of contemporary

realist ethnography, rooted in the modernist, empirical tradition of Durkheim, so will it be guided by its underlying ontological principles.

Stewart observes that “(t)here is a discrepancy in postmodernist naturalistic inquiry between, on one hand, method prescriptions such as interrater checks and audit trails, and on the other hand, the antirealist ontology proclaimed” (Stewart 1998:13). If the researcher is seeking objectivity, seeking to reduce bias or mistaken interpretations through the use of these methodological tools in their research, then “a realist ontology is a necessary condition...of the intelligibility of discourse...and...of ethnography....Otherwise one merely pretends, pandering to norms at odds with one’s ontological stance” (Stewart 1998:13). Furthermore, as Van Maanen himself asserts, much classical realist ethnography has stood the test of time:

“Realist ethnography has a long and by-and-large worthy pedigree...the durability of some realist work indicates that despite the invisibility, high-science stance, or interpretive omnipotence of the author, the tale is fundamentally sound” (Van Maanen 1988:54)

This thesis will therefore follow the conventions of realist ethnography, including use of native terminology in presenting the findings, to allow the reader to see that the author really has “been there”, has genuinely engaged with the members of the culture, and has undergone full cultural immersion so as to produce a legitimate, authoritative account (Stoddart 1991, Van Maanen 1988, Geertz 1988, Stewart 1998). To quote Stoddart (1991:246):

“Catchy section titles (in reporting ethnographic findings) that reveal informants’ vocabulary are not to be regarded simply as matters of style, personal or otherwise. Instead they are to be seen as (legitimate) rhetorical devices communicating that an author has established a certain rapport with the natives of his field: they assert an authority based on experience (Van Maanen 1988), an authority derived from “being there” (Geertz 1988)”.

This monograph therefore provides a methodological confessional, to facilitate assessment of its veracity. It provides this in the form of an appendix because this satisfies the requirements of the realist approach (Stewart 1998, Van Maanen 1988).

Finally, in selecting an appropriate field of study, it was noted that the study of a cultural field of which the researcher is already a member is considered relatively unproblematic, provided appropriate techniques are adopted to 'make the familiar strange' and maintain an appropriate level of analytic distance (Lofland and Lofland 1995, Schouten and McAlexander 1995). In addition, the participant researcher will already possess an 'insider' understanding of that culture, which facilitates assessment of data (Lofland and Lofland 1995). For the purposes of this study it was thus deemed appropriate to define the field in terms of the respective fan communities of two particular clubs, Liverpool F.C. and Cork City F.C. As a fan of both teams, the researcher had prior access to both communities, and this in turn meant that some degree of insider status was already present.

The research therefore followed the conventions of realist ethnography as outlined above, using participant observation, interviews, triangulation, and other necessary elements of ethnographic research. The iterative approach of Spiggle (1994) was utilized in the analysis of data and development of the ethnographic interpretation. A full discussion of the methodology as actually deployed over the duration of the study is presented in Appendix A.

5 Chapter Five. Football Fandom as Sacred Consumption.

5.1 Introduction to the concept of football fandom as sacred consumption

In analysing the data on fans involved in both the 'Red All Over The Land' and Cork City fan communities, the theme that emerges more forcefully than any other is that of sacred consumption. Belk *et al* (1989) note that sport is one of a number of spheres where "consumption can become a vehicle of transcendent experience". This means that it enables consumers to transcend the mundane reality of daily life and experience, via their consumption of fan activities, a sense of the sacred.

Of course "... the sacred does not manifest itself to everyone. A sacred stone continues to appear like other stones except to those who believe it has revealed itself to them as unique, supernatural, or *ganz andere* (totally other)" (Belk *et al* 1989:6). There may well be consumers who find football fandom an occasional distraction, one of a number of hobbies, perhaps, but certainly not particularly important. The members of the fan communities investigated for this study did not fall into this category. Rather, in the case of these fans, one is again reminded of the famous quotation from Bill Shankly that football "is not a matter of life and death, it's far more important than that".

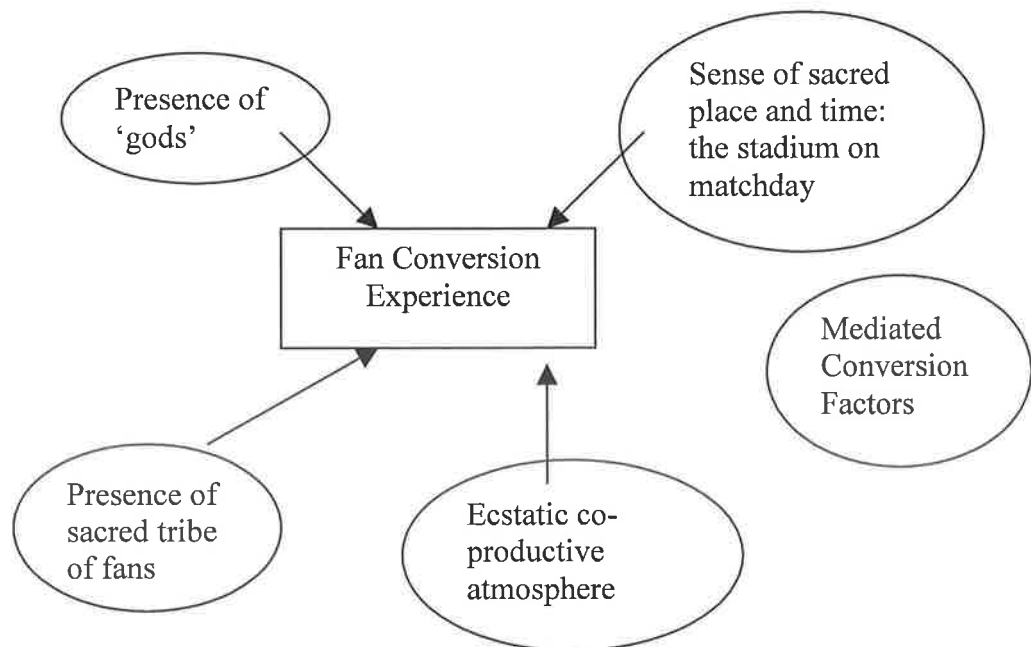
This research found that football is sacred to its fans. The consumption patterns and behaviours observed within these communities manifest multiple aspects of the sacred. The following analysis is therefore concerned with fan consumption as transcendent experience and sacred identity. In this context, fans are understood to worship sports stars, the sports season is understood to be a sacred time, and sports stadia are sacred places (Bale 1993, Belk *et al* 1989, Giulianotti 1999, Hopkinson and Pujari 1999, Light 2000, Westerbeek and Shilbury 1999). The fans themselves are understood to constitute a sacred collective. The theme of sacred identity is therefore central to the discussion. While this analysis explores the role played by sacred goods in the maintenance of sacred identity, technically termed 'hierophany' (Belk *et al* 1989), other elements of the sacred are also of importance in illuminating the consumption processes and behaviours of these fans. Additional aspects of sacred consumption with particular relevance for the study of

football fans include sacralisation processes such as conversion, singularisation, and external sanction. External sanction (Belk *et al* 1989) is an interesting aspect of sacred consumption that merits more attention than it has received to date in the consumer literature. It refers to the manner in which an object can be sacralised through sanction by an external authority. The sanctioning of an heirloom as particularly valuable by an expert in the field of antiques would constitute an example of this, although external sanction need not always relate to material objects. This study presents evidence that the process of external sanction from a legitimate source can confer or deepen a felt sense of hierophany among a community of consumers. Sacralisation maintenance, in a variety of forms including sustaining rituals and tangibilised contamination, is also central to the understanding of fan consumption. Finally, separation of the sacred from the profane presents itself as one of the key ways in which fans seek to maintain the sacredness of the fan identity.

5.2 The Fan Conversion Experience

There are a number of factors that contribute to the fan conversion experience (Figure 5.1).

5-1 Factors in the Fan Conversion Experience



The four factors shown in Figure 5.1 as directly connected to the fan conversion experience are all non mediated in nature, that is, they are all factors that the fans can experience personally. The fifth 'factor' is really a combination of factors. Mediated influences on fan conversion, such as seeing the Kop on television, or reading literature on football stars and football supporters, could certainly play a role in the fan conversion experience but possibly lack the same overwhelming sense of personalised immediacy that the term 'conversion experience' implies. Fans I spoke to tended not to cite the first time they saw their favourite team on television, when talking about how they became hooked, or when they first became fervent fanatics. They almost all cited personal, non mediated experience, the sole exception to this being one fan (not a member of RAOTL) who commented on her experience of seeing the Kop on television. Conversion in this study chiefly arises out of non mediated experience.

Descriptions of the entry to fandom display a sense of the extraordinary, a sense of something magical, as consumers come into contact with heroic, sacred figures who provide them with transcendent experience:

We were now inside the ground, and the smell seemed different, the pitch looked lush and green the stands – with their different colour seats – looked huge, and right in front of me were my heroes, there was Hansen, there was Grobbelaar, there was Lawrenson, where was he...where was my favourite...."there he is son, down there near the side". There was Ian Rush, my hero, stood signing autographs for fans in the Main Stand. I felt the tingle down my spine, and the hairs on my neck stand up. This was my baptism, and these players and this ground were my religion, I was now a fully fledged Red
('Roper', RAOTL Forum Member)

Fans see the fandom that springs from this “baptism” as a life-long commitment. Belk *et al* (1989) explain that from a psychological perspective “such commitment directs attention to the sacred, which becomes a strong part of one’s identity”. By the term ‘conversion’ (Belk *et al* 1989), we further understand that initial contact with the sacred is so personally overwhelming that “an identity change resulting in an unshakeable conviction” takes place. Football fandom, then, can be understood as something permanently integrated into the consumer’s self-concept:

“My first Cork City match was a pre season friendly in Musgrave Park, 15 years ago now”

(‘Allan’, Cork City fan, male, thirties)

“I’ve supported them since 1990. So that’s fourteen years (at time of interview)”

(‘A.G.’, Arsenal fan)

I have never once not supported United in twenty-odd years”

(‘Greg’ – a fan of both Manchester United and Cork City FC)

The conversion experience described above by ‘Roper’ emphasises the role of sacred people in the form of heroes like Ian Rush. In terms of fan celebration of individuals as gods (O’Guinn 1991) perhaps the most notable figure in the history of Liverpool FC is Bill Shankly. His statue stands outside the entrance to the Club Museum, emblazoned with the words “He Made The People Happy”. The adulation of the fans for Shankly can be compared to, for example, the role played by Steve Jobs for members of the Apple Macintosh community. Belk and Tumbat (2003) conceptualise the Apple Macintosh community as a cult with its own cultic myths. In these myths, Steve Jobs is cited as an heroic, charismatic, quasi-messianic figure who not only co-created Macintosh (the cult’s creation myth) but who also came back from the dead (resurrection myth) to restore the company’s fortunes at Macintosh’s darkest hour.

In an analogous manner, Liverpool fans celebrate Bill Shankly as the creator of the modern Liverpool FC. Their religious devotion to Shankly, an incredibly charismatic figure whose arrival on Merseyside coincided with the emergence of the Beatles, and whose successes as manager did so much to inspire the fans to develop their then unique style of fandom, contains multiple elements of what Belk *et al* classify as sacred consumption. The fans still relate stories² of Shankly as a messiah whose hierophanous vocation was to deliver glorious success after glorious success to the club. This certainly can be equated to the power of a sacred, charismatic figure to “redefine ideas of what is sacred” (Belk *et al* 1989:12).

Belk *et al* elaborate further that part of the legacy of such a charismatic leader is a degree of routinisation of their charisma: “The sacredness of a charismatic leader ...shifts over time from the person to a structure, to positions, and then to role occupants” (Belk *et al* p.12). Many Liverpool fans choose to view each successive Liverpool manager as a potential heir to Bill Shankly, and until subsequent results prove otherwise, each new manager is greeted as the messiah the fans hope he will prove to be, inspiring new songs and chants, as well as the production of home made banners and flags.

Another figure still venerated as a god by the Liverpool fans (O’Guinn 1991) is former player and manager Kenny Dalglish. After some newspapers suggested in 2004 that he would return to the club to take over as manager, some of the Liverpool fans on the RAOTL discussion forum had this to say:

² One of the most frequently repeated stories about Bill Shankly refers to an incident that occurred after a match at Anfield, when Shankly and the Liverpool team were performing a lap of honour after winning the League Championship in the last game of the season. A fan attempted to throw his Liverpool scarf to Shankly, but his throw fell short. A policeman, appearing to deliberately ignore the scarf, trod on it as it lay on the ground. Shankly angrily turned on the policeman, shouting “You can’t do that! That scarf is someone’s life!” He then picked up the scarf and placed it around his own shoulders. This external sanction (Belk *et al* 1989) of the Liverpool fan’s scarf arguably contributed to the symbolic meaning that football scarves have continued to hold for Liverpool fans ever since.

I wouldn't want him to come back and run the risk of failing as the man is as close to a deity as we will ever see.

(‘Kopite’)

Is he coming back to wear the Red number seven again? He'd still walk straight into our first XI!!!

(‘Red Phil 18/4’)

This clearly illustrates the reverence the fans hold for such sacred figures as Dalglish. While individuals like Shankly, Keegan, and Dalglish have been instrumental in the conversion experience of many Liverpool fans, this study is less concerned with conversion by means of exposure to one sacred person, and far more concerned with the experience of conversion as something brought about by exposure to a sacred collective. While the above accounts of the initial fan experience emphasise the role of star players, there is an even stronger pattern in fan narratives of their initial experiences of the atmosphere created by the crowd at a football match:

The whole crowd thing...I would never have been at an event like that...where there were so many people packed together, shouting, and...singing together, ...it (the whole thing) was just amazing to watch...when you're not used to it, it seems kind of exotic as well and so much fun...they (the Liverpool fans on the Kop terrace) ...were always so vocal, Liverpool would score a goal and the whole place would go ballistic you know?

(‘A.D.’, Liverpool fan, early 40s, describes watching the Kop on television)

Coming into contact with the extraordinary atmosphere generated by the crowd at the match – even in a mediated format - was clearly a profound experience for this consumer, who went on to explain her fandom in terms that indicate the lasting effect of her initial conversion experience:

I could have been accused of being a glory hunter at the start ...but I'm with them (i.e. Liverpool) – God! How long is it now at this stage? It's nearly thirty years, you know? ... I feel I kind of can't (change teams), I've been with them for so long...it's a loyalty – you go through so much following them, you have a lot invested in it. Everybody knows that I'm a Liverpool fan – it goes without saying

The crowd and the atmosphere they generate are a key element in the conversion experience that inspired this fan's ongoing commitment. In fan accounts of initial entry experiences, atmosphere is cited again and again. Just as 'A.D.' spoke with a sense of awe when describing her initial exposure to the atmosphere generated by the Liverpool fans on the Spion Kop, 'Wally' (a Cork City supporter in his early thirties), says that when he experienced going to Cork City's home ground, Turner's Cross, for the first time he "got hooked straight away" because of "the atmosphere, singing (and), chanting" and the feeling that

"(we) ...were all there for the same thing".

Another fan, 'Gerry', (male, thirties) describes his first experience of a football match in similar terms:

I just went down and that day it was jammed, it was a fair spectacle ... so that would definitely make me go back, you know

'Gerry' recalls that the next time he went to a match the experience was not as intense but by then he had already undergone his conversion experience – the change of identity was permanent:

I didn't find as many people the second time I went back, needless to say! Ah no, (but)... I was just bitten by the bug (by) then

It is clear from all these statements that the fan collective is itself a catalyst in bringing about the initial conversion experience. It is also worth noting that in the case of 'Alison', conversion occurred even though the experience was mediated rather than direct. In the case of non-mediated fans, the initial experience is if anything even more overwhelming, given its multi-sensory nature:

“(T)o stand packed on a terrace is to become part of terrace culture, to feel the shape and edges of at least four other bodies. There is nothing quite so out-of-body and helpless as being part of a crowd craning to see action in a corner and feeling oneself part of an involuntary human wave of massive energy” (Bowden (1995:122) cited in Crawford 2004:74/75)³

This difference in qualitative experience between the conversion of the mediated fan and that of the non-mediated fan is significant in terms of the shaping of alternative – and to a degree competing – notions of fan identity. Subsequent chapters in the thesis expand on the perceived differences between these two categories of fan, and how these perceived differences contribute to contrasting patterns in consumer behaviour. The remainder of this chapter, however, will focus on how fandom develops, post the initial conversion experience.

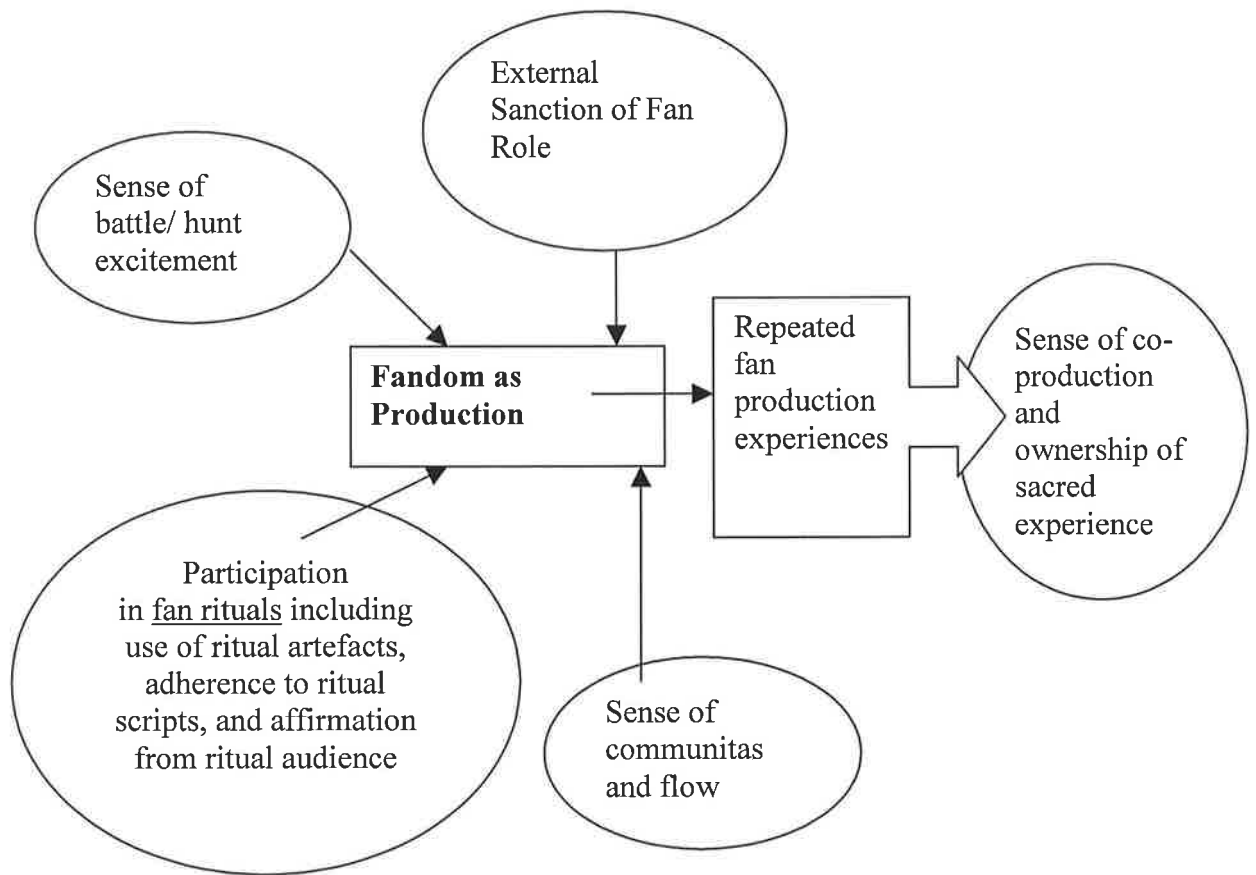
5.3 Fandom as Production of Sacred Experience

What emerges very strongly from the data is that for these fans, participation in atmosphere generation very quickly becomes central to the fan experience. A number of

³ The football terrace experience is no longer available to Premiership fans but this description is included here nonetheless because it helps to communicate the notion of difference between mediated and non-mediated experience. Fans perceive the non-mediated experience as more meaningful, even in all-seater stadia.

factors contribute to fans' sense of personal involvement in production of this experience (Figure 5.2).

5-2 Fandom as Ongoing Production of Sacred Experience.



Over time, ongoing involvement in fan production activities contributes to feelings of ownership of both fan activity and identity. One of the key factors identified in Figure 5.2 that contributes to this sense of production is participation in fan rituals. The intensely ritualised nature of the fan experience allows the fans to imagine that they are helping to produce the outcome of the occasion (Holt 1995). When fans join in the collective production of atmosphere at a football match, they are, according to Morris (2002:467-

469), taking part in a contemporary form of tribal hunt. Morris conceptualises football fandom as participation in a pseudo-hunt that allows spectators to exercise the instinctive need to hunt, born of primeval times but still present in the contemporary consumer. Football in particular provides all the necessary excitement of the hunt, with its drama, physical exertions, and the need to aim (the football) at the prey (the goalmouth). The supporters, with their ritualised drumming, singing, and chanting, actively participate in encouraging the lead hunters (the players) and intimidating or attempting to intimidate the hunters (both team and supporters) from the rival tribe. Cork City's fans were observed, for instance, engaged in the following ritual activity, chanting and gesturing towards the fans of Dublin team St. Patrick's Athletic:

*You are a Jackeen, a scummy Jackeen, you're only happy on dole day,
You're always stealin' and drug dealin, Please don't take my hubcaps away*
(Fieldnotes, June 4th 2004)

The term 'Jackeen' is a derogatory noun denoting the identity of someone from Dublin. This song, sung to the tune of 'You are my sunshine', was accompanied by the home fans gesticulating *en masse* towards the away fans in the far corner of the main stand. The fans stand together, each fan with an arm in the air, rhythmically pointing at the away fans at regular intervals during the chant. The visual effect from even a close distance is quite pronounced. The away team and their supporters therefore play a vital role in the drama, in providing the necessary element of danger, a visual and verbal threat to the hopes of the home fans, a mock enemy without which there would be no risk and therefore no real thrill.

Group rituals thus play a particularly significant role in the delivery of such shared experience. Collective veneration of the sacred persons who actually play for the worshipped team can be understood as another such ritual. Fans were often observed performing the following type of greeting ritual, for example:

The teamsheets were read out over the PA, to the accompaniment of booing for the Newcastle players' names, and raucous cheering of the home players' names. The home team sheet is prefaced with a loud "FOR LIVERPOOL!" from the announcer, which acts as a cue for the ritual cheering to commence. It is not too difficult to notice that some players' names are greeted with particularly loud and enthusiastic cheers from the crowd. This seemed to be reserved for a small number of players, in particular the local trio of Jamie Carragher, Steven Gerrard, and Michael Owen. "He's Scouse, He's sound, he'll clock you with a pound, Carragher, Carragher" rang out around the stadium, as did "STEVEN GERRARD! STEVEN GERRARD!". Star striker Michael Owen's name is treated differently. The crowd break into a chant of "OWEN!" followed by a rapid clap-clap-clap "OWEN!" clap clap clap "OWEN!"

(Fieldnotes, May 2004)

While the above incident took place at a Liverpool home fixture against Newcastle, this ritual was observed at all home games attended by this researcher. Fans speak of getting caught up in the atmosphere, and such experiences deliver an overwhelming sense of *communitas*, of shared experience, of being on the same side as everyone else, while sharing an intense experience of mutual devotion to the sacred people playing for the team.

The nature of the football fan experience during a match is such that there are multiple ritualized opportunities to experience an ecstatic sense of shared flow (Belk *et al* 1989, Celsi *et al* 1993, Csikszentmihalyi 2000). The following example was observed at a match between Liverpool and Manchester City:

We roar in excitement. "LIIIIIVERPOOL! LIVERPOOL!" is chanted fervently. "We love you Liverpool" rings out ..., followed immediately by "We won it five times...we'll win it six times"...A crescendo of excitement as Liverpool attack again. Roars of approval for individual players as they play a good pass forward or in some other way contribute to the ongoing pressure on Manchester City's goal, which is immediately below us... We sing and roar, drowning out the

(Manchester City) support completely...shouts of instruction and roars of encouragement to the players. Groans when a move breaks down, shouts of "Shit!" Excitement intensifies as Liverpool attack again. The pace of the attacks seems to increase each time, and the panic in the home defence seems to mount. All singing abruptly stops as Liverpool suddenly surge forward. The shouts are more urgent now, one of the nearby fans just has time to shout "COME ON, COME ON" followed by someone else shouting "GET IT INNN" as John Arne Riise plays a one-two with Steven Gerrard before hammering the football past David James in the Manchester City goal. We erupt in euphoria, shouting incoherently, roaring YYYEEAAHHH, hugging and thumping each other. The team finish mobbing John Arne Riise, we finish hugging each other, Riise salutes us then turns and follows his team mates back down the field. We break into "JOHN ARNE RIISE... ..OOH! AHH! I WANNA KNOW ...HOW YOU SCORED THAT GOAL" (sung to the tune of popular hit 'Hey Baby')

(Fieldnotes, 26/11/05)

The crowd are more likely to experience a sense of shared flow when the match has reached a certain level of excitement – the ‘battle’ really is being waged, the players are fully engaged in waging it, and the fans are fully engaged in the co-participative act (Holt 1995, Morris 2002, Richardson and Turley 2006) of roaring them on. There is a heightened sense of not only unity, but unity in a dramatic, exciting battle against the (mock) enemy (Elias and Dunning 1993). There is intense excitement, intense anticipation, intense joy (as described above) when the tribe’s collective hopes are realised (such as the moment when a goal is scored), and, at times, intense disappointment, when those hopes are dashed.

Key to this is that all these intense experiences are shared. Experiencing such powerful collective intensity for the first time can clearly trigger the conversion experience described earlier, while experiencing it again and again over an extended period of time can be thought of as a form of sustaining ritual (Belk *et al* 1989) that perpetuates the sacred

meaning of the experience for the long term football fan and gives the “buzz” of football fandom its compelling qualities:

I (started going to) every away game, week in, week out...you just felt like you had to go! ...You have to go – and I don't know why – it just suddenly kicked in that the more you have, the more you want! And you just want – I just wanted the buzz, the buzz was unbelievable

(‘Le Songmeister’, Liverpool fan, male, early thirties)

The concepts of *communitas*, ecstasy, and shared flow (Belk *et al* 1989:8) therefore help to further clarify why the atmosphere at a football match can be so compelling, and why the fans feel such a sense of personal involvement with the production of the consumption experience. The shared emotions of the stadium produce a vivid feeling of community, or consciousness of kind (Muniz and O’Guinn 2001, Hopkinson and Pujari 1999). Hopkinson and Pujari (1999) highlight the significance of hedonic experience in the creation of identity, including the extended self (Belk 1988). The loss of self, at the level of the individual, through such ‘flow’ experiences (Csikszentmihalyi 2000), is replaced with a particularly potent sense of identity at the collective level. The individual “enters a transcending community of camaraderie (Hopkinson and Pujari 1999)”, feeling a strong sense of collective identity as a result of their ecstatic experience.

The atmosphere at a football match is most highly charged when the home fans’ main rivals are in town, because this particular group of ‘others’ allows the ‘home’ fans to experience a particularly intense sense of excitement (Elias and Dunning 1993) and an even stronger sense than usual of their own tribal identity (Aharpour 1999:11 and 228). Taking part in these particular mock battles is so intense and personal, incorporating as it does the physical acting out of participatory hunting behaviours, that fans can experience an intensity of the collective tribalised self that is greater than usual. This suggests that while football fandom is sacred, that some fan occasions are clearly more sacred than others.

The sense that some occasions are particularly special may in fact help to maintain the overall sacredness of the matchday experience. Belk *et al* (1989) define habituation as a gradual loss of sacredness through the familiarity that can arise through over-frequent use or experience. If every match was the same, some degree of de-mystification of the sacred would eventually take place. The anticipation of special occasions such as derbies against local rivals, or end-of-season Cup Finals, can therefore act as rituals which help to guard against such habituation (Belk *et al* 1989). The last match might only have been a run-of-the-mill fixture against Bolton Wanderers, but there is always next week's 'derby' clash against local rivals Everton to look forward to:

Who else woke up this morning, the euphoria of the Cup win planted well in the back of the memory banks. The rivalry with the "Woodentops" (Everton fans) right at the forefront of your thinking. The Derby atmosphere will not start on Saturday, for most it will begin today. Whether sitting in work or sitting at home, the battle commences today....for anyone who is going to their first ever Derby, let me warn you. You are likely to lose a good stone in sweat. Your heart beat will increase by a minimum of 33%, not just when they get close to our area, but when they get the ball in their own half...

(‘Wooltonian’, on the RAOTL forum)

Here ‘Wooltonian’ eagerly anticipates the excitement of the forthcoming ‘derby’ fixture between Liverpool and local rivals Everton. There is clearly more at stake here than there would be in a normal league match. ‘Wooltonian’ elaborates:

A goal in a Derby game is celebrated at least FIVE times longer than any other. I bet the game has kicked back off long before you've finished (celebrating) and sat back down. Are you happy now ? Yer avin a laugh, even if you're THREE (goals) up in a Derby, yer still panickin every time they get the ball.

The sense of physical and emotional involvement is particularly pronounced. The heart races and the body pumps far more sweat than it would during a normal game. There is a feeling of panic if Everton get the ball, while the fans are on their feet, celebrating for far longer than usual if Liverpool score. The fans experience a profound sense of co-production (Holt 1995). Again, it is important to note that this is no normal game, but one of those special matches that serves to perpetuate the sacred nature of the fan experience.

The sense of co-production is also important on lesser occasions when the match itself might not provide much in the way of excitement. Standing on the terrace at a League of Ireland game, enjoying the atmosphere produced by the fans around you is central to the fan experience:

It's good craic as well, standing in the Shed for 2 hours a week y'know, it couldn't but entertain ya...often the football (doesn't)! ...I just enjoyed it y'know, it was good craic ...that helps like, it's better than sitting looking at a telly there's nothing to compare to it like, you know? There's always some fella standing in front of you with a smart ass comment

('Gerry', Cork City fan, male, late twenties)

The enjoyment of atmosphere becomes part of the ongoing *raison d'être* of football fandom and therefore helps to bring fans back again and again even if the team are not playing well:

It's (atmosphere) very important! Yeah – I think a lot of people will tell you that...the atmosphere is what brings a lot of people back ... – the match could be crap but people come back...(because of the atmosphere) ...there's a bit of a singsong or whatever you know?

('Pablo', Cork City supporter, male, late twenties)

The ritual scripts (Cheol Park 1998, Rook 1985) of football fans are therefore adhered to even if “the match (is)... crap”. This is significant because being a football fan is not

always about the enjoyment of one ecstatic experience after another. Fans can often have negative experiences:

*We've all been to horrible games like we'll say the Bohs game just after the Malmo game where we lost 1-0 and it was like – poor crowd, terrible weather, average game, you know? (We) lost 1-0, it's like those kind of games where people will go 'ah f***s sake I'd much prefer being at home now, warm, watching the Simpsons or something!' (laughter)*

(‘Allan’, Cork City fan, male, early 30s)

Clearly fandom is not always about the pleasure derived from victory. There is no guarantee of positive outcomes. How, then, is the sacredness of fandom maintained (Belk *et al* 1989), if ecstatic experience is only occasional in nature? It is maintained to a great degree by the fans’ sense of themselves as producers of the consumption experience.

Fans, then, have a strongly developed sense of fandom as an activity that is produced by themselves (Holt 1995). This self-perception is strengthened by external sanction (Belk *et al* 1989), even if this involves selective perception in relation to fan interpretation of media, players, and managers’ comments and opinions on their role as fans. This perception of fandom as something not only productive, but sacred, helps in turn to maintain commitment to fandom as an ongoing activity. It also plays a central role in the collective understanding of not only fan activity, but also fan identity as something owned by the fans themselves. This is particularly interesting in the context of the current study, because it has strong implications for fan perceptions of the market.

5.4 Fandom and the marketplace.

The fans’ sense of fandom as participation contributes to a perspective among the fans of fandom as something that is outside the marketplace. They have helped to co-produce (Holt 1995) the fan experience and identity with minimal involvement from marketers. Many aspects of fandom are characterised by the absence of any monetary transaction

other than the acquisition of a match ticket. When the fans do have something to say about the market it is often critical:

They've (the club) got your £500 or £520 or...whatever, up front for your season ticket...it's human nature, they are gonna sit back and go 'yeah' cause they know we're always gonna be there, they're gonna take you for granted, ...they know they've got a captive audience so they do take you for granted
(‘Evo’, Liverpool fan, male, late fifties)

While ‘Evo’ feels taken for granted, ‘Papa Lozarou’ (Liverpool fan, male) voices even stronger feelings, this time in relation to the official merchandise replica teamshirt issued by the club after the European Cup Final in 2005:

*It looks like some crap knock off shirt you get down the market on a Saturday. It just looks so bloody cheap. No embroidered badge, GOLD (gold????) numbers? What the f**k? Tacky as f**k.*

It is worth noting that a self-perception on the part of fans that corporate marketers take them for granted, or otherwise treat them unfairly by trying to sell them shoddy merchandise, for example, is not an original finding, but is a theme in the wider fan literature, including research on media fans (Jenkins 1992, Kozinets 2001). The question of why fans adopt such an oppositional stance therefore becomes important in the development of a theory of fan consumption. As this study will show, such an oppositional stance contributes to the greater emphasis placed by football fans on consumption of non material consumption objects, such as fan camaraderie (Madrigal 2000), over consumption of official market goods, when it comes to delineating fan identity and prioritising fan practice.

This antipathy towards official goods might seem strange at first, given the popular (and not wholly inaccurate) perception of football fans as merchandise-laden consumers who

avidly queue up every season to buy each new team shirt, to ritually prepare themselves for visiting the stadium or pub to cheer their team on. The problem with this perception is that it overlooks the oppositional stance at the heart of 'hard-core' football fandom (Richardson and Turley 2005, King 1997). The problem has been exacerbated at a conceptual level by consumer behaviour studies that fail to distinguish between contrasting fan consumption styles, and instead equate participatory fandom with uncritical consumption of official merchandise (Derbaix *et al* 2002, Holt 1995, Hopkinson and Pujari 1999).

The sociological literature on football fan consumption provides an alternative perspective however. Giulianotti (2002) observes that only certain types of fan buy official team merchandise. King (1995, 1997) explains the distaste of the hard-core Manchester United 'lads' for official team merchandise, which to them signals inauthenticity rather than authenticity. In an exception to the received understanding in the consumer behaviour literature, Richardson and Turley (2007, forthcoming) document the antipathy of some Liverpool supporters towards uncritical adoption of official team merchandise.

Among the sociological perspectives on sports fan consumption, Crawford (2004) is isolated in mistakenly equating the merchandise-oriented displays of ice hockey fans with the participatory fandom of hard-core football fans. Crawford fails to acknowledge that the foundations of ice hockey fandom are far more marketised in nature than the pre-hyper commodification (Giulianotti 2002) styles of fandom still eulogised by many of the fans of Manchester United and Liverpool.

It is noticeable from the data gathered for this study, however, that football fans do not completely shun official merchandise. They do not boycott the club shop or organise protests outside it. They will often buy and use the official goods – but only under certain conditions and with certain objectives in mind. In short, they are neither adversaries nor dupes of consumption (Kozinets and Handelman 2004), but instead to a degree resemble Jenkins' (1992) textual poachers, or Holt's (2002) *bricoleurs*, practicing something not unrelated to Fiske's (1989:15) concept of expropriation. They continue to consume their fandom, interacting with the market, but refuse to allow their identity as fans to be defined

or confined by the dictates and boundaries the market attempts to set (Fiske 1989, Holt 2002).

Fans in fact reject market-defined versions of fan identity. They do so partly because market definitions of fan identity elevate consumption of official merchandise over consumption of alternative, fan produced consumption objects. An uncritical acceptance of market-defined fandom is therefore impossible. Market-defined fandom conflicts far too strongly with the fans' sense of hierophany (Belk *et al* 1989) and their sense of ownership of this particular cultural terrain. To understand how the fans contest this cultural terrain, it is important to understand the nature of these fan produced consumption objects.

5.5 Material and non material fan consumption objects.

In the first instance, it is essential to note that fan consumption objects can be either material or non material in nature. Material fan consumption objects deliver on a number of themes for fans, including aspects of sacred consumption such as hierophany and tangibilised contamination (Belk *et al* 1989). By and large, subsequent studies of fandom have neglected to focus specifically on sacred consumption, instead addressing other (admittedly important) themes including those of affiliation, participation, and integration (Derbaix *et al* 2002, Holt 1995). This relative neglect has contributed to the current situation in the literature, where the significance of hierophany, for instance, has been erroneously overlooked. Similarly, the existence of *non* material consumption objects within fan consumption has not been completely overlooked, but our understanding of such consumption objects is underdeveloped. What are these objects, and what purposes do they fulfil? What role, if any, do such objects play in the fans' sense of hierophany?

Fan adulation of sacred players, and, of course, managers like Bill Shankly is expressed not only by using goods to concretise (Belk *et al* 1989) fans' feelings of adoration for their 'gods' (O'Guinn 1991) but also through singing and chanting their names, and recounting stories about their exploits and achievements. It is now proposed that the composition and

performance of these songs, and the recounting of stories about the exploits of these footballing 'gods', constitute two distinct forms of non material fan consumption objects. In order to explain what is meant by this, a discussion of Madrigal's initial conceptualisation of fan camaraderie as consumption object is now presented.

Madrigal (2000) introduces (but does not develop) the concept of fan camaraderie as consumption object. Two factors are now proposed as being of particular importance in relation to this concept. The first factor is fan ownership of the consumption object production process, and the second is the non material nature of the consumption object.

Madrigal's conceptualisation of fan camaraderie as a consumable object is a highly useful one, underdeveloped though it may be, because it gives a great deal of insight into what fans actually consume. It builds on Holt's (1995) conceptualisation of fans as co-producers of the consumption object, because it recognises the slightly over-simplified nature of Holt's original model. The idea of fans as *co*-producers does not fully recognise the role of fans as producers in their own right.

Fan camaraderie itself, as a consumption object, is also something of an oversimplification. It is apparent from this study's findings that a number of non-material consumption objects must be 'acquired' in order to fully participate in fan camaraderie. Furthermore, while all such objects could, in a sense, be collectively regarded as 'fan knowledge', fan knowledge as consumption object would also be an oversimplification, because it overlooks the difference between the separate consumption objects 'fan discourse' and 'fan singing'/'fan performance'.

Football fan discourse, when fans converse with each other about football, can be understood as related to the 'fan gossip' of media fans (Jenkins 1992) while 'fan performance', because it is based on the performance of songs the fans have written themselves, can in a sense be regarded as related to media fans' production of their own texts (Jenkins 1992, Kozinets 2001, Lewis 1992), giving the fans a sense of producerly control (Fiske 1989:104) over their fandom.

The non-material consumption objects of discourse and performance fulfil many of the same purposes as the material fan consumption objects described in the literature, such as affiliation and production (see above). What is of particular interest, however, is the greater significance attached by some fans to non-material consumption objects than to material consumption objects in the form of official merchandise:

It's so hard to put into words! But merchandise to me doesn't mean anything ... – if I see someone buying all the gear that's fine yeh know! ...but to me merchandise isn't important. I see a fella beside me- he's wearing no colours - I don't care! He knows the words to 'Poor Scouser Tommy'? Fair play to ya, you're me best mate yeh know?

'Funkyzeit Mit Looney' (Liverpool fan, male, early 30's)

'Funkyzeit Mit Looney' prioritises the *non* material consumption object of 'fan performance' (such as an ability to sing the Liverpool supporters' song 'Poor Scouser Tommy') over the material consumption object of merchandise. This verbatim does not, in isolation, problematise official merchandise, but it locates it far below the fan produced, non-material consumption object of fan performance. It does this not just in terms of emically declared importance, but also in terms of its value as a marker of consciousness of kind (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001). 'Funkyzeit Mit Looney' goes on to distance himself from official merchandise, however, in a way that *does* explicitly indicate that there is a problem:

Merchandise to me – euhh – merchandise would sum up Man United - yeh know? Say no more like! Yeh know they're practically imploding themselves at the moment ...they're the ones who epitomise greed and epitomise the whole merchandise scheme and the brand yeh know

This is not to claim that fandom is non-material, or that material things are intrinsically unimportant to fans. Fandom and the fan identity are produced through a *combination* of material and non material consumption objects and practices. In order to understand what this identity means to the fans, and why it is that market-produced consumption objects can be perceived as problematic, the concept of hierophany will now be discussed.

5.6 Sacred Identity (Hierophany), Singularisation, and the role of Sacred Consumption Objects

5.6.1 Sacred Identity (Hierophany).

In contending that hierophany is key to developing an understanding of the consumption of football fans, the study now examines the collective sense of identity of hard-core Liverpool fans. These fans see themselves as unique among the wider football fan population, and believe that no other club has a spirit comparable to theirs. They further assert that it is through their songs, their home made banners, and their sporting and knowledgeable attitude that their uniqueness manifests itself:

Nobody else does what we do. Nobody else would have organised a piss up in London's main square because that's what we do at every other European away. Nobody's got the spirit of our club. Nobody else has got the spirit of our supporters.... Nobody else has got songs like ours.... Nobody else makes banners ...like we do

(‘Evo’, Liverpool fan)

I think the common thread within football is that Liverpool supporters are more knowledgeable about the game. I happen to think that's true. The even handedness is also part of it – it's hard to imagine other supporters having the sportsmanship to stay and applaud a team that has just taken the championship from you with an injury time goal. I've lost count of the times that winning teams have received full acknowledgement after winning at Anfield, particularly in European games. Those are the sort of things that stick in the mind of people within football.

(‘acrossthefaceofthegoaaal’, Liverpool fan, posting on the RAOTL forum)

While it is true that Liverpool fans have attracted much comment, and have often been singled out for attention for their colourful and passionate support, claims of idiosyncrasy

such as the above are probably not unique to Liverpool fans. Such claims would probably be contested by fans of other clubs. The accuracy or otherwise of these claims is not the concern of this study, however. What is of relevance to this investigation is how such claims of idiosyncrasy⁴ constitute evidence of a sense of hierophany (Belk *et al* 1989) among the fans, and further, how this sense of hierophany acts to influence preferences and practices in relation to fan use of consumption objects. Belk *et al* (1989:6) explain that a central aspect of the sacred is that it “does not manifest itself to everyone” but rather it only “shows itself to *us* (this writer’s italics)”. Hierophany can therefore be understood to mean a community’s sense of itself as possessing a sacredness that has not been revealed or given to others.

The data in this study show that Liverpool fans have a particularly strong sense of hierophany. Their collective self-concept is that of a sort of chosen people, a people apart. This sense of collective sacredness was bestowed on the group in the first instance by the mythical achievements of Bill Shankly, but can also be understood as something collectively bestowed upon each other.

The fans experience the sacred, and have a sense of collective self as sacred, in part because of their participative style of fandom, their singing, chanting, and use of sacred goods such as home made flags and banners. All these things are used as ways not only to express their sense of hierophany, but to continually bestow it upon each other. Their sense of self is not simply as *fans* of the star players on the field, but as *co-participants* with the players, co-producers of the sacred moments from which fans of other teams are excluded. Their collective experience of shared flow and ecstatic fandom can also be understood as a manifestation of what Maffesoli (1996) terms ‘puissance’, that is, the sacred life force of the crowd. This transcends Holt’s (1995) imagined co-production of outcomes. It extends into the realm of co-production of sacred experience and identity.

⁴ Claims of idiosyncrasy, or claims of possessing a unique understanding that others do not share, seem to be a widespread phenomenon among members of subcultures of consumption and brand communities. In this respect, the Liverpool fans are not unusual and making such claims is certainly not unique. The claim is of great interest however when we consider that it strongly colours their attitude towards official market goods.

The material and non-material sacred consumption objects used by football fans therefore have multiple purposes and meanings. They represent not only the felt need to venerate the star players, but also to express the sense of sacredness in the fan identity itself. Fans always articulate a sense of their own participation as something extraordinary:

It's very important to be there (in time) for that (singing 'You'll Never Walk Alone' before the match begins)... (the crowd singing) it makes my skin go in ...goosebumps!

(Swedish Liverpool supporter, 'Petter' tries to describe the sacred experience of joining in singing 'You'll Never Walk Alone' at Anfield)

That (Liverpool v Celtic) would have been a match! Everyone singing 'You'll Never Walk Alone'. I'd love one of those (half Liverpool, half Celtic colours) scarves

('Adrian', Liverpool fan)

The ritual singing of the Liverpool anthem, 'You'll Never Walk Alone', usually involves supporters lifting their Liverpool scarves into the air for the duration of the song. The sacredness of the good (in this case, scarves) is maintained by the crowd's collective understanding of this ritual as a preparation rite for the sacred moment when the 'Men in Red' take to the field (Belk *et al* 1989:7). Their heroes are about to arrive, 'mock' battle is about to commence, and they use their scarves to help them prepare for the 'battle' and their own role in it (Figure 5-3):



5-3 The Kop sing You'll Never Walk Alone

A variety of other songs and chants are performed by the fans during the game:

You couldn't be quiet (on the Kop). There was peer pressure to join in – especially the important chants

Give me an example of an 'important' chant

Say when you're one-nil down

Yeah?

'Attack! Attack! Attack Attack Attack!' ...That had to be sustained, it had to be frightening. And if you weren't chanting you'd get a bit of a 'Come on!' ...nights like St. Etienne you weren't allowed to shut up! If you weren't singing you'd get thrown out of the way (out to one side of the Kop)

('Jeff Mc', Liverpool supporter, male, forties)

This suggests a perceived kratophanous power (Belk *et al* 1989) in the collective generation of an atmosphere that is seen as simultaneously encouraging the home team, while attempting to discourage or even intimidate the opposition. The fans see the use of colours as playing a key role in this creation of atmosphere:

“Now is the time for us all to show our colours!” Anything! Absolutely anything, because we need to get an edge against Chelsea, and everything that’s gonna give us an edge is worth trying. Anything! If that meant that everyone was in Red, and all they (Chelsea) could see when they came out was Red everywhere – whether it was just us screaming and shouting all the time which might – might give us an edge...we needed every edge we could against Chelsea because Chelsea, last season, were a better football team than us

(‘Evo’)

‘Evo’ sees not only the singing and chanting, but also the mass display of Liverpool team colours as something that just might help tip the balance of the game in Liverpool’s favour. In this context, team colours become part of the collective sense of identity, helping the fans to support the players, and giving expression to their felt need to influence the outcome of the tie in any way possible. Both material and non material consumption objects are combined to produce passionate performances that are collectively understood by the fans as demonstrative of their unique spirit and hierophanous identity, unmatched by the fans of any other club:

No other fans, when you’re 3-0 down at half time, sing ‘You’ll Never Walk Alone’

(‘Le Songmeister’ Liverpool fan, male, 30s)

Here, ‘Le Songmeister’ invokes the memory of half time in the 2005 European Cup Final, when Liverpool found themselves 3-0 down to AC Milan, and the Liverpool fans sang ‘You’ll Never Walk Alone’ with an incredible passion. Performances of this nature are often cited by many figures in the game, including journalists, commentators, and star footballers not only from Liverpool but other teams, as evidence of how passionate and

loyal Liverpool fans are. These eulogising statements in praise of the supporters, often coming from figures practically venerated as gods by the fans (O'Guinn 1991), have the effect of externally sanctioning (Belk *et al* 1989) the collective self-perception of Liverpool fans as together being not only special but unique.

This collective self-perception is therefore understood as possessing hierophanous qualities to a great degree because of non material consumption objects such as fan performance. Not only do the fans perceive their identity as sacred, but they perceive it as sacred and unique largely because of the non-material qualities that they cite as core to their felt sense of identity. The fans see the non-material aspects of fandom as even more important than the material. Material consumption objects, including football scarves and home made banners, can be legitimately used and celebrated as long as it is understood that of themselves they are insufficient in the expression of fan identity. They only acquire their full value when used in conjunction with the non- material. Hyper-marketised versions of fandom are perceived as seeking to invert this order, by elevating material, branded goods in importance over both the non-material and material consumption objects produced by the fans. This is unacceptable to the fans partly because it does not offer the same capacity for singularisation (Belk *et al* 1989) as their own preferred modes and objects of consumption.

5.6.2 Singularisation.

The concept of singularisation (Belk *et al* 1989) provides particularly useful insight into fan preference for unofficial consumption objects. Singularisation represents one of the chief ways in which consumer goods can be de-commoditised and rendered sacred (Belk *et al* 1989:14). This process is of interest because it provides insight into the problem of how consumers can take a commercial commodity and use it to enhance their own sense of unique identity. Once an object has been bought, its symbolic meaning is transformed from that of homogenous commodity to unique (and sacred) object by including it in the performance of rituals that are seen as having a singularising effect. Football fans can therefore buy and wear a football shirt or scarf, perform the ritual of wearing these items to

a match, and in the process conceive of these items as sacred and unique to their 'tribe', even though millions of football fans around the world are engaged in the same process, using similar goods.

In the case of the hard-core Liverpool fans, their sense of production and identity being particularly bound up in non-market consumption objects allows them to feel a particularly strong sense of singularisation. What renders the unofficial consumption objects preferable to these fans is that they are produced by the fans, and thus the fans enjoy full producerly control over them (Fiske 1989:103,104). The process of singularisation is therefore greatly facilitated by the knowledge that the meanings assimilated into the self-concept (McCracken 1988, Elliott and Wattanasuwan 1998) are predominantly taken from consumption objects that were never commercial commodities to begin with. The fan produced consumer objects are collectively perceived as preferable to market produced goods, therefore, because of their greater ability to deliver on themes of singularisation, decommodification, and maintenance of the collective feeling of hierophany (Belk *et al* 1989). By the same token, football scarves, even if they are bought from official market sources, are much cheaper than the replica shirts that marketers place most emphasis on selling. They are therefore less hyper-marketised and can be more readily included in fan rituals without posing any risk to the singularisation process.

What has become particularly problematic for the fans in recent years is the sheer scale of market incursion onto their cultural terrain. A variety of studies have concluded that the marketisation of football has made it far more difficult for supporters to articulate their support in the manner that they would wish, not only through changes in stadium design and increased ticket prices, but also, for example, through changes in kick off times that facilitate satellite TV broadcasts but make it difficult to attend away games (Bale 1993, Giulianotti 2002, Nash 2000, Parry and Malcolm 2004). Ultimately the market is also blamed for the introduction of what fans perceive as the incursion of inauthentic styles of

support that threaten to destroy the sacred atmosphere within football stadia (King 1995, 1997; Richardson and Turley 2006).

While the response of fans to these issues has been to place greater emphasis on the significance of unofficial consumption objects as markers of authentic fandom, they have also adopted a variety of additional tactics to distance their consumption from the official marketplace (Kozinets 2002a). It is important to note that the primary purpose of these distancing tactics is not to resist the market *per se*, but rather to maintain the sacredness of both the experience and the identity of fandom. The manifestations of consumer resistance analysed in the following chapter should therefore primarily be seen as behaviours designed to maintain sacredness, rather than as participation in ideologically motivated social movements such as those studied by Kozinets and Handelman (2004). Fan resistance is not to the capitalist system as such, but rather to the manner in which it tends to commoditise and therefore secularise what should properly be regarded as sacred.

Finally, what is also of interest is the extent to which fans incorporate official, market produced fan paraphernalia into their consumption. How do fans resolve the apparent contradiction between their professed aversion towards official market goods, and their actual consumption of these goods?

In order to examine these issues in more depth, the study now turns to the case of two different fan communities. The first of these communities is a group of Liverpool fans who are members of the 'Red All Over The Land' community, and the second community is made up of a much smaller group of Cork City fans involved in the production of a fanzine called 'FourFiveOne'.

5.7 Summary

For dedicated football fans, football fandom is a form of sacred consumption. It begins with a conversion experience of the non-pauline variety, in that the convert feels that everyone else shares her or his sudden passion for the game. The effect of this conversion

experience is to embed the fan identity very strongly within the neophyte fan's self-concept. Fan commitment to the identity is further bolstered by participation in the production of non material sacred consumption objects such as fan performance. Participation in producerly fandom, through production of non material fan consumption objects such as fan performance, and their co-use with material objects such as home made banners, generates sacred feelings of *communitas*, ecstasy, and flow which serve to further maintain commitment to the fan identity. For football fans such as hard-core Liverpool supporters, this identity is best conceptualised as a form of hierophany. These fans believe that no other set of supporters can match the spirit, passion, and wisdom of their community. They feel that this sets them apart from other football supporters and this further cements the sacredness of their fandom as a source of transcendent meaningfulness in their lives.

These feelings, in tandem with the collective belief in fandom as primarily a producerly and non marketised activity, have in recent years brought fans into conflict with the official market. Fans feel that the official market over-emphasises the importance of material consumption objects in the cultural pecking order. They see the market as a threat to their sense of hierophany, and they see official football merchandise as highly problematic, because it proposes fandom as an homogenous purchaseable commodity rather than a distinctive producerly activity. They have therefore adopted a rich variety of tactics to resist the market and distance their fandom from it, with the objective of maintaining their sacred experiences and protecting their sacred identity.

6 Chapter Six. Keeping Football Fandom Sacred Through Resisting The Market.

6.1 The 'Red All Over The Land' Community

6.1.1 The relative absence of the market from fan discourse

Prior to commencing the analysis of sacralisation maintenance through the mechanism of distancing tactics by the members of this community of football fans, it is useful to note the prevailing sense of a non (hyper) marketised culture that strikes the reader browsing through the many discussions on the fans' main discussion forum. In fact over the duration of the fieldwork for this study, what has been observed is that, rather than spending their time discussing issues related to the buying of merchandise – or for that matter resisting the selling of merchandise, fans have been concerned with other things.

They have spent most of their time engaged in typical fan discourse - how the team were performing, whether an underperforming striker should be dropped, or better still sold, whether the manager should be fired, and so on. When not discussing these topics, they have tended to discuss alternative designs for new banners, which songs were given the best airing at a recent match, or who would be present in the pub for a "bevy" (pint) before or after the next Liverpool game. What these topics have in common, of course, is that they can all be classified as part of 'fan discourse', a non-marketised consumption object, as defined in Chapter Five.

What is equally striking is that where official market goods do come up for discussion it is usually in a pejorative context, where the fans collectively derogate some outsider group by associating them with football merchandise. The conclusion that emerges from an overall analysis of the data is that these fans do not see official merchandise, whether bought from the club or a high street retailer, as necessarily being a marker of authentic fandom. Their definition of fandom prioritises and elevates a particularly participative style

of fan behaviour, over anything else. In this context, it is not buying market goods that counts, but participation in what we have earlier seen Holt (1995) define as co-productive consumption, where the fans see themselves sometimes as co-producers, with the team, and sometimes as *sole* producers, of the consumption experience.

This collective view of self as co-producers of sacred experience and identity brings these consumers into something of a collision course with the official market. It is the purpose of this chapter to critically scrutinise how these consumers manage this sense of conflict with the official market, and also how they resolve the apparent contradiction between on the one hand almost constantly criticising the market, and on the other hand actually managing to consume quite a high level of fan paraphernalia.

This analysis now returns to a re-consideration of Holt's (1995) concept of consumption as producing. Holt suggests that the problem for sports spectators intent on co-producing the outcome of the consumption event is that "the consumption object is controlled by others". The fans need some way of managing their perceptions of the event, to facilitate the belief that they are co-producing the outcome. One of the ways in which they do this is by bonding with the players on the field. Any communication from player to fan, such as a wave, is interpreted as a sign of this bonding process, the purpose of which is to allow fans "perceive that they have tapped into the official producers productive capabilities". According to Holt this allows the spectators "to engage in vicarious consumption", keeping in mind that this experience is not perceived as vicarious by the fans themselves. Also, while Holt mentions the wearing of merchandise elsewhere in his analysis, he could certainly have usefully included it as one of the key elements in this process of consumption as producing. How much easier it is for fans to imagine themselves as co-producers, once they are wearing the same shirts as players on the field?

And yet, in the case of members of the 'Red All Over The Land' community, co-production that relies excessively on consumption of official merchandise is regarded as far less meaningful than co-production that utilises alternative consumption objects, such as home made banners, as part of the process of production. Official merchandise is not

excluded from this process, but its significance is downplayed. What really matters to fans is collective participation in the production of non-material consumption objects such as fan performance.

There are moments when it becomes apparent that the fans' sense of participation is so strong that they come to perceive their own productive role as taking *primacy* over the role of any other co-producers, including both players and the market. The main source of sacralising power is seen as being the fans themselves, most notably on occasions such as the victory over Chelsea in the 2005 European Cup Semi-Final, when the atmosphere generated by the supporters was particularly passionate and spectacular:

*F*ckin 'ell! Did you lot just take notice of my rallying call or what? I've got to admit I'm writing this with a little bit of water seeping out of my eyes. THAT WAS F*CKIN INCREDIBLE! ...I've seen everything at Anfield in the past 41 years but NEVER NEVER anything like that...Well done every single last one of you, male and female, young and old, Scouse and Wool...No matter where you were in the ground last night please remember this as the greatest CROWD night in the history of Liverpool FC*

('Evo')

'Evo' is understandably emotional and excited the morning after the victory over Chelsea, as Liverpool are in a European Cup Final for the first time in 20 years. The claim that this was the greatest crowd night in the history of the club needs to be recognised as a claim of idiosyncratic status, arguably arising out of a felt need to articulate Evo's overwhelming sense of hierophany after the events in question. What is most significant however is that it was *fan* ownership of the occasion that was celebrated – and this ownership was exercised, or claimed, via the use of fan performance.

This sets a marker for overall ownership of the cultural terrain. The collective self perception (as seen not only in Evo's remarks but throughout the forum discourse in relation to the epic encounters between Liverpool and Chelsea, and then Liverpool and

Milan in the 2005 Final itself), is of the supporters as primary owners of the (sacred) occasion. The most significant aspects of the fan experience, the most sacred moments at the heart of these relevatory incidents (Belk *et al* 1989), involve the fans collaborating in producing a socially constructed version of reality that emphasises their role over that of the market. The fans perceived that what happened was something that they achieved and that the market could never accomplish:

WE unnerved (Chelsea goalkeeper) Cech...WE made sure the linesman dare not disallow the goal...WE made the difference...You can't buy that Mr Abramovich
(Liverpool fan 'Stork', posting on RAOTL)

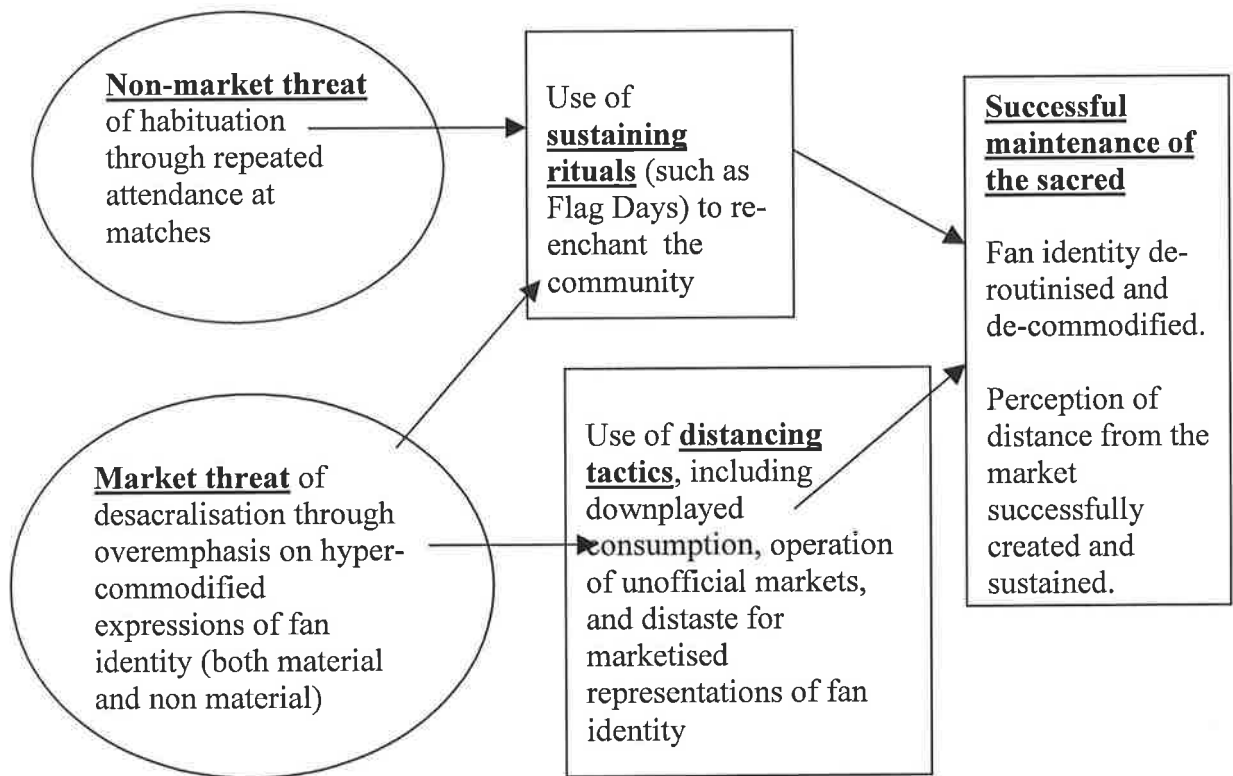
These consumers see the market as something incapable of delivering unique experience. The market is therefore kept at a distance, and hierophanous claims of ownership of fan experience are made. The assertion – 'You can't buy that Mr Abramovich' – is all the more evocative as a metaphor when we consider Chelsea owner Roman Abramovich's status as one of the richest people in the world. The moment of triumph over Chelsea is socially re-constructed as the triumph of the people over the market. The man who can buy everything defeated, thwarted, by the power of the people.

This suggests that fans can have a strong sense of self-as-fan with little or no reference to market goods. Equally, it implies that any presentation of fandom that over-emphasises the significance of market goods will be perceived as problematic, because of the contradiction it poses to the collectively structured, socially constructed identity that the fans are familiar with. The cultural terrain is primed for at least some degree of consumer resistance to *any* attempt at marketisation of fan identity, because the belief that fandom is something that you do, not something that you can buy (Richardson and Turley 2006), is so strongly held.

The practices of the market in relation to fandom would probably have been perceived in a problematic fashion by the fans, even if marketers had adopted a high degree of cultural sensitivity towards the fans' sense of identity. Of course what developed instead was a set of marketing practices characterised by a lack of sensitivity and an eagerness to cash in on

the new-found popularity of football, by, for example, charging inflated prices for match tickets and football shirts. This of course led to a feeling on the part of many fans that they were being ripped off and excluded from the game (King 1998) and the Liverpool fans were no exception. More fundamentally, the hegemonic presentation of marketised fandom as the only legitimate version of football supporter identity was seen as a threat to the fans' sense of hierophany. This in turn has resulted in the adoption of a rich variety of distancing tactics (Kozinets 2002a). In relation to these tactics, as Figure 6.1 illustrates, it is important to remember that efforts at sacralisation maintenance are not solely aimed at the market. Fans work to maintain the sacredness of fandom against *any* potential agent of desacralisation, including the habituation that might otherwise arise from going to the match, week in, week out. This serves to remind us that their ultimate objective is to maintain the sacredness of fandom, rather than to take any ideological stance against the hegemony of the market. However because the main potential desacralising agent is perceived to be the market rather than habituation, most of the emphasis is on practices aimed at distancing fandom from the market.

6-1 Fan Sacralisation Maintenance Activities.



6.2 Distancing Tactics in the RAOTL Community.

6.2.1 Distancing Tactic One: Voicing distaste for marketised representations of fandom/ fan identity

Football marketers have incorporated (Fiske 1989) or commodified (Holt 2002) not only material fan consumption objects in the development of new products and services, but the non-material consumption object of fan discourse as well. Every single manifestation of marketised fan identity is challenged by the hard-core fans however. Voicing distaste for each and every representation of marketised identity is accordingly one of the most important distancing tactics through which the fans resist the market, because through it the fans reject the notion that the de-sacralising market could have any legitimate role in defining fan identity.

6.2.1.1 Distaste for marketised versions of fan discourse

New outlets for fan discourse have proliferated in recent years, and have become populated by 'new consumer' fans eager to display their expertise on the subject of the beautiful game. While fans have always enjoyed talking about football, individual fans can now engage in the opportunity to do so in front of a national audience, by dialing a premium pay phone number to speak on the new programme '*You're On Sky Sports*', and present their perspective on the burning football issues of the day. The resulting contributions tend to be perceived as lacking in any sort of insight by the members of the RAOTL community. The question of whether this is in any sense true is not an issue for the current study. What is of interest is that the distaste expressed by the members of RAOTL for '*You're on Sky Sports*' is part of a systematic practice of denying that any marketised version of a fan consumption object, material or non material, could possibly possess any subcultural capital whatsoever (Jancovich 2002, Thornton 1995).

6.2.1.2 Distaste for marketised versions of fan performance and marketised versions of fan colour display

The Sky Sports Saturday morning show '*Soccer A.M.*' comes in for considerable criticism on the RAOTL website discussion forum. This is unsurprising because '*Soccer A.M.*' presents marketised representations of both non material (fan performance) and material (fan colours) consumption objects. The fans who appear on '*Soccer A.M.*' are always dressed in full replica football kits, and regularly perform the type of generic, homogenised chants that the members of RAOTL find not just deeply irritating but potentially desacralising:

I hate Soccer AM with a passion. All the little shitty things like that 'easy' clap thing they do are ruining football

('Merse', member of RAOTL)

The chant 'Easy! Easy!' meaning that the opposition are inferior and easy to beat, is despised because it appears to have originated on the commercial television show '*Soccer A.M.*' and is therefore market produced rather than fan produced. It has been widely adopted by fans whose style is perceived as inauthentic. Their adoption of a marketised chant is seen as symptomatic of their inability to come up with original chants of their own. This implicates such fans as part of the 'new consumer' fan project. It labels them as believers in fandom as purchasable commodity and is symbolic of their utter lack of subcultural capital. The notion that football fandom could be reduced to the buying of team kits from official marketers and chanting exactly the same words as every other fan in the country is anathema to the hard-core fans. Distaste for this entire style of fandom is therefore a regular theme in the discourse among members of the RAOTL community, and the increased emergence of this style of fandom at live football matches is bitterly resented:

*A lot of people at Anfield now have no respect and think they know it all cos they saw it on Soccer AM. I've said this before and I'll say it again, when you first are at the match, my thinking is you'd spend a while sussing out the what everyone else did/said/thought. You'd learn from the regulars and would keep it zipped til you knew what was what. Nowadays, f****s turn up for their first game at Anfield and act as if they own the place. Same goes for the pubs.*

‘Aido’ (RAOTL member, male, thirties)

While the consensus in relation to ‘Soccer A.M.’ is not entirely negative, those who do admit to watching the programme are careful to stress that they only enjoy certain things about it:

If I'm up on a Saturday morning I'd watch it, the showboating and...crossbar challenge are decent enough...

‘Funkyzeit Mit Looney’

The presence – and resentment of – the ‘Soccer A.M.’ style of fandom is interesting because it suggests that as far as the more ‘traditional’ fans are concerned, the real issue in regard to fan authenticity is not necessarily *non-participation*, that is, behaving passively, not joining in the singing, chanting, and so on but *incorrect* participation. There is obviously more than one form of incorrect participation in football fan culture. Fan distaste for passive, non participative spectating has already been discussed in the literature (King 1998, Richardson & Turley 2006), but these new findings suggest that to proactively participate in a culturally incorrect manner is equally or perhaps even more offensive to the hard-core fans. Blame for all these subculturally deficient practices is laid at the door of the market:

Money is the root to many modern day problems, of which I don't need to bore you with repetitive reminders. The control has shifted from manager and club, to player and agent. The fans in the ground matter less than the fans watching on the TV (or so it seems), and those who dedicate time, effort and money week in week out, matter less than those who come less frequently and spend big bucks in the stores that are rigged out from top to bottom with mostly useless merchandise that clutters your house and makes you look like some sort of American "sports nut" who shouts "Go team Go".

(Liverpool fan 'Roper', on the RAOTL forum)

Merchandise from official club stores is “mostly useless”, it “clutters your house” and (worst of all?) it “makes you look like some sort of American ‘sports nut’ who shouts ‘Go team Go’”.

What all these problematic styles or approaches to fandom have in common is that they are seen as creatures, or creations of the market. The market was blamed for the arrival of the passive ‘new consumer’ fan and the market is now being blamed for the advent of the “Easy! Easy!” chanting fan. Both types of fan are viewed as failing to practice participative fandom correctly, and both types are viewed as uncritically endorsing market defined fan identities, including the excessive consumption of merchandise. Therefore as marketised representations of fandom, both identities are derogated as inauthentic, distasteful (Hogg and Savolainen 1998), and lacking in subcultural capital (Jancovich 2002, Thornton 1995).

6.2.1.3 Distaste for buyers of Liverpool merchandise

A further distancing tactic is the voicing of distaste, not only for fans of other clubs who appear on TV shows like *Soccer A.M.*, but also fans of Liverpool who throng the official club shop, queueing up to uncritically buy merchandise. There is a consensus on the forum that the ‘new consumer’ style of fandom is characterised by occasional rather than regular

visits to Anfield, and that each visit must include a visit to the club shop, to stock up on official merchandise (prior to going into the stadium to engage in inappropriate chants at inappropriate times). The members of the forum further emically differentiate between (OOTs) out of towners who are not from Liverpool but who are regarded as knowledgeable members of the community, and 'day trippers' who are criticised for their tendency to treat match day as some sort of annual shopping expedition:

I would say an OOT (out of townner) is someone who goes as often as possible but is not from the area and a day tripper is someone who goes once a season but could go more and has the digital camera (look this is me at the Kop end, this is me with the pitch behind me arms length type of pic)/jester hat wearer/club shop bag bulging with goodies

('UMC', Liverpool fan, on the 'RAOTL' web forum)

Another variation as regards collective nouns that function as a term of abuse for the 'daytripper' style of fan is 'jester hatted beaut':

Where's the originality on the terraces, and the banter between the home and away fans. It's not just us, it's everyone....I think everyone's being dragged down by the way football is at the moment. Home and away atmospheres are getting worse and worse. At home, there's the old annoyances, that have been dragging on for seasons such as the Liverworld day trippers and the jester hatted beauts all dotted around singing "stand up if you hate....." and other such lower league shite that has no home on the terraces of Anfield.

('roper')

'Liverworld' is a derogatory term used by 'Roper' to refer to the club's official retail outlets. He is almost in despair at the de-differentiation he feels has been brought about by market commodification of football. Liverworld-frequenting 'day trippers', bedecked in jester hats, expressing their fan identity through silly merchandise and the singing of despicable 'Soccer A.M.' style chants, are to be heard everywhere these days – even in the hallowed ground of Anfield. The generic chants and ubiquitous displays of merchandise associated with the 'Soccer A.M.' style tend to standardise fandom across clubs, and to evaporate rather than emphasise what is distinctive about them. This undermines the claims to idiosyncrasy of Liverpool fans, and poses a threat to their felt sense of hierophany.

While the above analysis explains the avowed distaste for 'Soccer A.M.' fandom, the voicing of distaste for marketised consumption objects and identities is not enough by itself to maintain successful resistance to the market. The fans need additional tactics in order to ward off the threat posed by the market to their sense of hierophany. What, then, are the other distancing tactics? They include the operation of an alternative, informal, implicit market, in competition to the official market, and – so that official goods can be consumed without fan consumption becoming profane – a third distancing tactic, namely, downplayed consumption.

6.2.2 Distancing Tactic Three – Operation of an informal fan market in competition with the official market

Given the ubiquitous presence of market-defined versions of fandom, articulations of distaste are not really sufficient as a strategy for contesting the cultural terrain of fandom and maintaining the collective sense of hierophany. Articulations of distaste certainly distance the community's version of fandom verbally from the desacralising threat of the market, but verbal approaches alone would lack the substance that tangibilised contamination (Belk *et al* 1989) provides as a more certain, concretised way of assuring sacralisation maintenance. For sacralisation maintenance to be assured, resistance must be material as well as verbal.

Resistance to the market does indeed take material form, in the shape of an unofficial or implicit market, that parallels the official market through provision of fan colours such as home made banners, fan designed t-shirts, and fan texts in the form of unofficial fanzines. It also provides many other consumption objects such as badges, CDs, and other paraphernalia. The most fundamental distinction between it and the official market, however, lies not in the goods it provides but in its socially constructed ethos.

One of the clearest aspects of the ethos of this unofficial market is the communal attitude towards prices. The fans practice very moderate pricing when trading with each other. Such non extortionate pricing is seen as a form of deliberate opposition to the official 'rip off' market. Breaches of this ethos are taken very seriously and are one of the very few reasons that justify the barring of entry to, or expulsion from, the community. This was illustrated in the weeks prior to the 2005 European Cup Final when a small number of people attempted to offer Cup Final tickets for sale at a price substantially above their face value:

*For the next three weeks we are not going to be accepting new members...I don't have time to sift through threads looking for touting **** and then subsequently banning the f***ers*

'Papa Lozarou'

...

*Great idea Loz. It would have got a bit tedious telling them all to f*** off!*

'Davey C'

This discussion took place with less than three weeks to go to the 2005 European Cup Final, so the purpose of the lockout was absolutely clear, and the members greeted it with unanimous approval. This occurred in spite of the fact that it was Liverpool FC's first European Cup Final for twenty years, something that one might have expected to lead to an unprecedented level of demand for match tickets among the fans. The offer of tickets for sale at vastly inflated prices received an angry response from fans who, though desperate to get to the Final, were completely unwilling to be 'ripped off', and were even angrier at the idea that anyone calling himself or herself a Liverpool fan could even contemplate doing such a thing to their fellow fans:

...you are scum. You don't deserve a final ticket. You should be reported to UEFA. If you'd come on here asking for say £50 to cover your own costs ...I think most people would probably live with that...asking people to pay upwards of £500 ...is very low indeed

'Yoshan Inanuku'

*...we get ripped off by everyone else, so why the f*** do you want us to rip each other off?(You are) Banned. No touting on RAOTL thanks...all of you know we hardly ever ban people, but we're not having touting*

'Papa Lozarou'

There is a clear sense of an anti-profiteering ideology here – the assertion that “we get ripped off by everyone else” can’t be simply dismissed as an off-the cuff remark. It confirms the pattern elsewhere throughout the data that fans feel a strong sense of grievance directed at those who seek to define fandom as a purchaseable commodity packaged at a premium price. Prices are supposed to be reasonable, rather than a ‘rip off’ like the official prices:

*(I) would never wear a replica shirt nowadays. They're a f**king rip-off! I see the shirt (and I think...) 'Day Tripper'!!! The 70's one looks ok!?! Still wouldn't go to the game in one*
(‘Shearer’)

*The Reebok winners T shirt (from the official club shop) is playing on us wanting something authentic!! (i.e. as actually worn by the players)., F**k the corporates off, as a previous post said, go (to) the HJC shop, and perhaps the HJC can come up with a decent 5 times commemorative T? I copped for some nice winners T's in the Bul after the game and only 6 quid, the club as usual taking the piss 15 quid for a Red T shirt with a bit of a print on!!*
(‘Bernier’, on the RAOTL forum)

‘Bernier’ advocates buying t-shirts to commemorate the 2005 European Cup victory from an *alternative* outlet – the HJC (Hillsborough Justice Campaign⁵) Shop, which normally sells a variety of Liverpool fan paraphernalia at prices that are usually lower than those charged in the official club shop. Buying material representations of fandom is not the problem – the fans need tangibilised contamination, in the form of material objects, for

⁵ The Hillsborough Justice Campaign is a campaign to re-open the official enquiry into the 1989 Hillsborough Disaster referred to in Chapter Two.

sacralisation maintenance (Belk *et al*) – but these representations *must*, Bernier argues, be kept at a distance from the exploitative proclivity of the market.

The reference to the HJC shop further illustrates another aspect of this unofficial market, in that it is not made up of formally incorporated fan trading premises, but rather exists in a collectively implicit sense. In this implicit, informal ‘market’, the fans understand that buying fan artifacts from alternative, unofficial sources such as the HJC Shop, street stalls, or even their fellow fans, is higher in subcultural capital (Thornton 1995) than buying from official sources, and is therefore subculturally preferable. Adhering to the community’s system of subcultural capital by buying goods from any of these unofficial sources helps to protect against the de-sacralising effects of the official market in a number of key ways.

(a) The goods for sale from unofficial sources are not for sale from official sources, nor are they advertised by official media:

Fanzines (which are cheaper than the official matchday club programmes) are not sold from official programme kiosks. ‘Unofficial’ t-shirts are never sold inside the club shops. No form of unofficial merchandise is available from anything other than informal channels, which of course include the fans’ own unofficial websites. They are thus literally at a real spatial distance from the official market. This greatly facilitates the processes of singularisation and de-commodification (Belk *et al* 1989), allowing the fans to perceive these goods as existing outside the official market.

(b) ‘Unofficial’ goods are produced and sold in very small quantities from ‘insider’ outlets

The official mass market desacralises partly because it homogenises. The sheer numbers of official football shirts sold, for instance, means that huge numbers of consumers have exactly the same product, which makes it more difficult to perceive the product as retaining sacred qualities such as hierophany.

Most of the unofficial goods, however, only appear from time to time, or are only available from outlets that many fans are possibly not even aware of, such as unofficial websites or dingy pubs frequented by hard-core fans on match day, but are overlooked by most 'new consumer' fans. The goods are produced in small numbers, they are sold in small numbers from a tiny number of the type of outlet just described above, and therefore they retain their heterogenous quality and a high level of perceived subcultural capital (Bourdieu 1984, Thornton 1995, Holt 1998). These factors clearly serve to maintain the distance of these goods from the official market. The relative lack of availability of the goods, compared to the official merchandise, is a further inversion of the traditional marketplace logic of facilitating customer access to goods.

(c) Unofficial goods are never festooned in sponsors' logos

In stark contrast to the sponsorship bedecked official shirts, fan-produced merchandise is always sponsorship free. Fans can choose from a range of items, none of which are negatively contaminated by a potentially desacralising commercial logo. The unofficial goods therefore concretise only the displaced meaning (McCracken 1988) understood and treasured by the fan, and not any commercial meaning.

Kozinets (2002a) conceptualises the attempts by 'Burning Man' participants to 'mask' brand logos as an important tactic in distancing the self from the market. A similar preference for the absence of brand names is expressed by RAOTL forum member 'Paul F':

I'd prefer us to take the Barcelona approach - no shirt sponsorship and no ground sponsorship, as both would taint and dilute the 'brand' of "FC Barcelona". Has the club ever thought through the implications of how many more shirts they would sell if they took this stance? Similarly with the stadium - the income would be partly offset by the reduced attractiveness of all the 'This is the Carlsberg Stadium' merchandise. Call me naive - but I think the idea has merit.

The distaste for commercial sponsorship and official sponsored merchandise could not be more explicit. Furthermore, the possibility of sponsorship on the one hand is contrasted to the perceived authenticity of Barcelona on the other. The implication is clear; Barcelona's shirt symbolises authenticity, purity and distance from the market, because it is not festooned with sponsors' names. Rather than wait for the club to come up with similar, brand-free materials, however, the unofficial fan market produces its own, in the form of home made goods.

Some of these home made and/or home designed goods, such as t-shirts, are produced for sale to other members of the community. They are produced in the small quantities, and low prices referred to above. For example, 'Evo' produced a plain, relatively unadorned, red t-shirt, designed to commemorate the 2005 European Cup win in Istanbul, decorated only by a reproduction of the sleeve badge that the club were now entitled to display on the team shirt – a European Cup with the number 5. Evo's t-shirt sported no sponsors' logos, a fact that would cause other fans to perceive it as purer and more authentic than the official teamshirts. The design was very popular with members of the RAOTL forum and it sold out quickly.

The demand for this t-shirt should be understood as a particularly interesting illustration of the need for tangibilised contamination (Belk *et al* 1989). It was a sign of the underlying desire not only to safeguard the memory of Istanbul, but to doubly safeguard it by distancing it in yet another way from the market. This particular t-shirt, with no connection to official marketing channels connotes 'Istanbul doesn't belong to the market, it belongs to us'. It is another example of the fans contesting - and winning - the cultural terrain through acts of consumption, by actively choosing goods from the alternative market rather than the official market.

(d) Not for sale - home made flags and banners.

In this informal fan economy, one category of home made fan consumption object, namely home made banners, is not for sale at all. These goods are perceived as authentic artistic creations in their own right, thus possessing an unquestionable perceived legitimacy and semiotic payload beyond the potential scope of any commercial product (Kozinets 2002a).

One of the most important points in relation to these home made banners is that the identity they proclaim does not recognise any difference between players and fans – it simply proclaims “we” – we are the people, we are the tribe, we are Liverpool FC. Displaying the banners is of course an act of reverence, venerating the demi-gods who play for the team now, or more often those who played for or managed the team in the past, but it is also an act of renewal of the tribe’s own identity. There is a clear underlying meaning here in the fact that these home made banners are perceived by fans not only as concretized representations of the spirit of the club, but as symbols of their own guardianship of that spirit. This goes beyond the representations of the specific triumphs of the past usually depicted on such banners, and is thus representative of the tribe’s sense of itself, representative of what Maffesoli (1996) calls ‘puissance’, or the sacredness of the tribe. Of course, all these meanings *can* reside in official goods for some fans (Derbaix *et al* 2002) but the home made goods have the distinct advantage of being completely untainted by commerciality. They facilitate fans’ collective sense of hierophany more so than official goods, for a variety of reasons.

First, a sense of ownership of the symbolic meanings of the banners, and the integration of these symbolic meanings into the collective self-concept of the fans, is immediately achieved without the need for de commodification that accompanies official goods. Again, rather than wait for the market to provide goods with the desired symbolic meaning, and then buy those goods and gradually appropriate their meaning into the collective sense of self (Elliott & Wattanasuwan 1998), the fans have custom-made their own goods. Hence these concretised representations of tribal identity have not come from the market, and are

thus de facto at a distance from the market from the very beginning, so that separation of the sacred from the profane is attained from the outset. The practice of making these banners clearly predates the introduction of market-produced football merchandise as we know it today, which further helps to achieve distance from the market. This is also redolent of a nostalgia for a pre-mass market ethos of unmediated creativity.

The achievement of distance from the market begins long before the banner is completed. It begins with the planning of the banner in the first place. Fans go online and ask the opinion of other fans on such design issues as materials, colours, the symbols to be used and of course the wording of the banner (something that tends to receive more attention than the other issues). Photos of completed banners are subsequently posted on the community website for approval; banners are not always brought to the match, so these virtual displays can be an important way of achieving recognition for one's banner making efforts. The making of these home made banners is, therefore, a process in itself through which deeper assimilation of community identity into the self concept is affirmed via repetition of ritual (McCracken 1988) and mutual affirmation of symbolic meaning through processes of discursive elaboration (Elliott and Wattanasuwan 1998, Goulding *et al* 2002).

Of course processes of discursive elaboration can also operate in the case of commercial goods, but in the case of home made banners all the inherent symbolic meanings are collectively understood to have originated within the community and outside the market from beginning to end. The process is collectively perceived as non-marketised. Furthermore, even an online announcement of the intention to make a banner possesses a richness of subcultural capital (Jancovich 2002, Thornton 1995) that easily exceeds the lower subcultural capital accruing from buying an item of official merchandise.

What particularly helps to concretise fans' perception of their fandom as something beyond the desacralising threat of the marketplace, is the fact that these banners are never made available for sale. While fans might buy fan-designed t-shirts or similar items from each other from time to time, no-one ever seeks to purchase another fan's home made banner.

The flags and banners can thus be regarded as all the more authentic because they have been artistically created, rather than reproduced for even the most moderate commercial gain. These home made banners are effectively a “signal of communal authenticity counterposed against the alleged inauthenticity of the mainstream or mass market (Kozinets 2002)” and are therefore part of the communal armoury in proclaiming ownership of the cultural terrain of fandom and distancing it from the market. Furthermore “art that is consumed in the context of ritual and tradition in which it has been historically embedded can be said to possess an ‘aura’ that confers upon it a rich surplus of meaning (Benjamin 1969, cited in Kozinets 2002a)”. This “rich surplus of meaning” effectively re-enchants the community (Kozinets 2002a). The special occasions, called ‘Flag Days’, when fans organise mass displays of these home made banners and flags can, therefore, be understood not just as sacralisation maintenance through keeping the market at a critical distance, but also as a form of sustaining ritual (Belk *et al* 1989). In order to maintain the sacred, it is not enough to keep the market at a distance. It is also necessary to have specific sustaining rituals in order to re-infuse the fan experience with a sense of myth, mystery, and magic, by using these home made flags and banners to celebrate the extraordinary events and sacred people of the past.

The last home game of the season at Anfield is therefore usually designated as a ‘Flag Day’ by the fans, and the Kop becomes a blaze of colour, as banners and flags not normally brought to every match are ritually taken from storage and carried to the ground for display before, during, and after the game. Perhaps the most significant aspect of this practice is that the devotion with which it is celebrated, in this researcher’s experience, seems if anything to be more fervent on those occasions when the team has not won anything and has nothing to show for the season, no totemic trophy to facilitate basking in reflected glory (Mahony *et al* 1999). The true meaning of this annual ritual seems, therefore, to be not only about devotion to, and celebration of, the team, but mutual devotion to, and celebration of each other, in a carnivalesque, non-marketised, rejuvenation of the shared sense of hierophanous identity.



6-2 Bob Paisley Flag Night

The Kop on Bob Paisley Night, a special Flag Night in 2001, dedicated by the fans to the memory of Bob Paisley (photograph provided by the editor of 'The Liverpool Way' fanzine)

Flag Days are not always observed with the same collective commitment to display as in the above photograph. The last home game of the 2005/06 season, for example, was intended to be a Flag Day on the Kop, but as Figure 6.3 (below) illustrates, while there were plenty of scarves being held aloft that there were not that many flags on display.



6-3 Flag Day on The Kop, April 2006

Flag Day on The Kop, Liverpool v Aston Villa, 2005/06 season. Note the relative absence of home made flags and banners

There are two aspects of particular interest here. First, this was not Liverpool's last match of the season. The last game of the season was not, on this occasion, a league game but was instead the forthcoming FA Cup Final against West Ham United. The next photograph, taken at the FA Cup Final, shows the sort of home made banner display that would not normally be unusual on the Kop on a Flag Day. Clearly, the effort of creating a mass display of home made banners was reserved for the more sacred of the two occasions, and the sustaining ritual (Belk *et al* 1989) took place on this occasion in the Millenium Stadium in Cardiff instead of inside Anfield (Figure 6.4 below).



6-4 FA Cup Final 2006

The travelling Kop create a temporary shrine inside the Millenium Stadium on FA Cup Final Day 2006

The second point of interest here is the role of the football scarf as a sort of substitute for the home made banner. To refer back to Figure 6.3, most of the crowd are holding their Liverpool scarves aloft during the singing of 'You'll Never Walk Alone'. At the bottom left hand corner of the photograph, a scarf with the words 'Liverpool – Five Times Champions of Europe' can be seen. What is also apparent is that this is not a home made

scarf. Members of the RAOTL community do not have a problem with football scarves, even though they are clearly market goods.

This serves to remind us that even among these purist fans, market goods can be utilised for sacred purposes. It is now proposed that part of the reason for the partially unproblematic use of *certain* market goods, such as scarves and, to a lesser degree, football shirts, is the degree of distance from the market established through the other practices where market hegemony is challenged. This seems to have the effect of rendering a certain amount of consumption of market goods acceptable, because the right of the fans to claim ownership of the cultural terrain has been firmly established, through practices such as the collective preference for unofficial goods. Where official goods are used, it is on the fans' own terms. Market contestation is therefore selective and targeted in nature.

The consumption of official fan consumption objects by the members of RAOTL is also characterised by a number of additional distancing tactics, to further confirm that fandom, and fan identity, remain the property of the fans and not the market. It is to a consideration of these additional tactics that the analysis now turns.

6.2.3 Distancing Tactic Three – Downplayed Consumption.

6.2.3.1 The non-boycotting of official merchandise

What is rather fascinating about these consumers is that there is a clear dynamic of taste as distaste (Hogg & Savolainen 1998) at work in this community of fans, with regard to the buying of official merchandise. Unlike the Manchester United 'lads' (King 1998), however, they have not resorted to a boycott to express their distaste. Instead they continue to buy and use the merchandise. Belk et al (1989) argue that a boycott is an obvious tactical approach for sacralisation maintenance, but instead, these fans have come up with a variety of alternatives, that facilitate ongoing consumption of market goods, while simultaneously maintaining a separation of the sacred from the profane.

This suggests the possibility that there may be something inherently sacred about some of the official merchandise, so that they cannot bring themselves to boycott it completely. In order to maintain this sense of sacredness, however, they refrain from unquestioningly and uncritically buying and using merchandise in the manner of the 'new consumer' fans. The analysis now briefly reconsiders Holt's (1998) conceptualisation of how systems of cultural capital can be re-configured to maintain distinction. When changing economic conditions allow more and more people to buy expensive goods and services, the symbolic value of such goods as sources of distinction is reduced. Members of the upper echelons of society have retained their sense of distinction by emphasising the manner in which these goods or services are consumed, rather than ownership of the goods.

What we can see among this community of football fans is a sense of retention of the sacred through adopting such an approach to their consumption. These fans protect their sense of hierophany as 'real' Liverpool fans by emphasising the differences in manner and modes of consumption between themselves and the 'day trippers'. This allows them to go on buying merchandise while simultaneously having a sense that they have managed to keep the sacred at a safe distance from the profane.

6.2.3.2 Downplayed Consumption

Downplayed consumption is achieved in a number of ways. Firstly, the fans emphasise that when they do buy merchandise, it is only occasionally, and in small amounts. There is also a preference for the cheaper items, such as polo shirts and 'retro' tops (Liverpool shirts designed to look like the team shirts from the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s) rather than the more expensive option of the most recent official replica shirt. Secondly, when they do buy official merchandise, they usually refer to such purchases in a highly self-deprecating manner ('look at me, I'm a day tripper ha ha ha!'), or they buy online, rather than profane themselves by using the same (offline i.e. official club store) shop as the 'day trippers'. Another alternative means of acquiring merchandise while keeping at a distance from the market is via gifting behaviours. Fans might not practice self-gifting with any real frequency, but family and friends know what sort of gifts to give for Christmas or Father's

Day. The fans also consume vicariously by buying the merchandise for someone else rather than themselves, such as their own offspring, or a niece or nephew. It is important to note that this is also a form of sacralisation maintenance, because giving gifts of merchandise is a form of bequeathing behaviour (Belk et al 1989). The gifts symbolise the 'faith' that is being handed on to the next generation of Liverpool fans, but this behaviour, crucially, allows members of the community to buy official merchandise without indulging in the 'bag filled with goodies (for oneself)' style of consumption associated with the 'daytrippers'. Finally, when official merchandise is used, it is usually used sparingly, often in conjunction with non football-related goods, to create a distinctive style recognisable to members of the community, but not to the daytrippers.

The tactics of downplayed consumption, taken in conjunction with the other distancing tactics, allow fans not only to maintain a collective perception of their fandom as something non marketised, but to do so while actually consuming official market goods. So ubiquitous is the presence of the market, and so meaningful are some of the official market goods for the fans, that some mechanism almost had to be developed to allow them a 'licence' of sorts to consume these goods, without feeling that they were thereby 'selling out', or desacralising their fandom.

6.2.3.3 The downplaying of direct (i.e. personal) purchases

One tactic for distancing oneself from the act of purchasing is to emphasise the relative infrequency of purchases compared to the 'daytripper' style of fandom:

I only buy every two years, I refuse to buy the home, the away, the third... (shirt) – I don't believe in it personally like, you know.

But you said, I mean once every two years the club bring out a new home shirt, so you usually buy it then yeah?

Yeah, I buy it! What I tend to do meself is I buy the home one, then two years later I buy the away one, then two years later the home one and I try to alternate

Oh Ok so you only buy the new home shirt every four years!

Exactly yeah – I have the home one this year

(extract from interview with ‘Funkyzeit Mit Looney’)

There are several aspects of sacred consumption to be analysed here. Of course there is the separation of the sacred ‘real’ fan from the profane ‘day tripper’ who blindly buys every single new shirt, by reducing the frequency of shirt purchasing. The consumer deliberately refuses to accept the marketer’s definition of appropriate levels of purchase frequency, which in the case of football shirts is usually at least once per season.

The relative infrequency of purchase is also a form of sacralisation in another way. Deliberate infrequency of purchase is a form of singularisation (Belk et al 1989). It de-commoditises the good by personalising the frequency of purchase, making those occasions when a new shirt is bought something more of a special occasion or event. It is thus not a matter of mere routine to trot along and buy each new shirt issued by the official market. This deliberate personalisation of purchase frequency helps to decommodify the experience, and guard it against habituation (Belk *et al* 1989).

The third aspect of sacred consumption manifested here is that of collection (Belk et al 1989), which of course is also a form of sacralisation maintenance. Some members of the community not only buy the shirts, but also use them to construct shrines at home, by framing them and displaying them on the wall. One member of the forum, ‘Supersub’, posted photographs of his shirt collection on the community website where other members of the community could admire it, for example.

The practice of only occasionally buying a new replica shirt, or alternatively buying a ‘retro’ style shirt, rather than buying every new shirt, is a widespread one among members of the RAOTL community. Time and again, in meeting members of the community while conducting fieldwork, fans like ‘Kathy’, ‘Big Al’, and ‘True Red’ were observed wearing the same Liverpool shirt they had worn to every game in previous years. In many cases the fans prefer to wear a polo shirt with the club crest emblazoned on the chest, or alternatively wear the same ‘retro’ shirt they have worn for years, rather than wear the most recent

replica shirt. The following discussion on the forum further illustrates not only the preference for 'retro' shirts but the communal, sacralising logic behind this preference:

Just seen the official merchandise (on the club website) for the cup final - fancied one of the '77 shirts as advertised but only see the '84 one in the selection? Must have been a typo
(‘Sprozzy’)

Sprozzy - I bought one from the club shop before moving here. It's proper cotton and doesn't date - better than a modern replica any day! And it's cheaper.
(‘Paul F’)

*Sound aren't they, bought a couple meself the other week and am made up with the quality, and no sponsors logos all over the place, just the LiverBird looking proud as f****
(‘superscally fradulistic’)

This discussion refers to official merchandise bought from the same official club store that the fans on the forum normally describe in very negative terms. There are a number of factors that explain this. The retro shirts are a physical embodiment of the community's displaced ideals, in that they are concretized reminders of the club's glorious past (McCracken 1988:110-114). They also satisfy the taste for the necessary (Bourdieu 1984, Holt 1998), and simultaneously help to socially construct a metaphorical degree of distance from the market. They are cheaper than the normal marketised version of what fans are supposed to wear, and come unadorned with all the logos that contemporary shirts are festooned with. They can be perceived as “old stuff” (Holt 2003, discussed below) compared to the latest replica shirt marketers want fans to buy. The de-differentiating homogenisation of the market is thus neatly side-stepped.

6.2.3.4 Self-deprecation in relation to personal purchases of official merchandise

The sacredness of certain items of merchandise is such that members of the RAOTL community do feel compelled to make occasional purchases from the club shop or the online shop available via the club's official website. However, the announcement of such purchases on the forum often gave rise to self-deprecating humour, of the 'Look at me, I'm a 'wool'⁶ ha ha ha' type:

*F**k it, be a wool for the day. ;-)* Apart from Jester hats, anything goes.

4 silkies (one off each wrist, one off each elbow) Jarg (Large?) Istanbul teesh (t-shirt) from the stall outside TK Max in town. LFC sun-hat, them Shades with LFC on them. Red and Yeller bar scarf from the club shop.

... P.S. Shorts are Blue Harbour from Marks&Sparks (Obviously)

('Mags' describes his planned 'look' for the occasion of the 2005 European Cup Final)

The European Cup Final requires higher than normal levels of fan display. This calls for some device to reassert the distinction between authentic and inauthentic fan identity. Self-deprecation underscores this distinction.

Another option is to not only go online to announce one's purchases, but to engage in even more narcissistic playfulness by posting a photograph of not just the item of merchandise, but also the accompanying club-branded shopping bag, recognised by everyone on the forum as a tell-tale sign of being a 'day tripper'. The daytripping norm of unproblematic consumption is therefore subverted through this playful pretence and pastiche. Again it is essential to note the duality of purpose: this practice is not simply indulged in to assert a distinction between 'real' fans and 'daytrippers' but to establish a distance between one's own consumption and the official market, in order to separate the sacred from the profane.

⁶ Abbreviated form of 'woollyback' or 'out of townner' fan

'Boomer' utilises the same self-mockery in order to legitimise the purchase of a full day-tripper style complement of items:

I've shopped at Liverworld on matchdays (got a few Champions League souvenirs – mug, keyring, badge etc prior to the TNS match last week). However I always have a backpack with me which my club carrier bag goes straight into to avoid me looking like a daytripper. My Manchester-Liverpool day return train tickets might suggest I've got no right to be so pretentious though;-)

('Boomer', male Liverpool fan, late 20s, on RAOTL)

'Boomer' concludes this post with a winking 'smiley' icon acknowledging the playfulness of his behaviour. He can not help but buy the merchandise, and not being from Liverpool, matchdays are the only days when he normally gets the chance to travel to Liverpool by train. He has to disassociate himself from the hordes of daytrippers, though, so he hides his 'Liverworld' shopping bag in his backpack – and then engages in self-mocking at the pseudo deception.

'Ferryrich' (Liverpool fan, male, early 30s) takes a different approach:

As long as it's cash going into the club and not the dodgy street sellers, I'm happy. My choice is that while I'd buy merchandise from the shop, I'd never do it on a match day. I'd even like a tour of Anfield and go round the museum again not on a match day.

Stadium tours are not available on match days, but that is not really the point. The significant pattern here is that, even for members of the forum who happily admit to buying official merchandise from the club shop, they feel a need to distance themselves from the un-reflexive masses who queue up on match day to buy merchandise and shamelessly parade their goodie bags afterwards.

6.2.3.5 Gifting Behaviours as a form of downplayed consumption.

The acceptance of official merchandise when it comes in the form of a gift is another distancing tactic. There is a warmth and acceptance of goods from the club shop when the source of the goods is a gift. Announcements of such gifts on the forum are never accompanied by the usual playful sarcasm that accompanies statements about self-gifting.

There still seem to be some criteria in relation to the type of merchandise received as a gift. Nobody expresses their joy at receiving the gift of a mousemat or LFC furry dice, for example. *Legitimate* gifts on the other hand are welcome and can be openly and warmly discussed. Under the heading, *'Father's Day Presents'*, for example, 'True Red' proudly proclaims the following:

So who got socks and smellies? None of that here. Liverpool FC Champions of Europe DVD and Electric Light Orchestra Greatest Hits CD. Best kids in the world my two.

'True Red' is subsequently playfully mocked for confessing to his taste for ELO, but the concern here is not his taste in music, but rather his clear pride in having received this commemorative DVD as a gift from his kids for Fathers' Day. A number of the fans happily boast that they too received copies of this or other commemorative Liverpool FC DVDs for Father's Day. DVDs of great matches of the past are socially constructed as legitimate forms of merchandise among these fans because they embody the perceived greatness and distinctiveness of the club. They are concretised examples of sacralisation maintenance through tangibilised contamination of unique experiences (Belk *et al* 1989). They are symbolic of the hierophanous identity of the club, and as such, constitute subculturally acceptable merchandise.

Other items of merchandise which could belong to *any* club (furry dice that come in the club colours, or "smellies" such as deodorant or aftershave in packages with the club crest on the front) lack such differentiating qualities and therefore do not seem to merit a

mention if received as gifts. Of course such forms of merchandise could easily be regarded as kitsch and are therefore potentially desacralising (Belk *et al* 1989) hence their exclusion from community discourse.

6.2.3.6 Alternative fan styles as downplayed consumption – the “casual clobber” look.

Some of the fans combine official football merchandise with a variety of other, non football related, market goods in order to construct a differentiated look which distinguishes them from the ‘Soccer A.M.’ (merchandise covered) style of supporter, and in so doing, achieves the desired objective of separation of the sacred from the profane. This reassures fans that their usage of official club merchandise is acceptable because yet again it is more subtle, more tasteful, than the excessive behaviour of the daytrippers. In a discussion on what Liverpool fans should normally wear when going to a match, ‘Osty’ begins as follows:

I've been a fan of the casual clobber for many years...I have a fetish for Adidas training shoes...a few modern labels (Prada, Paul Shark, ...mostly Barbour, Faconnable, Fred Perry, Lacoste)...Remember Scousers were the first lads to introduce the dressing, clobber lark ...I honestly think we should try and be different all the time

(‘Osty’)

What is of interest in the responses of other fans is how many of them agree with the sentiment that official merchandise is for ‘trippers’ or alternatively that it is acceptable for younger fans. The show of loyalty to the team is confined to the display of one small pinbadge, or perhaps also a scarf. The following response is typical:

Never wear colours nowadays. Used to when I was younger. Now its usually jeans and a smart jacket. Hugo Boss or (...similar)...However I always wear a badge! Only one mind! A small Liverbird badge is a must in my book
(‘Shearer’)

The use of labels such as Prada, Hugo Boss, and Lacoste is interesting because it represents a use of market labels to indicate resistance to the market – where it encroaches on football ‘space’. They are seen as expressing an oppositional stance to the ‘new consumer’ style of fandom. This behaviour resembles that of the Manchester United ‘lads’ who also turned to designer labels to differentiate themselves from the hordes of ‘new consumer’ fans who descended on Old Trafford in the 1990s (King 1995, 1997).

This contemporary utilisation of fan style as a means of differentiating between authentic fans and ‘daytrippers’ should not, however, be regarded as equivalent to the ‘football casual’ style (Giulianotti 1993). The ‘football casual’ look of the 1980s, which incorporated the use of designer labels, was utilised as a distinctive style by members of football hooligan ‘firms’. The contemporary practice of fans like ‘Osty’ is merely concerned with differentiation from the ‘daytripper’ hordes, not proclamation of membership of a ‘firm’.

Of course fans are aware that supporters of other clubs have also adopted the designer look in preference to the merchandise-laden ‘new consumer fan’ style, so only certain designer brands are acceptable in the construction of the “Scouse look”:

Go to a Liverpool game and it'll be very hard to spot any scousers wearing Burberry, Aquascutum etc...house check is for Birmingham, Stoke, Leicester and Cardiff..!! The Scouse look tends to be more discreet, yet classy. No labels on display saying 'look I'm wearing a £600 coat', it's done with discretion. Labels such as Hugo Boss, Prada and Armani are rife among the Liverpool support. One thing they all have in common are most designs are simple. Plain black jacket with only a mark on the zip etc as a give away to the make. As far as wearing colours to

the game, leave it to the kids! No worse sight than a 40 year old fella squeezed into a red top. Sorry those that do, just my opinion don't forget!

('Fatty Arbuckle', Liverpool fan, on RAOTL)

This particular fan does not have any issues with non football related market goods, unless they are indicative of inferior taste such as Burberry, which is clearly perceived as the choice of those who have no taste. A point of interest is the tolerance 'Fatty' displays for fans whose tastes and practices extend to squeezing their beer bellies into football shirts designed for slimmer, fitter bodies. He does not manifest any ideological problem with this, it is not a thought-out anti market philosophy or stance. This places him somewhat at odds with other fans on the forum who certainly do take a more militant stance against the market. This suggests that this community is not an homogenous subculture, a point elaborated upon in the conclusion.

6.2.3.7 The football scarf as symbol of downplayed consumption

The status of football scarves as an acceptable item of market-produced football merchandise is explicable partly because of the symbolic meaning of scarves as a link to the past, when the scarf-bedecked Kop was known and celebrated for its colour and passion (Figure 6.5):



6-5 The Kop in the 1970s

A typical scene from the Kop during the 1970s (source of photo unknown)

The red and white scarves of the Liverpool fans are strongly associated with the singing of 'You'll Never Walk Alone', something begun by Liverpool fans but subsequently replicated elsewhere, from Celtic Park in Glasgow to the San Siro stadium in Milan, and beyond. In any event, scarves seem to enjoy an acceptance far beyond that of other items. Scarves are always referred to in positive terms and seen by many of the fans on the forum

as an appropriate item to bring to the match. Even if they do not normally wear colours they will still occasionally bring a scarf for flag days on the Kop:

Never wear colours nowadays...If it's a flag day then I might wear a scarf just to do my bit

'Shearer'

I've always worn colours of some sort or other...normally a bar scarf and HJC badge

'Big Al'

Scarves are viewed as a facilitator of playfulness (Fiske 1989) as well as support for the team. They enjoy considerable status on the forum as an expression of fans' self-concept:

Get everyone swinging a scarf and bouncing about instead (of just clapping) and it would look class!

'RedAd'

That's happened at a few aways (away games) especially in Europe and it is class

'Bullet'

More than any other item of merchandise, scarves are 'retro' and therefore have a legitimacy of their own, one that is seen as beyond the profaning reach of the marketers. They are perceived as far more authentic than other forms of official football merchandise, because they have such a strong symbolic link to the club's rich heritage and past achievements. As such, they are perceived as having a sacredness that the marketers cannot profane. They are seen as "old stuff" that can be (re)claimed as authentic (Holt 2003). They are goods that industry no longer focuses strongly on selling, marketers' focus having moved on to the higher margin, 'rip-off' replica shirts as the primary official marker of fan identity. This sense of 'old stuff' is further confirmed by the marked

preference among forum members for the obviously retro 'bar' style scarf rather than the other alternatives available in the club shop.

Ultimately, 'retro' scarves, with their plain designs such as the red and white alternative bands of the 'bar' scarf, are particularly representative of downplayed consumption, because they symbolise the fandom of pre hyper-marketisation. They further represent a collectively imagined idyllic time (Brown *et al* 2003) when the fan community was uncontaminated by pseudo-fans such as the *Soccer A.M.* 'daytripper'. As such, they evoke not only the displaced meaning (McCracken 1988) of Liverpool as invincible football team, but Liverpool *fans* as the most colourful, authentic, and passionate fans imaginable.

What all these forms of downplayed consumption are dependent on to be of maximum effect, however, is the casting of the 'daytripper' fan as 'other'. This sense of daytripper as 'other' is essential, to facilitate the community's sense that goods from the official market *can* be consumed without risk to the collective sense of hierophany, provided that they are consumed in a style and practice that contrasts with the styles and practices of the 'daytripper' fans.

6.2.4 'Daytripper' as 'other' – downplayed consumption as resistance to hyper-marketised identity

The Birmingham School essentially views resistance by members of a subculture as being practiced against the dominant, mainstream groups in society. It is more common, however, to practice distinction against groups that are *closest* to one's own socio-cultural space (Bourdieu 1984:60). In criticising Hebdige's (1979) conceptualisation of punk as

resistance to mainstream bourgeois society, for example, Thornton (1995:93) argues that the punk rock movement had more to do with declaring an opposition to disco music, within the cultural sphere of popular musical tastes among youth, than declaring opposition to normal, 'mainstream' society as a whole. Thornton (1997, 1995), Jancovich (2002), and Wilson (2002) demonstrate that the 'mainstream' is, in fact, a moveable feast. The 'mainstream' is nothing more than something invoked by members of a 'subculture' when they wish to make distinctions between their superior, collectively 'hip' 'ingroup' and some easily derogated 'other'. The social construction of 'mainstream' or 'other' by members of a subculture is therefore usually incoherent, contradictory, and inconsistent. 'Other' is a subjective construct, the purpose of which is to allow for the production of distinctions that confer a sense of cultural superiority and "provide a sense of subcultural authenticity" (Jancovich 2002). 'Others' can be those who drink excess alcohol in disco bars instead of being part of the 'ingroup' at raves (Wilson 2002), fans of mainstream ('commercial') cinema instead of alternative 'cult' cinema (Jancovich 2002), or disco fans dancing round their handbags instead of embracing the ferocity of punk rock (Thornton 1995).

The practice of members of RAOTL, in labelling other fans as 'daytrippers', can be viewed as a further case of asserting distinction through the maintenance of a group-specific system of subcultural capital which, at every turn, privileges ingroup taste, preference, and practice over the imagined tastes, practices and preferences of 'daytripper' fans. Fans who bear a sufficient resemblance to the collective understanding of the 'daytripper' or 'Soccer A.M.' style of fan thus perform the role of 'other', so that the RAOTL community members can reassure themselves that their identity is not profaned by consumption of official market merchandise. Compared to these 'others', community consumption of official merchandise is moderate, tasteful, and inexcessive, and above all else is relatively under-marketised. Under these conditions and with this perspective, fans can continue to buy official merchandise without feeling that they have ceded the (subcultural) terrain to marketers, and without fearing that their sense of hierophany is under threat.

6.3 Cork City FC and the 'lads' from The Shed

Having devoted a considerable proportion of the analysis so far to a discussion of the Red all over the Land community of Liverpool supporters, it is useful to consider the case of a different football fan community – the fans of Cork City FC. The purpose of this analysis is to gain an insight into how the beliefs and practices of these fans compare to those of fans of a much larger and more marketised club (i.e. Liverpool). This analysis shows that consumer resistance is also present even in this far less marketised environment. It subsequently explores the specific forms this resistance takes.

The study of Cork City supporters was focused on a group of fans who have rejected the idea of supporting any team but City. In order to affirm their sense of identity, these supporters assert their sense of cultural distinctiveness in a number of ways. The norm among Irish consumers who support football teams is typically to follow English teams, such as Liverpool or Manchester United (Richardson and O'Dwyer 2003), and to take little or no interest in domestic Irish football. The hard-core Cork City fans refer to Irish supporters of English teams as 'barstool' fans. This term implies that such supporters are not 'real' fans because they watch their teams while sitting in the pub rather than going to support them in person. This of course overlooks the commitment displayed by many such fans in travelling to England as frequently as they can, for that very purpose. The denigration of the 'barstool' fans is significant because it illustrates yet again the practice of 'ingroup' rejection of a selectively constructed 'mainstream' (Jancovich 2002, Thornton 1995, Wilson 2002). A distinction is made between the 'fella on a barstool' and the 'real' fan who goes in person to support his local side. This distinction is carefully constructed by privileging certain key practices over others, such as emphasising the greater authenticity of supporting one's local team. The assertion is made that, in supporting one's local team, the fan has an authentic connection to the team that fans of non-local teams will always lack. 'Pablo', for example, asserts that his is a more authentic affinity precisely because of his local identity:

I've an affinity to the team as well because being from Cork, you know? ...I never understood sitting in a pub watching football, just it doesn't appeal to me and it's kind of amusing to me, people saying 'we' talking about English teams...I can genuinely say 'we' going to Turner's Cross, it's not the biggest, but they're our own at the end of the day you know?

'Pablo' being from Cork means that he feels he can "genuinely say 'we'". According to this worldview, his fandom is therefore more authentic than that of the Irish soccer fan who supports English teams such as Manchester United. He asserts that real football fans support their local team rather than simply choosing to follow a team that are likely to win a lot of trophies:

(Y)our average football fan from Moss Side's (working class district in Manchester) going to be a Manchester City supporter...he's following that football team because that's where he's from, not because they're winning trophies every year ... they (Manchester City)... were still getting 30,000 people in the Second Division ... you'd respect them as supporters for that.

Irish fans of teams like Chelsea or Manchester United are therefore regarded as less authentic not only because of their failure to support their local team, but also because it seems to be contingent on the winning of trophies.

6.4 Meanderers.

Some of the hard-core Cork City fans also express an opposition to the idea of supporting more than one team:

A meanderer is a fella ...who goes to a live game and says 'I miss the replays' or 'I'd love a pint now' ...he meanders from (watching) Celtic V Rangers and Celtic are this great team... then just after that Liverpool are playing Man United and then he's all into Liverpool... and then just after that they'll watch something else

and they've always got this, they're a life long Liverpool and Celtic fan – they're not! They meander between 'em
(‘Allan’, Cork City fan, 30s)

Here, the crucial characteristic of the ‘authentic’ fan is defined as a single-minded devotion to one team only. The “meanderer” is regarded as failing to practice fandom in the (sub)culturally appropriate way. The fickleness, the willingness to switch from cheering for one team to cheering for another, is regarded as another indication of lack of authenticity. Full membership of the community of ‘real’ fans is reserved for the faithful who adhere to the code of unconditional loyalty irrespective of the team’s level of success. The practices of full-blooded commitment and caring passionately about the outcome of your own team’s match, will *always* be privileged over the lukewarm alternative demonstrated by any other group:

Well ... a real fan knows what he's talking about – I suppose this sounds like football snobbery now – and will care whether they win or lose – I suppose that's the most important thing, to actually care

(‘Eddie’, Cork City supporter, male, 40s)

The involvement of meanderers in more than one team is taken as a sign that they do not care in the culturally appropriate, singleminded way. The taste for this practice is therefore resisted, in a manner consistent with Hogg and Savolainen’s conceptualisation of taste as distaste (1998).

6.5 Participatory Fandom among Cork City fans.

The literature on cultural capital, subculture and resistance consistently asserts that readily accessible cultural materials and practices are used to affirm distinction (Holt 1998, Fiske 1989, Thornton 1995). An additional source of cultural capital, therefore, for the Cork City

fans is personal match attendance, which is privileged over the watching of football on television:

Well, I like to watch Man United and Arsenal ...but eh... that's for entertainment purposes – I wouldn't be one of those fellas standing there or sitting there on a barstool screaming at the TV screen!

(‘Andy’, Cork City supporter, male, 40s)

If ‘real’ fans watch football on television, it is “(only) for entertainment purposes”. It is acceptable to watch football on television – as long as it is understood that such viewing is only for “entertainment purposes”. ‘Real’ support is not about being entertained, it is about duty, obligation, blood, sweat and tears. Even if the football on show is horrendous or the weather conditions are miserable, the ‘real’ fan gets on with supporting the team. The truly unpalatable is privileged to show how ‘we’ the real fans embrace those things that others will not. This provides further evidence to the ‘real’ fans of the distinction between their group and ‘other’ (inauthentic) fans (Jancovich 2002).

The Cork City fans’ sense of duty should not be understood as focusing primarily on the unpalatable or uncomfortable however. It is best understood in terms of the ‘call to order’ of the group (Bourdieu 1984:380), and can just as easily be observed in their mutual observation of the carnivalesque practices of group singing and chanting to be seen at any Cork City home fixture. There is, then, a communal commitment to fandom as productive practice (that is, a sense of fandom as production, as explained in Chapter Four). Furthermore, just as the collective rituals of the Liverpool fans strengthen their collective sense of self as Liverpool fans, the singing of Cork City songs bonds these fans together, deepening the felt sense of self as Cork City supporter (Belk 1988, McCracken 1988:87, Elliott & Wattanasuwan 1998). It also provides opportunities for narcissistic display (Maffesoli 1996) and gives a felt sense of co-participation in the tribal hunt (Morris 2002). Finally, it satisfies the taste for communal festivity and immediate gratification at times when the match itself is not entertaining, something a number of the fans stress the importance of, given the often poor quality of the football on display (Bourdieu 1984).

Fans like Pablo (above) and ‘Allan’ see it as their duty to contribute to the matchday atmosphere, either in order to secure a successful outcome to the ‘hunt’, or to entertain their fellow fans, or both. The ‘call to order’ therefore extends not only to attending matches but being as vocal as possible, in order to play one’s part in supporting the team:

I think everything we do is basically to try and create an atmosphere in there, to support the team... It’s (i.e. singing, chanting and drumming) from the first whistle now to the end ...whether we win or lose, basically – that’s the way it should be, you know?

(‘Pablo’)

Fans who attend matches in person but do not engage in this participatory style of support are regarded as inferior in status to the ‘real’ fans, and are sometimes identified by the derogatory label of ‘trippers’. Commenting on a trip to Estonia to see an international match between the Estonian national team and the Republic of Ireland, ‘Eddie’ says:

What’s happened in the last couple of years is there’s so many just, trippers going to the match, and they kinda turn up like they’re going to the theatre or the cinema, and they just want to be entertained...you could see people around you – you can’t resent them, because they’re entitled to be there – but they just weren’t up for it, they just wanted to be entertained.

Again this is consistent with Hogg and Savolainen’s (1998) conceptualisation of taste as distaste. ‘Eddie’ respects the right of these other consumers to be present, but he uses the inferiority of their practices to make clear the distinction between them and himself. As was the case with much of the resistance of the Liverpool fans, this is resistance to oppositional taste (Hogg and Savolainen) rather than ‘classic’ subcultural resistance as conceptualised by Hebdige (1979).

6.6 The winning of 'space' and the selective embracing of the market.

The Birmingham School's conceptualisation of subculture includes the definition of resistance as including the winning, or appropriation, of space:

“(The working class)...have won space for their own forms of life. The values of this ...culture are registered everywhere, in material and social forms, in the shapes and uses of things, in patterns of recreation and leisure...(t)hese spaces are both physical ...and social”.

Clarke et al (1975:43)

In contrast to the view that space is won in opposition to the market, Thornton (1995:25) asserts that space is 'won' by the *actions* of the market, in catering for a particular demographic. Yet in the context of Cork City FC's home ground of Turner's Cross, the tradition of the 'Shed' as the space that in a sense belongs to the 'real' fans, is a product of football fan culture and tradition, not a deliberate creation of the market. While the market has informally facilitated this in the past through differential pricing between the seated Stand and the standing terrace patronised by younger low-income fans, it is the practices of the fans on the Shed terrace that have given it its meaning as a sacred space reserved for those partisans who will give their all to defend the honour of the team.

It is interesting to see how, in something of a contrast to the approach of the 'Red All Over The Land' community, official Cork City merchandise is used by the Cork City fans in a completely unproblematic way to help create this space. The group norm of buying and wearing official replica shirts to the match helps to create the 'sea of green' effect on the Shed, for instance. While this acts as a symbol to rally both fans and players, it is also a form of semiotic 'resistance' not primarily to the *market* but rather to the 'mainstream' practice of the 'barstool' fans who wear the shirts of non-local clubs:

City are pretty good in that way, in that they usually (have the same shirt) ... for two years- ... other clubs (such as) ... Manchester United – they'll probably have three shirts and they'll change them twice a year, you know? So it's not that expensive in that respect...the merchandise is pretty good quality as well

('Pablo')

Pablo's enjoyment in buying and using merchandise that facilitates the expression of self-as-local-fan is all the stronger for the fact that it facilitates the expression of opposition to 'barstool' fandom. While he refers to his local club's merchandise as being of "pretty good quality" his opposition to the wider market manifests itself in a number of ways. He rebukes the hyper-marketised clubs who change their merchandise too frequently; this implies an excessively marketised definition of fan identity and would make being a fan unreasonably expensive.

He also includes an implicit rebuke for the 'barstool' fans whom he perceives as silly enough to go along with the market's definition of fandom. The Cork City fans therefore share a distaste for the 'market stooges' (Kozinets and Handelman 2004) who are perceived to have passively embraced the Sky Sports definition of fandom. Their cultural understanding of 'real' fandom is thus very similar to that of the Liverpool fans. In other words, the authenticity of fandom cannot be 'bought' but rather is co-produced through a combination of participatory fandom and subculturally appropriate levels of merchandise consumption that comply with the group system of subcultural capital (Thornton 1995). However it is worth noting that the maintenance of a collective sense of fan identity as something that resides outside the marketplace is considerably easier for Cork City fans than their Liverpool counterparts. This has some implications for the manner in which they go about maintaining that sense of distance. The analysis therefore now considers how the distancing tactics of these fans compare to those of the RAOTL community.

6.7 Distancing the Cork City fan identity from the market.

Clearly, one of the most interesting findings of this study is that a group of consumers who share a devotion to a small, under-marketised club – in this case Cork City FC – demonstrate a resistance to the market in ways that closely resemble the approach taken by fans of a much bigger – and arguably hyper-marketised club. The Cork City fans' approach to resistance is, therefore, like that of the Liverpool fans, characterised by the careful maintenance of a critical distance from the market, through a variety of distancing tactics (Kozinets 2002a). These tactics, again resembling the approach of the Liverpool fans, have the dual objectives of separating the sacred from the profane, and guarding against loss of sacredness through habituation (Belk *et al* 1989), rather than being primarily intended as ideological resistance to the market *per se*. Again like the Liverpool fans, this is achieved through the deployment of a group-specific system of subcultural capital, that draws from all available resources to privilege the identity of the 'ingroup' over a subjectively constructed outgroup.

6.7.1 The voicing of distaste for the hypermarketised Premiership and its fans.

The Cork City 'lads' distance themselves verbally from the market by keeping their fandom at a distance from the FA Premiership, with its "overpaid" stars and 'barstool' fans:

It's good craic as well, standing in the Shed for 2 hours a week y'know, it couldn't but entertain ya...often the football didn't y'know! ... it's better than sitting looking at a telly like , y'know, so I'd swap that – I'd swap a poor game and the fact that it's your own team before watching overpaid millionaires (on TV)

('Gerry', Cork City fan)

I've got no respect for the fella who ... supports a team off the telly, because that's what they are in the end, all these fellas, all the Ryan Giggs and David Beckhams of the world like all they are is TV characters

('Allan')

The (English) Premiership is categorised as inauthentic. The culture of football – and football fandom – is kept sacred by asserting that the over-commercialised Premiership is merely some kind of fantasy, populated by “TV characters” who do not really exist, except in the minds of the ‘armchair’ or ‘barstool’ fans who watch them. ‘Real’ fandom, as described above, involves standing on the terrace for hours on end, providing your own entertainment rather than waiting for the market to provide you with TV characters to fuel your fantasies, in exchange for your monthly subscription to Sky Sports. The reward for this is the experience of “Shed Moments”:

(I)t’s up there with the Shed moments you know? So...

The Shed moments!

Yeah!

Well you’ve got to explain that to me now

Em well you know just your favourite Shed moments like, that’s definitely up there...

(Verbatim from interview with ‘Gerry’, Cork City fan, male, 30s)

Two categories of “Shed moment” (or favourite memories from the Shed) appear in the Cork City fan discourse. There are moments when the action on the field is particularly spectacular, such as when the home team score a last-minute winning goal to send the crowd into collective ecstasy, and perhaps just as importantly, there are moments of humour where the crowd engage in collective rituals not directly related to events on the field. Someone spontaneously shouts a funny remark, overheard by hundreds of people who join in the laughter. The away fans of St Patrick’s Athletic, when visiting Cork City’s home ground, Turner’s Cross, unfurl and display a giant banner displaying the mock-insult:

If you can read this, you’re not from Cork!

The Cork City fans standing on The Shed, noticing diminutive RTE commentator George Hamilton conducting an interview on the side of the pitch, spontaneously begin to sing

Are you small or far away? Are you small or far away.

Other forms of 'Shed moment' include the 'Sit down for the Cork City' ritual, as practiced on the Shed. This amusing parody of the normal fan rallying cry of 'Stand Up for ... (team name)' involved chanting 'Sit down for Cork City' and actually sitting down on the terrace steps. This always achieved the desired dual effect of making both onlookers and the participants laugh. Those taking part derive a narcissistic enjoyment from successfully getting other fans' attention, and they also enjoy a sense of hilarity at the farcical struggle to regain one's feet on a crowded terrace.

All such experiences are collectively understood as emphasising the authenticity of 'real' fandom over the poor substitute offered by the market. 'Real' fandom is collectively perceived as satisfying the collective taste for immediate gratification (Bourdieu 1984), and this satisfaction is collectively understood as attainable only through personal participation, not through consumption of a mediated experience provided by the market. In this sense, 'Shed Moments' are for free and in this way they invert the pricing logic of the contemporary marketplace.

They are also, of course, forms of non marketised fan consumption object, produced by the fans, and the fans therefore enjoy the same sense of producerly control (Fiske 1989) as that experienced by the hard-core Liverpool fans.

6.7.2 The operation of a parallel market alongside the official market

6.7.2.1 The unofficial market in material fan consumption objects

While the parallel market operated by the Cork City fans is not on a comparable scale to that of the Liverpool fans, it certainly retains some of the core characteristics of a fan-operated market. The goods for sale, such as fanzines and t-shirts, are similar:

I've my usual home and away shirt, and I might have a polo shirt or something like that - we've our own merchandise as well, the supporters -

Oh for Four Five One?

Yeah - so we're using - we've the Coca Cola design for Cork City and ...there's plans for a Carlsberg one now at the moment, so, which will probably be more suitable because its green and white you know? ... So eh, that will get off the ground now hopefully

('Pablo')

The t-shirt Pablo refers to here was produced with the legend '*Enjoy Cork City*' across the chest, in white lettering on a red background, in a font style identical to the normal lettering seen on Coca-Cola t-shirts. It was very popular and sold out quite quickly. It was priced at a similar level to the official club polo shirts but was of course significantly cheaper than the official replica team shirts. The production of these t-shirts, with their playful subversion of normal market brand strategies, is a clear form of expropriation (Fiske 1989).

The group of fans responsible for these t-shirts also produced a fanzine called '*FourFiveOne*' for several seasons. This was priced at approximately half the cost of the official match programme and was quite popular among the wider Cork City fan community. It eventually ceased production, not through lack of demand but through the more fundamental difficulty of lack of time. The fans involved found that work and family commitments made it impossible to continue to give the fanzine the time it needed. This is

a particular feature of the smaller population within a fan community centred around a club such as Cork City. There are simply far fewer people to draw from for the production of goods for this unofficial market. Fan-produced goods therefore tend to appear in bursts of creativity which may be sustained for a football season or two, before subsiding again. This is not inconsistent with Fiske's (1989) conceptualisation of resistance as a sort of guerilla campaign. However, the playful, pleasure-giving aspects of fanzine and t-shirt production should be understood as taking priority over any possible agenda of resistance, other than of course a declaration of oppositional taste to that of the 'barstool' fans in their English team shirts.

6.7.2.2 Non-transactional home made goods

Another parallel with the activities of the Liverpool fans is the production of home made goods that fulfil similar, display oriented functions as the t-shirts, but which are not made available for sale to other fans. The Cork City fans have used revenues from t-shirt and fanzine sales to pay for materials needed for the production of flags and banners. There have been cases where flags made from cheap materials were used for once-off special occasions such as European matches, but most of the money has been used to pay for giant tifo-style flags (similar to those used by the *ultra* supporters of Italian 'Serie A' teams). These large banners can be passed overhead before kickoff or hung from the stands or terracing to create a temporary shrine for the duration of the game.

Em, the fanzine basically is covering the costs of this (producing the flags) – you buy it for a euro, it pays for the flags ... recently we did flags for the Malmo match – that cost a fair bit of money ... But it was effort and time that went into it that took more, because the flags came in loose – they had their sticks and all that to be put together ... so em it took about twelve of us three or four nights, to put ... a thousand flags together. We bit off more than we could chew in a way because we didn't

think it would take that long but ... it was a hell of an effort and it took us a long time to do it but it was worth it in the end cos it looked pretty good
(‘Pablo’)



6-6 Display of Colour on The Shed

The Cork City fans on The Shed create their ‘Display of Colour’ against Malmo in the InterToto Cup.

The legend ‘1984’ on the giant ‘tifo’ flag in the bottom left hand corner of Figure 6.6 refers to the year Cork City were founded. Home made or home commissioned goods of this sort concretise sacred, displaced meanings for the fans, without the potentially de-sacralising presence of any commercial sponsorship logos. The smaller flags visible in Figure 6.6

were distributed *gratis* on the day of the game against Malmo referred to above, while the larger flags and banners were of course retained by the fans responsible for 'FourFiveOne', and are still used at Cork City matches. The Cork City fans' sense of distance from the market is considerably enhanced by the cultural presence of these home made goods, because like the banners of the Liverpool fans, they are not for sale. This helps the Cork City fans to understand their fan identity as possessing the same non-marketised authenticity (Kozinets 2002a) felt by the Liverpool fans.

In an interesting contrast to the behaviour of the Liverpool fans, similar displays of colour to that shown in Figure 6.6 were sponsored by commercial radio station Red FM. for the next two rounds of Cork City's involvement in the Inter Toto Cup. This is something of a contrast to the normal practice of Liverpool fans when constructing their displays on The Kop, which are characterised by a complete absence of commercial sponsorship. This contrast is illustrative of the greater reliance of the Cork City fans on the resources the official market can provide. However it is still important for the fans to feel that their identity is independent of the official market. This sense of independence is further maintained by the adoption of a pricing structure similar to that of the Liverpool fans.

The adoption of non-exploitative pricing has been noted as a key factor in the RAOTL community's successful operation of an informal market. By keeping prices at a level perceived as significantly lower than the official market, the sacred nature of the goods being exchanged is protected, because the low price signals their non profane, non-commodified nature (Kozinets 2002a). Price structures in the unofficial market communicate not just a sense of authenticity but also one of solidarity. Prices are kept lower than the official market as a way of symbolically bestowing consciousness of kind upon each other. Charging non-exploitative prices affirms that each party to the transaction is an authentic member of the community (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001). The pricing system thus plays an important role in affirming the community's sense of itself. In adopting low prices for their fanzines and t-shirts, the Cork City fans display a similar sense of

differentiation from the official market as that displayed by the Liverpool fans, and thereby enjoy a similar sense of consciousness of kind.

6.7.3 Downplayed Consumption

The Cork City fans, like the Liverpool fans, often engage in the practice of downplayed consumption. This is the practice of regularly purchasing, or otherwise acquiring, such branded goods as official team shirts, while at the same time downplaying its significance. Many of the fans interviewed assert that buying the merchandise is not important to them nor is it an important part of being a football fan. Like the Liverpool fans they are often dismissive of “the whole merchandise thing” and yet it usually emerges that they are regular purchasers, or at least regular acquirers, of such items as official replica team shirts, or commemorative shirts.

There are several different ways in which downplayed consumption manifests itself among the Cork City fans. There are fans who buy shirts but do not wear them. There are fans who do not buy shirts at all but other people, such as friends and family, are buying the shirts for them regularly as gifts. There are also fans who refuse to buy the current team shirt but who have a full collection of the previously worn official teamshirts:

One of my buddies... buys every jersey but it's very rare you'd see him wearing one – he has, he just wants the collection! You know? I've got other buddies who wear them the whole time, I've got other buddies who wouldn't even consider buying a jersey – you know, they'd buy a polo neck or a polo shirt or whatever

Oh yeah yeah, and wear that to the match?

Yeah but wouldn't buy a jersey, you know? so I suppose it's just different tastes, it's different strokes for different folks you know

(‘Allan’, Cork City fan)

Therefore, while the fans assert that they do not buy the shirts, or that they do not really have many official teamshirts, what actually happens is that they frequently buy, or otherwise acquire, some version of the team shirt:

Would you have a fair number of Cork City shirts so?

No not really

Just a few?

(Counts up to five out loud) Five ...And three of them (were) bought in the last 3 years

And you bought most of them for yourself

Em yeah, well I won one of them off Red FM, I got another one off me buddy, another one Santa brought!

(Interviewer laughs) That's a while ago!

Well no, I ... my folks bought it for Christmas (laughs)

('Allan')

Thus, even though 'Allan' insists that he is not really a football shirt buyer, he actually has a substantial collection of Cork City shirts. Furthermore, while he asserts verbally that he does not feel obliged to buy every new Cork City shirt that comes out, in fact he has a network of friends and family organised to provide him with these shirts as gifts. This helps fulfil the need to de-commoditise the shirt, and keep it sacred by keeping him at some degree of distance from the act of personal involvement in a commercial transaction. His behaviour thus resembles the sacralising tactics of the Liverpool fans, helping to ensure the success of the singularisation process.

The preference for older versions of the shirt is also a form of distancing tactic he has in common with Liverpool fans :

(T)he first Cork City shirt I owned was when I was about ten and it was the classic green and white

The kind of diagonal...

no no no, it was green white green white, it was Guinness (i.e. hooped design) unfortunately in my wisdom I threw it out ...like apparently I'd sell it for...I've seen it on Ebay recently going for upwards of fifty sterling y'know? Yeah, that was the first one

('Allan')

Holt (2003) outlines that consumers tend to perceive goods or versions of brands produced in the past as more authentic than contemporary alternatives, in part because they represent something other than the latest version of whatever marketers are currently trying to sell. Consumers therefore see their preference for the older item as a successful means of attaining a distance from the market. Allan's reference to the jersey he owned as a ten year old may not be accompanied by an explicit assertion that it was the best Cork City shirt he ever had but it is certainly the only one he referred to as a "classic" and he is clearly upset, in retrospect, at the error he committed in throwing it out. Finally, his reference to what it might now fetch on eBay should not be taken as meaning that he would definitely sell it if it was still in his possession, but rather as a mechanism for communicating the superior symbolic value and greater significance of this "classic" shirt.

It is also possible that the privileging of older shirts, or retro shirts in the case of the Liverpool fans, is a further means of resisting the contrived obsolescence created by the market in the annual release of new official shirts. Thornton's (1995) point in relation to space being won by the actions of the market in catering for a particular demographic could arguably be applied to the preference for retro shirts. After all, it is the club that provides them. However, singularisation often takes place in the form of a refusal to buy each new shirt as well as the retro shirts. Resistance has therefore been successful, as far as these consumers are concerned, because they can conceive of their identity as being outside the market.

Also of significance, in terms of maintaining a perceived distance from the market, is the practice of buying merchandise from the club shop rather than an alternative commercial source:

Sometimes I just might be in (the official club shop) and I'll see something small and I'll say, ... sure, I'll have it - I'd prefer to buy City merchandise in the club shop rather than buy it in Cummins' cos obviously if you buy it in the, er, club shop, all the margin is...

Going directly to City, yeah

Going to the club, that'd be my opinion there, y'know

(Allan')

The 'Cummins' that Allan refers to is a large sports goods retailer in Cork city centre, which stocks some of the Cork City merchandise. The point of course is that the proceeds of Allan's purchases are thus perceived as helping the club financially, a cause which as a fan Allan obviously identifies with, rather than contributing to the profits of an independent, explicitly commercial organisation.

There is a parallel here with the practice of *some* of the Liverpool fans in the RAOTL community, but there is a lack of agreement among them on the issue. As noted in Chapter Five, some of the fans fervently believe that spending their money directly in the club shop is a way of putting money directly into the club, and is therefore *not* a normal (profane) commercial transaction but an act of loyalty to the club. Other members of RAOTL believe that the only appropriate thing to do is "f*** the corporates off" and refrain from buying anything at all in the club shop. No such dilemma exists for the Cork City fans, however. Profit is not a dirty word if it is *their* club shop that is taking in the proceeds.

Overall, however, the Cork City 'lads' tend to relate to their official club shop in a different way to Liverpool fans. They are grateful, for instance, that there is now a reasonable range of official merchandise available from the club shop:

Now that it (i.e. a full range of official merchandise) is available I would buy them alright yeah... It wasn't always the case ... there was a time when you couldn't even buy the jersey, so they're getting their act together in that respect, definitely
Yeah, I suppose in terms of the range of stuff that's available and all that kind of thing
Yeah well a range of stuff is one thing but not even being able to buy a jersey at one stage, was ridiculous
(‘Pablo’)

The smaller population of Cork City fans helps to explain this higher degree of dependence on the official market, because they lack the resources to consistently maintain an output of fanzines and t-shirts and distribute them for sale. However this not the sole explanation for the willingness of these fans to perceive commercial goods as legitimate expressions of fan identity. The other contributing factor is the semiotic value of *any* symbol of Cork City, whether that symbol is of commercial origin or not, as a sign of resistance to the hegemony of Sky Sports and the Premiership. Just as the Liverpool fans utilise the subjectively constructed stereotype of the ‘*Soccer A.M.*’ fan as ‘other’, the Cork City fans downplay their own consumption of the official market, by comparing their consumption to that of the ‘barstool’ fans. This comparison makes it far easier for these fans to retain a sense of singularisation (Belk *et al* 1989) in relation to the consumption of official goods. It means that they can uncritically embrace their club’s official merchandise while simultaneously proclaiming their resistance to the hegemony of the hyper-market.

While both communities privilege the practices of 'real' fandom over the alternative, market defined version, the Cork City fans do perhaps enjoy an advantage over the Liverpool fans in that by supporting their local team, their fandom does not have to compete with the hegemony of the global market. It seems to be the case that official merchandise is not a problem for fans of smaller teams, such as the Cork City fans and the fans of Belgian teams studied by Derbaix *et al* (2002). Such teams might not necessarily be non commercialised, but at least would not have been hyper-marketised. It really only becomes a (hyper) problem for fans, apparently, when marketers engage in hyper marketing of their team. Thus if fans support a small Irish or Belgian club, for example, instead of one of the European 'superclubs' such as Liverpool, they can already feel that they are resisting the market, simply by buying their own club's official market goods. Indeed their fandom and financial outlay constitute a form of tangible support for a deserving David pitted against a commercial Goliath.

The Cork City fans are also free to enter into a (perceived) relationship with players who are categorically *not* "overpaid millionaires". There is thus a further absence of over-commercialisation and the worst excesses of the market. The fans' heroes remain accessible to them and can often be seen mingling with the supporters in one or more of the pubs near the stadium after home games. Even if they are usually sipping fruit juice or soft drinks, rather than the pints of beer or cider preferred by most of the fans, at least they are not sweeping off in obscenely expensive cars with tinted windows, on their way to some exclusive nightclub, to quaff champagne or some other expensive cocktail.

The Liverpool fans do not enjoy this option. Their team actually plays in the Premiership and receives a great deal of media coverage both on Sky Sports and elsewhere. The players are on huge salaries and can afford lifestyles far beyond the means of the vast majority of fans. Confronted with this, how do the Liverpool fans go about maintaining some sense of relationship with their team and the stars who play for it? While the distancing tactics already discussed help to explain the ongoing devotion of the Liverpool fans to their beloved Reds, Chapter Six explores the significance of the relationships not just between fans and the team, but the relationships the fans have with each other, as a further means

by which the sacredness of fan devotion and fan identity is culturally reproduced. It also examines the role of shared taste for other forms of market goods and services as a further concretizing agent in the perpetuation of these relationships.

6.8 Summary.

Football fans maintain the sacredness of their fandom by resisting market-defined notions of fan identity that propose fandom as a purchasable commodity rather than a producerly activity. This resistance manifests itself through the utilisation of a rich variety of distancing tactics that serve to position fandom outside the official marketplace. These tactics provide for resistance to all marketised forms of fan identity. They include an articulated distaste for market-oriented fandom in all its forms, including the buying of too much merchandise and inappropriate forms of fan participation, such as joining in generic *Soccer A.M.* 'fan chants' rather than singing songs that are perceived as faithful to the traditions of their own club. The fans also practice material resistance to the market, via the maintenance of an alternative, implicit market that parallels the official market in the provision of fan consumption objects, but inverts and subverts its logic through practices that emphasise solidarity rather than exploitation. Liverpool fans ultimately combine all their practices in the maintenance of a system of subcultural capital that not only delivers a sense of distinction from hyper-marketised fandom, but also allows them to maintain a sense of hierophany.

These distancing tactics, and the accompanying system of subcultural capital which prioritises non marketised fandom over its marketised counterpart, are to some extent mirrored in the activities of a much smaller group of fans, the 'lads' of Cork City F.C. This group find it much easier to distance themselves from the hyper-marketplace, because their identity has not been subjected to the same potentially de-sacralising market pressures as that of their Liverpool counterparts. This means that their distancing practices vary slightly from those of the Liverpool fans. They can unproblematically consume the official merchandise sold by their club, for instance, because of its symbolic value as a sign of resistance to the hegemony of the FA Premiership and Sky Sports. Ultimately, they too

come to terms with the official market by positioning their consumption outside its boundaries. This allows them to selectively consume the outputs offered by the official market, while retaining a sense of producerly control over their fandom and maintaining their sense of fandom as something magical and sacred. The distancing tactics of both sets of fans are summarised in Figure 6.7:

6-7 Summary of Fan Distancing Tactics:

Liverpool fans' distancing tactics	Cork City fans' distancing tactics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voicing distaste for marketised representations of fandom/ fan identity • Voicing distaste for buyers/ excessive buying of Liverpool merchandise • Operation of informal/ unofficial market, with emphasis on unexploitative pricing, informal distribution channels, absence of sponsors' logos and home made goods • Downplayed consumption, including self-deprecation with regard to buying of merchandise, emphasis on relative infrequency of purchase, gifting rather than direct purchase, and a preference for scarves rather than shirts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voicing distaste for barstool fans, that is, those who support the hyper-marketised Premiership and by implication are inferior to those who support their local team • Operation of informal market, albeit on a smaller scale compared to that of the Liverpool fans • Downplayed consumption, though with far less of a tendency towards use of self-deprecation (while Cork City fans certainly practice downplayed consumption, they practice it to a lesser degree than the Liverpool fans, partly because supporting a non hyper-marketised team is itself perceived as an act of resistance to the market. Official Cork City merchandise thus enjoys a certain semiotic value as a symbol of such resistance)

7 Chapter Seven. Relationships with the players and each other

7.1 Introduction to Chapter Seven. Maintenance of the fan-team-fan relationship.

Chapter Six concluded by raising the question of how the members of the RAOTL community go about sustaining the relationship with their team, given their collective distaste for the hyper-marketisation of Liverpool FC. Accultured as they are into loyalty to their team, Liverpool fans do not enjoy the option available to Cork City fans of eschewing a globally marketised phenomenon in favour of a small, under-marketised, local team. Furthermore, the prediction of Belk *et al* (1989) that payment of huge salaries to sports stars would not have a desacralising effect, because these stars would be perceived as unique rather than as commodified entities, does not seem to have fully withstood the test of time. At times over the course of this study there has been considerable disquiet among community members over this very issue. The fans are not happy at a perceived lack of effort from players who are paid huge salaries irrespective of the team's performance, and they sometimes question whether the players' level of commitment matches their own.

How, then, do the fans manage to maintain a sense of relationship with their beloved Liverpool FC? While they still enjoy a degree of relationship with some of the players on the team, the ongoing nature of the commitment is primarily explained by the sense of relationship they have with each other. Once fan bona fides have been established through shared experiences, tastes, and consumption practices, relationships move beyond a sense of imagined community (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001) into a bond that is more deeply integrated into the extended self (Belk 1988). Due to a perception that everyone has undertaken numerous sacrifices in order to support the team, the fans perceive in each other a shared sense of devotion (Pimentel and Reynolds 2004) and commitment (Fournier 1998b) to the sacred (Belk *et al* 1989). This shared sense of devotion and commitment, along with the communal taste for playfulness (Fiske 1989) and excitement (Elias and Dunning 1993), produces strong relationships among the fans. When this sense of relationship is combined with the perceived hierophany (Belk *et al* 1989) of being a

Liverpool supporter, the relationships have the further effect of preserving the mutual devotion directed towards the team, even if the club are perceived as having become excessively commercialised. This is analogous to the way in which relationships among members of the Harley Davidson subculture of consumption (Schouten and McAlexander 1995) or the Saab brand community (Muniz and O’Guinn 2001) act to sustain mutual devotion to the brand, even when the corporations who own those brands act in ways that are distasteful to the community.

7.2 Relating to the players

7.2.1 The fan-team relationship

The attitude of the fans towards the players is not one of consistent, unconditional, unquestioning devotion. It is expected by the fans that the ‘call to order’ (Bourdieu 1984) of giving one’s all for the shirt must be observed by the players. Any perceived failure, in terms of effort or loyalty, on the part of any of the players, therefore results in a questioning, and in some cases a removal, of perceived legitimacy from the identity of that player.

Significantly, however, the community practice a degree of restraint in relation to criticism of the players. Part of the code of practice used to assert distinction (Holt 1998) between legitimate and non legitimate members of the community (Muniz & O’Guinn 2001) is the choice of forum for expressing one’s disapproval of players who fail to deliver the expected level of commitment to the team. Criticism of the team, or individual players, on public sites such as radio phone-ins or, even worse, ‘*You’re on Sky Sports*’, is taken as a sign that the person making the complaint is not a legitimate member of the community. Criticisms may only be expressed legitimately in non-marketised spaces such as the community forum. In this context, even the free-to-air BBC Five phone-in show, *6-0-6*, is deemed to be a marketised space, populated by merchandise-buying “numpties” who are

collectively understood as lacking in basic football literacy. In the relative privacy of the community's discussion forum, however, fans can safely vent their anger:

Nowadays, I don't support the players, I support the team. The players on the pitch mean nothing to me personally. I have no connection with them whatsoever. The only players who have come close in the last decade are Fowler, Gerrard ... and Carragher. I am sick of feeling empty and annoyed when they run off the pitch after a defeat to get into their Porsche and get home to the blond darlin' and a slap up meal with 'friends' in some swanky bistro, and then onto a contemporary club to sip Dom Perignon '63. They can't even be bothered to face the fans who have spent a vast majority of their weekly wage to see them play in that Red shirt.
(‘Roper’)

‘Roper’ blames the hyper-marketisation of football for dulling the hunger of the players for success on the field. He yearns for an era now gone, when it was far easier to identify more closely with those on the field:

It's such a distant memory the days when the players played for you, and were on the whole pretty much just ordinary fellas

‘Roper’ is not alone in blaming commercialisation and greed for the decline in the relationship between the fans and some of the players:

*I just can't agree with getting behind lazy arsed piss taking money grabbing bastards like Heskey and showing them unconditional love and support when they can't be arsed with us. If I'm there or not it makes no odds to Heskey or Biscan or Diouf or whoever who'll f*** off home to a luxury pad with a model girlfriend and not give another s*** performance a second thought*
(‘Signor Il Irriducibli’, RAOTL member, male)

*Heskey isn't a striker. I would kick his nuts off for wasting possession at the end.
Useless. Not fit to wear the shirt.*
(‘Sally Bob’, RAOTL member, male)

The collective wisdom among the fans for several years during this study (at a time when the team were performing poorly) was that some of the players were no longer as ‘hungry’ to win games and trophies, because their new-found wealth had dulled their hunger and desire to win. They already had it all, in terms of material wealth and the worldly trappings of success, so their desire for glory suffered. Commerce, of course, was to blame.

Criticisms of the manager and players voiced by numerous Liverpool fans via media such as *You're on Sky Sports* caused members of the forum to move quickly, however, to assert distinction between themselves as real Liverpool fans and other Liverpool fans lacking in the required qualities of loyalty and commitment:

It hurts me to say this, but I think some Liverpool supporters are fickle they want INSTANT success. To me any success is earned NOT bought. They watch Sky and listen to the negativity cascaded from their mouths at us and sit in awe as Man U, Arsenal etc sometimes have a bit of luck to win games they shouldn't. Supporting Liverpool is about supporting Liverpool, it's not about 5 minutes of fame, it's not about bemoaning players lack of form, it's about being there, willing and cheering them on when they need it most.
(‘Mottman’, RAOTL member, male)

‘Mottman’ is not only critical of fans whose support is conditional upon success, he is also clearly expressing some strongly felt ideals. His definition of the fan-team relationship is highly altruistic. It stands in opposition to the type of fandom that is seen as demanding success in return for consumer investment. In fact, so often when fans wish to communicate the notion of purity in relation to their fandom, they invoke the market, to

clarify that purity in contrast to the market's grubbiness and pragmatism. The idea that 'I have paid my money so I'm entitled to be entertained by exciting football' is attacked, arguably not because of an explicit anti-market ideology but rather simply to communicate that there is something pure and noble about unconditional love and devotion. Consider the following forum exchange between 'Buckie' and 'Big Al', for example:

The end of the day (Houllier's) tactics are boring that is why Anfield isn't loud anymore and besides people like myself pay good money to watch LFC and quite frankly they're not value for money. I watched Chelsea on the Premiership on Saturday night and immediately afterwards Liverpool were on and although Chelsea were beaten by Bolton the gulf between Chelsea and Liverpool is massive. We cannot keep possession and this has been the case for 5 years.

('Buckie')

*"Value for money", value for money is f*** all to do with being a football fan FACT. When you started supporting LFC did you stop to work on the return on your investment or something, was it a conscious decision you made to follow the reds? Supporting a club, being a fan, isn't about what's value for money or not it's about supporting the club through good times and bad, through singing, shouting and sharing the highs and lows FACT.*

(Big Al)

What 'Big Al' is actually saying is 'don't *commercialise* the fan-team relationship'. It is above all that.. It is instead about ideals such as commitment and unconditional devotion. Ultimately the fans socially reinforce each other, not only in the practice of unconditional devotion to the team during the match, but also in refraining from utilising commercial forms of fan discourse to express any negative emotions after a poor performance:

We all support LFC ... The team needs us now more than ever. Regardless of what we think of them as individuals or the manager's judgement, we owe it to the club

to be 100% supportive. No booing. No barracking players. Slag them off all you want in the pub or on this forum, not on 606 or 'You're on Sky Sports'. We should not wash our dirty linen in public.

(‘Old Red Eyes’, RAOTL member)

*We have to put it all behind us tomorrow night. Support the team. Support the Manager - for he is the manager of Liverpool FC and deserves our support, otherwise we're no better than the lazy f***ing vultures in the press. I have my criticisms and opinions, I know a lot of us do, but for the 90 mins inside Anfield they deserve our 100% support. When the going gets tough we should stick together and see it through. I've been a critic of GH (Houllier), I know, but if living in Liverpool has ever taught us anything its that we should look after our own.*

COME ON YOU CANT DO NOTHING WRONG REDMEN!

(‘johnnymac’, RAOTL member, male)

The members of the community are unwilling to concede that real support is in any sense conditional. In order to reinforce this idea, they again utilise the tactic of distancing their fandom from the official marketplace. The fans reserve the right to criticise the players, but not via inappropriate hyper-commercialised media such as Sky Sports. Most significantly, from the perspective of consumer behaviour, they again invoke the market as a symbol of impurity and lack of devotion, in order to clarify their own understanding of what is meant by ‘real’ fandom. By refraining from criticising the team via official market media, they reassure each other of the unconditional nature of their devotion to the players. They again mutually behave in a way that helps to preserve the sacredness of the fan-team relationship, by carefully maintaining distance between the sacred (themselves and their relationship with the team) and the profane. Their understanding of the profane therefore includes not only excessively commercially mediated fandom, but also any players who seem to have settled for collecting huge wages rather than retaining a hunger for success on the field (Belk *et al* 1989).

While the fans do seem to disassociate themselves from players whom they feel have let them down, they of course continue to practice devotion towards individual players. Fan devotion at the level of the individual player remains highly significant. Any player who is perceived as capable of delivering ecstatic experience to the fans, while simultaneously demonstrating culturally appropriate levels of commitment to the team, is enthusiastically celebrated by the supporters. Certain players in particular are perceived by the fans as personifying the same extraordinary passion for the club that they themselves feel. Hence for example the popularity of home made banners in veneration of Jamie Carragher (Figure 7.1).



7-1 Jamie Carragher banners

Banners tend to venerate the collective rather than individuals but a number of banners celebrate centre-half Jamie Carragher, as seen here.

Carragher personifies, for the fans, the passion that they feel, the sense that the club *matters* (Grossberg 1992). The fans frequently laud his displays in the centre of Liverpool's defence, and his name is celebrated by the fans as representative of the spirit of the club, in ways that the names of most of the other players are not. Ultimately, however, in maintaining mutual devotion to the team, the fans avoid dependence on individual players, and dependence on victory in Cup Finals. They rely instead on their relationships with each other.

7.3 Fan Relationships with each other - the role of shared habitus.

The many ecstatic experiences shared at the match, while contributing to the shared sense of *communitas* and flow (Belk *et al* 1989, Celsi *et al* 1993, Hopkinson and Pujari 1999), and the communal sense of magic and mystery (Arnould and Price 1993) are clearly not the sole sources of camaraderie among football fans. Consumers need material things both to express their sense of identity, and have it affirmed by others, via processes of discursive elaboration (Elliott and Wattanasuwan, 1998). Of course football-related goods play a key role in reification of the fans' sense of collective identity (Derbaix *et al* 2002). The collective sense of identity among members of the Red All Over The Land Community is reified not only by football-related consumption objects, but also by the shared taste for downmarket consumption. When it comes to their collective identity as Liverpool fans, these consumers demonstrate a strong sense of collective, downmarket habitus (Bourdieu 1984) which structures not only their consumption in relation to the team but also their consumption in relation to each other. It is this shared habitus, then, that further reifies the collective sense of community.

7.3.1 The role of habitus in facilitating community relationships

The shared habitus of the community, extending as it does beyond the context in which football related consumption objects are consumed, must also focus on the role played by consumption of other goods and services in facilitating the fans' sense of relationship with

each other. Shared tastes and preferences for certain kinds of goods and services allow community members to participate in what is emically termed 'the craic', something that can be understood at the etic level as a taste for immediate gratification (Bourdieu 1984). Hearty downmarket consumption which reflects a shared taste for the necessary (Bourdieu 1984: 177-184) is thus an important part of the collective maintenance of consciousness of kind (Muniz & O'Guinn 2001).

There are two main themes in relation to the habitus of this fan community. There is the shared taste for the 'craic', or immediate gratification, expressed via downmarket consumption. There is also the shared sense of sacrifice, a mutual recognition of the discomforts everyone has endured precisely because of the cheaper forms of transport and accomodation necessary in order to fund as many football trips as possible.

7.3.1.1 Enjoying the 'craic'

The sense of *communitas* arising out of the initial conversion experience is perhaps more responsible than any other factor for the *onset* of consciousness of kind. The sense of camaraderie is sustained over time through a variety of practices, all of which facilitate mutual affirmation of identity, via this shared preference for downmarket consumption. When fans talk about enjoying the 'craic', it is important to understand that the 'craic' resembles but is not equivalent to what Bourdieu (1984) defines as immediate gratification (see discussion below). It is also important to note that this taste for 'the craic' manifests itself materially in the shared preference for numerous forms of downmarket consumption. These downmarket goods and services are collectively understood as essential elements of the environment in which 'the craic' is simultaneously and collectively produced and consumed (Holt 1995) by the community.

For example, over the course of most football weekends, not only is a great deal of time spent in pubs, but the pubs tend to be of the downmarket variety. The Albert (located next door to Anfield), The Horseshoe (next door to Cork City's home ground), Mary D's pub in Manchester, 'The British Bar' in Lisbon, Shenanigans' Bar in Liverpool, and of course

Flanagans and O'Neills Irish pubs (in Liverpool City Centre) on the Saturday night after a home game, are typical examples.

In observing fans over the course of a football weekend, it is strongly apparent that the time spent in each other's company is characterised by as much banter and craic as possible. The observed playfulness is not confined to the time spent at the match but rather goes on for the whole duration of the trip. For instance a faux pas by any member of the group will be immediately seized on and used as ammunition not so much to tease the person involved but actually to celebrate the shared sense of friendship and 'craic'. The following incident was observed while participating with Liverpool fans in a European 'away trip':

Halfway through 'Liver Bird Upon My Chest' L... got the words wrong. The moment we all realised that the Songmeister himself had actually made a mistake in singing one of our most loved songs, everyone roared with laughter. Half the bar then burst into a chorus of 'You're shit! And you know you are' followed by a chorus of 'He only knows eighty songs'. L... covered his head in mock shame and ran out of the bar for a minute, before coming back in to more laughter
(fieldnotes 21/2/06)

Incessant playfulness is the order of the day, interspersed with the consumption of downmarket goods such as cheap food and beer, along with the non material, fan produced, consumption objects of song and discourse. Entertainment is provided by each other, for each other, in plain, clearly downmarket environments. This doubtless seems an over-idealised account; are these relationships invariably this warm and congenial? In fact, over four years of data gathering has led this researcher to believe that they are. Any differences of opinion, or exchanges of harsh words on the forum, when they do occur (which is very seldom), never seem to last. In speculating as to why this might be so, it certainly seems possible that the same process of self-selection (Schouten and McAlexander 1995) which has brought the community together in the first place also acts as a compelling force, encouraging the fans to make any effort required to sustain their

relationships with each other. On the rare occasions when the need for reconciliation arises (as in the above case with 'Buckie' and 'Big Al'), it is quickly attained by the mutual desire to find common ground with each other, by drawing on shared experiences, for example away games that both fans may have been to.

Certainly there is also a strong incentive towards relationship maintenance in the mutual desire to affirm the collective displaced meanings (McCracken 1988) understood in the shared devotion to Liverpool FC. As discussed above, when football fans gather together, a great deal of their activity centres round the singing of songs that express an almost religious devotion to their team. This shared devotion helps to explain the collective predisposition to willingly maintain warm relationships with one's fellow fans (Muniz and Schau 2005). Furthermore, the utilisation of fan-produced consumption objects (in this case fan texts in the form of football songs), when combined with the collective sense of downmarket, non exploitative habitus, reified by the surroundings of pubs like 'The Albert' (which is decorated, incidentally, with football goods donated *gratis* by football fans over the years) amounts to a merging of production and consumption, making both processes into acts of creativity which serve to 're-enchant' the social world and rejuvenate the sense of authentic community (Kozinets 2002).

Other group relationships observed among another cluster of Liverpool fans from the 'Red All Over the Land' forum demonstrate a similar degree of warmth. 'True Red', 'Matth', 'Jocky's Scar', 'Big Al', 'Ferryrich', 'Kathy', and UMC usually meet in Sam Dodd's before home games and tend to go to The Albert afterwards. Meeting up together is enjoyed for its own sake, before heading off to watch the match. After the game, the fans meet up again, to enjoy the 'craic' and each other's company. Across the entire fan community, the enjoyment of the craic is an end in itself that allows the fans to enjoy the day, or the weekend, irrespective of the result of the match:

(If Liverpool got beaten four or five nil, but there was outstanding singing on that day and outstanding craic, with the few pints before and after, I wouldn't feel half as

bad, you know that kinda way... like I go for the atmosphere, the singing, the few pints, going out on whatever town that night, the whole trip
(‘Funkyzeit Mit Looney’)

This enjoyment of the craic is a repeated way in which community members affirm each other in their sense of collective identity. These shared experiences, repeated over and over again, irrespective of whether the football team has won or lost, effectively concretise the warmth of the relationships and reinforce the sense of collective identity (Elliott and Wattanasuwan 1998, McCracken 1988). The sense of relationship that the fans enjoy with each other therefore more than compensates for disappointments in relation to match results, issues with the club ticket office, or anything else that might – in the absence of community membership – have a negative impact on fan devotion levels.

7.3.1.2 ‘Scran Today’: The shared taste for downmarket food

One of the rituals on the community forum is the weekly discussion on Fridays of what members have eaten for lunch. This discussion thread began life with the title ‘Lunch today’ but was first re-named ‘Dinner today’ and finally ‘Scran today’ after a long and playful argument over what the midday meal should be called. An interesting point in relation to this is the manner in which out-of-town fans of the club have been socialised into adopting Liverpool working class expressions and terms such as ‘scran’ (‘scran’ refers to food in general, not just lunch). The ‘scran’ consumed on Fridays, while varied, usually conforms to what one might expect – anything from beans on toast to Indian food to Kentucky Fried Chicken.

In relation to match day food (as distinct from Friday lunchtime meals) fans might start, for example, with a hearty – and cheap – downmarket breakfast (the Wetherspoons referred to below is in fact yet another downmarket pub in Liverpool) :

Up early into Littlewoods for breakfast, 10 items for a couple of quid, is another recommendation I would not hesitate to make. Off to the taxi rank outside JD Wetherspoons, first disappointment of the day? It was SHUT.

(Wooltonian)

'Dinner' (whether before or after the match) is usually eaten in the 'chippy', or, failing that, Subway or McDonald's. It is certainly not consumed in an upmarket restaurant. Pimentel and Reynolds (2004) comment on how the sense of extended self is strengthened by bonding through shared consumption of food, citing Belk (1988) in their interpretation of the bonding effects of 'tailgating' and 'potluck' meals shared by American football fans. It is more illuminative, however, to revert to Belk's (1988) original analysis of contamination, to understand the significance of this shared taste for downmarket food.

Belk (1988) explains that to share food is to incorporate the identity of those with whom one shares this food into one's sense of extended self. To share food and beer, therefore, is to confirm the sense of communion with one's fellow fans, particularly when the type of food is of the hearty, plain sort, eaten in the kind of downmarket establishment (such as Wetherspoon's Pub and Restaurant in Liverpool) that signifies not only the shared taste for necessity (Bourdieu 1984), but the shared sacrifice that everyone has made in order to fulfil their commitment (Belk *et al* 1989, Fournier 1998b, Pimentel and Reynolds 2004) to the team and each other. Even the playful online 'Scran Today' ritual, is a form of communal meal, through which the community experiences a further confirmation of their relationship with each other.

7.3.1.3 The shared sense of sacrifice and endurance

Sacrifice is often not only financial but also involves the giving up of creature comforts. The choice of hotel accommodation is almost always cheap and cheerful. It may no longer be possible to stay in the 'Lord Nelson' for £25 per night, bed and (full English) breakfast,

due to the economic rejuvenation of Liverpool as a city, but, where possible, downmarket, highly affordable hotel accommodation is the preferred option. With regard to travel arrangements, the mode of transport may have changed, in that fans now tend to avail of low cost airline flights rather than taking the ferry to get to matches, but members of the community will always travel independently rather than via an official travel agency package. The relative absence of luxury is made more than bearable by the mutual and cheerful recognition that in order to get to as many Liverpool games as possible, everyone is in the same boat:

I remember staying in Wales a few times, the likes of Rhyl and stuff but I also remember sleeping in the cars, ... we literally stayed in the car, slept in the car all night, you know this type of thing. I remember sleeping in Lime Street one night, I was probably only seventeen or eighteen you know, like a knacker you know? Couldn't afford anything else y'know! I just had barely enough to go to the match ... – in fairness if it wasn't for the generosity of my brothers and sister I would never have got over y'know? ...Well worth it anyway ...– so worth it y'know?

(Funkyzeit Mit Looney)

What has been frequently been observed as a theme in fan discourse is a mutual recognition that, at one time or another, everyone has endured sleeping in train stations or on the dirty floor of a ferry, just to ensure that they get the chance to see their team play. This extends to the recognition that many members of the community have endured mistreatment by the club ticket office, in ticket allocation schemes that are perceived as unfair. It is also frequently assumed that everyone has endured having to make difficult travel arrangements at awkward times of the day or night, because of changes in kick-off times to suit live commercial satellite broadcasts. All these obstacles combine to give a mutual sense of membership of a community of true believers, who recognise in each other a willingness to make meaningful sacrifices (Belk *et al* 1989, Pimentel and Reynolds 2004), because of their shared love for the team. The sense of shared habitus is therefore pivotal in maintaining the bond between the fans.

Having established the importance of habitus as a further reifying factor in strengthening social bonds among the fans, the analysis now turns briefly to the question of whether this fan habitus is characterised by the kind of immediate, unreflexive, and unsophisticated gratification that Bourdieu attributes to fandom.

7.4 A critique of Bourdieu's conceptualisation of immediate gratification

Bourdieu labels fandom as a 'compensatory sop' on several grounds. It is not compatible with the deployment of the 'pure gaze' (Bourdieu 1984:5) because it is typically characterised by engagement with, rather than critical detachment from, the consumption object. It frequently involves displaying an inappropriate lack of decorum (Fiske 1989:138, Cusack 2001:7, Jenkins 1992:17, Bourdieu 1984:5). In its immediacy, it is too closely associated with the "lower, coarse, vulgar, venal, servile" pleasures and tastes of the masses (Bourdieu 1984:7). He further argues (see Chapter Two) that members of the working class only turn to fandom because they are blocked from access to higher forms of cultural capital. He sees it as a poor substitute for better, more desirable things, and portrays fans as "locked in a passionate, even chauvinistic, but passive and spurious participation which is merely an illusory compensation for dispossession by experts (*ibid*, p.386)."

Bourdieu acknowledges that each distinct social space will produce its own products (1984:88), its own (social) markets, its own "consecrating agencies" (1984:96), which will place a premium on the things they themselves produce, in order to affirm some sense of legitimate identity, but he sees the products and processes of fandom as conferring only a spurious identity that cannot confer higher socioeconomic status. Perhaps in Bourdieu's defence it could be suggested that his dismissal of fandom might have been borne out of frustration. To see people devote their energies to fandom instead of working towards the creation of a more egalitarian society, may perhaps have caused him to vent his spleen on fandom and other forms of immediate gratification. Such speculation is beyond the scope of the current study however. So, indeed, is the question of whether an expertise (at the level of the fan) in fandom is in any way helpful in climbing the social ladder among the

wider community. This study must instead confine itself to an evaluation of Bourdieu's conceptualisation of fandom in its own right.

The central flaw in Bourdieu's conceptualisation of fandom is his claim that it is a passive activity concerned only with immediate gratification. It stupefies the mind and causes it to overlook problems of social inequality and inferior economic status. Fiske (1989) and others (Kozinets 2001, Jenkins 1992) argue that, contrary to Bourdieu's view, fans tend to consume the products of mass culture in quite a proactive and critical manner; they are more likely to be *unwilling* than *unwitting* consumers of these products (Fiske 1989:23,24 – see Chapter Two of this study). To return to Fiske's argument that "popular culture is...the art of making do with what is available" (Fiske 2001:15), it can now be asserted that the members of both football fan communities in this study are engaged in proactively and creatively distancing themselves from the homogenised fan identity proposed by the official market. However, as their main concern is the retention of a sense of hierophany, they do not seek to distance themselves completely from the market; they simply refuse to allow the market to define the terms and parameters of their sacred activity and identity.

What of Bourdieu's distaste for uninhibited displays of emotion? Chapter Two of this thesis notes Jenkins' (1992) argument that the practice of emotional detachment is a relatively recent one in the history of aesthetics, and is in conflict with "broader currents in aesthetics which *embraced* rather than *rejected* strong emotions" (Jenkins, 1992:61 (this writer's italics)). Chapter Two further noted that shared emotions, shared passions, rather than being in any sense negative or inferior, are a force for what Maffesoli (1996) defines as *re-ligare*; the ties that bind not only postmodern but also more traditional consumer communities together, enabling them to experience the sacredness that is community. In order to maintain a sense of hierophany in relation to their communities, these football fans depend not only on emotion, but avidly produce and consume their own forms of popular (Fiske 1989), or subcultural (Thornton 1995) capital. Ultimately, therefore, Bourdieu provides us with a framework to understand fandom, even if, rather ironically, he did not seem to fully understand it himself.

7.5 Concluding remarks on fan-team-fan relationships, 'habitus', fan identity, and fan resistance.

A major factor in explaining the durability of the fan identity, and the strength of the initial felt bond with other fans lies in the nature of football itself. Taking sides in a football match automatically provides the consumer not only with a sense of affiliation, but with an immediate and regular sense of 'us' against 'them' (as noted in Chapter Five). Football fandom, beginning as it does with a form of conversion experience, is a form of sacred consumption. While the post-conversion development of fan identity involves the ritualised utilisation of material manifestations of that identity, so that meaning transfer (McCracken 1988: 85) can take place, the desire to keep fandom sacred can bring fans into conflict with the official market and consumer resistance to marketised versions of fan identity. The sense of hierophanous identity experienced by members of the 'Red All Over The Land' community is also maintained by adherence to a downmarket habitus. In extending the consumption framework of fandom into non football related, but essentially downmarket goods and services, this habitus further confirms the fans' belief that their identity is essentially one that lies outside the official marketplace. The fans' sense of relationship with each other as a community of 'true believers' is therefore strengthened by their sense that they are mutually engaged in a sacred relationship which they cannot allow the market to profane. Thus, while their consumption is partly about pleasure (Fiske 1989:174, 1992:38; Grossberg 1992:55,56), via the heady stuff of European Cups and the pursuit of the 'craic', it is also partly about resistance.

Two further issues of interest remain to be addressed. First, given that these fans are engaged in a form of consumer resistance, how does their resistance compare to the resistance practiced by other consumer groups? Second, do these fans only resist the official market when it encroaches on their specific subcultural terrain? If this is the case, how does this compare to the forms of resistance that manifest themselves among other consumer groups? These issues are considered in detail in Chapter Eight.

8 Chapter Eight. Resistance, Alternative Marketplaces, Symbiosis, and Hierophany.

8.1 Introduction.

The conclusion to Chapter Seven raised a number of questions, including the issue of how fan resistance, via the mechanism of distancing tactics, compares to the resistance practiced by other consumer groups. The question also arises as to whether these fans collectively resist the official market in general, or if they only become involved in resistance when the market encroaches on their specific subcultural terrain. How does this aspect of these consumers' behaviour compare to the forms of resistance that manifest themselves among other consumer groups? The analysis will now focus on how the distancing tactics of football fans compare to the practices of other consumer groups. A first question of interest at this point, therefore, is the extent to which distancing tactics (such as the utilisation of alternative marketplaces) are used in other subcultures of consumption.

8.2 Distancing Tactics in other subcultures of consumption

It is not possible to comment fully on the presence and purpose of distancing tactics deployed by members of all the various subcultures of consumption discussed in the literature on consumer behaviour, but a number of examples are referred to here, as a precursor to any further investigation of this issue. The distancing tactics identified in the current study included the voicing of distaste for marketised tastes and identities, the operation of an alternative marketplace, and the downplaying of consumption of official market goods. Chapter Seven also noted the role of fan habitus as a crucial element in sacralisation maintenance, through not only separating the sacredness of fandom from the profane market but also "re-enchanting" (Kozinets 2002a) the relationships within the community, among other things.

8.2.1 Voicing distaste for marketised identities

Declarations of distaste for marketised attempts to attain subcultural identity are commonplace within subcultures of consumption. Schouten and McAlexander (1995) describe how the hard core bikers deploy a variety of derogatory names, such as RUBies and HOOTers, to describe 'wanna-bes'. The 'wanna-be' bikers are forms of 'other' (Jancovich 2002, Thornton 1995), subculturally constructed to represent the belief that the biker identity cannot be purchased. Similarly Lorr (2005) outlines how veteran skateboarders see their activity as something outside the marketplace, and how they question the validity of marketised representations of the skateboarding identity.

Members of the tattooing subculture seek to preserve 'outsidership' (Bengtsson *et al* 2005) partly by use of the pejorative term "geek tattoos" to communicate a sense of distaste for newcomers to tattooing who have a preference for brand logo tattoos. Like the bikers, their reason for resisting commerce seems to be grounded in their desire to signal their ownership of an identity outside the mainstream. Tattooing was until very recently regarded as something of a signal of marginalisation from mainstream society. It has now become very fashionable and as Bengtsson *et al* note, in so doing, has largely lost its "traditional transgressionary qualities". However the hard-core members of the subculture again clearly reject the idea that the subcultural identity can be easily purchased.

A number of subcultures of consumption, including members of the 'Burning Man' community, for example, voice strong distaste for the idea of marketised identity in general. Regular consumers are 'couch potatoes' or unreflexive dupes of the system (Kozinets 2002, Kozinets and Handelman 2004). This is of interest because it shows how 'other' can be subculturally constructed as a dupe of the market, even where there is no particular marketised identity encroaching, or attempting to encroach on, a specific subcultural terrain. The subculturally shared understanding of 'other', where that other is

emically deemed representative of unreflexive marketised identity, is socially constructed as inauthentic and inferior to the identity of the ingroup.

8.2.2 The operation of alternative markets

The literature on subcultures of consumption does not reveal whether all the other distancing tactics listed above are prevalent across other subcultures. However, the literature *does* indicate the presence of alternative marketplaces, as a particularly powerful means of distancing subcultural identity from the official marketplace. This connection across subcultures of consumption becomes clear when we consider tattoo artists' practice of charging greatly reduced prices to clients who enter into a process of more elaborate body modification. Bengtsson *et al* argue that this practice resembles that of the 'Burning Man' participants who construct their annual 'gift economy' as a way of achieving "true communal affiliations". Authentic community, some argue, can only be achieved in "non-market mediated environments" (Thompson and Arsel 2004), hence the need to remove, or at least significantly reduce, the profit motive associated with the world of commerce. This practice has clear resonances with the alternative markets operated by football fans trading in such items as unofficial fanzines and t-shirts. Clearly there are multiple reasons for the practice. It is not done solely to attain a sense of authenticity with regard to community, but it is also done to attain a sense of creative authenticity (Kozinets 2002) and of course to maintain a sense of the sacred via decommodification (Belk *et al* 1989).

In the alternative economy of 'Burning Man', there is an even stronger resemblance to the unofficial, or alternative, market of the football fan subculture. There is the removal of commercial logos, the production and exchange of non market goods and 'services', and the removal of exploitative profiteering through gifting rather than charging normal prices. Finally, a sense of re-enchanting community is achieved via the simultaneous production and consumption of experience outside the normal marketplace (Kozinets 2002).

The 'true spirit' of the subcultural activity is thus always understood and articulated in opposition to commerce and the official mainstream market. The activity is always

conceptualised as something that cannot be bought. In the case of tattooing there is clearly a financial transaction involved but this is reduced to a token fee, when a member of the subculture is being tattooed, to differentiate it from the normal price charged to the 'geeks'. The non marketised nature of the transaction is further emphasised by embracing the hard core dedicated body modifiers as friends with whom one can go for a drink. This consciousness of kind is clearly not bestowed on the hoi polloi who just want to buy a trendy tattoo or two. Thus, while not every group has necessarily developed their own full-blown alternative market, a number of groups share a view of their activity as something that cannot be commodified. These uncommodifiable activities are then prioritised within the group-specific system of cultural capital. This explicitly facilitates the ringfencing and protection of that which 'really matters' not just by keeping it at a distance from the market, but by being able to point to the distance between it and the market.

8.3 The Co-Presence of Consumer Resistance and Symbiotic Relationships with Marketers.

One of the questions raised at the beginning of this chapter was whether the resistance of football fans to the market differed in any important ways from the resistance practiced by other consumers. Kozinets' (2002) analysis of consumer resistance clearly offers a useful basis for comparison in this regard. However, one difficulty with Kozinets' (2002) analysis is his insistence that brand communities and subcultures of consumption must be reconceptualised as "regatherings of the collective force required to resist" (2002:14) the (evil?) corporations that crush heterogeneity and creativity. Such a conceptualisation fails to explain the presence of symbiotic relationships between these communities (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001, Schouten *et al* 2000) and the corporations who provide them with branded goods. Any interpretation of these communities that describes them as 'regatherings' of a collective will to resist large corporations, without explaining not only the presence, but also the desire for, symbiotic marketer-consumer relationships, is therefore clearly incomplete. A reconceptualisation of tribalised consumption, which accounts for the co-presence of resistance and symbiotic relationships with marketers, is therefore needed.

The current study suggests that fans crave a sense of hierophanous identity, rather than a desire to resist the market per se. This suggests that relationships with marketers whose offerings facilitate a sense of hierophany among fans will be sought rather than resisted. This in turn suggests that future research could examine whether this might apply in other spheres of consumption. Holt (2002) suggests that, rather than acting as an homogenising force, marketing has already moved to cater for a new kind of consumer culture, one that facilitates a more personal consumer sovereignty. He proffers the case of 'Don' by way of illustration, defining 'Don' as a 'cultural bricoleur' who constantly eludes the identity categorisations of the market, but who is ultimately dependent on the market as a source of resources that he can selectively draw from to construct his own, non-market identity. Marketing, Holt (2002) claims, has already 'gone postmodern'. It has already reinvented itself to cater for the 'consumer as pygmalion (Elliott and Wattanasuwan 1998)' who uses market resources in a playful, bricoleur-like way. Holt ultimately argues that such consumers are not really acting to tear down the market or overthrow the system (as some commentators might wish). Instead, he says, they are helping to renew it. If there is a widespread desire among consumers for a sense of hierophany as well as the personal sovereignty suggested by Holt, then such a desire could possibly facilitate this putative renewal and help to explain the relationships between corporations and brand communities.

Holt's assertion that the "proliferation of narrowly focused consumption communities" is some sort of "defensive posture toward consumer culture" (2002:87) makes most sense if we consider the possibility that consumer resistance to the market is sometimes a result of the desire to maintain a sense of heterogenous identity and experience. Members of communities such as the Saab brand community or the Harley Davidson subculture of consumption, often enjoy a symbiotic relationship with the 'large corporations' who manufacture these brands (Schouten *et al* 2000, Muniz and O'Guinn 2001, Schouten and McAlexander 1995). This symbiotic relationship remains stable provided the role of the consumption community as custodians of the 'spirit' of the brand is respected by the 'large corporation' that actually owns it. Any antagonistic posture towards the corporation is usually only adopted if there is a temporary failure on the part of the company to respect

this custodianship, because this represents a threat to the community's sense of heterogeneous identity. Kozinets (2002) fails to come to terms with this. He interprets the resistance of brand communities as resistance to commercial brand development and growth *per se*. This perspective fails to explore the motivation that arguably lies behind the resistance expressed by Muniz and O'Guinn's Saab brand community (2001). If this resistance is motivated by the desire to maintain a sense of distinction, rather than an inherent desire to resist the market, then we can account for the ongoing relationship with the corporation. This in turn indicates that members of brand communities do not necessarily see themselves as part of a collective force gathered together to resist large corporations.

We can now revert to the claim that authentic affiliation requires a non-market mediated environment (Kozinets 2002). This writer suggests that this may indeed be true, but only for members of communities who have self-selected with regard to community membership, on the basis of a shared ideological opposition to brands and the market. However, for consumers who feel otherwise, such as members of the Saab brand community (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001) or the Jeep brand community (McAlexander *et al* 2002) then brands and the companies who produce them can *facilitate* authentic community (Bengtsson *et al* 2005). Members of these brand communities frequently accept, rather than reject, the presence of the corporation as co-producer.

This of course points to the possibility that some consumers will be attracted to brands and the merchandise produced by official marketers precisely because of the desire for community they perceive such merchandise to represent. They buy the brand because they crave affiliation and see the brand as offering access to community (Cova 1997). This is arguably at least part of the reason why so many new consumer football fans are attracted towards official merchandise. It does not just imply affiliation, it practically screams it. However the tension between these fans and the hard core members of the subculture is inevitable, because there is clearly far more to being a fan than just wearing the shirt. Issues of authenticity are therefore immediately contested, for all the reasons already

discussed. This helps to explain why hard core fans feel the need to denigrate commerce and distance themselves from it, but does not necessarily make them part of the vanguard of global anti-corporate resistance. They are primarily concerned with maintaining a sense of hierophany and preserving the sacred dimension of the fandom experience. If official marketers were disposed toward more frequent and more formal facilitation of these fans' sense of hierophany, it is highly likely that much of the negative sentiment towards them would cease.

8.4 A speculative comment on consumers' willingness to engage in symbiotic relationships with marketers

How can we explain the apparent contradiction represented by the co-presence of resistance on the one hand, and positive relationships with marketers on the other? Consumers, instead of being predisposed towards resistance, and strategically deciding where and when to resist the market (Fiske 1989), will resist the market specifically in those areas of their lives where the identity they are most familiar with is (or was) fundamentally an under-marketised identity. Where the self-concept has developed, or has been socially constructed in a way that is perceived as being outside the official market, the sense of ownership of the cultural terrain is understandably high. The official market, and marketised expressions of (sub)cultural identity, will be seen as unwelcome intrusions unless marketers take a highly symbiotic approach. Once an activity becomes fashionable and the market moves in to commoditise it, whether the activity in question is football fandom, tattooing, skateboarding, or outlaw biking, the absence of such a symbiotic approach means that hard core participants will more than likely engage in resistance. They feel obliged to resist because the encroachment of the market will be perceived as a threat to their sense of hierophany (Belk *et al* 1989). In other spheres of activity, there is an absence of formal resistance to the market because the identity in these spheres was always perceived and accepted as marketised to begin with. In the case of members of the RAOTL community, there is no contestation of the market for computer game consoles, for instance. There is no anti-corporate alliance among these consumers, no agitation to stand up and be counted against the might of the Sony Corporation. Instead, resistance takes the

form of oppositional taste (Hogg & Savolainen 1998), where consumers will argue the relative merits of the X-Box over the Playstation (or vice versa). The identity of computer gamer has evolved as one where the marketer's right to be present is not contested. This is because there is a 'buy-in' to an official brand, as part of the entry into the games console world, and the system of subcultural capital may discriminate *between* brands but it certainly accepts the *idea* of brands. The strongly adversarial type of resistance present in the sphere of football fandom is therefore absent from the consumption of computer games.

This also serves to explain the nature of resistance among members of brand communities. They perceive the brand as being there by right, and tend to oppose illegitimate ways of consuming the brand (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001), rather than resisting the corporation. The notion of a brand's presence being welcome, once it has been part of the subcultural activity from the beginning, is further corroborated by Holt's (2003) analysis of the status of the 'Mountain Dew' soft drink brand among extreme sports participants. The brand's active role in sponsoring extreme sports events prior to, rather than post, their explosion in popularity, gave it an iconic status.

Of course this entire comment is speculative in nature but it summarises some intriguing possibilities which certainly merit further research.

8.5 Conclusions: Resist here, consume there?

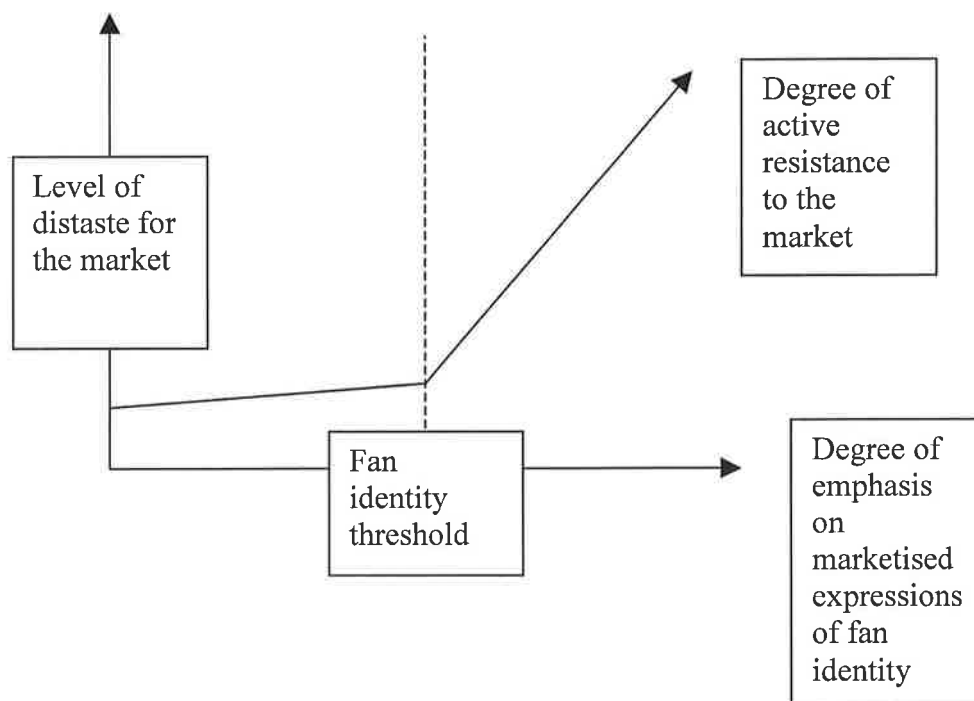
One final possibility of interest is now addressed. The denigration of an 'outgroup', such as the 'daytrippers', 'dupes', or 'couch potatoes' is a popular mode for affirmation of the ingroup's sense of identity. Perhaps it is the sheer ubiquitousness of the market that causes it and its patrons to be so often the scapegoat of choice. This suggests that much of what is termed consumer resistance is not really grounded in strong ideological resistance to the market, lived out consistently in consumers' lives, but rather simply a convenient stance to temporarily take, to affirm one's own sense of identity.

Furthermore, what of the possibility that maintaining *one* sphere of life as a site of explicitly proclaimed 'resistance' to the market effectively grants consumers a licence to unproblematically, or at least less problematically, consume whatever they wish in other spheres, at other times? 'Burning Man' participant 'Crucifix George' (Kozinets 2002a) possibly enjoys his time in the desert partly because it permits him to believe that he is a reflexive person, unlike the passive dupes of the market system. Does he then happily return to buying his favourite brand of RV and other consumer goods and services, in all the other spheres of life? This is another interesting possibility which merits further investigation.

Similarly, do hard core football fans, having reassured themselves as to the non-marketised authenticity of their identity in relation to football, happily consume whatever they like in other spheres of their lives, whether that is in relation to cars, video games, music, movies, holiday destinations, or other consumer goods and services? Having at least one area of life defined as sacred, and kept at a perceived distance from the market as part of the process of sacralisation maintenance, possibly helps to anchor consumers' identities. It prevents a sense of anonymity from taking over consumers' lives and also permits them to happily purchase mass produced commodities in other spheres of their existence. As Holt (2002) observes, it is impossible to completely resist the market. Most consumers are under too much pressure, due to the ordinary commitments and obligations of life, to practice consistent evasion of the market. They manage to maintain a sense of transcendent meaningfulness, by focusing instead on a small number of spheres of activity which they strive to maintain as sacred.

Furthermore, provided the market facilitates a sense of hierophany in these spheres, rather than threatening it, consumers may be happy to allow marketers a role in co-producing the consumption experience. This would explain the current willingness of the hard core Liverpool fans to work with the club in co-producing matchday atmosphere in the stadium. Now that the club are actively supporting the fans' 'Reclaim The Kop' campaign, to reassert traditional Liverpool fan values and resist the nouveau '*Soccer A.M.*' style of fandom, the fans feel somewhat more reassured that their sense of hierophany is

understood, rather than threatened by the club. More generally, it can also be suggested that if consumers succeed in maintaining a sense of hierophany, and if they have managed to maintain a collective knowledge that there is far more to life than whether they can afford to buy the latest sensational offering from the official market, then arguably their 'resistance' has been a success. Of course this is a tentative conclusion but it is of conceptual interest and certainly merits further research attention. To revert more specifically to the question of football fans and their relationship with the market, we can suggest the following summary (Figure 8.1):



8-1 Football Fans' Relationship With The Official Market.

Figure 8.1 tentatively outlines the relationship between hard-core football fans and the official market. The key to the relationship lies in the degree to which the market is perceived to attempt to completely hyper-commoditise football fan identity. Hard core fans

such as members of RAOTL display a degree of acceptance of the official market until the point on the horizontal axis denoted by the dotted line (above) is reached. Prior to this point the fans feel that their identity is not under threat. Beyond this point the market is perceived as seeking to completely dominate fan identity. This lack of recognition for the identity and values of non-hypermarketised fandom has resulted in a significant increase in distaste for the offerings of the official market, and an increased willingness to embrace tactics to distance fandom from that market. However where fans perceive that their identity is recognised and respected, they will display a degree of willingness to embrace the market's offerings. The key to successful relationships with these fans from a marketing viewpoint lies in a more explicit acknowledgement of their identity. Again of course this is a tentative conclusion, which should be subjected to scrutiny via further empirical research.

9 Chapter Nine. Conclusion.

9.1 On being a football fan.

Being a football fan has in the past involved a magical initiation that included an almost utopian sense of displacement (Maclaran and Brown 2005), structured in part by exposure to the magical atmosphere provided by the crowd, and in part by the demigods on the field. The 'traditional' fan then embarked on a career path that was understood in terms of collective self-entertainment and an identity narrative that did not involve the market, or marketer-produced symbols, but rather involved the use of home made goods rich in localised cultural or subcultural capital. Such terrace style fandom has been regarded as the cultural preserve or territory of working class fans, and is characterised by multiple features of a working class habitus (Bourdieu 1984).

Giulianotti's exploration of the attraction of football fandom for middle class consumers concluded that working class 'terrace style' fandom was perceived as more authentic and therefore more desirable. This perceived authenticity can now be explained in terms of the perceived distance between terrace style fandom and the market. This is a new finding in the literature on football fans. The football fan academic literature has looked at how middle class fans are attracted by the perceived authenticity of the working class style of fandom without necessarily analysing this in terms of the less marketised, less commodified, nature of terrace style fandom. This study builds on the work of Kozinets (2002a), in explain that working class styles of consumption can therefore have great appeal for middle class consumers in search of distance from the market. Terrace style fandom is 'retro' and working class, and thus is more 'authentic' and desirable because of its perceived distance from the market. This confirms the findings of Brown *et al* (2003) and Holt (2002), in that anything perceivable as being at a greater distance from the market will automatically be deemed more authentic, and a growing body of consumers will therefore consider it a more attractive option.

9.2 Fandom is not primarily a form of resistance, but a form of (sacred) identity and experience

What else do we now know about fandom? What additional contributions has this study made to our conceptual knowledge of fan consumer behaviour? One contribution has certainly been the finding that fandom can incorporate a sense of resistance, but that resistance is not the *raison d'être* of fandom.

This is a useful contribution because it makes a distinction between fan subcultural capital as a resource for the pursuit of pleasure through the enjoyment of shared tastes, and fan subcultural capital that is primarily intended as a means to resist various hegemonies such as the hegemony of patriarchal society, or the hegemony of capitalism and the market. This differs slightly from Fiske's view (1992) of resistance as having a more central role in fan consumption. Fiske's (1992:47-48) argument that "in capitalist societies popular culture is necessarily produced from the products of capitalism, for that is all the people have to work with" is part of an overall conceptualisation of fandom as a form of popular culture that stands in conscious opposition to capitalism and the market. Fiske sees fandom as a producerly activity but clearly believes that the main goal of this producerly fandom is resistance. However the current study clearly demonstrates that fans can behave in a producerly way, without having an anti-market agenda. For the fans in this study, the point of producerly consumption is really to enjoy the pleasure of fandom (Grossberg 1992). Resistance to the market manifests itself, certainly, but only after the fact of hyper-marketisation.

Being a traditional Liverpool football fan is a type of consumer identity project (Arnould and Thompson 2005), but one that is socially constructed in a manner that places it at a distance from the market, to resist the desacralising effects of hypermarketisation. It is therefore not a marketer-produced consumer position, in something of a contrast to the consumer behaviour of the new consumer fan. The new consumer fandom that has emerged in recent years can be understood far more readily as a consumer identity project of the kind articulated by Arnould and Thompson. New consumer fandom, to a great degree, inhabits marketer-produced consumer positions (Arnould and Thompson

2005:871), albeit to highly varying degrees of consumer acceptance and/or resistance with regard to issues of identity and authenticity.

We also need to understand that the resources available in the unofficial 'market' maintained and operated by the more traditional hard core fans are very often deemed more attractive as identity-project resources by some of the 'new consumer' fans than those offered by the official market. This is due to issues of perceived authenticity and the desire for subcultural capital on the part of such fans.

Moving on, then, to the question of subcultural, or as Fiske terms it, 'popular' cultural capital, this study's findings concur that "... 'popular cultural capital' ... can serve... similar functions to those of official cultural capital" and also that "fans, in particular, are active producers and users of such (popular) cultural capital" (Fiske 1992:33). However the subcultural capital of football fans is primarily used to generate and safeguard sacred experience and identity, not to resist the market or any other hegemonic force. Hence the apparent inconsistencies found in this study in relation to resistance. As explained above, when the market actually facilitates the fans' sense of hierophany, they are in a position to embrace it. It is when the market is perceived as a threat to the collective sense of hierophany and to the enjoyment of sacred experience that it is resisted.

In finding that football fandom is sacred to these fans we can concur with Grossberg (1992:58-59) that "... being a particular sort of ... fan can take on an enormous importance and thus come to constitute a dominant part of the fan's identity (this is how we often think of subcultures). For others, it remains a powerful but submerged difference that colors, but does not define, their dominant social identities".

Of course Grossberg speaks of fandom as something that 'matters', some site (or repository) in which one can invest one's identity and one's passion. He also asserts that fandom is "a necessary relationship" because "... one cannot exist in a world where nothing matters (including the fact that nothing matters)... what we describe today as a 'fan' is the

contemporary articulation of a necessary relationship which has historically constituted the popular". Grossberg (1992:63) goes on to state that:

"there is no necessary reason why the fan relationship is located...on the terrain of commercial popular culture ...(b)ut ...for the vast majority of people in advanced capitalist societies, this is increasingly the only space where the fan relationship can take shape ... It is in consumer culture that the transition from consumer to fan (takes place)...It is here ...that we seek ...to construct our own identities, partly because there seems to be no other space available, no other terrain on which we can construct and anchor our mattering maps"

Grossberg thus asserts that fandom provides fans with the opportunity to construct their own identities, from the outputs of popular commercially produced culture, and that fans turn to these outputs because of a lack of alternatives elsewhere. A distinction should nevertheless be drawn between fandom that is located as Grossberg describes it "on the terrain of commercial popular culture" and fandom as practiced by the members of Red All Over The Land. This form of fandom differs from that of media fans such as *Star Trek* devotees (Kozinets 2001) because it is not mediated in origin. Members of the RAOTL community do not perceive their fandom as something primarily responsive in nature. In other words, their fandom is not a response to commercial outputs and media images (Kozinets 2001). They understand fandom to mean a relationship between football players and supporters, resulting in the creation of unmediated authentic experience.

That is not to say that their fandom does not resemble that of media fans in certain important respects such as producerly behaviours, but rather to observe that this form of fandom did not originate inside the market in the manner that much science fiction and other forms of media fandom arguably have. Furthermore, while agreeing with Grossberg (1992:64) that fandom "empowers" fans and that fans are not subjugated to the commercial marketplace, the fandom studied here does not seem to lie within the boundaries of hyper-commercial fan culture. It positions itself in relation to that culture, certainly, but at a distance from it, as an alternative to it.

9.3 Fan habitus as a facilitator of identity and resistance

This sense of fan identity as something that can be kept at a distance from the fan hyper market is arguably only sustainable because of the depth and breadth of the fans' sense of fan habitus (Bourdieu 1984). The habitus of these fans was first discussed in Chapter Seven, which listed numerous examples of how fan consumption is systematically structured in ways that de-emphasise the role of the market. This included the shared taste for downmarket consumption, and the preference for not only non marketised consumption objects but also various forms of non material consumption objects as markers of authentic fan identity and practice. Any collective understanding of authentic identity as being successfully distanced from the marketplace is far more likely to be effective when an entire group-specific habitus, including material and non material expressions of identity and practice, has been constructed around it.

It is now suggested in support of this argument that Belk and Costa's (1998) analysis of participation in the mountain man 'rendezvous' event indicates that an entire habitus is constructed and maintained around this particular consumption activity. Every single aspect of 'mountain man' consumption is subject to the rules of the temporary schema that governs participant behaviour. Modern conveniences are banned. Home-made items, rich with symbolic meaning, are utilised instead. Participants also produce and value non-material consumption objects not dissimilar to those of the football fans. Group camaraderie, for instance, is central to the entire experience, as is participant discourse. Levels of personal skill and knowledge enjoy very high value in this alternative economy, just as they do among football fans. However, just as was the case with football fandom, non-material consumption objects do not of themselves suffice to give full, reified substance to the habitus. For any alternative habitus to have substance, for it to possess full credibility, it must have a material dimension. It must produce goods and services for consumers to consume.

Rendezvous participants therefore not only produce their own consumption objects but also operate a parallel market not dissimilar to those of the other communities referenced in Chapter Eight. When the community is together, trading in their own unofficial market

takes up a considerable proportion of their time. Even the more formally organized aspects of this trading activity are socially constructed to facilitate the collective fantasy that all are participating in an authentic nineteenth century mountain man rendezvous. For example, the stalls selling food only provide vittles recognisable as typical of the foodstuffs of the early nineteenth century. In a further validation of community authenticity, the most favourable trading terms are reserved for fellow participants, rather than the tourists occasionally permitted to visit the rendezvous. Members even engage in barter with their fellow participants, swapping home made goods and avoiding the use of cash altogether.

In relation to the production of their own goods the 'rendezvous' participants display a great deal of commitment to their activity. They only recognize handmade outfits as authentic. Furthermore, the wearer must have carried out their own beadwork, and buckskin leather must have been brain-tanned rather than tanned with synthetic products. While the sheer depth of creative production displayed by rendezvous participants in this respect therefore greatly exceeds the efforts of the football fans, it is important to recognize that both sets of consumers demonstrate fidelity to their chosen habitus. Members of the RAOTL community have to make their own banners, and are expected to comply with the community consensus on how such banners are to be designed. It is hard to imagine a more complete schema for the collective management of perceptions than that of the mountain men, but again it is important to note that the fidelity of the football fans to their particular schema is just as unconditional in its own way.

This reconceptualisation of habitus does admittedly differ somewhat from Bourdieu's (1984) original conceptualisation. It suggests that football fans share a socially constructed understanding of fandom that embraces multiple aspects of consumption. It also demonstrates an adherence to something strongly resembling Bourdieu's concept of the taste for necessity. This does not necessarily validate Bourdieu's theory in relation to such a taste, because the study only examined fan tastes and preferences in relation to the consumption of football. There is ample anecdotal evidence to suggest that working class consumers would not necessarily demonstrate the rigorous adherence to the taste for necessity described by Bourdieu, across all possible spheres of consumption. Nevertheless

what has emerged from this study is the intriguing possibility that consumers can collectively construct sphere-specific forms of habitus and that these forms of habitus play a similar role in relation to identity to that outlined by Bourdieu.

9.4 A brief comment on the nature of consumer resistance.

What do we now know about consumer resistance, in light of the findings of this study? Consumer resistance is perhaps overly defined as being primarily ideological in nature. The so-called strong end of the resistance continuum (Fournier 1998a) tends to dominate our understanding of what is meant by the term. However, such an understanding of resistance does not appear to explain the behaviour of non-activist consumers, and it can also lead to a tendency to label such non-activist consumers as “dupes” (Kozinets and Handelman 2004).

This thesis focuses primarily on consumer resistance as a means of separating the sacred from the profane, rather than being primarily concerned with ideological opposition to the ‘brand bullies’ (Holt 2002). Fans seem to manage to conceive of their identities as locatable beyond the desacralising, profaning reach of the market, provided that they can retain a sense of ownership over at least one area of meaningful activity that facilitates a sense of transcendence, *communitas*, and *hierophany* in their lives. This frees them from the need to mount a more consistent resistance to the market across all spheres of their existence, something that, as Holt (2002) observes, may well be beyond the resources of most contemporary consumers in any case.

It is also interesting to see that the form of resistance practiced by these fans contains both elements of taste as distaste, and elements of ideological opposition to the market. In other words it clearly manifests aspects of resistance from either end of Fournier’s (1998a) continuum. This suggests in turn that our understanding of consumer resistance as being neatly delineated along such a continuum may need to be revised, but only further research can establish the answer to such a question.

On another note, this study possibly offers a little more clarity on the apparent contradiction between resistance to the market on the one hand, and the embracing of symbiotic relationships with marketers on the other, by members of consumption communities. It may be that where the market can facilitate a sense of hierophany among a community of consumers, it is embraced, but where it threatens the communal sense of hierophany, it is actively resisted. The ultimate objective of any act of resistance is not to resist the market *per se* but to maintain the collective sense of sacred experience and identity.

It has been suggested that “consumers seek to form lifestyles that defy dominant consumerist norms or that directly challenge corporate power” (Kozinets and Handelman 2004, Arnould and Thompson 2005). However it is worth observing that very few consumers overall seem interested in trying to construct lifestyles that “directly challenge corporate power”. It is possible that many consumers feel some need to distance their identities from the market, but instead of choosing to actively resist the market across the entire spectrum of their lives, identities, and needs, they are selective about their resistance. They possibly make strategic choices within specific areas of consumption, in order to maintain their sense of the sacred, by keeping the market at a distance within these particular spheres. This may give them a sufficient sense of a market-independent identity to render the need for more explicit forms of resistance more or less redundant.

This does not preclude the possibility of a symbiotic relationship with marketers who are careful to ensure that they recognise consumers as co-producers of brand identity and cultural activity. If consumers can be allowed to feel that they are being given a say, then marketers will be able to make commercial decisions without consumers feeling that such brands or activities are being overly homogenised. Such consumers might be able to point to how competing brands are far more homogenised by comparison and are more likely to believe that theirs is the more authentic brand/ more authentic identity. This explains the otherwise apparent contradiction between maintaining devotion to a brand, or to a marketised activity, while simultaneously professing resistance to the market. For many consumers, it may come down to being able to perceive one’s own identity as less

commercialised, less homogenised, and therefore more authentic, than some more commercial alternative. Thus members of brand communities can happily engage in relationships with marketers, for example, but only if they feel the distinctive identity of the brand, and by extension that of their community, is not under threat (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001).

The current study does seem to provide some evidence to at least support further investigation of the above possibility. If the ultimate objective of resistance is not the maintenance of an ideology-based resistance to the market, but maintenance of sacred experience and identity, then a certain level of interaction with the market can be permitted. This latter argument is further supported by the willingness of the RAOTL community, for instance, to welcome new members even if their entry to fandom has come via the 'new consumer fan' route. Ultimately, members recognise that the community has to accept new members from outside in order for the community's existence to continue. Accepting new members is therefore necessary to maintain the sacredness of the communal identity. Newcomers are scrutinised, however, to make sure they demonstrate the correct characteristics, and thus do not pose a threat to group identity (Aharpour 1999:32). Hence the disavowal of merchandise-consuming 'daytrippers' who refuse to acknowledge the need to learn the requirements of the habitus, but the embracing of those fans who display a willingness to recognise both the habitus and the community system of cultural capital. Those who prioritise the non-marketised practices of learning to sing the right songs and knowing the club's history, over the 'day tripper' practice of buying large quantities of merchandise, are welcomed with open arms:

...If you're a Red, you're good enough for me
(*'True Red'*)

Hence there is no difficulty in consuming the offerings of the market, provided of course that it is understood that such offerings are subservient to fan-produced consumption objects in the community's consumption hierarchy. In this way the fans can co-exist with the market. Thus Anfield, for example, is definitely not a 'servicescape', at least not yet. It

does not provide the highly structured, easily digested, cocoon-like experience that typifies the servicescape phenomenon as described by Kozinets *et al* (2004) for example. Instead we see the fans themselves resisting the possibility of a 'servicescape' model, partly via the recently launched 'Reclaim The Kop' campaign, at the time of writing with considerable support from the club.

This study does seem to fall within several of the parameters of CCT theory as defined by Arnould and Thompson (2005), even though there was no conscious decision to investigate fan behaviour from a CCT perspective at the outset of the study. The study nonetheless deals with how consumers consume (Holt 1995), deploying a qualitative triangulatory ethnographic methodology to investigate purposes and meanings of real life 'messy' consumption. It even responds partially to the authors' call for a broader, macro-level analysis of how consumption has been affected by the wider socioeconomic forces that have acted upon Western society over the last thirty to forty years. This study has provided a useful analysis of how two different communities of consumers in late modernity have used and shaped their particular forms of collective consumption to reassert their own identities in the face of market colonization and indeed hyper-marketisation.

The current study also delivers somewhat on the theoretical innovation called for in relation to cultural capital (Arnould and Thompson 2005). It discusses how fans allocate their cultural capital to co-create value, and also how they utilize their cultural capital to maintain their collective sense of sacred identity and experience. Sphere-specific forms of cultural capital play a vital role in sacralisation maintenance and in fans' understanding of themselves as cultural producers. Lastly, in relation to the authors' interesting and provocative discussion of where CCT fits into the wider field of consumer research, this author agrees that the 'multiple conversation' approach of CCT can have a stimulating, "thought provoking, and inspiring" effect on consumer research in general. Certainly while this study sought to maintain a realist approach throughout its ethnographic investigation, it was at all times influenced and informed by the work and thinking of consumer researchers who would probably accept Arnould and Thompson's classification of their work as part of one or more of the theoretical domains of CCT. Without these influences

the study would quite simply have not produced the insights it did.

9.5 Questions for future research.

9.5.1 Cultural scripts as a resource in the social construction of habitus

In their analysis, Belk and Costa explain, citing Berger and Luckmann (1966) that the 'rendezvous' consumption enclave amounts to an entire, socially constructed, alternative reality. While this suggests nothing less than an extremely well-developed collective sense of habitus, it is also useful to consider the role played by cultural scripts and motifs in making such a strongly imagined sense of collective habitus possible. The mountain man fantasy has a rich, socially imagined tradition to draw from. It benefits from favourable participant predisposition towards the myth of the American West, and the prior cultural understanding of the mountain man identity. This cultural script is so strongly developed that it makes it all the easier to imagine that participation in a rendezvous is truly real.

In an analogous manner, football fans can draw from a well-written cultural script that comprehensively delineates the breadth and depth of what they collectively sense themselves to be experiencing. Mediated images of the Spion Kop are so evocative and have been repeated so often that the fans have no difficulty in believing that they are taking part in the propagation of an authentic tradition. The fact that so many members of the RAOTL community actually stood on the Kop in its heyday gives the evocative power of the matchday experience an even greater intensity for neophyte members. It is somewhat analogous to the experience that rendezvous participants would have if Kit Carson himself suddenly appeared in their midst, striding through the camp in his buckskins, gnawing on a hunk of venison.

Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) assert that brands with a rich history and tradition are more likely to see brand communities develop around them. Such a sense of history possibly acts as a form of cultural script as described by Belk and Costa (1998), thereby facilitating the

development of a strong habitus. Given that the presence of strong cultural scripts seems to facilitate the development of a strong sense of habitus, two questions for further research arise. First it would be interesting to assess whether the connection between cultural script and habitus was true of other forms of consumption collective. Second, it would also be interesting to examine whether a strong collective sense of habitus in other communities tended to be accompanied by manifestations of the same forms of resistance as those outlined in this thesis. Furthermore, where such a habitus is also characterised by a high degree of producerly activity, the resulting self-confidence in the community's sense of identity might also help to explain the belief that symbiotic relationships with marketers can be entered into without compromising the collective sense of hierophany. The only way to test this conclusion is to carry out further research into brand communities and subcultures of consumption, but such research, in building on the findings of this study, would make a valuable further contribution to the literature.

9.5.2 The Elusive Nature of the RAOTL Community.

A number of community models have been referred to over the course of this study, without any related attempt to specify which particular model best describes the nature of the RAOTL community. Several authors have referred to sports fan communities as neotribes (Alabarces 1999, Cova 1997, Crawford 2000) but the findings of this study indicate that the RAOTL community is characterised by longevity rather than ephemerality. This suggests either that our understanding of neotribalism should be revised to account for tribes whose identity transcends the impermanence of neotribes as defined by Maffesoli (1996), or that another conceptual model should be used to clarify the nature of this particular community. The model which seems to best capture the nature of the RAOTL community is Schouten and McAlexander's (1995) concept of consumption subculture. However, a number of caveats must be added to this. For example, the extent to which RAOTL is a postmodern rather than traditional community is debatable. While it is certainly a community of shared taste based on a self-selecting membership, a very high proportion of the membership originate from one particular geographic area, more specifically Liverpool and the greater Merseyside area. Furthermore the members are concerned to a great degree with the preservation of old-style football fandom, in what they collectively imagine to be the unique Liverpool style. This has echoes of Cova's (1997) description of traditional communities, rather than his conceptualization of the contemporary postmodern football fan. Indeed, in their opposition to new consumer fandom, these fans to an extent resemble one of Holt's (2002) consumption enclaves, determined as they seem to reject in principle the myriad offerings of identity proffered by a postmodern marketplace, at least insofar as such identities concern football.

However this is not an isolated community that seeks to cut itself off from the rest of the world. While their rejection of new consumer fandom is absolute, their rejection of individual new consumer fans is not. *Homo consumericus* (Goulding *et al* 2002) is not permanently barred from community membership, provided he or she gets rid of the jester hat and instead demonstrates an appreciation for the community's non-material consumption objects. This possibility arises largely through the virtual dimension to the

community's existence. On the community forum, non-scousers can learn the difference between being a 'jester hatted beaut' or 'daytripper' on the one hand and a legitimate out-of-towner on the other. Not only can the "narcissism of minor differences" (Goulding *et al* 2002:272) relating to the material symbols of fandom be studied online by prospective members, but other crucial non material elements of the system of subcultural capital can also be learned, in advance of meeting one's fellow fans offline on match day. New consumer fans, according to King's (1997, 1998) definition, include those fans that only began to attend live football matches post the Sky Sports revolution and the rehabilitation of football. As such, this writer is a new consumer fan, for instance. Through participation in the community forum, even the new consumer fan can be socialised into a form of fandom considered legitimate (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001) by the community. The sort of cultural errors Bourdieu (1984) defines as cultural allodoxia can thus be avoided.

However, for successful integration of the new consumer fan into the community to take place, the sense of self-selection described by Schouten and McAlexander (1995) is essential. It is not enough to want to belong (Cova 1997), rather one must want to belong to a particular community that seems to epitomise the style of fandom an individual fan considers most desirable. The self-deprecating playfulness (Fiske 1989) of the RAOTL community is not to everyone's taste. Some Liverpool fans prefer the more serious websites such as 'Koptalk' or 'Red and White Kop', where the discussion rarely, if ever, deviates from football. Fans who venture online in search of Liverpool websites and find that RAOTL is to their taste are therefore more likely to become longer term contributing members of the community (Hagel and Armstrong 1997, McWilliam 2000). Fans who prefer their football websites to confine content to football are not.

In considering all the above issues, it is readily apparent that this is a community that eludes ease of categorisation. It is not a neotribe where values are only shared for the duration of the experience (Goulding *et al* 2002). It is not, for all of its members, an all-embracing way of life (Schouten and McAlexander 1995) but neither is its identity restricted by the sense of limited liability that characterises brand communities (Muniz and O'Guinn 2001). Cova (1997) argues that elusiveness is an inherent characteristic of the

postmodern consumer and yet this is a community obsessed with the preservation of tradition. However, the virtual dimension of the community is so central to its existence that the possibility of its identity being geographically bound does not arise at all. It is therefore only possible to tentatively rather than definitively suggest that the community is a form of de-commercialised consumption subculture (Schouten and McAlexander 1995). It is a community that reflects the need of its members to preserve a sense of identity outside a marketplace populated by members of *Homo consumericus* (Goulding *et al* 2002). Unlike communities drawn together by mutual devotion to a commercial brand (Algesheimer *et al* 2005, McAlexander *et al* 2002, Muniz and O'Guinn 2001) these consumers have been drawn together by virtue of their shared devotion to an iconic, sacred football team that they perceive as originating outside the profane marketplace (Belk *et al* 1989).

The need to preserve this perceived sacredness has contributed to the felt tension between the community, the market, and *Homo consumericus* as football fan. Furthermore these preservation efforts have specifically resulted in the utilisation of subcultural capital in an attempt to resist the market and maintain this sense of the sacred. One of the most interesting outcomes of this is the shift towards a greater emphasis on non-material aspects of the collective identity. This suggests that future consumer research needs to move radically beyond a conceptualisation of consumer identity as something largely constructed around material goods, towards a conceptualisation that places far more emphasis on the non-material.

It is possible that these shifts in subcultural capital are not confined to fan communities. It is quite possible that legitimate identity within consumption enclaves will increasingly be defined by minor differences in practice rather than minor differences in appearance. This intriguing possibility calls for research across the whole spectrum of collective consumption activities, to establish the extent to which non-material elements of identity have taken on increased importance. Such research would also reveal whether other consumption communities prove as difficult to categorise as RAOTL, and hopefully allow

for the development of a more comprehensive typology of consumption communities than that which presently exists.

9.5.3 Gender.

The current study's analysis of football fans has deliberately chosen not to explore gender as an issue within football fandom. This decision was taken partly on the basis that the problematised way in which masculinity is at times presented in the literature (Chant 2000, Horrocks 1994, Yeo 2004) did not seem to resonate in any way with the data as experienced and observed during fieldwork. For example, fandom was found to be characterised by playfulness rather than self-damaging attempts to live up to 'hard man' stereotypes. Some resonances with Holt and Thompson's (2004) concept of 'man of action hero' masculinity were found, but even here the sobriquet '*fan-of-action-hero*' seemed to provide a more appropriate fit to the understanding of fandom that emerged from the data, than designating it as a gender-specific activity. However the decision to focus on themes other than gender was taken primarily on the basis that sacred consumption, resistance, cultural capital and habitus were ultimately the most illuminating concepts with which to interpret the story of these tribes. These were the themes that emerged from the data, the themes that withstood the search for disconfirming observations, and that explain the consumption behaviours of these consumers. All of this notwithstanding, it would surely be useful to undertake a study of football fandom that consciously privileged the voice of female football fans, to examine how they manage their consumption identities in a sphere of consumption numerically dominated by male consumers. It might also be useful to explore football fandom from the perspective that it has served a valuable function in the past as one of the very few outlets where it was culturally acceptable for males to openly display emotions normally taboo for their gender role (Russell 1999:17). While gender roles have certainly undergone change in recent years, it would be interesting to examine the extent to which football fandom still acted as a positive emotional outlet in this way.

Both types of study would therefore help to develop a rounded and balanced perspective of the effects of gender in contemporary football fandom.

9.5.4 The Search for Utopia.

Belk and Costa (1998:223) cite Musgrove (1974) to explain that “periods of rapid Western economic growth have generally been accompanied by romantic countercultural reactions against the order, control, and rationality of mainstream society”. They locate their study of the mountain man fantasy within this paradigm of an ongoing belief in utopia and an attempt to recover it through fantastic consumption.

The football fans studied in this thesis have experienced an incursion of the market at a time of rapid economic growth and technological change that exponentially expanded the possibilities for mediated, marketised consumption of football. Is it therefore a surprise that they are now seeking to ‘Reclaim The Kop’, that they wish to reassert the traditions of what they collectively imagine as the more authentic past, over the current experience of a Kop infiltrated by inauthentic daytrippers? The theme of consumption as search for utopia is not without precedent in the fan literature (Kozinets 2001) and indeed utopian aspects to consumption, with striking parallels to the fan experience, are present in the wider consumer literature (Maclaran and Brown 2005). Maclaran and Brown argue that certain consumption spaces can act as utopian enclaves that allow consumers to temporarily escape into a magical space where self-transformation is possible. This resonates with the experience of football fans, who enter into a magical world the moment they go through the turnstile into the football stadium (Richardson 2004). This moment of entry constitutes a liminal rite comparable to that undergone by clubbers entering a rave club (Goulding *et al* 2002). A sense of football stadium as utopian place therefore holds rich possibilities for an extended understanding of how football fans relate to their teams, to each other, and to the goods that they produce and consume. Furthermore the concept is not unrelated to the discussion on topophilia, or love of place (Bale 1991, 1993, Maclaran and Brown 2005) already present in the literature. This suggests that specific research into the concept of

consumption as search for utopia could further illuminate the nature and meaning of football fan consumption, and build on the connections between it and what we now understand about the nature and purpose of consumer resistance.

9.6 Concluding Remarks.

9.6.1 Cultural Capital

This ethnography of football fans has shown that fans are indeed what they consume (Belk 1988) in that their sense of self-concept relies greatly on those consumption objects whose meanings they incorporate into their sense of self (Elliott and Wattanasuwan 1998). It has further shown that these consumption objects need neither be of market origin, or even material in nature, for fans to enjoy a collective incorporation of their meaning into a magical, transcendent and participatory identity. By constructing their identities and producing sacred experience from a palette of material and non-material, market and non-market resources, fans therefore manage to retain a sense of singularised identity that they can collectively perceive as theirs and not the market's.

The desire, not only for social distinction as proposed by Bourdieu (1984) but an ongoing sense of hierophany (Belk *et al* 1989) that gives meaning to their existence, can at times bring fans into a sense of conflict with the market as they seek to preserve their sense of hierophany. However, fans can demonstrate a willingness to engage in symbiotic relationships with marketers rather than engage in conflict. This suggests that conflict arises primarily where the marketers of football have failed to engage in the sort of qualitative consumer research that would help them to better understand fans' systems of cultural or subcultural capital. An understanding of these systems would allow football marketers to design products and services that facilitated fans' need as human beings to enjoy a sense of meaningfulness and hierophany in their lives. Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital, once adapted to a subcultural fan context, therefore still resonates with significance. It remains one of the key concepts that help to shed light on the expression of human identity through the medium of fan behaviour. In arguing that social groups construct their own markets where their own group-specific systems of cultural capital

could apply, Bourdieu in fact predicted how consumers involved in subcultures of consumption would behave. In showing how fans use these alternative markets and systems of cultural capital to retain a sense of the sacred in their lives, this thesis has hopefully made a significant and original contribution to the literature.

9.6.2 Ethnographic Methodology: Questions Answered and Contributions Made to the Literature.

There is a consensus in the literature on ethnography that the amount of time spent engaged in participant observation is crucial to the success of the study (Arnould and Wallendorf 1994, Stewart 1998). Fieldwork should continue until there has been “overdetermination of pattern” (Stewart 1998:68). Put simply, if patterns have been observed, have these patterns been rigorously assessed against all the available data? Is the researcher confident that observation work has been carried out for the entire “length of the cycle over which the phenomenon of interest manifests itself” (Wallendorf and Belk 1989:71)? Has this been repeated to establish that these patterns do indeed present themselves again and again over this cycle?

At a relatively early stage in this study, it was decided, not unreasonably, that the relevant temporal cycle at issue in this study was the normal football season. The English football season runs from August until May. This study was carried out over the course of three such seasons, beginning with a pilot phase during the second half of the 2003/04 football season and extending until the end of the 2005/06 season. For most of this time, the population of the RAOTL community remained very stable. The total number of participants on the online forum remained relatively manageable, as did the volume of discussion threads. Behaviour patterns and attitudes expressed on the forum remained highly stable, and the overdetermination of pattern described above manifested itself in an unproblematic manner.

The most significant relevatory incident (Belk *et al* 1989) that occurred during the study took place in 2005 when Liverpool won the European Cup for the first time in twenty-one years. This caused a disturbance in behaviour patterns and expressed attitudes that took some time to analyse and reconcile with the interpretation that had begun to emerge prior to the incident in question. The fans' sudden embrace of market goods that commemorated the event ran contrary to their previously expressed distaste for all forms of official merchandise. The study of this incident led to a significant revision of the emerging interpretation of football fan culture. It became apparent that the real underlying issue for these consumers was preservation not only of a sense of the sacred in general terms, but a sense of hierophany in particular. Generally speaking, market goods were therefore problematic because they symbolised the profaning force of the market, but market goods that clearly signalled the sacred nature of the community identity could actually be embraced.

One moment during the fieldwork which illustrated this in a particularly forceful way was a meeting with key informant 'Evo', in Liverpool city centre in July 2005, two months after Liverpool's victory in the European Cup Final. Evo was wearing a brand new official teamshirt which he had just bought. The apparently consistent pattern of antipathy towards official merchandise had to be reconsidered.

In reconsidering the meanings of what had been observed to date, a number of issues became clear. The link between the concepts of cultural capital, sacred consumption, and consumer resistance emerged. The motivation of these consumers to engage in consumer resistance was the preservation of the sacred. If the market facilitated rather than threatened this sense of the sacred then there was no need to resist it. Hence the demand for merchandise that commemorated the events of May 2005 for instance.

The link between cultural capital and sacred consumption had already been identified at this point. The group system of cultural capital was being used to maintain a sense of the sacred by ensuring the legitimacy of aspiring members of the community, for instance. However the fact that material goods could be central to the expression of a sense of the

sacred in regard to fandom was particularly emphasised by the events of 2005. This suggested that material goods could play a greater role in the system of cultural capital than had been previously believed. This in turn led to the realisation that the production of home made goods gave fans such a strong sense of distinction (Bourdieu 1984) from marketised fan identities that it was in fact a major part of their strategy for sacralisation maintenance (Belk *et al* 1989).

The use of ethnography as the methodology for the study therefore resulted in what is, hopefully, a major contribution to the literature on consumer behaviour. The finding that fans engage in sacred consumption is not in any sense new. Nor is it in any way original to conclude that fans engage in the utilisation of systems of cultural or subcultural capital. Neither is it original to find that fans practice resistance through producerly behaviours (Fiske 1989) that distance them from the market (Kozinets 2002a). However it *is* new to present linkages between these theories. Furthermore, in showing that sacred consumption, cultural capital, and consumer resistance are linked, this study has offered a new conceptual model which explains the co-presence of resistance and symbiotic relationships with marketers within fan communities, which may have implications for other communities of consumption.

9.6.3 Questions that remain unanswered.

Towards the end of an ethnographic study there is an understandable tendency to follow up on existing patterns and emergent themes. If the ethnographer believes that all relevant themes have been identified and confirmed then the decision to leave the field seems justified. In retrospect, this writer would now question whether the relevant temporal cycle brought about by Liverpool's achievement in winning the 2005 Champions League Final had come to a conclusion by the time fieldwork ceased. While research attention was directed towards concluding the analysis of all data gathered by the beginning of 2006, the composition of the community changed. Apparently precipitated at least in part by Liverpool's success, a host of "newbies" (Hagel and Armstrong 1997:87) had joined the forum.

What effects has this had on the community? What is the nature of the forum now? Has there been a loss of intimacy, as established members of the community log on to the website, only to discover that the newbies are dominating the conversation and the old hard core do not enjoy the freedom to express themselves as intimately as before (Hagel and Armstrong 1997)? An attempt was made by an established member of the forum to initiate a tiered sub-community, to “allow stalwarts to enjoy some protection from the hordes of newbies” (Hagel and Armstrong 1997:153) but this ended in failure and recriminations. The newbies took umbrage and decided that the initiative disparaged their status. Rather than cause offence, the initiative was dropped.

It had been assumed that because all patterns observed in relation to merchandise, for example, had been reconciled and integrated into the final thematic interpretation, that there were no other issues to resolve. Both in taking the above incident into consideration, and in revisiting the forum recently to see how things have changed, it seems that any claim that nothing remains to investigate would be foolhardy. The community is much bigger than it was. The newbies seem younger and far more laddish in orientation than the old guard who made up the membership during the study. One welcome development is an increase in the number of female Liverpool fans taking part in the forum. However the manner in which they are managing their gender identity in a male-dominated environment is not something that has been investigated, beyond noting that the majority seem to have adopted something of a ‘ladette’ persona.

In not having investigated these issues, it is possible that the temporal duration of the effects of Liverpool’s 2005 European Cup success was underestimated. It seems to have led to a surge in interest in Liverpool, the outcomes of which were not fully explored. Alternatively it is equally possible that these developments were the inevitable outcome of the cyclical nature of virtual communities (Hagel and Armstrong 1997). This might to a degree call into question the earlier conclusions as to the quality of relationships in the community, were it not for the fact that the old stalwart members of the community, have been observed as recently as June 2007 to have kept close contact with each other. This

suggests that the relationships referred to above are still very much in place. However ultimately it is a feature of ethnography that ethnographic data is not temporally independent (Stewart 1998). It is inevitable that some features of the community might change as time moves on. The veracity of the original conclusions is not cast into doubt by such changes.

It is interesting to consider whether anything should be done differently if the study were to begin again tomorrow. The sheer number of new entrants to the community suggests that any ethnographer undertaking a follow up study would be best advised to start from scratch. The entire purposive sampling process would have to begin all over again. Netnography (Kozinets 2002b) would certainly appear to remain a useful method for entering the field. The numbers of people now involved suggests that a gradual progression to offline participant observation across the entire community would not be possible. The study might end up focusing on one or two subsets of fans within the community, rendering it possible to meet at least some members of the community face to face.

It does seem likely that a fresh investigation of the community might find things that the current study did not. The sense of relationship and intimacy may not be as strong. The demographic profile of the community seems to have changed, and the system of cultural capital may be undergoing adjustment. However it would be very surprising if any fresh data contradicted the main conclusions of the current study. Even though the composition of the community might be different, the underlying human need for a shared sense of hierophany, and all the implications this throws up for interaction with the market, should still be present. One of the reasons for this belief is the degree of conceptual support for these findings, in the numerous other studies of collective forms of consumption that were referenced in drawing the study's conclusion. Another reason for this is the degree to which the findings were echoed by the findings from the study of Cork City fans. This study also found themes such as the operation of a parallel market and the use of cultural capital to maintain both a sense of distance from the market and a sense of the sacred. Taken together, both investigations suggest that the findings presented in this thesis can be

regarded as having achieved an acceptable degree of veracity (Stewart 1998), a point elaborated on in Appendix A.

One final point remains unexplored, or perhaps under-explored. There was a tentative aspiration at the outset of the study to try to pay particular attention to new consumer fans. To an extent, new consumers proved somewhat elusive to locate, possibly because the new consumer identity is gradually shed as one is drawn into membership of a consumption collective that needs to understand itself as outside the market. Fans may enter the culture as new consumers but they learn to downplay their consumption so that they can experience a deeper consciousness of kind with the rest of the community. An identity that over-emphasises consumption of material market goods is not compatible with membership of a community that deliberately asserts distinction in non-marketised ways.

It would therefore be interesting, if anyone wished to carry out a study on new consumer football fans, to spend far more time investigating fans who are affiliated by preference to an official supporter's forum such as the one available on the official Liverpool FC website. Interesting qualitative differences between this group and the members of RAOTL might well be present, and these differences could be subjected to conceptual scrutiny to see what else can be learned about the relationship between hierophany and the market.

This also leaves the question of the so-called ordinary fan unanswered. Crawford (2004) is among those who have suggested that in the rush to investigate fans who demand our attention with their narcissistic, spectacular behaviours, researchers have neglected the study of the visually less exciting but nonetheless worthy fans who engage in quieter, less narcissistic forms of fandom. Crawford refers to these neglected fans as ordinary fans. This raises the question of what is meant by ordinary fandom. Does it mean the armchair fan, who does not attend matches, but faithfully checks her or his team's results every week? Given the contemporary rush towards participation in the spectacular, one might well ask whether there are any such ordinary fans left. Certainly if such fans could be located it would be interesting to explore the nature of their fandom. However, contemporary ordinary fandom, for most fans, seems to involve participation in the spectacular. The

norm for consumers of fandom seems to be participation in forms of fandom that optimise the opportunities for social affirmation of the chosen identity. Given that so many fans engage in this, an investigation of those fans who choose public, new consumer-style market oriented fandom, over other alternatives such as the withdrawn position of the so-called armchair fan would appear to have the greater merit as a site for further research.

Finally, such research could also address the question of those intriguing bits of data from the current study that were not explained by the interpretation outlined here. Several of the respondents at the pilot interview stage of the study appear to have experienced a sense of the sacred via unproblematised consumption of market goods. Observational data of Liverpool fans eagerly queueing outside the official club shop also suggests that many other fans possibly share this unproblematised view of the market. This in no way undermines the veracity of the conclusions drawn in relation to either the lads from the Shed or the members of the RAOTL community. However it does indicate that there are types of fan who merit further research attention because they differ in interesting ways from the fans that either congregate on the Shed or who collectively constitute the membership of Red All Over The Land.

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11 Appendix A. Methodology.

11.1 Choice of research sites

Lofland and Lofland (1995) advocate the relevance and usefulness of current biography, that is, the researcher's personal circumstances, in the choice of an appropriate site for naturalistic research. Similarly Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) argue that issues such as travel costs are acceptable considerations in choice of research site, as is being able to spend an adequate amount of time in that setting. However, Lofland and Lofland make a clear distinction between 'starting where you are' and staying there, by which they mean the autobiographical approach. The autobiographical approach can be used to good effect by the experienced researcher, but is in their view an inappropriate approach for the novice researcher, leaving him or her vulnerable to the possibilities of self-indulgence, narcissism, and excessive bias.

In choosing to *initiate* the study in a site of personal interest and involvement, however, starting where you are, to use their terminology, gives the researcher "meaningful linkages between the personal and emotional on the one hand, and the stringent intellectual operations to come on the other...(u)nless you are emotionally engaged in your work, the inevitable boredom, confusion and frustration even the completion – not to speak of the quality – of the project" (1995:15). Thus encouraged, this researcher selected two research sites, both of which are endowed with personal significance and emotional involvement. These are the football fan communities of Liverpool and Cork City football clubs. It is worth noting at this point that while the main methodological reference for this study was Stewart's (1998) description of the ethnographic methodology, that it was not felt necessary to adhere to Stewart in an excessively slavish manner. Thus while Stewart, for instance, makes the point that naturalistic enquiry differs slightly from ethnography, it was felt that the adoption of Lofland and Lofland's guidelines for the selection of a research site would not undermine the study in any way.

11.2 Veracity and methodological requirements

11.2.1 Participant Observation and Prolonged Immersion in the Field

While, as noted above, it was not felt necessary to adhere strictly to Stewart in every detail, it certainly was felt that Stewart's guidelines should be followed in an overall sense, to ensure that the study would possess an overall methodological rigour. For instance, it was deemed necessary to satisfy Stewart's requirements for veracity, so that the eventual findings could be regarded as reliable. The first requirement for veracity is prolonged fieldwork (Stewart 1998), or what Wallendorf and Belk (1989) refer to as prolonged engagement/ persistent observation. In discussing the benefits of prolonged fieldwork, Stewart states that "...it takes time for the enquirer to *undergo* what ethnography is - a process of learning" (1998:21). The longer the researcher spends in the field, the greater the opportunity to obtain not only perspectives *of* action (actors' accounts given verbally to the researcher) but perspectives *in* action, that is, actual observation by the researcher of particular activities and practices. How long, then, should this learning period be? One key in determining duration of fieldwork effort may be "the length of the cycle over which the phenomenon of interest manifests itself" (Wallendorf and Belk 1989:71). The temporal cycle over which football fandom primarily manifests itself is the football season. For domestic football, this runs from August to May in the U.K. and from March to November in southern Ireland. For fans of English football the 'close season' (from June until the second week of August) is characterised by varying degrees of interest in the transfer market, and some degree of attention to pre-season friendly fixtures. Fandom as an activity certainly does not cease for the summer months. For fans of Cork City the summer coincides with mid-season so the fans are quite active.

The timeframe of the study therefore spanned a number of football seasons, from the 2003/04 English football season to the 2005/06 season, and the summers in between. The research activities that took place each season are outlined on a season by season basis. Most of the research on Cork City fans was carried out during the 2004 Irish football season.

11.2.2 The 2003/04 English football season

Preliminary netnography (Kozinets 2002 (b)) began during the close season, that is in the late summer of 2003. This involved non participant observation of a number of football fan discussion forums (Richardson 2003). Web discussion forums should be chosen for netnography on the basis of (a) high research-question relevance (b) the highest levels of traffic (c) high numbers of discrete posters (d) the richest data and (e) the greatest level of between-member interaction of the type required by the research question (Kozinets 2002 (b)). In practice early efforts by this researcher were characterised by a somewhat haphazard approach. It took some time to settle on the websites eventually used for the study.

Pilot interviews took place in mid season (that is, early 2004). The researcher also joined the 'Red All Over The Land' internet community at this time.

11.2.3 The 2004 Irish Football Season

Netnography formally began before the start of the season, to ensure that pre-season data could be obtained. Netnography continued for the duration of the season. My offline fieldwork commenced with visits to the home grounds of both Liverpool and Cork City, in the case of Liverpool for their last match of the English football season, against Newcastle United, and in the case of Cork City, for a league game against Longford Town FC. My approach for the latter match was to write an observational note the next day. This ran to approximately 23 pages of handwritten notes. The note include a number of inferences and interpretation of the behaviour of some of the fans. This analytical material accounts for at least one third of the content. It also contains a good deal of rich data on the behaviour of the fans on the 'Shed', the terrace behind the goal at the Turner's Cross end of the ground. It furthermore notes some of my concerns in terms of the relative ease or difficulty of separating my feelings as a fan watching the game, from my ability to observe the crowd and speculate as to their feelings, based on their facial expressions, the tone of their voices,

the decibel level on the Shed, and so on. I found it hard at times to remember to watch the crowd and observe their reactions at key moments during the match, rather than simply getting caught up in the drama of the moment myself.

While the fieldnote records my concern at this occasional inability to avoid being caught up in the experience, there are however several reassuring perspectives on exactly this issue in the literature. Football is an exciting spectator sport. To quote Lofland and Lofland (1995:3) “(t)he epistemological foundation of fieldstudies is indeed the proposition that only through direct experience can one accurately know much about social life”. It therefore follows that there is much to be learned from engaging in the fan experience for oneself. Similarly Stewart argues in favour of actual participation, rather than simply looking over the shoulder of the participant. He states that “it is not enough to witness a variety of performances – you also have to experience culture personally” (1998:25). Pollner and Emerson agree that “...involvement in the form of life of a particular group or setting is indispensable for understanding local meaning and action” (2001:123).

Thus being caught up in the excitement and watching with your heart in your mouth, so to speak, as your team either comes under attack, or your team’s star striker is on the verge of scoring a vital goal, rather than being a barrier to the study, can, if used appropriately, enhance the quality of the research. Emerson *et al* (2001) recommend a dual approach, that is, maximizing immersion occasionally, by virtue of full participation in the experience, and conducting other field visits with more of an emphasis on observation. Both can have a role to play.

The recording of one’s own personal and emotional reactions fulfils three purposes (Emerson *et al* 2001, Lofland and Lofland 1995). Your own reactions might mirror those “that naturally occur in the setting” (the researcher can note his or her own feelings and by asking others how they felt, useful comparisons can be made, leading to rich insights into the nature of the cultural participant’s experience). Also “even if not shared by others, emotional reactions may provide important analytic leads...finally, recording one’s

emotions over time enables the ethnographer to read through fieldnotes to identify biases and prejudices as well as ...changing attitudes” (Emerson et al 2001:361).

With regard to concerns over the specific issue of cultural membership, Lofland and Lofland (1995:17) argue that personal involvement if anything facilitates the gathering of rich data. They comment further that

“If you are already ...a member in the setting, you almost ‘naturally’ possess...the convert stance. You have easy access to understanding. You need, therefore...to seek mechanisms for distancing” (1995:23)

It is therefore quite acceptable for the ‘native’ to study his or her own culture, and indeed the native member researcher thereby enjoys the benefit of existing access to cultural understanding. The one caveat is of course the need for detachment, for distance, in other words what numerous commentators have described as the ability to ‘make the familiar strange’.

It is certainly possible to be a member of the culture under study, and yet retain sufficient detachment for one’s research purposes, as evidenced by Schouten and McAlexander (1995), in their ethnography of the new bikers. In their case this was achieved by means of regular reflection and periodic debriefing of each other. Furthermore, Stewart argues that the researcher who ‘converts’, or becomes a ‘complete member researcher’, can retain sufficient detachment so as not to be a ‘true CMR...’ (Stewart 1998:23). One can therefore already be a member of the community, yet retain the ability to detach oneself for research purposes. As Hammersley and Atkinson state “...it is in the space created by this distance that the analytic work of the ethnographer gets done” (1995:115).

Thus it was felt that conscious and meticulous adherence to field observation guidelines, regular reflection on my own perspective as a fan, and periodic debriefing by my supervisor, should provide adequate safeguards to facilitate the distancing process during

the study. In practice this was not always unproblematic to achieve, a point elaborated upon below.

11.2.4 Guidelines followed during field observation.

The first two field reports were written from memory, without the benefit of any jotted notes during the matches. The field report from Liverpool v Newcastle was written from memory on Monday May 17th (the match was played on Saturday May 15th). The field notes for the first two field reports from attendance at Cork City matches were written from memory, again without the benefit of any jotted notes taken during the game itself. They were instead written the following morning, when the events of the night before still seemed relatively fresh in my memory. This practice of writing fieldnotes the day after observation in the field is, in retrospect, indefensible. Fortunately my research habits improved greatly as the study progressed.

For these field trips, I was in principle guided by Emerson *et al* (2001)'s citation of Lofland and Lofland's (1995) approach. In other words, to facilitate remembering what has taken place, the researcher is advised to orientate their consciousness by taking note of who was there, how many were there, who said what, and who did what, when observing cultural events or activities. While these are simple guidelines, they were useful in guiding my initial forays as an ethnographic observer.

I was also guided in a more general sense by Stewart (1998), Arnould and Wallendorf (1994), and Wallendorf and Belk (1989). My intentions in attending football matches were therefore shaped by the need to attain a holistic perspective on the world of the football fan. This rendered regular observation essential. The desire to attain such a perspective indicated a need to attempt to note and remember as much as possible. In my initial naivety as a neophyte researcher, I imagined that my powers of recall would suffice for writing fieldnotes the day after the event, and that the desired holistic perspective could be thereby attained. In retrospect all I can say of these early efforts at fieldnotes was that I was at least

beginning to think about what I was supposed to be doing, even if I had not yet commenced to do it! I also imagined my overall approach at this early stage to be influenced by Holt's (1995) rigorous approach to the documentation of all observable fan activities, over the course of two full baseball seasons at Wrigley Field, home of the Chicago Cubs. It is clear in retrospect that at this early stage of the research, that Holt's approach was a general, rather than specific, influence, on my activities for those first pilot field observation studies.

11.2.5 Dictaphone usage and refined observation

Having reviewed my approach to fieldnote taking with my supervisor, it was felt that the use of a dictaphone or some other form of note-taking during matches would be helpful. Dictaphone usage commenced from Friday June 4th 2004, for the field trip to the Irish league match between Cork City and St. Patrick's Athletic. A more conscious focus on fans' usage of consumption objects also commenced at this time. The Dictaphone proved an excellent facilitator because not only did it reduce my reliance on memory alone, it also prompted me to record events and observations more frequently and in more detail. It was there so I had to use it. I 'felt' more like a researcher and therefore focused more on doing the research. Furthermore, when transcribing from the tape to written field notes, the recording also provided an aural record of the crowd's behaviour, making it easier to bring the scene back to life, and recall the atmosphere as well as the mood and behaviours of the fans.

Emerson *et al* (2001) among others, recommend that detailed fieldnotes be written at the end of each day of field work. The timing of the observed events, however, rendered this impracticable. Cork City's home games usually kick off at 7.45pm. By the time the crowd's behaviour during the match has been observed and comments recorded onto tape, it is 10pm and time to face the journey home. I therefore developed the practice of listening to, and transcribing from, the tape, on the morning following the matches. In practice I found that this facilitated my being able to fully reconstitute what I saw, in the

manner recommended by Emerson *et al* (2001). For instance, the noise of the crowd recorded on tape during different moments of the match made the visual images that I had seen much easier to recall than written notes alone. I discussed this practice with my supervisor and he indicated that it seemed suitable. In practice, this was an excellent way in which to take fieldnotes because I was taking a record of what I saw and also managing to record theoretical asides. Both the fieldnotes and theoretical asides could then be considered anew the following morning when they were being formally typed up.

I did experience one problem with battery failure for the match between Cork City and St. Patrick's Athletic, but I found that having spent the whole game recording comments made it much easier to recall what I had observed, even for the latter part of the match where the recording had failed. I was in full observation mode, so to speak, and this certainly facilitated recall the following day, atoning to a degree for the partial lack of a full record. Needless to say I took the precaution for future fieldtrips of bringing spare batteries.

Recall was also facilitated by the practice of studying newspaper reports as part of the process of writing up each fieldnote. This practice began with the first fieldnote from the Liverpool versus Newcastle match in 2004, and continued after introducing Dictaphone usage. Reading the newspaper account of particular moments from the match made it easier to recall my own reactions, my view of events (in a literal and not just an analytical sense), and the crowd's reaction to those moments in the game. This practice was not followed with the same degree of rigour for the matches against Nijmegen and Nantes, but was utilized for all other matches.

Cork City V Derry City, 11/6/04

Having reviewed my field notes from previous matches, I had decided to try to watch out for certain patterns in the crowd's behaviour. These seemed to be recurring themes in the other games I had attended for observational purposes to date. I felt that such a checklist might be advantageous in helping me to focus more on what I should be doing as an observer of the crowd, instead of reacting to events on the field as they unfolded. The list I

compiled prior to travelling to the stadium included the following points that I intended to watch out for:

- Strong singing and chanting at the start of the game
- Level of subsequent singing and chanting dependent on/ related to team performance
- Noting the emotions associated with different types of event on the field
- Consider the behaviour of the 'lads' (i.e. the young men at the back of the Shed) from the perspective of their own self-awareness, group narcissism and the extent to which they might be consciously putting on a performance
- Watching out for any interaction between the home fans and members of the away team
- Noting the nature of any comments
- Watching out for comments by fans within earshot on (a) the match
(b) anything else
- Taking note of what is sung and who sings it
- Paying careful attention to how the crowd interact with or respond to the behaviour of the referee
- Paying attention to as much as possible, in as much detail as possible, and not just looking for presence or absence of the above but anything else that seems to represent a ritualistic form of behaviour.

I was by now also influenced by Pollner and Emerson (2001:125), who cite Moerman's (1965) study of the Lue people of Southeast Asia to highlight the importance of cultural traits not as determinants of ethnicity but as available *resources* (my italics) which allow them to *demonstrate* (their italics) their ethnicity.

This pointed to the importance of identifying all cultural resources available to football fans that can be drawn on and utilised to demonstrate their fandom to themselves and others. Further reading of Holt (1995) had also highlighted the need to look carefully at any behaviours of a ritualistic nature, and to pay careful attention to whatever objects

participants seemed to make use of to engage in these rituals, or otherwise consume the spectacle. After many of these early fieldtrips, I spent a good deal of time not only studying my fieldnotes, but also reflecting on my experiences as an observer. I often re-read Holt (1995), Lofland and Lofland (1995), and Emerson et al (2001), in an effort to compare their guidelines and experience of observation and note-taking with my experiences and practices.

While there seems to be agreement on the inevitability of fieldnotes being to some degree selective (Emerson et al 2001), I do not believe I was being excessively selective in drafting the checklist referred to above. I was simply becoming more aware of what was going on, because I was making more of an effort to consciously study what was going on. It is not a coincidence that my fieldnotes started to get a little more comprehensive at this time, as with practice I was becoming more adept at noting the ritualized nature of the activities of the fans. However I was still consciously trying to observe as much as possible, because it was far too early to make any distinctions between what might or might not subsequently prove to be useful or significant.

11.2.6 Separation of observational fieldnotes from analytical fieldnotes.

Much of the analytical material in my fieldnotes was inserted while typing up the recorded notes. The normal procedure was to listen to the tape, write everything out in longhand, adding some analysis at this point, and only afterwards to type the fieldnote. In fact this was a useful exercise because it resulted in not one but two prolonged exposures to the data, before a third reading prior to the next field trip. In practice, this third reading did not always take place, and was often been quite short.

Following a debriefing meeting with my supervisor on Friday July 2nd, 2004, where the issue of separation of observational data from analytical notes was discussed, I adopted the

approach of using italics to write analytical notes, to distinguish them from the observational data in the same field reports. This is a practice not dissimilar to that of Lofland and Lofland (1995), who simply recommend the use of brackets to separate analytical material from observational material in the fieldnotes. However it is probable that greater distance should be kept between the two types of note, particularly considering the researcher's own member status of the culture under study, and the greater resulting need for careful maintenance of researcher detachment or distance.

Emerson *et al* (2001) note the preference of some ethnographers for highly detailed fieldnotes of a purely observational nature, to be subsequently used as a set of data for analysis, but such postponement of analysis is an extremist viewpoint. Most researchers prefer to "engage in various kinds of analytical writing during or close to the initial production of fieldnotes" (2001:361), and this is a far more accurate reflection of the research habits that I personally developed. It is worth noting that my early efforts at analysis certainly did not measure up to the rigorous approaches described by either Spiggle (1994) or Stewart (1998). It took some time to come to terms with Spiggle's guidelines for the analysis of qualitative data.

11.2.7 Fieldtrips for the remainder of the 2004 Irish football season

After the initial attempts at fieldnote taking described above, far more detailed fieldnotes were eventually recorded at all of Cork City's home games for the duration of the 2004 InterToto Cup campaign, which spanned much of June and July. Fieldnotes were also recorded for most of Cork City's domestic fixtures over this time period. I usually located myself in the same spot, (or 'spec'), on the 'Shed' terrace at the Turner's Cross end of Cork City's home ground for these matches. The formal field observation work ceased at the end of this period for several reasons. Firstly, Cork City did not play any home fixtures

for over a month after this period, even though the season was not over. Secondly, it was felt that the patterns of behaviour observed at matches towards the end of the observational period had all been observed at other matches, so no new data was emerging, other than data that appeared to confirm previous observations. It was felt, therefore, that a temporary withdrawal from observational field would be appropriate, in order to more thoroughly analyse all observational data gathered to date. By now, a number of interviews with football fans had also been carried out and this, too, contributed to the need to withdraw temporarily from the field, so that patterns and themes emerging from fieldnote data could be compared to those emerging from the interview data.

11.2.8 Pilot Interviews

There is a great deal of scope in the literature on initial informant selection. For example Hammersley and Atkinson (1995:139) state that “selection of informants must be based on the best judgements one can make in the circumstances”. They provide guidelines as to this judgement however, recommending that informants “whose testimony seems most likely to develop and test emerging analytic ideas” (1995:138) be selected. Lofland and Lofland (1995) reduced my not inconsiderable anxiety at the beginning of this stage of the study, with their advocacy of the ‘casting about’ approach. Informants for pilot interviews were selected on this basis. Some friends and work colleagues were asked whether they would be willing to undertake an interview. Lofland and Lofland (1995) specify that interviewees should simply possess some characteristics of research interest. For the pilot interviews it was therefore sufficient that respondents were self-professed football fans. This was obviously a very broadly defined basis for respondent selection but it was a case of cutting one’s teeth as an interviewer and thereby beginning to look at the world of the football fan from a wider viewpoint than that of the more narrowly defined group of supporters of one particular club.

Five pilot interviews were eventually carried out, with fans of a number of football teams. The fans interviewed included ‘Joe B’ (Liverpool fan, male, late 30s), ‘Anne’ (Arsenal fan,

30s, female), Hugh (Arsenal fan, 30s, male), 'John D' (Liverpool and Cork City fan, male, early 30s), and Alison (Liverpool fan, female, 40s). The pilot interviews were very useful for the refining of interview structure and technique, for the reasons now outlined.

11.2.9 Methodological approach for pilot interviews

The interviews were conducted in a "straightforward and commonsensical way", while attempting to place an emphasis on "obtaining narratives or accounts in the person's own terms" (Lofland and Lofland 1995). The intention was to allow the sequence of the discussion to follow a natural conversational flow, while at the same time retaining an adequate level of control over what was discussed (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). The overall intention, therefore, was to utilise a sort of hybrid approach, attempting to combine aspects of the existential phenomenological approach of Thompson *et al* (1989) with McCracken's (1988) long interview model. In practice, the quality of the pilot interviews suffered from the researcher's relative inexperience in following up on interesting statements made by respondents. The list of topics and 'floating prompts' drawn up to facilitate the 'long interview' approach were far too often given precedence over the novel assertions of the respondents. The interviewer also occasionally used leading questions or terms, rather than allowing the respondent's own emic terminology to emerge. The experience of these interviews was invaluable however, not only because of the interesting data that was derived from them but also because of the quality of subsequent debriefings carried out with the research supervisor. This meant that all subsequent interviews were usually carried out more successfully. Researcher and supervisor met regularly over this entire period, to analyse the data and attain some degree of triangulation in interpreting it (Belk *et al* 1989, Stewart 1998).

11.2.10 Progression from the casting about approach to purposive sampling.

Purposive sampling (Stewart 1998) was used to identify and interview respondents who matched criteria identified during the early phases of fieldwork. Analysis of observational data from fieldnotes taken at Cork City matches, and initial netnography of Cork City fan

websites www.foot.ie and Citynet⁷, indicated that most of the atmosphere at Cork City's home games was being deliberately generated by a small group of male fans located on the 'Shed' terrace at the Turner's Cross end of the ground. This group had proactively decided to do something to improve the atmosphere inside the stadium. It was therefore among these 'lads' from the Shed that I felt purposive sampling should begin.

11.2.11 The 'lads' from the Shed

For my initial interviews with these fans, while I was very interested in interviewing members of the group, not knowing any of them personally, I had to start somewhere in trying to establish contact with them. I therefore posted requests on two Cork City supporters websites, Citynet and Foot.ie's dedicated Cork City forum (Foot.ie has separate dedicated forums for each Eircom League club), looking for volunteers for the study. I also sent a communication to Four Five One, the Cork City Fanzine (the fans who produce the fanzine are also responsible for the flags, drums, etc used on The Shed, so I was particularly interested in making contact with this obviously active and, one might at least initially assume, highly involved group). I could at least be assured that any respondents would be Cork City supporters, thereby fulfilling at least the most basic criterion of being members of the population I wished to study. I hoped that initial contacts made in this way would result in interview data on the population, which would facilitate subsequent purposive sampling. At a somewhat more basic level I also hoped that my first respondents might introduce me to others, thereby fulfilling some of the functions of key informants (Stewart 1998) or gatekeepers (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995), in helping me to meet other members of the population, in a manner more conducive to a positive response than 'cold calling'.

In practice this worked out reasonably well. Four fans were interviewed at this stage of the study. Two of the fans ('Allan', mid twenties, male, and 'Pablo', mid twenties, male) were

⁷ These websites did not necessarily satisfy all of Kozinets' criteria for netnography, but the at times relatively low degree of activity on the sites is explicable in terms of the small size of Cork City's fanbase. In every other respect they were useful sites for the execution of netnography.

directly involved with production of the 'FourFiveOne' unofficial fanzine, while a third fan ('Gerry') was also a patron of the Shed on matchdays. The fourth fan, 'Andy', proved slightly problematic in that he did not match the required profile for purposive sampling. He had no involvement with the group of younger male fans from the Shed, was not involved with production of the fanzine or the campaign to improve matchday atmosphere, and his age profile (early fifties) was also very different to that of the younger fans. This last factor came as something of a shock to this researcher, given the youthful tone of the web forums from which these respondents had been recruited, but the interview ultimately yielded some useful data.

In terms of interview locations I attempted to utilise fan 'space' as an interview location where possible, so that my informant would feel more relaxed. In Pablo's case, for example, the interview took place in the Horseshoe Bar two hours before the Inter Toto Cup Quarter Final against FC Nantes. This location, coupled with my now slightly improved style with regard to an ability to bring up topics in a straightforward, conversational, and commonsensical manner allowing the sequence of the discussion of the issues to follow a natural conversational flow. At the same time I also felt I was succeeding to an acceptable degree in retaining an adequate level of control over what was discussed (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995:143-152). In retrospect it is probable that I was still adhering a little too closely to my list of topics, and missing out on some interesting possible data avenues as a result, but the interview with Pablo at least represented a turning point where I began to develop a greater ability to listen to, and engage in meaningful dialogue with, my respondent.

11.2.12 Preparation of interview discussion topics.

Perusal of fieldnotes was a very fruitful source for selection of discussion topics. As noted by Lofland and Lofland (1995), one's own feelings and emotions, as recorded during or immediately after an experience, can form an appropriate starting point for an informative

session with a respondent. Other issues for discussion that emerged from the fieldnotes would have included the various fan rituals and their purposes. I also utilized some questions from the questionnaire that had been developed for my pilot interviews, deliberately selecting those topics (from the pilot interview questionnaire) that had elicited richly detailed answers i.e. seemed to strike a chord with respondents.

11.2.13 Post interview work and initial data analysis.

I usually kept post interview comment sheets as recommended by Lofland and Lofland (1995). I also carefully read each transcript prior to conducting the next interview, to work out for myself what went well, what did not, what kind of questions or statements elicited rich answers, and which did not. Furthermore I also began consciously selecting interesting emic terms or phrases and tried to introduce them in subsequent interviews, to see whether they elicited an interesting or noteworthy response. Thus the manner in which interviews were being conducted continued to improve over time. Having carried out these interviews and taken fieldnotes at the football matches mentioned above, I temporarily stopped gathering data (as explained above) in order to reflect on the data I had gathered to date. This included a certain amount of data on Liverpool fans taken from the RAOTL internet discussion forum.

In retrospect, with regard to my earlier efforts at data analysis, I think it is fair to say that while they were guided by my reading of Arnould and Wallendorf (1994), Spiggle (1994), and Stewart (1998), I still had not fully grasped the subtler points of qualitative data analysis. Conference papers and even journal articles written at around this time, such as one article subsequently published in the *Irish Journal of Management* (Richardson 2004), were certainly written in good faith but were characterised by a less complete understanding of the analytical process than was the case later on in the study. While I was still becoming accustomed to using Spiggle's (1994) approach for the analysis of qualitative data, I found it difficult not to cherry-pick interesting sections of text. I had a tendency, for example, to selectively examine data looking for examples of sacred

consumption and/ or cultural capital, and neglect to properly code data that did not fit these concepts. It took a good deal of work to establish more correct coding practices on my part. Proper iterative comparison of codes and subsequent development of higher order themes only fully established itself after a number of exercises in comparing codes I had developed with those my supervisor had suggested from consideration of the same texts. However, this more correct understanding of proper analytical practice took time to develop, and I re-entered the field in late 2004 still struggling to develop it.

11.2.14 Re-entering the field – interviews with other Cork City fans

Interviews with a second group of Cork City fans took place after the 2004 Irish football season had finished. To facilitate the iterative nature of the research, these respondents were not selected nor did the interviews take place until all data from the earlier stages of the study had been analysed, albeit in the manner explained above. However this analysis certainly helped to ensure that respondents would be representative of a different group within the Cork City fan population, to provide a contrast to the ‘lads’ on the Shed, and to maximise the opportunity for identification of disconfirming observations. Interviews were carried out with ‘Eddie’, ‘Greg’, ‘Wally’ and ‘Dougal’ (‘Dougal’ was selected for interview on the further basis of a lack of interest in, rather than devotion to, Cork City, even though they are his local club).

‘Eddie’ is in his early forties. He is married with three children. He has been a football fan for most of his life, and a supporter of Cork City Football Club for most of that time. When Eddie gets the chance to attend matches he now sits in the stand rather than standing on the Shed terrace.

By contrast, ‘Greg’ is a slightly younger fan in his early thirties who is in a relationship but unmarried. Greg was selected for interview on the basis that he falls into a somewhat different category to Eddie. He has a great deal of freedom to attend matches. He chooses to frequent the Shed when he goes to Turners Cross, rather than sitting in the Stand. What differentiates him from both Eddie and the slightly younger supporters who frequent the

Shed are two additional factors – he never buys or wears Cork City merchandise and he also regards himself as a supporter of Manchester United.

Two other fans were interviewed at this stage of the study. ‘Wally’ is in his late 30s and therefore met one of the purposive sampling criteria for this particular round of interviews, but it emerged during the interview that he was heavily involved with the activities of the younger fans from the Shed already described. Finally ‘Dougal’ (male, 30s, unmarried at time of interview) had been to Turner’s Cross, but only to see Liverpool play a friendly fixture. He described himself as a Liverpool fan and not a Cork City fan. Ultimately all these interviews were extremely useful, because they facilitated further exploration of themes already identified in the earlier stages of the study. In this sense they very much delivered on the important goal of searching for possible disconfirming observations. They also pointed to the need for research into fans whose interest lay in supporting much bigger, more successful clubs such as Liverpool or Manchester United, in preference to small local clubs like Cork City FC.

In defence of both the data and analysis at this stage of the study, it is worth observing that my relative deficiencies as observer, interviewer, and analyst notwithstanding, a great deal of rich data had been gathered, via a variety of methodologies, including participant observation, netnography, and qualitative interviews with respondents selected in a manner that adhered correctly to purposive sampling as described by Stewart (1998). Also the themes that had begun to emerge were certainly present in the data, even if I was to an extent incorrectly privileging some data patterns over others. A further saving grace in relation to the research was my belief that Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus and cultural capital rendered everything in the data important unless and until proven otherwise. Finally, another invaluable resource in keeping the analysis from straying too far off track was the practice of regular meetings with my supervisor, for the purpose of comparing analytical notes on the patterns in the data. Again in retrospect I certainly wish that I had grasped the points he tried to make in regard to data analysis a little sooner than I did!

11.2.15 The 2004/05 English football season: Entering the RAOTL fan community

The study's emphasis began to shift from research on the Cork City fan community towards research on Liverpool supporters towards the end of 2004. The beginning of the RAOTL phase of the study therefore overlapped with the concluding stage of the research on Cork City fans described immediately above.

During the first comprehensive fieldtrip to Liverpool in late October of that year, I conducted one 30-40 minute group interview in the Supporters Club bar (with three male Irish fans, all in their mid twenties), one 15-20 minute interview in the museum, with 'Mark' a middle aged married fan, and one full length (i.e approximately 70 minutes) interview with 'Vince' (late fifties, male, married) who has been a Liverpool fan for his entire life and who started to go to matches at Anfield in the 1950s. I was also introduced to 'Daisy', an elderly fan who attends all Liverpool's home games but I found it impossible to conduct an interview with her. Every question was answered with a remark designed to entertain her entire entourage, rather than participate in an interview.

Rather than attempt to investigate a wide-ranging sample of the different branches of the official Liverpool Supporters' Club, and continue to interview fans from either the Swedish branch or the various Irish branches, I felt it would be more appropriate to focus on one particular community of Liverpool fans, and become a participant researcher within this community. This led directly to my concentration on the 'Red All Over The Land' internet discussion forum.

My interest in this community began during the earlier stages of my netnography. The 'Red All Over The Land' discussion forum did not meet all of Kozinets (2002 (b)) criteria for netnography. The 'Red And White Kop' (or 'RAWK') community, for example, had a significantly larger number of members and a correspondingly higher number of discussion threads was generated by this membership on a daily basis. I felt however that the Red All Over The Land forum (or 'RAOTL') represented an excellent opportunity to become a member of a community where I could actually develop relationships with a

significant proportion of the membership. Also, while the number of different discussion threads per day was significantly smaller than the corresponding level of output from RAWK, the discussions on RAOTL were of sufficient depth and breadth to provide the sort of rich data specified by Kozinets (2002(b)).

A formal netnography of the 'Red All Over The Land' community therefore began at this point. Having established myself as a member of the community by means of active participation in the RAOTL discussion forum for several months, I eventually posted a message asking for volunteers to help with the study. Initial contact was made with fans like 'Big Al', 'Evo', 'True Red', and 'UMC' – all of whom offered to help. I subsequently met these fans and other members of RAOTL, including 'Kathy', 'Matth', 'Davey C', and 'Ferryrich' on most of my trips to Liverpool. Social ties to the group therefore began to thrive not only online, but also offline, strengthening my relationships with the community and enhancing the quality of the research.

This was helpful in ensuring that comments posted online by any of these fans over the course of the study could be assessed against my personal knowledge of the fan posting the comments. This facilitated my conclusions as to whether the online data felt 'right' (Arnould and Wallendorf 1994:493, Wallendorf and Belk 1989:80). This experience was invaluable, given the possible deficiencies in verbal data identified by Stewart (1998). Stewart argues that "we should treat all explicit knowledge as...probably remote from that employed in practical activities under normal circumstances" (1998:26). There is a danger that in the course of being formally interviewed (or posting online) actors will give an account of how they believe things ought to be, hence the need for the researcher to observe events for himself or herself. It is important, moreover, for the same reasons, to attempt to gain access to the 'behind the scenes', or 'backstage' activities of actors, where their behaviour is likely to be more natural. Over the course of time participant observers are more likely to achieve some degree of social acceptance by the group, resulting in opportunities for this type of access. Also the quality of verbal data offered is likely to be better; greater opportunities will present themselves for capturing 'speech-in-action' (that

is spontaneous utterances from group insiders to each other), given the more relaxed setting. In other words, there is a need to capture and evaluate verbal data across all the relevant contexts (Stewart 1998).

By participating both online and offline in fan discourse over the extended timeframe of the study, I therefore gained a high level of social acceptance within the community, and the community members that I met soon reverted to natural behaviour in their interactions with me. This put me in a strong position when it came to evaluating data gathered formally via the internet, or informally via conversations in the pub on matchday. It is important to note that this degree of evaluation of the data was not possible with all participants. I did not get to meet every single contributor to the study. However I did manage to establish a degree of 'virtual' rapport with many of the online contributors. One example of my own degree of participant observation on the forum included posting a personal journal of my 2005 Istanbul experience. This was warmly received by 'True Red' and others. 'True Red', for example, responded by saying that these Istanbul stories were great and to keep them coming. In other words, I was after a time clearly perceived as one of the community, rather than simply a researcher with an academic interest in football fans.

This phase of my research, beginning as it did during the 2004/05 football season, coincided with Liverpool's ultimately successful campaign in the 2005 UEFA Champions' League. As part of the netnography, once Liverpool had reached the Final, I asked a small number of the fans to keep a journal of their experiences of the final stages of the campaign. Data from these journals was subsequently included in the analysis.

Also in the months after the final, I arranged a small number of formal interviews with members of the community. Everyone interviewed was an active member of the forum, which clearly made the interviews useful, but the respondent profiles also comprised two distinct subgroups; local (native Liverpoolians) and non local fans of Liverpool F.C. 'Jeff Mc' (male, 40s) is from Liverpool but lives in Cork. 'Evo' (male, 50s) is from Liverpool and still lives on Merseyside. 'Le Songmeister' (male, early 30s) is from Cork but has

recently moved to the UK, while 'Funkyzeit Mit Looney' (male, 30s) is also Irish and lives in Cork. This particular purposive sampling therefore ensured that both OOTs (out of towners, emically identified as Liverpool fans who were not from Liverpool) and local 'Scousers' were included in the analysis.

One final phase of fieldwork emerged from these interviews and the relationships that I developed with members of the community. I was invited to accompany 'Le Songmeister' and others on trips to away matches, where I was assured that only "the die hards" would be present. These away trips contributed further valuable data to the study, providing additional perspectives in action to accompany the perspectives of action provided by the interviews. They did not take place, however, until the 2005/06 football season.

11.2.16 The 2005/06 English Football Season

This was the last season of the study. The netnographic element of the study had essentially concluded by the end of the 2005 calendar year, although I remained a member of the online forum. I continued to gather offline data however, travelling to two away games with some of the fans, and carrying out the remaining interviews as described earlier. I also gathered further data via two final fieldtrips at the end of the season. All this additional data was highly useful because it provided one final opportunity to search for disconfirming observations (Stewart 1998) and to observe perspectives in action. Travelling to away games with the fans, and carrying out the final set of interviews with members of the community, represented two of the concluding efforts to ensure identification of any disconfirming data. One such disconfirming observation occurred when I met one of the fans ('Evo') in July 2005, to carry out an interview. He was wearing a brand new replica team shirt. I had never seen him wear official merchandise before. The revelation that you could be a hard core Liverpool fan and yet unproblematically enjoy buying the official merchandise made me reconsider my earlier interpretation completely. This is just one example of the usefulness of prolonged and persistent fieldwork in ensuring the identification of disconfirming observations. Finally, believing that "it is not sufficient to interview actors to understand their culture" (Stewart 1998:25) means of

course that it is not enough to witness a variety of performances. The researcher has to experience culture personally, and “moreover, because culture is not homogenous, but is distributed across diverse social contexts, the ethnographer needs experience in multiple contexts” (Stewart 1998:25). Thus by progressing from the identity of novice researcher and novice community member at the beginning of the study, through to Complete Member Researcher by the study’s conclusion, fully participating as a Liverpool supporter during this time, I acquired not only the cultural “...knowledge that can be transmitted explicitly” but also the “the tacit knowledge that ... is...much more central to insider culture” (Stewart 1998:24).

Having spent some thirty-six months in toto as a member of the RAOTL community I therefore believe that the requirements for veracity of prolonged fieldwork (Stewart 1998), or that of prolonged engagement/ persistent observation required for credibility (Wallendorf and Belk 1989) were comprehensively met.

11.3 Reliability / Objectivity

Having established the veracity of the study in the above notes I will now briefly address the questions of reliability and objectivity. Reliability for positivists is a combination of objectivity and consistency. Objectivity in a positivist sense means the goal of carrying out research and obtaining results that are independent of any peculiarities of the researcher. Many ethnographers consequently reject the notion that objectivity can be applied as a criterion in the evaluation of ethnographic research, because ethnography is inevitably affected by the characteristics and orientations of both researcher and respondent (Stewart 1998).

Stewart argues, however, that several tactics can be utilised to ascertain that the study is characterised by objectivity. He asserts that the ‘trail of the ethnographer’s path’ technique can be used to document the researcher’s work, such that the reader can assess the extent and type of any partisanship on the part of either the researcher or any of the key

informants. Bias can be reduced through utilising purposive sampling, for instance. It is important to show that adequate numbers of actors/ informants have been interacted with, all relevant categories have been investigated, and that all different perspectives have been documented. This assures the reader that not only have opportunities for disconfirmations have been maximised (Stewart 1998) but that any bias that may have accrued through recruiting respondents from only one group within the population is minimised.

The profile of different respondent categories suggests that any bias introduced to the findings through the peculiar characteristics of any one group has essentially been minimized by the careful processes of purposive sampling used throughout the study.

Rather than confine the study of Cork City fans to the population of the 'lads' on the Shed, I also interviewed older fans who frequented other parts of the ground. Rather than accept that the Cork City 'lads' were correct in their labelling of 'barstool' fans as inauthentic, I explored the practices and lived experiences of Irish fans of an English football club. Rather than accept the argument of members of RAOTL that only 'daytrippers' buy merchandise from the club shop, I probed the disjunctures (Arnould and Wallendorf 1994) between stated assertions and actual behaviour in relation to such merchandise. I also interviewed both local and non local members of the RAOTL community, to gain access to multiple perspectives.

Collectively, these research practices lead me to believe that problems of bias have been minimised in relation to my respondents. In relation to bias arising out of personal orientation or characteristics of myself as researcher, I will briefly discuss the further research tactics that contributed to the objectivity of the study.

Stewart recommends three further tactics to maximise objectivity. These are respondent validation, feedback from outsiders, and interrater checks on indexing and coding. He also lists a fourth tactic (maintenance of a comprehensive data archive) but strongly recommends against its use and it is therefore not discussed here. I will not discuss respondent validation in any detail other than to say that in my experience it did not contribute anything to the study. I asked two members of the RAOTL community to read a

draft conference paper that discussed some of my initial findings, and this did not lead to any further insight. In retrospect perhaps if the findings had been in a less academic format this might have been a more meaningful exercise. Presenting two of my informants with findings written in an etic format was in retrospect unlikely to be helpful (Arnould and Wallendorf 1994).

Feedback from outsiders and interrater checks on indexing and coding

Wallendorf and Belk refer to the technique of periodic debriefing by peers, who are not actively involved in the research and who therefore should bring a fresh perspective to bear on both data and interpretations (Wallendorf and Belk 1989).

While useful feedback on findings was received at conferences such as ACR 2005, the role of periodic debriefing and external checking of data coding was really performed by only one person, that is my research supervisor. In practice this proved invaluable in attaining the necessary level of objectivity for the research. Without this it would have been very difficult to retain sufficient detachment to avoid going 'native' (Stewart, 1998:23). As a fan myself, I found it difficult to avoid placing an excessive emphasis on themes that stressed the sheer excitement of the fan experience, but did not necessarily shed a great deal of light on fan consumption processes.

Rigorous adherence to interrater checking of codes proved most useful in two specific ways. First, as discussed above, in the earlier stages of the study, I had a tendency, for example, to selectively examine the data looking for examples of concepts with which I was familiar, rather than following correct coding practices. Adoption of proper practice only fully established itself later on in the study, after numerous exercises in comparing codes generated by myself to codes generated by my research supervisor.

Second, as a further test of the veracity of the study, I undertook a comprehensive re-examination of the data after all fieldwork was finished. I re-analysed every interview and fieldnote, and reviewed every discussion thread that had been downloaded from the online forum, in the iterative manner described by Spiggle (1994). This was done in order to

ensure that each final theme had been subjected to full scrutiny for disconfirming observations against all available data. These themes were subsequently reviewed by my supervisor. It proved necessary to focus more on developing those themes that shed fresh perspectives on fan consumption processes, rather than focusing on findings that had already been established in the literature. It proved somewhat traumatic to let go, so to speak, of some of the material that dealt with the excitement of attending live football matches. Ultimately the process of interrater checking proved invaluable in ensuring the study's contribution was not overly focused on the quest for excitement among football fans (Elias and Dunning 1993) but rather was clearly oriented towards themes that demonstrated strong relationships between sacred consumption, consumer resistance, and cultural capital.

11.4 Generalisability and Perspicacity

For a number of obvious reasons ethnographic studies cannot have external validity or generalisability in the same manner as for example quantitative studies. Ethnographic studies require purposive rather than random sampling and there are also limits on the number of respondents ethnographers can hope to interview, given the face-to-face requirement for such interviews. In addition, ethnographic data are regarded as being tied to their contexts of time and place, that is, they are not spatially or temporally independent (Stewart 1998). That is not to say, however, that ethnographers' findings and insights cannot be applied to other contexts. Stewart (1998) mentions two main devices for the verification of perspicacity. These are intense consideration of the data, and exploration. It is hopefully clear that the study was characterised by intense consideration of the data (for example, the prioritisation and clustering of codes in the construction of higher order themes). In terms of exploration it is also apparent that potential points of contrast were sought out and more than one field was investigated. This certainly suggests that the insights obtained in the study could be applied to other football fan communities and

indeed to other instances of fandom.

In relation to establishing perspicacity outside the realm of fandom, Stewart (1998) suggests that reflections on the literature may be used, or of course new fieldwork may be carried out in fresh field sites. The reflections on other subcultures of consumption explored in Chapter Seven suggest that the experiences and practices of these consumers are strongly linked to those of many other consumers. This in turn suggests that the findings of the current study may carry significance for other domains of contemporary consumer behaviour.

One final point is of importance. A researcher with a critical realist perspective might have unearthed other themes besides those discussed in the body of this text, and might have found such alternative themes to be of fundamental importance. The ethnographic gaze deployed in the conduct of this study was somewhat selective, in that it avoided considering issues of gender, for example. The question of whether some female fans still feel excluded from football fandom is of potential importance, for instance, but the study chose to focus on other issues, such as the relationship between members of the culture and the market. The omission of a dedicated treatment of the relationship between gender and football fandom in this thesis stems less from any attempt to downplay its significance than from a realisation that it could well form the basis for a sustained and critical study in its own right.

11.5 Summary of how Data Analysis Processes led to Interpretation Milestones

Spiggle (1994) asserts that good ethnographic research fully documents the project milestones, including recording and explaining the iterative to-ing and fro-ing that characterised interpretation development. It therefore seems appropriate and useful, particularly in light of the issues highlighted above in relation to data analysis in the earlier stages of the study, to provide a summary of the thematic milestones in the progression of

the interpretation, and the analysis processes that led to it. As Spiggle (1994) observes, while these processes are systematic they do not tend to be linear but rather are iterative in nature.

Analysis begins with coding. Spiggle (1994) defines this as identifying a piece of data as representative of a particular phenomenon and labelling it accordingly. Each fieldnote, discussion thread from the RAOTL forum, and interview transcript therefore had to be read as a text in its own right, and every piece of data had to be considered as possibly representative of an interesting phenomenon. It is important to note that this process in no way guarantees the capture of all phenomena of interest with regard to football fan consumption. It provides for analysis of the data as gathered. The data itself is limited by the boundaries of the ethnographer's gaze. All the ethnographer can hope to do is cast his or her gaze as widely as is practically possible. Utilising data-gathering methodologies that complement each other, so that different types of data can be captured and a wider range of phenomena identified for consideration, helps to broaden the scope of that gaze (de Chartonay *et al* 2005, Paul 1996).

Interview data, for instance, is co-produced, and will yield data that is dependent on the joint perspectives of interviewer and respondent. Observational data is subject to the boundaries of that which the ethnographer decides to focus on. However, in producing an overall ethnographic interpretation, the two methods can complement each other, in that issues that emerge from observational data can widen the perspective that the ethnographer brings to bear when conducting interviews, and vice versa. Therefore the ethnographer can proceed with the analysis in good faith, provided that this strategy of complementarity is being followed and a reflective and sceptical attitude is retained towards emergent themes until they have been verified by consideration against all the available data.

The first text to be given comprehensive consideration for coding purposes was the interview with Cork City fan 'Allan'. I found myself returning to this transcript a number of times, asking myself whether it had been properly coded. I eventually produced a list of analytical codes that ran to forty-three pages of single-spaced text, in contrast to the

seventeen pages of the interview transcript itself. The next step in analysis was to assess the extent to which these first order codes could be clustered together on the basis of a conceptual relationship, an emic relationship, or some other shared features, a process defined as abstraction (Spiggle 1994). These clusters or groups could then be labelled to identify them clearly as second order codes.

Before elaborating on how the analysis progressed from there, an additional comment on my experience of learning how to carry out qualitative data analysis might be useful. I think that a difficulty for novice ethnographers with the constant comparative method of Glaser and Strauss, as referenced by Spiggle (1994) is that it is quite an abstract concept until a substantial body of data has been collected and a more meaningful comparison not only within texts, but across texts, becomes possible. For example, one first order code from the interview with 'Allan' was 'It's better than the telly'. It was obvious from this statement that 'Allan' felt that going to a live football match was preferable to watching football on TV. When I considered this in the data for the first time I coded it on its own merits as an isolated statement. I sensed that it was important, particularly when I considered how emphatically 'Allan' had stated this preference. Initially, I was not sure what it meant, other than that he literally thought going to a match was a qualitatively more enjoyable experience than watching it on TV.

I continued to code the rest of the interview transcript, coming up with a rich variety of first order codes. Many of those codes were perhaps unsurprising given the nature of football as an exciting and absorbing spectator sport. One code, for instance, was 'The Call of the Wild'. This reflected Allan's enjoyment of the opportunity at a match to behave in a manner that seemed rather wild compared to how he or I might normally behave in public. However it did not seem at all unusual to me that someone might enjoy behaving in an unrestrained way at a football match.

In contrast to the above issue, what did come as a surprise was the extent to which 'Allan' had very strong opinions about other categories of football fan. He articulated a strong distaste for fans who professed support for more than one team. I coded this as 'Antipathy

towards soccer meanderers', using Allan's emic term of 'meanderers' as part of the label for this particular theme. Gary also professed a strong distaste for fans who did not support their local team. I coded this in an uncomplicated manner as 'Support your local team'.

This sort of first order coding was not overly problematic once I became accustomed to it. What remained problematic for longer was the notion that different first order codes or themes could be related to each other. It was far easier to note the relationship between the code 'It's better than the Telly' from the interview with Allan, and data from subsequent interviews with other Cork City fans, than to progress to the generation of second order codes based on the interview with Allan.

In practice, the iterative approach of considering how data across a number of interviews was related to more than one of the first order codes from the interview with 'Allan' proved the key to finally grasping the concept of second order coding. In reflecting on the data after the first set of Cork City fan interviews listed above had been completed, I suddenly gained the intuition that when all the interviews were considered together, there was actually a relationship between the first order codes 'It's better than the Telly' and 'Support your local team'. They were linked by a higher order theme (or second order code) of fan identity, which dictated that authentic fan identity necessitated supporting one's local team in person. I finally had gained an understanding of what Spiggle (1994) meant by having a sudden sense of deciphering a code or realising that a thematic pattern was present. I then proceeded to follow Spiggle's (1994) guidelines on iteration and refutation, by going back through all my interview data to see whether any of it contradicted this emerging theme. Some of the data in my pilot interviews suggested that not all fans felt this burning necessity to support their local team in person, but I was able to conclude that such a value system certainly existed among the hard-core Cork City supporters.

It then became a relatively unproblematic task to relate this theme to a higher order conceptual level. My familiarity with Bourdieu's (1984) theory of cultural capital and Thornton's (1997, 1995) concept of subcultural capital also allowed me to note the

relationships between these codes and other lower level codes relating to practices that community members drew from in order to construct and maintain a sense of distinction between themselves as real fans and others as inauthentic barstoolers, meanderers, or day trippers.

It also became obvious that cultural capital offered a particularly illuminative perspective on the consumer behaviour of members of the RAOTL community. When I finally realised I understood the system of cultural capital on the RAOTL forum, I spent a few days downloading and reading discussion threads on one topic after another. Spiggle (1994) describes how the correctness of an interpretation can become known to the researcher when the relationship between pieces of data that previously seemed discrete suddenly becomes apparent. Multiple examples of the relationship suddenly become obvious in the text. This suggested to me that I had achieved “massive overdetermination of pattern” (Stewart 1998:29), at least in relation to cultural capital.

Some of the most important higher order themes in the study took far longer to emerge. For instance, to refer again to the analysis of the interview with ‘Allan’, I had originally noted a small number of first order codes relating to merchandise. These were very simplistic codes such as ‘Wearing the shirt’ or ‘Wearing a scarf’. It was not until much later on in the study that I was suddenly struck by the presence of a strong pattern of behaviour among the members of the RAOTL community in relation to merchandise. I had already noted an antipathy towards official merchandise on the community forum. This was interesting and would have been more than a little surprising if I had not already come across King’s (1995, 1997, 1998) analysis of the distaste for merchandise among hard-core Manchester United fans. However what intrigued me about the Liverpool fans was when I suddenly realised that their professions of distaste for official merchandise were not consistently matched by their behaviour in relation to it. In another moment of illumination I came up with the second order code of ‘downplayed consumption’. Fans like ‘Funkyzeit Mit Looney’ were declaring an aversion for market goods but were in fact buying a considerable quantity of official merchandise. However the significance of these purchases was being verbally downplayed, hence the code ‘downplayed consumption’. Having

identified this theme, I again followed the procedure of subjecting it to rigorous scrutiny against all available interview data. It was particularly gratifying to realise that the pattern presented itself again and again across all the interviews with fans in both the RAOTL and Cork City communities. The only exceptions to this were again among the pilot interviews.

In the interview with 'Allan', for instance, even though I had not noticed it when coding the interview earlier on in the study, it was now obvious that he, too, was eager to downplay his personal consumption of official merchandise. The ubiquitous presence of the theme gave me cause for further reflection. I then realised that many of the higher order themes were clearly related to each other. Fans were constantly engaged in attempting to distance their identity from the official marketplace. The theme of downplayed consumption illustrated how merchandise could not be unproblematically purchased. The theme of antipathy towards marketised fan identities further illustrated the underlying higher order theme that fandom had to be understood as an identity that resided primarily outside the market.

In perusing the conceptual literature on this practice of distancing consumption and consumption identity from the official marketplace I was struck by Kozinets' (2002a) finding that consumers can also operate their own markets as a further distancing tactic. This metaphor of the parallel market tallied so strongly with many of the practices I had observed that I then realised that in fact fans were operating such a market. I further realised that part of the reasoning behind this practice was the maintenance of a sense of not just distinction (Bourdieu 1984) but also hierophany (Belk *et al* 1989). Fans also amended their system of subcultural capital not just to reinforce the distinction between themselves and marketised fan identities, but to better distance their fandom from the profaning threat of the market.

Finally, I resolved the question of how fans could verbally assert a stance of resistance to the market while continuing to partially engage with it. This particular problem had required a good deal of iteration between the patterns in my data and the conceptual literature on resistance, cultural capital, the sacred and the profane, and communities of

consumption. I realised that because fans were primarily concerned with sacralisation maintenance (Belk *et al* 1989) rather than resistance, goods that delivered on themes of tangibilised contamination (Belk *et al* 1989), for example, could be accepted by the fan community. By the same token, any marketing initiatives that respected the fans' sense of hierophany would be perceived as unproblematic but initiatives that threatened this sense of hierophany would be resisted. A reconceptualisation of resistance as being primarily concerned with sacralisation maintenance was thus one of the overall themes which, in fitting so much of the data, helped to comprehensively explain the consumer behaviour of football fans.

The question remains as to whether this interpretation satisfied *all* my data. The answer is no. It does not explain all the data from the pilot interviews. Some football fans seem unconcerned with resisting the market in any sense. Observational data of football fans queueing up outside the official Liverpool club shop further suggests that many fans equate market goods with the transcendent (Belk *et al* 1989) qualities alluded to by some of my pilot interview respondents. Future research could therefore usefully examine the qualitative differences between fans who resist the market and fans who apparently do not, a point already made in the conclusion. This of course represents only one of the possible options for future research. As to what methodology might be appropriate, there is no reason to suppose that ethnography would not be suitable for exploration of any of these questions.

11.6 List of interview participants

11.6.1 Pilot interviews

Interview with J.B. (Liverpool fan, male, late 30s) 17 February 2004.

Interview with A.G. (Arsenal fan, female, mid 30s) 18th February 2004

Interview with J.D. (Liverpool and Cork City fan, male, early 30s) 20 February 2004

Interview with H.Q. (Arsenal fan, male, late 30s) 1st March, 2004.

Interview with A.D. (Liverpool fan, female, early 40s) April 2004

11.6.2 Second round of interviews (Cork City fans)

‘Allan’, July 2004

‘Andy’, July 2004

‘Gerry’, July 2004

‘Pablo’, July 2004

11.6.3 Third round of interviews

During the Liverpool v Charlton fieldtrip I conducted one 30-40 minute group interview in the Supporters Club bar (with three male Irish fans in their late twenties), one 15-20 minute interview in the museum, with a middle aged male fan (M.N.), and one full length interview with V., who works in the club’s P.R. department but who has been a Liverpool fan for his entire life and who started to go to matches at Anfield in the 1950s. I also attempted to interview ‘Daisy’ as mentioned earlier in the Appendix.

11.6.4 Fourth round of interviews:

‘Greg’ 4/2/05

‘Eddie’ 7/2/2005

‘Wally’ 24/2/05

(all of the above are Cork City fans)

‘Dougal’ (lapsed Liverpool fan with no interest in Cork City) – interview conducted in Spring 2005

11.6.5 Fifth (and final) round of interviews

(These interviews were spread out over a six month period, but they were all interviews with members of the RAOTL forum.)

'Funkyzeit Mit Looney', June 11th 2005

'Evo' 13/7/05

'Le Songmeister' 15/11/05

'Jeff Mc' 11/1/06

11.7 List of field trips.

Initial experimental fieldnote prior to start of fieldwork:

Waterford United AFC V Cork City FC, Eircom League Premier Division,
Friday 18th July 2003. (10 pages)

Pilot fieldtrips immediately prior to start of observational fieldwork proper:

Liverpool V Newcastle, Saturday May 15th 2004 (14 pages)

Cork City v Longford Town FC, eircom League, Friday 21/5/04

Commencement of fieldtrips proper (involving taking of systematic fieldnotes before, during, and after the game):

Cork City v St. Patrick's Athletic, 4th June, 2004. Eircom League. (20 pages)

Cork City V Derry City, Eircom League, Friday 11th June, 2004. (19 pages)

Cork City V Malmö (Sweden), Inter Toto Cup, Saturday 19th June 2004, (22 pages)

Cork City V NEC Nijmegen, Inter Toto Cup, Second Round Second Leg
Sunday July 11th 2004 (17 pages)

Cork City v Nantes, Inter Toto Cup, Saturday 24/7/04

After this game the first phase of gathering observational data more or less stopped. There were no home games to attend, for a period of more than a month, so I spent some time analyzing the data gathered to date, and my analysis of the data indicated there was nothing new emerging. What transpired later on was that I'd essentially been documenting macro

rituals without gathering sufficient detail on micro rituals. All the short fieldnotes that follow this are examples of confirmed observation of macro rituals. The two more comprehensive field notes (i.e. the Liverpool 'away' fixtures are post the realization that there was a need to gather more data on micro rituals, hence the increased volume of data gathered)

Subsequent fieldtrips that involved documentation of macro rituals:

Liverpool v Charlton Athletic, Saturday 23/10/04 (FA Premiership). (9 pages)

Republic of Ireland v Israel, World Cup Qualifier 4/6/05 (4 pages)

Cork City v Shelbourne, Eircom League, Monday 15th August 2005 (3 pages)

Cork City v Derry City FAI Cup semi final 21/10/05 (4 pages)

Fieldtrips designed to document micro rituals in greater detail:

Manchester City v Liverpool, FA Premiership, Saturday 26th November 2005
(23 pages)

AS Benfica v Liverpool FC, UEFA Champions' League Second Round, First Leg.
Tuesday 21st February 2006. (15 pages)

Liverpool v Aston Villa, FA Premiership, April 2006.

I also attended a number of other matches over the course of the study but did not take fieldnotes at those games. However, at all other matches attended over the period of the study I would have, for example, paid attention to aspects of fans appearance, including their use or lack thereof, of official merchandise. In particular I maintained an overall level of observation (admittedly at the macro ritual level) for anything that might in any way

contradict previously observed patterns of behaviour. I also attended the 2005 Champions League Final and the 2006 FA Cup Final but treated both occasions as opportunities for maximised immersion (Emerson *et al* 2001) rather than observational work. Both trips nonetheless formed part of the overall data set for the study. In practice I found that attendance at all matches greatly facilitated the development of closer relationships with all my respondents. Without this, the study would not have merited the designation of ethnography.
