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**FINDING THE BACK OF THE NET:
FOOTBALL AND IDENTITIES IN THE AGE OF THE INTERNET**

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ABSTRACT

Given the increased use of the Internet in communications, entertainment and merchandizing, there are a number of issues that arise regarding how these functions impact the identities of those who use the medium. Although sport on the Internet is shown to be highly integrated with traditional media forms and consequently reflective of them, this research examines communications less contingent upon corporate influence and more impacted by characteristics of community. In addition to the influences of traditional media and modern commodified sport, the comparative case studies used by this examination present a number of other elements that impact the identities of those who affiliate themselves with professional sport online. Specifically, by doing a survey of the users of two e-mail discussion lists and having observed their message postings for a year, this study provides an understanding of how both 'local' and 'global' identities are sustained and/or formed online. The 'sportified' identities examined are shaped by the histories, activities and general character of Southampton F.C., and Manchester United F.C., which represent 'local' and 'global' identities respectively.

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

Figure 1	Football and Internet associated identities.....	9
Figure 2	Comparative fandom and locality of list users.....	65
Table 1	Locality of listees.....	64
Table 2	Presence of relevant link to club's city.....	67
Table 3	Alternative sources of fandom.....	68
Table 4	Reasons for Internet use.....	70
Table 5	Frequency distribution of list use.....	72
Table 6	List as main source of interaction.....	73
Table 7	Reasons cited for identification with team.....	75

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	i
ABSTRACT.....	ii
LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES.....	iii
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Context and justification for the research.....	2
Research question and hypothesis.....	4
Contribution of research.....	5
Definition of terms and concepts.....	6
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	11
Sport and identity.....	11
Local identities.....	17
Global identities.....	19
Football and processes of globalization.....	21
The integration of Internet technologies into mediasport and football.....	29
Football fandom and team identification.....	38
III. METHODOLOGY.....	48
Assumptions and context of research.....	49

Data collection.....	52
Questionnaire.....	53
Virtual participant observation.....	55
Analysis techniques and procedures.....	57
Quantitative.....	58
Qualitative.....	58
IV. RESULTS.....	62
Questionnaire.....	62
Locality in the context of the study.....	64
Modes of fandom and list use frequency.....	67
Listees conceptualizations of identity.....	74
Summary of questionnaire results.....	78
Virtual participant observation.....	79
V. DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS.....	82
Identity.....	82
Consumer identities.....	84
Cosmopolitan identities.....	88
Saints as underdog.....	92
Saints as a local civic and regional identity.....	95
Conflicts between the local and the global.....	99

Globalization and mediasport.....	104
Media-led football.....	104
The Internet and the facilitation of globalization.....	108
The commercialization of the English game.....	109
Club strategy in the context of the global market.....	113
Listees sentiments on ‘away’ fans.....	118
Fandom and the lists.....	125
 VI. CONCLUSION.....	 131
 APPENDICES.....	 141
Appendix A University of Ottawa Ethical Approval.....	142
Appendix B Questionnaire.....	144
Appendix C Message to List.....	146
Appendix D Message to List Administrators.....	149
Appendix E List Rules.....	151
 REFERENCES.....	 155

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Internet is increasing the number of sports-related communications worldwide. It provides entertainment and facilitates marketing. For marketers the web is becoming a means to reach out to a broad audience that includes sport fans and consumers. For sports fans the Internet increases their access to information on teams, leagues and governing bodies. This extension into new communication realms not only facilitates ready access to given sports, forms of recreation and such, but in so doing impacts on those who are heavily involved in sport be it professionally, recreationally or in a passive manner. Are the identities of athletes, communities and other actors who construct or live through sport both at local and global levels influenced by the interactive and globalized properties of the Internet? This is a question these issues raise.

The primary research problem with which this study is concerned is the dynamic between sport, identity, and the Internet. More precisely, this study examines actual communications as illustrations of identity formation and confirmation relating to sport as they take place on the Internet. To do this, the communications of two e-mail discussion groups have been monitored that concentrate on the activities of Southampton Saints Football Club, an average sized Premiership football club located in the South of England and Manchester United football club, an internationally renowned and highly successful club in the same league.

The Internet is becoming increasingly merged into sport-related mainstream media, information and entertainment industries and its functions and interests are increasingly in the hands of the few. Sport is unquestionably a vital part of the current mainstream media and entertainment construct and its' role has been researched extensively (see Andrews, 2000; Jhally, 1984; Maguire, 1999; Sewart, 1987; Stoddart, 1997; Turner & Shilbury, 1996; and Whannel, 1992). Its study in relation to emerging media technologies however is a new area of study and one that requires applied research as the implications of this relatively new media platform and communications tool are still unclear.

Context and justification for the research

The Internet is a global phenomenon in that it is uninhibited by traditional boundaries and restrictive regulations that impact other technologies such as print media, radio and television. In theory, with the infrastructure in place, the Internet and all that it contains can be accessed from anywhere at any time. It is thus a unique way that local sport organizations and ventures can impact structures and audiences otherwise beyond their grasp. The interactive capacity of the medium offers the potential to partially create, transform and confirm local identities, institutions, teams and sports into global phenomena, and similarly create and confirm global identities. This research looked to reveal diffusions of local and global identities that are associated with sport and the Internet using professional football as empirical terrain.

The need for such research is primarily based on two factors. Identity, whether influenced by sport, politics, culture or other means is a powerful force in a highly diverse and increasingly global society, so greater understandings regarding the production of identities can only help our understandings of local cultures and of varied social groups in contemporary society. Of further importance is the role of the Internet in the sporting sphere. It is already apparent that the technology is here to stay, and as we begin to invest, shop, communicate and entertain ourselves online, there should be a greater academic importance attributed to how this relatively new method of communication may be influencing our social world and consequently our identities, especially given the role of media giants in controlling Internet platforms and content (see Andrews, 2000; Gardner, 1998; and Whitson, 1998). Regardless of whether the Internet's impact is deleterious or positive in terms of nurturing a harmonious and progressive society, an analysis confined to the realm of sport would be useful in establishing a greater understanding of social interactions that are concerned with sports fandom and the identities that develop from them.

An examination of these interactions and transformations seems particularly important within the realm of sport, since media and entertainment conglomerates are having a greater influence on how professional sport develops on the web. The Internet will arguably tighten the strong grasp on professional sports' future which is currently in the hands of the few (see Law, Harvey & Kemp, 2000) and thus has consequences for its future character, foundations and direction. Alternatively, the Internet may facilitate new forums for all levels of

sport in the way that it can form communities that could empower fans and athletes alike.

The relatively low cost of establishing a web site, organizing an online forum or establishing an e-mail list enables groups and individuals to utilize the Internet in an interactive way and not be subject to passive interpretation of mainstream discourse from the media giants. In so doing, media power may be challenged by the potential subversive and interactive nature of the Internet where there is some control of the medium gained by athletes, fans and consumers. This said, very little has been written on the actual relationship between the web and processes of globalization, especially as they pertain to sport and the formation and confirmation of identity.

Research question and hypothesis

What role does the Internet play in the creation and confirmation of local and global identities based on sporting affiliations? My research hypothesized that local and global identities are being formulated and confirmed by Internet technologies within the sporting arena through the ease of access to a global medium. Assertions are made that the Internet is de-emphasizing the importance of geographic locality for those whose identities are associated with sport is and making possible the maintenance of an identity based on factors associated with locality (fandom, ethnicity, culture etc.) in instances where a group or individual is removed from that locality.

Local, national and global instances abound whereby formulations of common identification are grounded on shared attachment to either a given sport or a particular athletic loyalty. From this recognition, questions arise about the foundations of these identifications, their strength, stability and their potential diffusive implications (see Maguire, 1996 and Jarvie, 1991). The comparative case study that is used here examines how local sport and identity is drawn into larger global constructs by the Internet and analyzes how the Internet serves to perpetuate current globalizing trends in sport.

Contribution of research

Benefits of this research include a preliminary understanding of how identities can be formed and transformed by Internet technologies, and impacted by processes of globalization. Further, it illustrates 'fandom' as a socio-cultural phenomenon. This will provide insights into how and why fans associate themselves with a given sport, and football specifically. Also, the comparative case study will contribute to the literature on the delocalization of sporting tastes that appears to be occurring given the increased commodification and globalization of sport and physical activity.

The Internet extends the possibilities of fan re-affiliation and consequently mitigates the importance of locality. The specific steps that these processes take cannot be fully ascertained, but the example herein will illustrate that indeed globalization can de-emphasize the importance of locality in favour of other elements. Practical examples of this process are not abundant in the existing

literature. Lastly, this study contributes to the field of sport sociology by examining human interaction in a setting outside the normal face-to-face public sphere. How professional sport and its' fans have been represented on the Internet has yet to be thoroughly reviewed. I hope that this research is a modest effort toward that end.

Definition of terms and concepts

The complexity of the dynamic that this study focuses on, along with the particulars of the case studies demands some background and elaboration on specific terms and concepts. Identity itself is a concept that is troublesome to define entirely as it is something in constant flux and transition. Ashmore and Jussim (1997) note the difficulty in imposing specific meaning to the term identity. They posit that identity is “a large, amorphous and changing phenomenon that defies hard and fast definition” (p. 5). However presumptuous of this research it may be to try and entirely define identity, as it relates to this study, we will associate identity with social constructions of meaning that link individuals by common bonds such as geographical, linguistic, cultural bonds or membership to an exclusive social body. In its simplest form, identity makes sense of who and what we are as individuals within a collectivity. In this case, how and why fans come to associate themselves with a given football team, and in so doing define themselves through the club is at the heart of identity.

In reference to the Internet-associated identities already mentioned, two types seem to be apparent and will be continually mentioned. The first is a

community of sorts that is founded on a common identification to either a team, sport or given athletic pursuit. This identity may be strictly based on common fandom, or may stem from more historically formed identities (such as race, ethnicity, gender etc.) which are manifested through affiliation with, and support for a given team or club. In such instances, the web seems to provide a forum for communication that builds and maintains ties based on the sport-based commonality.

Castells (1997) characterizes community as socialization and interaction within a given environment. It is collective action and through collective memory within this environment that community is built. The example used here sees a cyber-community comprised of predominantly ex-patriots who follow an English football team's progress from afar via the web and in so doing sustain their identity as either a fan, or English citizen, who identifies with the team geographically or symbolically in a way not otherwise available to them. Within this dynamic it appears that local identities are being confirmed by Internet communications.

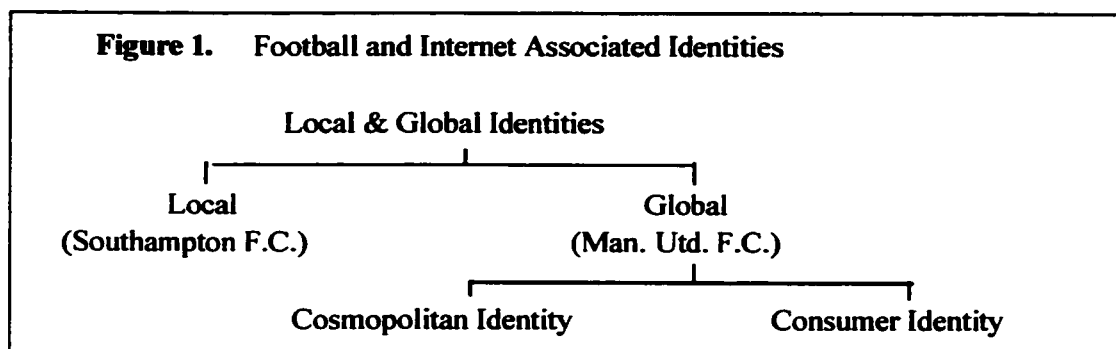
The other sort of identity that is impacted by the globalizing properties of the Internet is also relevant to discussions of Internet communications, but is more fixed by consumer and cosmopolitan identities that the internationalization and commodification of sport have fashioned. The examination of this sort of identity construction will deal more with how processes of globalization have had the effect of delocalizing fan loyalties and undermining the importance of local geographic identification in favour of following teams and their sports in a

larger global community where it is not so uncommon to have an individual following and idolizing athletes and teams from afar in spite of access to comparable ones closer to home. The globalizing principle behind this emerging phenomenon sees professional sport support (fandom) based increasingly on global consumer appeal and commercial notoriety (which are in turn based on other factors such as success and fashion) rather than on the locality of supporters and teams. This consumer appeal originates from the commercial assortment of imagery and corporate production that is related to certain football clubs.

One further distinction between these two types of identification should be noted as they relate to global technologies. It would appear that the first form of identity outlined is formed by locality yet confirmed and sustained by the web as opposed to the second type which is partially fostered by the Internet but primarily formed through the global commodification of sport. This observation is important as it details the two distinct roles that the Internet plays in the identity formation processes. One type can be attributed to the Internet in terms of partially forming global identities from afar, whilst the other uses the Internet to maintain a pre-existing identification based on other factors (in this case football fandom) that are locally based. Thus, at this point the role of the Internet can be seen as two-fold.

Further to this concept, the global identities of professional football fans can take the form of consumer identities or of cosmopolitan identities that transcend strictly national or regional identifications that are more traditionally

locally embedded. The specifics of consumer versus cosmopolitan identities will be examined in more detail in the review of literature on identity, but at this point should be considered distinct from one another in the way that consumer identities are formed through commodification and corporate presence, and cosmopolitanism refers to a complex identification with a region or nation. Specifically, cosmopolitanism suggests simultaneity of citizenship. While an individual is a member or citizen of a given nation state, they can also be a global citizen, whose outlook is the “necessary condition of a multicultural society in a global order” (Giddens, 1998, p. 136). The differences in identities for the case study are outlined in Figure 1.



Globalization refers to the emergence of a global economy, a transnational cosmopolitan culture, and a range of international social movements. It is important to note that herein, globalization is not to be confused with either Americanization or global homogenization, which imply a unidirectional flow of customs, capital or culture. Globalization’s flow is multi-directional, it does not originate from a single and constant source (Maguire, 1994).

All of these issues and research questions have been addressed using a comparative case study of the two clubs. This format “explores a phenomenon bounded by time and activity” (Creswell, 1994, p. 12). Using a comparative analysis, the research will be able to effectively illustrate the emerging relationship between the Internet and sport, and the globalization of sport-related identities.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Pertinent academic work to this study comes from a diversity of fields. The realms of sociology, communications, political economy, and sport history are all drawn from in the review that follows. From these works, three broad categories of literature have been established that relate to this research. These subjects, *football and processes of globalization*, *sport and identity*, and *football fandom and team identification* are reviewed in this chapter.

Sport and Identity

Identity can be manifested through, and symbolically illustrated by affiliation with professional sports organizations. Idealists will have us believe that sport has the capacity to transcend boundaries of gender, race and class (particularly those involved with the Olympic movement). Some of this idealism has been discussed by Allison (1993), Cronin (1999), Gruneau & Whitson (1993), Jarvie (1991), and Sugden & Bairner (1994). However, when considering the overwhelming involvement of the corporate world in modern professional and amateur sport it is not so simple to declare the idealism of sport for purposes of unity knowing that it is many of the less virtuous capitalist values and practices that are at the root of change within modern sport (see Sewart, 1987). Further, the detrimental ways that sport has created divide, increased tension and facilitated hatred surrounding ethnic, national and religious differences have been well-documented (see Boyle 1994; Giulianotti 1999; Brown 1998; and

Bairner & Sugden 1999). Needless to say the role of sport (and football in particular) in impacting identification is complex as it both unites and divides fans, citizens and consumers.

For my own purposes, identity is a powerful imaginary bond that serves to integrate and mobilize those who sense inclusion through locality or cultural ties. From this view, sport itself is not so much a single unifying entity as it is a platform, upon which identifications of a regional, ethnic, gendered or political nature are embodied or are displayed and expressed. Not based strictly on geography, history or language alone, the formulation of identity has no set equation, in fact multiple identities are possible rather than a single composite one. Identity should be considered multi-faceted in nature and something that is continually constituted and reconstituted (Boyle, 1994). Identity is a contested concept that for the function of this research will continue to be regarded as something that is shared in common, be it real or imagined, that is internalized to give the self a sense of place and/or meaning.

Sugden and Bairner (1993) express this idea of commonality when differentiating between identity and community by referring to what they call “shared cultural characteristics” (p. 61). Identity, they argue is about those experiences that are considered important and indicative of tradition. “Identity inevitably involves questions of representation, nostalgia, myth and representation” (p. 73). This quote captures what is tangible about the relationship between sport and identity. Where a club team or nation’s team is meant to symbolically represent thousands or millions, representation is key. It

is doubtful that all players on a given side hold true all the values, beliefs and cultural histories that their followers claim to, but in representing them, they embody these elements. Sport, and football in particular because of its international popularity, offers a useful stage to exhibit local, regional, national and cultural sentiment, and symbolic action to represent these sentiments and identities (Sugden & Bairner, 1993).

An author of importance to any discussion on identity but of particular relevance to this one is Benedict Anderson. Anderson explores notions of national identity in his book Imagined Communities (1991). Here, he attests that “[the nation] is ‘imagined’ because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion...” (Anderson, 1991, pp. x). This observation illustrates Anderson’s conceptualization of identity and it links well to the concept of shared cultural experiences previously mentioned. For Anderson, nationhood is an imagined abstraction that is real to individuals in the way that it symbolically unites. Although Anderson refers mostly to national identities, his basic premise of the imagined community can be helpful to this research on identity as most sports fans will never know one another personally yet consider themselves united through what they share in common.

This unity is founded on shared history, cultural imagery, mythology and symbolism, all related to ‘their’ football club. From this viewpoint, identity is very much concerned with an ongoing historical process. Duke and Crolley (1996) relate Anderson’s work to football when they attest that “Football captures

the notion of an imagined community perfectly. It is much easier to imagine the nation and confirm national identity, when eleven players are representing the nation in a match against another nation” (p. 4). Again reference is made to the nation, but for the purposes of this study the imagined community should not be exclusively considered as nationhood. Rather, civic identities, fandom and culturally related social identities are considered. Nash (2000) also uses the imagined community analogy when theorizing fandom. In examining democratic processes in new versus traditional forms of fandom, he borrows from Anderson to suggest that “there are no communities or nations, so fan cultures revolve around a constructed set of symbols, experiences, heroes, rivalries, modes of discourse and interaction and totemic historical episodes to create a unity and collectivity, and thereby define both the insider and the outsider within fan groups” (p. 468).

Tajfel (1981) argues that social identity is most concerned with categorization. He posits that individuals streamline their perceptions of like and unlike stimuli distinctively and in so doing categorize themselves and others. Tajfel defines social identity as “that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (p. 114). This notion of social identity is somewhat distinct from the national identity that Anderson refers to in that it refers not to nationhood, but social groups, thus it suits this study well since categories, like and unlike stimuli are easily identified when examining sport in general, and fans and their allegiance to

a given football club in particular. Further the idea of the 'imagined community' can be applied to a social group as it is in this study (football supporters) through Tajfel's work rather than looking at an imagined community in the context of a nation.

According to Jarvie (1991), early writings that associated sport with identity identified and probed the relationship between symbolism, tradition, nationalism, culture and the Highland games in the 1930s. Jarvie outlines identity as it relates to sport as shared experiences that create a sense of community and continuity, a collective history, a common destiny and similar social/cultural construct that responds to present threats and influences. Through sport, these identities can be given a body that is more easily identifiable and less intangible. This is where again Anderson's work becomes relevant. Hobshawm writes, "the imagined community of millions seems more real as a team of eleven named people" (1990, p. 143). Where Anderson envisions a large social group holding commonalities without face-to-face interaction, Hobshawm suggests that this 'imagined community' can be represented, brought to life and symbolized by the identifiable representation of a football team. Thus all who may not know one another at least have a shared representation of what is held in common.

Hobshawm (1990) goes on to single out sport as a unique way of easily inculcating national feelings for even the least political and public individuals. In a symbolized form (such as sport), people can identify with a nation by supporting and vicariously living through the actions on the field. Hobshawm

refers specifically to nationalism and national identity, however his arguments about the symbolic role of sport transfer well into other realms of identification.

Maguire (1993 & 1994) expands on Hobshawm's (1990) work in discussing how identity within the sports sphere not so much forms identity, as it elaborates on it. Sport gives a representative face to identity and thus symbolically pushes forward an image of a nation, community or a cultural identifier. This conceptualization of the role of sport regarding the construction of identity attaches tremendous potential to sport. Ideas like Maguire's underline the notion that sport can impact large and powerful identities by providing a tangible entity, be it an athlete, a team or a sport, which acts as a rallying point and a symbolic figurehead for unified representation.

Jarvie (1991) refutes some of this argument in that he attests that there is an argument against the role of sport in nationalism and identity creation in that sport merely consolidates what already exists and that it does not provide a "safe" outlet for expression, make possible a collective consciousness or positively integrate individuals in a common bond (see also Jarvie, 1993). This consideration is well taken by the case studies used in this research as it is argued that it is not merely a sports team with which one identifies. Rather, cultural and geographical characteristics can produce and build identities, and a football club (in addition to the Internet) serves to represent and confirm these characteristics. However, the idea that the formation and confirmation of these identities can be facilitated through sport is an essential assumption of this study and a distinction

must be made between local and global identity formation in order to associate each with its respective illustration in the comparative case study that follow.

Local Identities

Harvey (1993) argues that globalization is intimately related to 'the global and the local.' In his words, "sport may be at the same time a source of affirmation of personal identity and a source of national alienation" (p. 272).

Herein lies the tension between the local and the global, and more importantly a case for outlining the trends and features of each in order to make the case of this study more clear.

For the purposes of this research, the 'local' should be equated with Morley and Robins' (1995) view that it is the fluid and relational space, constituted only in and through its relation to the global. This 'fluidity' is a key consideration to this research since it should not be assumed that globalization is a "uniform process" that impacts all local particularities in the same manner (Jackson & Andrews, 1999 p. 39). Rather, resistance can be equally variable and dependant upon the particular context of a locality or region.

Viewing both amateur and professional sport as cultural phenomena in terms of how they reflect the dominant values of society and potentially represent other cultural identifiers (race, religion, gender etc.) leads us to an understanding that sport, through cultural representation, can influence the formation of identity. As identities are intimately linked to cultural formations and flows, it is important to note that two processes are at work between culture and

globalization. Firstly, heterogeneous cultures become “incorporated and integrated into a dominant culture which eventually covers the whole world” (Featherstone, 1995 p. 6). Secondly, cultures compress in a new dynamic that sees things once disparate come into contact with one another. These conceptualizations of how globalization impacts culture and subsequently identity formation and confirmation are important because cultural images and movements can influence identities. The idea that the *local* may become ‘incorporated and integrated’ is not absolute; rather this occurrence can be a part of the globalization process and may be evident in the case of this research.

Globally, a popular strategy for trans-national conglomerates has been to re-constitute products and images to suit local and specific commercial and cultural tastes and interests (Featherstone, 1995). This strategy attempts to penetrate the local without the all-encompassing domination of an international product. Coined ‘glocalism’ by Featherstone (1995), the concept is particularly pertinent to professional sport as glocalism suggests that the globalization of sport can occur hand-in-hand with attempts to meet the needs of local markets and demands. For regions where the effects of globalizations are both apparent and viewed as threatening, this corporate strategy seeks to soften the blow (see Jackson & Andrews, 1999 for more).

Houlihan’s (1994) contributions continue this line of argument with a belief that globalization does not entirely deconstruct or replace local cultures, but rather it manipulates them. It is this manipulation that can contest local identities and in so doing influence the formation and confirmation of identities.

Thus, for sport in local settings, it is an “awareness and acknowledgement of a global culture” (Houlihan, 1994 p. 183) that defines and distinguishes it as distinctive from the global whole. This global culture is predominantly concerned with social, economic, cultural and demographic processes (Kearney, 1995). It is the assumption that these processes transcend and penetrate the ‘local’ through globalization that demands a distinct review of both the local and the global.

Global Identities

I do not want the separation of local from global in this review to imply that the two are dichotomous and that each entails completely unique characteristics and facets as they relate to identity. In fact, the opposite is true as each only become reality when contrasted by one another. Jackson and Andrews (1999) go as far as to say “both the global and local can only be understood in relation to each other” (p. 32). An illustration of this relativity is found in the idea that it is possible to live in the local and global community simultaneously. This is now a reality and it is partly technological innovation that has impacted our thoughts and conceptualizations about culture, community and identity.

Featherstone (1995) has argued that the emergence of a global society can be attributed in large part to technological innovation. As innovations in transportation expanded the geographical space in which humans could interact, a new conceptualization of time and space developed. Developments in mass media have further extended notions of time-space by creating a medium

whereby interaction is possible on an inter-societal level. The result has been a larger context for everyday interaction and new capacities for information exchange and interaction.

The Internet is helping the media/entertainment complex delocalize sport in particular. Making the professional arena an increasingly global one based less on the local geography of supporters and more on global consumer appeal, commercial notoriety (both of which are in turn based on other factors such as success and fashion) and cosmopolitanism, sees the nature of affiliations to professional sport changing. In mitigating the geographic distance between broadcasters and audiences, and sports and consumers the Internet promotes commercial imagery abroad which fosters identity that associates itself not with locality, regional identification or pride, but rather product association and commercial appeal. In replacing local affiliation with corporate branding and product popularity, global sport can lessen the importance attributed to what is distinctive about the local.

Cantelon and Murray (1993) address the potential conflict between the local and the global that is alluded to here. These authors counter some of the arguments here and attest that the hegemonic nature of global culture will lead to increased regional and local resistance, and consequently full dominance by global culture will never completely blanket local and regional cultures and related identities. This raises issues of how the local might counter the pressures of globalization. As the case study verified, communication via the Internet may

be one possible way to counter or manipulate potential global influences and yet maintain local particularities.

Football and Processes of Globalization

Globality restores the boundlessness of culture and promotes the endless renewability and diversity of cultural expression rather than homogenization and hybridity. (Albrow, 1996, p. 144).

Within the realm of sport sociology, much has recently been written on processes of globalization (Cantelon & Murray, 1993; Harvey & Houle, 1994; Harvey, Rail & Thibault, 1996; Houlihan, 1994; Miller, Lawrence, McKay & Rowe, 1999; Maguire, 1996). However, what has lacked in much of this research has been a strong recognition of the important role that media/entertainment conglomerates have played in the globalization of sport. The purpose of the following chapter is to outline some of the academic literature that sets out the groundwork for this research.

As the relationship between sport and international media/entertainment structures is a rapidly developing one, it may be useful to examine the development of globalization theories as they pertain to the mediasport phenomenon. It is evident that the evolution of 'big time' professionalized sport and the internationalization of athletics is directly connected to media and entertainment structures and their economic power. This connection is intimately linked to globalization itself. The Internet has become a medium used by mediasport organizations to enhance and compliment the experience of the fan and sports consumer they currently provide through traditional media forms

(TV, newspapers, etc.). In so doing, media corporations provide the individual with greater consumptive opportunities. This increased potential for sports consumption through Internet technology places the medium into a context fitting of the highly commodified form of entertainment that professional sport is, and leads us to debates within sport sociology about the nature of globalization and sport itself.

Harvey and Houle (1994) outline three lines of arguments within the ongoing debate. Is sport a part of a process that adopts Americanization or globalization? Is it a part of economic and cultural imperialism, or is it integral to economic or cultural globalism? Lastly, are these processes irreversible and total, or is there room for resistance? The last of these questions is the most important to this study as the evidence suggests that indeed there is room for resistance against dominant hegemonic mediasport discourse through the empowering properties of the Internet.

Within these discussions, the concept of mundialization is introduced (Wagner, 1990) which seems particularly relevant to the Internet as a medium for sports proliferation. An assertion is made that rather than an international proliferation of American culture and its inherent dominant values, globalization is more a form of mundialization that diffuses the popularity of given sports worldwide. This mundialization fosters an interest in participating in the sport worldwide and serves to raise spectatorship for the sport. This in turn increases the involvement of mass media with the sport and consequently produces heightened interest in sport in lesser-developed nations. Mundialization regards

the increased importance of global sport as attributable to international media constructs that disperse Western sport to an international audience and in so doing confers it a greater political importance (whether real or imagined). It should be noted here that this proliferation of sport to global audiences is not merely one way. Although there is a great deal of commodified sport flowing from the West, Europe and other regions maintain a substantial influence on the sporting world making the global dynamic one in constant flux without strict rules or patterns.

It would appear that the Internet is a well-suited medium for this multi-directional 'mundialization' because of its interactive and instantaneous capacities. These arguments are well illustrated by the second form of identity formation that this research suggests is apparent in the sport-Internet dynamic. As Harvey and Houle (1994) outline, the commodification of sport is globally diffused, so perhaps then the Internet indeed plays a part in proliferating both the popularity and commercial appeal of a given team or sporting practice given its borderless reach.

Harvey, Rail and Thibault (1996) discuss globalization as the crystallization of the world into a whole space. Robertson (1992) refers to it as the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole. In terms of social-cultural specificity and relativity, and regardless of the many particular definitions, globalization can be viewed as a highly influential and subversive form of Western cultural superiority and dominance. Such issues and debates are of great consequence to this study

because the effects of globalization are crucial to the case study of professional football and identity. National integration, identity, and community all come under fire from the processes of global change. How these processes are carried out via the Internet and pertain to sport are discussed within this research and thus limit the discussion of globalization theories to those pertinent to Internet technologies.

It is vital at this point to emphasize the importance that most scholars in this area have given to the need to disassociate globalization from an all-encompassing homogenization thesis (Cantelon & Murray, 1993, Harvey & Houle, 1994). Rather, a model of modernization that relies entirely on the Westernization of global development should not be taken for granted (Maguire, 1994). Local identities are still able to flourish; only they recognize a single social space (the globe) that their own social world operates within. Maguire defines globalization within the sports world as the “multidirectional movement of people, practices, customs and ideas” (1994, p. 401). It is the aforementioned ‘social space’ in which these movements occur.

The very concept of the global is one that is still evolving. Since the 1960’s and Marshall McLuhan’s reference to the ‘global village’ as being a compression of the world’s community through shared technologies (Robertson, 1992), globalization, globality and the word global itself have all become synonymous with one another in reference to the shared community and experience of the world’s inhabitants. Undoubtedly, the way that mega-media has spread common

content and character worldwide has impacted the way that globalization has fostered an augmented sense of shared consciousness.

The perspective of political economists regarding globalization has to do with global culture and economic circumstances. The powerful commercial forces and potential of professional sport and its related industries (manufacturing, marketing, media, etc.) finds a consumer culture surrounding global sport and in so doing situates professional sport into an international commodified phenomenon. This perspective is of particular importance to this discussion as it is primarily economic globalization that drives global media to become involved with sport and capitalize on the technologies that can promote and advance their content. The McLuhanesque notion of global media (1989) is very much a reality with the advent of the new global mediasport oligopoly (see Law, Harvey & Kemp, 2000).

To this end, Harvey and Houle (1994) argue that processes of globalization are increasingly dependent upon corporate communications and technologies and to a lesser extent nation states. Increased information exchange, and communications accessibility and availability (made possible by new technologies) have resulted in a greater diversity of social relations and a vastly altered capacity for global interconnectedness and shared economic, political, social and cultural values and characteristics.

Historically, sport as been an effective means to give substance to shared identities and consciousness (Jarvie, 1991, Donnelly & Young, 1988, Maguire, 1999). As such, sport is most often cited in the globalization context as having

contributed to the emergence of a global culture (Harvey & Houle, 1994). However, the association between sport and globalization is furthered by the economic and media ties to professional and amateur sport that are emerging on an international stage. Harvey and Houle (1994) posit that the internationalization of sports industries (such as manufacturing) and sport ownership patterns are extending sport's role in globalization outside strictly the cultural realm. Rather, flows and exchanges of capital that involve sport are very much a part of new global processes.

Houlihan (1994) discusses this "flow" as being a fundamental cause behind the tendency for the globalization of sport to be equated with the commodification of sport. Specifically, he refers to the "predisposition to consume" (p. 175) that the international merging of state, corporate and media interests involved with sport have created. While global flows may be mostly of the cultural and economic variety, as Whannel (1992) points out, the globalization of sport is a part of markets, trade and labour, and culture.

On globalization, Mike Featherstone (1990) contributes to the discussion most notably by examining the directions of this global "flow." Featherstone attests that there are two movements at work, the first being an extension of a particular culture into the global realm, and the other being a "compression of cultures" (p. 7) that witnesses juxtaposed cultures coming into contact with one another via global processes. Featherstone notes that these flows and conceptualizations of cultural change can co-exist. The emergence of a global society is dependent on both sorts of movements and driven primarily by

economic factors and technological innovation. Just as other researchers from the political economy perspective have argued, Featherstone sees innovation as key to bringing time and space together and lessening the gaps that have diminished societies in the past from interacting on a global level. The Internet as an interactive medium could be one such innovation.

Miller, Lawrence, McKay and Rowe (1999) deal with the literature that explicitly concerns globalization in a sporting context from a post-modern perspective. Referring to Waters (1995), the authors foresee a “global melange” (p. 19) that is the result of a “social process in which the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements recede and in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding...territoriality will disappear as an organizing principle for social and cultural life” (Waters, p. 19). Such an extreme viewpoint is not without evidence. Within professional sport, international governing bodies (such as the IOC and FIFA) are streamlining the formerly distinct domestic policies of inter-dependent nations in a global era. In standardizing formerly distinct policies and regulations in conjunction with other bodies such as corporate interests (Nike and Adidas for example) and the interdependent national associations themselves, ISO’s now monopolize the international administration and delivery of sport.

Most authors agree that globalization is not necessarily an all-encompassing unifier, but rather a measure of standardization and synchronization. In looking at the relationships between nation-states, trans-national capital and information flows (Miller, Lawrence, McKay & Rowe, 1999),

it is evident that globalization is forcing economic, technological, cultural and social processes into an integrated and common space (Harvey & Houle, 1994).

In specific reference to sport, globalization trends have included sport governing bodies and leagues attempting to promote their game to a global audience and consequently trying to penetrate new markets. Whannel (1997) argues that these trends began in the early 1980's and include the marketing of American baseball in Asia, American football in Europe and even football in North America. This includes FIFA's bold move in bringing the 1994 World Cup to the U.S. in an attempt to open up the market quickly with instant penetration of the sport into society. The Internet will certainly do nothing to deter the global strategies of leagues and sports governing bodies alike. In fact quite the opposite is the more likely outcome as the borderless nature of the Internet is well suited to promote games across continents and to new audiences.

The Integration of Internet Technologies into Mediasport and Football

Markets, trade, labour and culture all play a role in the globalization of sport (Whannel, 1997). Mediasport companies have an alarmingly high level of control over all of these factors and elements, and as a result the role of big media in integrating the Internet into globalization processes cannot be overlooked.

It appears that the Internet is becoming an extension of sports entertainment in the way it attempts to enhance sports experiences and build on existing sports media. It is too early to understand the implications of this medium for sport in social processes, however the way that the Internet can mitigate previously expansive spaces between athletes, media, fans and sports organizations suggests its influence shall be significant and is thus worthy of investigation.

As a part of the mediasport complex, the Internet is merging into mainstream media in a similar fashion to the way that sport has become integrated into the holdings of modern media entertainment conglomerates. Widespread acquisitions of sports properties and broadcasting rights have been well-documented (Andrews, 2000; Harvey, Law & Kemp, 2000; Whitson, 1998) and without a doubt have promoted the further commercialization of sport. At their most basic level, these mergers marry sports content with media platforms, from which the content can be broadcast, controlled and manipulated. Today, big media and sport entertainment companies are doing their very best to align themselves with the latest media delivery platform, the Internet. These alignments are three sorts of sport-Internet relationships. Internet-oriented

companies are owning teams, joining leagues and teams in online ventures, and directly sponsoring the stadiums, arenas and fields where these teams play (Kemp & Harvey, 2000). The recent merger of America Online and Time Warner is an excellent example of these three types of alignments as a number of professional teams, their stadia, sports broadcasting companies and online sports ventures are controlled and owned both directly and indirectly by the merged corporation (see Harvey, Kemp & Law, 2000).

Another corporate relationship to sport that extends online is the enhancement of traditional sport broadcasting with media web sites that include expansive statistics, in-depth news and analysis, discussion, multimedia and fantasy sport games that compliment broadcasts or sponsorship of a given sports league or team. These web sites illustrate that despite the large number of fan-based sites and possibilities for communication and interactivity, the most dominant characteristic of websport is that of commercialism. The online world is one more area where corporate interests can sell their message, their product and reach their audience (Kemp & Harvey, 2000).

Andrews (2000) points out that media relationships to sport are predominantly cemented by exclusive media coverage rights and equity ownership, both of which exert high levels of control. In controlling the product online, media conglomerates can attempt to make savings within their vertically integrated strategies. When sport is seen as 'content' or 'software' as it is by big media, the capacity to cross-promote the retail opportunities and product lines

associated with this content online is invaluable. Whitson (1998) refers to this cross-promotional capacity as 'circuits of promotion.'

The most powerful and influential media entertainment conglomerates with large investments in sport deliver their content over several platforms. The Disney's and AOL-Time Warner's of the world control satellite, cable, radio, newspaper, magazine and Internet platforms (Law, Harvey & Kemp, 2000). In distributing sport content over one medium, that same material is then available for the other ones as well. Herein lies the attraction of the Internet for media companies. Consumers looking for sports scores, statistics and stories may log on to a given site, but once there they will not be limited to just sports content. The circuits of promotion corporate strategy has the site promoting the products and services of the same company but in other realms. While checking out the box-score on the game, why not link over to the company's book seller and order books and magazines about baseball or something entirely different?

Apart from the new retail and promotional opportunities that the Internet provides, one of the biggest reasons that media entertainment companies are jumping onto the Internet so quickly and with such brashness is out of fear for missing out on the potential of the technology. The ambiguity of the Internet as a sustainable media technology has seen the traditional companies doing their best to make sure they are the ones in control of sport content and the dissemination of sports information online in case the technology lives up to the hype (Kemp & Harvey, 2000). In merging the brands, content and tradition of existing platforms such as CNN, Sport Illustrated, or AOL, the media giants can claim

their space on the web with sites like cnnsi.com that take the same content to another audience and claim instant respectability and more importantly to them, market share.

The biggest reason these media companies need be fearful of the Internet is its potential to disrupt its currently amicable relationship with sports in terms of revenue generation. With professional sport so reliant on broadcast rights fees, and broadcasters so reliant on sport to attract audiences and consequently advertizers, the potential for the Internet to spoil this symbiotic relationship is worrisome for broadcasters (Gardner, 1998). All one needs do is turn on the television or browse the web to hear the proclamations of optimistic sports leagues, Internet companies and futurists who will have us believe that television will someday be a thing of the past, as the Internet will transcend traditional boundaries of language, geography and such. If this became reality, the nature of broadcast rights fees would cease to exist as teams, leagues and athletes took their content into their own hands and broadcast to the audience directly without the nuisance of the middle-man, the media. This position is not too far-fetched as the cost of broadcasting over the Internet is minimal in comparison to both current broadcasting expenditures and the resources available to today's multi-billion dollar leagues (Gardner, 1998).

This said, the future of broadcasting on the Internet could go in one of two directions for professional sport. Either, mainstream media will control content on the Internet by maintaining a link with its other delivery platforms and controlling the medium through the continued convergence of various

technologies, or sports organizations will recognize the potential for managing their own fate by either using the Internet on a pay-per-view basis to an expanded global audience that television could never reach all at once. Either way, a new revenue source for profit-driven sports organizations seems imminent as either control over broadcasting by the teams and leagues will occur, or the Internet will become one more technology where the teams and leagues will have the opportunity to sell their image through broadcast rights to the highest bidder (Kemp & Harvey, 2000).

The Internet will see an extension of the commodification of sport because there will be an increased amount of corporate involvement with sport. Existing media companies will be the ones on the cutting edge of Web-Sport since they are the ones with the broadband Internet infrastructure (high-speed) for this to happen. The expense of such infrastructure makes it financially impossible for any start-up company to be globally successful. Additionally, existing media companies already have massive audiences and sport content in place through their mainstream media platforms. So what of initiatives by teams and leagues to utilize the Internet for their own gain outside of traditional media forms currently? Media-savvy leagues and teams are beginning to incorporate the Internet into their strategies by delivering selected content to an international audience.

Teams and leagues recognize that there is an audience for 'insider information' and in-depth coverage of teams and leagues. The Internet in its current form, without a massive network of broadcast rights and control permits

those who own the content to directly disseminate the information. An example of such control is MUTV, a television network that broadcasts nothing but Manchester United Football-related information 24 hours a day. In conjunction with the teams' web site, the club is controlling the image of the squad in every aspect except for the actual broadcast of league play, this important revenue generator is still in the hands of the mainstream media conglomerates.

There are other aspects of websport that are less reliant on corporate involvement and media control. Sewart (1987) argued in his examination of sport commodification that commercial media selects those sports that are best suited for television and will attract the most consumers possible. The ability to control the Internet as a medium interdependently of media negates this lack of control for sport to some extent. The fact that websport enables a sports organization the power of a media platform is less pertinent to sports already with a healthy television broadcast contract in a given country, and more applicable to sports with limited media coverage and poor marketing and publicity. In Canada for instance, a simple web search shows that sports like Triathlon, Rugby or Swimming have a considerable presence on the web that is founded on the capacity for fans and sport governing bodies themselves to control content on Internet media platforms. In producing a team web site, or a fan site with information and coverage, the web is providing the means for sport without substantial corporate support and commercial influence to reach consumers and fans that were difficult to reach through conventional media.

Turner (1999) has pointed out that a small international sport with a large base of athletes and interested countries, but without substantial television viewing interests, could develop a targeted broadcasting strategy through the use of netcasting technology. He goes on to point out that this could “[c]reate exposure for the game, and facilitate online activities such as marketing, merchandising and sponsorship. Further, a subscription fee could be implemented for such a service. This would raise revenue to at least potentially cover the costs associated with developing the broadcast. In determining the demographics of viewers and subscribers, the sport body could also profile its market to extend this net strategy through a global database of interested fans, consumers and subscribers” (Turner, 1999 p. 48).

This possibility seems encouraging for those sports without a cozy relationship with the large mediasport broadcasters, in that it could help promote a given game and encourage participation worldwide. McDaniel and Sullivan (1998) note, “before the WWW, professional and college sports teams and leagues depended almost exclusively on the mass media to help promote their teams and players. The WWW provides a channel for sports organizations to take a more direct approach with community relations, bypassing media organizations and going straight to their fans” (p. 272). Thus, as well as creating possibilities for broadcasting and revenue generation for less mainstream sports and additionally minimizing the difficulty in contacting the fan/consumer, the Internet provides a vital link for those who find difficulty in accessing information about their favorite leagues, teams, and athletes. Turner (1999) goes

so far as to say “New technologies provide the avid and casual sports fan with instant access to a wide range of information and editorial content. Such access bolsters insider knowledge and adds to the connection between the sport and the fan” (p. 44). The Internet provides information that is not covered as intensely by mainstream journalism. Training reports, opinions, interviews and other information are available online from fan sites and bring a fresh perspective to the sports audience—that of the fan, not the media.

As well as the new interactive element that the Internet brings to the media world, the Internet as a broadcast and promotional platform is ideal for reaching a global audience through a single medium without the hindrance of regional and territorial broadcast restrictions. Of further importance to discussions on sport and the integration of the Internet into traditional media are notions of the medium extending the impacts of globalization. Specifically, the global circulation of sport through electronic delivery disengages audiences from traditional forms of cultural affiliation based on locality and more concretely ties sporting imagery to the images of products, arguably the dynamic that drives the entire complex (Whitson, 1998).

As mentioned, in the near future existing media will be on the cutting edge of websport because they are the ones with the broadband infrastructure, the high-speed key to websport proliferation. Existing television companies currently have the advantage of larger audiences and no problems with broadband clarity access and in turn the globalizing properties of television will

likely be exacerbated by the globality of the Internet and its contempt for territorial boundaries.

What room is there for resistance on the Internet? Will media conglomerates completely dominate the websport landscape? The answers to these questions remain to be seen but it is apparent that the Internet's interactivity and ease of access does differentiate it as a media platform from traditional media forms and in so doing leaves room for sports fans, communities and groups to put forward their voice.

Stoddart (1997) has argued that the Internet provides a "curious form of resistance" to the mainstream mediated line of sports information. As fans can directly contribute to those sites that they themselves interact with, they are in a sense able to take some measure of control over the medium. How successful this resistance and presence will be in the future is largely dependent on how effective mainstream media is at taking over the content on sport on the Internet against the bottom-up approach that fans and sports communities have taken in establishing their own presence online.

The integration of the Internet into mediasport sees a new interactive dimension within the sports entertainment spectacle. Turner (1999) describes this interactivity in the following way: "The web is a lean forward medium: you engage, interact, communicate, collaborate, retrieve information, locate and purchase products and services, solve problems and take care of business. In short TV is primarily a passive entertainment system; the Net primarily an active communications system. We don't watch it; we use it" (p. 45).

Football fandom and team identification

“Association football is the world’s number one game. This statement applies whether one is referring to participation in the game, spectating at a match or viewing a match on television.” (Duke & Crolley, 1996, p. 1).

Up until this point, I have been careful to differentiate between the terms ‘community’ and ‘identity,’ and between cultural identifiers and those that stem from geography. Within this study, both community and social identity are manipulated and formed by the online forum. Identities will not arise strictly from the online community per se, but will be impacted by the nature of the collective and common identification that listees hold in common. This ‘community of commonalties’ will be comprised of the shared actions and memories associated with the football club that all listees find important enough to their own lives to devote their time and effort to the lists.

The main body of literature on football supporters regards their form of identification as one that is of a social nature that may be influenced by cultural and geographical factors (see Ben-Porat, 2000; Boyle, 1994; Brown, 1998 & 1994; Freeman, 2000; Hornby, 1992; Hughson, 1998; Lever, 1983; Mignon, 1994; Russell, 1999; Sugden & Tomlinson, 1994 & 1998; Whannel, 1998). The nature of fandom, or support for a specific professional sports team or club is effectively social.

Football is considered the ‘world’s game’ for a number of reasons not the least of which is that it has penetrated all ends of the earth and aroused strong sentiments and passions (see Ben-Porat, 2000, Brown, 1998, Hornby, 1992,

Lever, 1983, Sugden & Tomlinson, 1998). The popularity of the game is underlined by Duke and Crolley (1996) who point out that FIFA (International football's governing body) claims more members than the United Nations and the world's population "takes a greater interest in the activities of the former than of the latter" (p. 2). The complexity and utter fervor of football support is difficult to comprehend without being personally engaged in the process. In order to understand then how identification through football can be a zealous and fused identity of sportified, cultural, geographical and social elements, let us take some time to review research specific to the relationship between identity and football as explored in sport sociology.

Theoretical literature on the concept of fandom itself is relatively scarce and by no means current. Smith, Patterson, Williams and Hogg (1981) suggest that the sports fan role can be identified as falling into one of three categories: escape, self-fulfillment and social integration (p. 28). Their argument about fandom as social integrator is the most pertinent one to this research. Regarded as a loyalty developed in adolescence and maintained through adulthood, fandom may develop a sense of stability in an otherwise discontinuous and unstable existence (Smith et al, p. 32.). The following review includes authors who have considered these loyalties, integrative properties of the game, and its' escapist functions.

Janet Lever's anthropological work, Soccer Madness (1983) stemmed from a small field study looking at how Brazilian athletes used football as a route toward social mobility. Her findings, along with a number of subsequent visits to

Brazil led her to write an authoritative study on the attachment of fans to football in that country. As she notes, “I had never witnessed such a reaction (to loss)...I was impressed and baffled at how a sport could mean so much to a nation” (p. x). Lever proposes a number of theses relating to social status, education, gender and religion in reference to football fandom.

For now it should be said that Lever’s most important contributions to the literature are her recognition that a) football promotes communal integration, b) the single greatest predictor of fandom is past athletic participation, and c) that despite the often haphazard and seemingly arbitrary way that fans select teams to support, this attachment is most often due to family affiliation and influence.

In Giulianotti and William’s Football, identity and modernity collection (1994), a number of chapters illustrate the sport-identity dynamic in football. The most useful of these is Boyle’s examination of Celtic identity in modern Scotland as he uses sporting evidence when referring to theoretical literature on culturally and ethnically derived identities such as ethnicity and religion. Cognizant of the multi-faceted nature of identity, Boyle argues that via football, individual identities are being “constituted and reconstituted” continually (p. 77) in concert with other cultural factors. As is the case with football supporters, it is when these individuals gather into larger social groups (such as at a match) that the process of identity becomes concerned with inclusion and exclusion. Membership or identification takes shape through and becomes identifiable through the expression of fan culture represented by scarves, team colours, chants, songs, and other cultural indicators and signifiers.

Boyle is adamant that “football and football culture can provide a concrete arena for expressing or articulating various strands of identity” (p. 86). He views football as an arena in which collective identity can be shared and a sense of “difference” promoted. This difference is not necessarily a negative element of identity but rather is indicative of some other identifying factor such as religion, ethnicity or class. In his case, Boyle regards Irish national identity as this additional element or as he refers to it, the “wider cultural network” (p. 93).

Bearing in mind that Lever’s (1983) research specifically examined Brazilian fandom and Boyle’s (1994) Scottish football supporters, what is the role of the English game? In line with the commodification and globalization of the game, some work has been done on how English football has come to impact nations and cultures abroad (see Ben-Porat, 2000, Gokspyr & Hognestad, 1999, Goldberg & Wagg, 1991, Lanfranchi, 1994, Williams, 1994).

Ben-Porat’s (2000) study of Israeli fans of English football is an excellent example of the globalization of fandom. Through the phenomenon of fandom via mediation, Ben-Porat looks at fans as consumers as opposed to the more traditional form that Lever (1983) analyzes, and in line with the majority of academic work carried out on what is termed ‘new fandom’ (Williams, 1994, p. 391; Nash, 2000, p. 466). Ben-Porat surveyed Israeli fans looking for patterns of association relating to demography, exposure-to-information and general fandom. What was found was that 25% claimed Manchester United as their favorite club although almost every Premiership club was represented in the questionnaire. The importance of this statistic will become clearer in the

presentation of data, however at this point it underscores the global reach and penetration of the club's popularity.

These fans follow English clubs in mediated forms through television, the Internet and world service radio, yet also maintain ties to a local club. Ben-Porat notes that the strength of affiliation to the English club is stronger than to the local. This emphasizes the strength not only of the perceived quality of the English game but the power of international media to influence the 'foreign' fan to such an extent. Most importantly however, it illustrates a local-global tension caused by the globalization of media, sport, and specifically football.

Gokspyr and Hognestad's (1999) research follows a similar vein to Ben-Porat's (2000) as it describes the specific effects of globalized British football on a particular society. British influence, it is argued, has dominated the development of the Norweigan game and similarly to Israeli fandom there has been an admiration of the game despite opportunities for support locally. The migration and success of Norweigan players in the English league has accentuated this interest (both Manchester United and Southampton can claim at least one Norwegian on their roster) to the extent that there are over 53 000 members of supporter clubs of British football in Norway representing some 45 teams.

In reference to the potential for a clash between the local and the global, or more specifically a conflict in support for a local Norweigan club and an English one, Gokspyr and Hognestad (1999) do not believe this conflict exists. They argue that Norweigan football fans are able to assume parallel identities because

they do not regard the two nation's leagues as being on the same competitive level:

“Football identity is carved out both in relation and in contrast to a series of others. For the partisan fan it is often unthinkable to support more than one club or one nation...It might be argued that this ‘tribalistic’ aspect of football still applies as a dominant feature in most countries where football has and continues to play a significant role in generating social and cultural identities” (p. 207).

Thus the idea of dual or merged identities returns and is well illustrated by the case of football fandom.

English football clubs have a “deep rooted identification” with given cities, regions and communities (Morrow, 1999, p. 172). Understanding what has been referred to as “new fandom” in relation to football identities however, requires a brief historical elaboration on how it differentiates itself from traditional forms of association. In 1992, England's top 22 clubs broke away from the traditional four-tier 104-year-old Football Association format. The new ‘Premier League’ was predicated on a newly formed television deal between the English F.A. and Australian News Corporation's BSkyB satellite sports channel that saw broadcast rights given to the foreign-owned broadcaster for £304 million (\$656 million Canadian¹) over five years (Williams, 1994). That original agreement has been most recently supplanted by a £1.1 billion (\$2.4 billion Canadian) deal over just three years that grants the rights to televise the action of the league's now 20 teams (Barkham, 2000). Sky's original deal with the F.A. was six times what had previously been in place with the national public broadcaster (Williams, p. 384).

¹ Pounds sterling to Canadian dollar conversions are made from exchange rate on July 17, 2001: 0.4637

The impact of such gargantuan injections of capital into a league not traditionally oriented toward profit has not been subtle. Nash (2000) describes the advent of the Premier League as “a watershed in the political economy of English football” (p. 483).

Nash (2000) simplified the contrasts between traditional fandom and the “new fandom” that has been a consequence of the commodification of the game in his examination of contestation in the modern English game. In terms of identity formation and cultural attachment, he regards traditional forms of fandom as having been concerned with passion and participation. He argues that new fandom considers football as entertainment and as a result identification with clubs has been lessened. As a consequence, identification with a club based on location has lost its primacy in favour of a more dispersed form of affiliation that includes no essential link between club/locality and fan identity.

Other distinctions between the character of traditional and new fandom in English football include attenuation of fan animosities toward specific clubs and their fans, and the legitimization of fandom that is carried out primarily through television and other media rather than live attendance. The underlying themes between these characteristics of traditional versus new fandom are their perspectives on commodification. One is opposed to change and celebrates the colours, traditions and grounds of the club, while the other celebrates consumer identity through merchandising and corporate involvement and views the ground as merely a place for leisure and entertainment. In considering changes to football in terms of both the new consumer-orientation of English football and

the cosmopolitanism of the game, the way that identities will be formed and confirmed differently must be considered. This is especially the case as those football-related identities traditionally associated with English football in the past such as “masculinity, locality and nationality” (Mignon, 1994, p. 273) are modernized by the pressures of “new fandom.”

Before the dawn of commodified football, the English game was an integral part of working-class culture with associated values of masculinity, aggression, physicality and regional identity (Cricher, 1979, p. 161). Russell (1999) confirms this stance in naming territoriality, physical strength and social loyalty as the most dominant features of traditional football support. These features reinforced and constructed identities then in a similar manner that those discussed earlier (consumerism and cosmopolitanism) impact the formulation of new fandom identities today. In the past, the professional footballer was a “working-class folk hero” (Cricher, p. 163) with whom fans and citizens could relate and respect. The athlete came from a similar socio-economic and cultural background and earned little (if anymore at all) than those who watched him. In this context, identity formation would have less to do with financially related consumer and cosmopolitan elements.

Akin to Nash’s (2000) analysis of the nature of traditional versus new football fandom, Cricher (1979), identifies a number of changes from a historical perspective. He delineates the disaffection of the new fan from the traditional relationship to the game in three forms: “firstly, a disinclination to continue following the local team regardless of its achievement; secondly, a preference for

armchair viewing of weekly televised excerpts: thirdly, a symbolic redefinition of the role of the supporter through the activities of ritualized aggression adopted by younger fans” (Chricter, 1979, p. 168).

Attachment to, or identity formation through, this sort of fandom is less straightforward. Taylor (1992) notes that in the traditional form of football fandom, supporters could sense a feeling of belonging and that they were a part of the football structure and cultural process. Today, the feeling is that fans are now ‘customers’ and ‘consumers’ whose participation in the processes of fandom are subject to the nature of a free market economy (see Crichton, 1979, Freeman, 2000 & Malcom, 2000, Morrow, 1999).

In The new economics of football, Morrow (1999) refers to the Premier League by alluding to “all seated stadiums, large scale corporate hospitality, executive boxes, satellite television, clubs as brands, the rise of merchandising, clubs raising capital and listing on the Stock Exchange, investment trusts dedicated to football, hostile takeovers, football in the courtroom and the globalization of the player market” (p. 1). These descriptors could not be more at odds with depictions of traditional English football. Traditional narratives spoke of the romanticism of the game and the sense of appreciation fans had for just being allowed to cram into standing-only terraces (Freeman, 2000).

With an historical account of fandom in place, where do today’s football fans fit into the equation in respect to this study? Despite the vastly increased commodification of the league, at its most basic level football in England is still a unique and important cultural institution around which a plethora of differing

identities can be arranged and fashioned. While economics may now be the primary motivator behind the game's development (or arguably its regression), without supporters the game would hold little meaning. Freeman (2000) describes how it is only the fans that make a club real at all levels. "They are permanent; directors, managers and players come and go but the supporters live through the club and give it reality" (p. 24).

Morrow (1999) speculates about when this tension between traditional passion and modern economics will escalate into the demise of the league. Will the accountability of clubs to fans (as perceived by traditional supporters) be annulled by the concerns of business interests over the "maximization of shareholder profit" (p. 165) or will supporter interest and traditional associations of fandom prevail? While the following case studies will touch on these issues, it is not my intention to answer such broad questions. Suffice it to say that these questions underline the importance of examining modern processes of fandom as supporters are at the root of the economic boom that the Premiership is experiencing. As both Rowe (1996) and Morrow (1999) posit, without the "atmosphere" that supporters provide, mediated football would be a far less appealing product to consumers, customers and fans alike.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This study is concerned with ongoing processes of identity formation, the local-global nexus (see Morley & Robins, 1995) and new media technology. This nexus, or relationship, finds the “de-nationalization and de-statization” (Castells, 1997, p. 259) of information occurring. The results of these changes are a blurring of the lines between what is considered ‘local’ and what is ‘global.’ The methodology of this study attempts to capture this blurring line by utilizing one of the technologies (the Internet) that is serving to accentuate this obscured line.

The research uses two comparative case studies that relate to the local and global creation and confirmation of identity through the Internet, which relate to football. This effort consisted of a survey that was sent to the subscribers of both lists after approval by the University’s ethics review board and each list’s manager/moderator.

Questions revolve around the use of technology in maintaining fandom and other ways that this fandom or identification is sustained. A full list of these questions can be found in Appendix B. An additional intent of these questions was to discover if there is a relation between geographic locale and support for the teams in each case study. In establishing the answer to these questions, it was possible to associate the creation and confirmation of local identities centered on geography with global identities that are delocalized and potentially engaged in consumer and cosmopolitan identity formation.

The events that occur online are centered on the activities of the two clubs. These events are both formal and informal with some listees sending in cut and pasted mainstream media stories about the teams (be these results, game previews or news items) but mostly personal opinions, observations and reactions. With this balance between hegemonic football media discourse (mainstream news and information sources) and the view of the avid fan, the events and setting of the lists are excellent sources of fan empowerment and resistance to predominant forms of football fandom (active interaction versus passive observation). The processes that the study engages are ones that are both unpredictable and somewhat inconsistent. List discussion obviously fluctuates depending on the fortunes and events of the club at any given time. As a result, one week may yield excellent illustrations of how the forum is effecting the user's conceptualizations of their own identity(ies), while the next may be filled with messages all relating to how the club's defense resembles Swiss cheese. It is for this reason that I did not solely rely on data collected through observation, but also utilized the survey approach outlined.

Assumptions and context of the research

Just as other authors have deemed it appropriate to consider the Internet as a media platform (namely Morris & Ogan, 1996), December (1996) claims that Internet technologies can be regarded as a form of media in that they are essentially a series of mechanisms whereby the exchange of information and ideas can take place. Specifically, the Internet provides "an array of tools for

people to use for information retrieval and communication in individual, group, and mass contexts” (December, 1996, p. 14).

Another assertion of this research is that sport impacts on the construction of identities (see Cronin, 1999; Gruneau & Whitson, 1993; Jarvie, 1991; Sugden & Bairner, 1994). Sport indeed has an impact on the development, veracity and cohesiveness of common identification. Lastly the notion of delocalization must be understood to exist within social reality (see Morley & Robins, 1995).

Delocalization should be considered for the purposes of this study as the way that globalization has made possible the de-emphasis of local identification and locality in general. Although one may be a citizen of a state, a member of the community etc, he or she is also a part of the global community and thus able to re-affiliate him or herself with given groups or communities that may well transcend boundaries of a traditional nature. The result of this assumption is that processes of globalization are believed to impact the social world at a subjective, individual level. The globalization of sport, culture and identity makes possible the delocalization of identities formed by or in part by sports institutions and affiliations to them.

Two football clubs have been chosen to represent affiliations of local and global identities, a personal decision was made regarding what teams to examine. I have a keen interest in British football and so the English Premier League was selected. Further, arguably no team has more of an international notoriety in the ‘world’s game’ than Manchester United so this team seemed an appropriate selection to represent the global identity associated with the research. The Red

Devils of Manchester United and their large overseas presence through product placement and allegiances with large media companies (namely News Corporation and Vodaphone) ensures that their popularity is as globally diffused as the origins of the players that represent them on the field (Freeman, 2000). Contrasting this representation of identity, Southampton Football Club is intended to represent the local (identification founded on community, gender, ethnicity, fandom etc.). While involved with the commercial enterprises of modern sport and counting no less than seven different nationalities amongst its players, Southampton sees identity formation and confirmation amongst its players tied more to processes of community and shared social experience. An illustration of the very significant difference in club magnitude can be found by merely looking at the capacity of each club's ground. Old Trafford in Manchester accommodates 67 400, while Southampton's Dell seats a mere 15 000. Even Southampton's new ground set to open for the 2001-2002 season (an effort to keep pace with the larger clubs in the Premiership in terms of revenue) will not seat half of what Old Trafford offers (FourFourTwo, 2000). This contrast suggests that both teams have distinct markets, and appeal to a different sort and number of fans/consumers who consequently identify with their club in dissimilar ways.

Manchester United is more than a local community club team with just local support, Man United is a global phenomenon and sport product with passionate supporters clubs world-wide (see Freeman, 2000, Mellor 2000, Morrow, 1999). Southampton Football Club on the other hand was chosen for a

number of reasons to represent local representations of identity. Despite a vast chasm between the two clubs' earnings and expenditures, the team competes in the same league as Manchester and so a level of standardization exists between both clubs' supporters and their discussion lists. A team in a lower division without the commercial and financial capacity of a Manchester United could have been chosen, however a team like Southampton, competing in the same league is appropriate as it does not have the global appeal of United (see Freeman, 2000; and Lee, 1998).

Further, Southampton is a smaller city with a smaller fan base, smaller stadium capacity and certainly a smaller operating budget (see Morrow, 1999, Four Four Two, 2000; and Lowe, 2000). It would be amiss of me not to mention that I am a Southampton supporter with ties to the city. It is my firm belief that such an attachment has in fact enhanced the efforts of the study as I have been able to tap into insider information about the clubs. I have an inherent understanding about the nature of club support. The two clubs then are meant to be diametrically opposed in their orientation, one as a representation of local community and identity and the other as a global commercial and cosmopolitan identity (see Freeman, 2000; and Lee, 1998).

Data Collection

Miles and Huberman (1984) have suggested that data collection in qualitative research consider four parameters, *setting*, *actors*, *events* and the *process*. Accordingly, all of the data collection took place online from the two e-

mail lists. The Southampton list is administered and monitored by volunteers who also participate in list discussions and it is hosted by yahoo groups.com, a company that provides the technologies to numerous online groups who share a common interest. The other list (MUFC) works in the same manner and operates through 'yahoo groups.com' as well. The participants on the lists were the target population of this research survey. I wished to make contact with all listees, especially those from afar who appeared to utilize the Internet as their primary bond to the club and their identity as fan, consumer or citizen. Specifically, data collection was carried out through two sources: the administration of online questionnaires, and the accumulation of messages from regular list exchanges.

Questionnaire

Limited information on the location of users was freely available on the Manchester list through a related web site. However, to attain a standardization of data between the two lists, a brief questionnaire was used to establish a few key characteristics of both sets of list users. The locality of the list users and their use of the list to maintain their fandom were the main themes of the questionnaire. This process required the consent of individuals and required formal University ethical approval (see appendices A and C).

This data collection method was the only direct contact with list participants. The survey included seven questions that were sent to each list's membership and can be found in appendix B. Specifically, the sorts of questions posed were meant to discover the link between fans, Internet technology and the

production and confirmation of local and global sport-related (sportified) identities. The questionnaire was meant to address these questions by examining the geographic origins of list users in an effort to correlate the formation and confirmation of local identities and the creation and confirmation of global ones.

When the questionnaires were distributed, the Saintslist had 816 subscribers and the 'MUFC,' 1417. 'Listees' I contacted came from all over the world, from as far as South Africa and Malaysia and as close to the clubs as in the cities of Southampton and Manchester themselves. Further information on each list can be found at www.yahogroups.com/group/saintslist & www.yahogroups.com/groups/MUFC respectively.

I sent the attached survey to each list's administrator (Appendix D) for approval, and then to the entire list (Appendix C) in hopes of attracting as many respondents as possible. This message/questionnaire included a brief description of the research, a guarantee of anonymity and confidentiality, and an offer to share these demographics with the lists' users should they desire them. In addition, it included all items that would be normally included in a traditional consent form. It has been common on both lists for discussions to be engaged with how fans became fans, and how supporters follow the team from afar, so this type of information may have been of interest to participants from both lists. Once sent, any additional contact with participants for follow-up information (missing data etc.) was done directly through electronic mail (off list) away from the eyes of other list members.

The messages to list users and administrators that follow in the appendices utilize casual language. I considered this important in order to attract as many participants as possible. In avoiding a high degree of formality in these messages, it was hoped that listees would feel welcome to participate and be uninhibited in their responses. The vast majority of day-to-day list messages utilize conversational language, so I hoped to keep the same tone in communicating with the lists as well.

No harms or inconveniences were present in the study since the questions asked did not pertain to sensitive issues. Furthermore, past exchanges on these discussion lists demonstrate that listees are interested in the issues/themes covered in the questionnaire. Participation was voluntary and information remains confidential and anonymous. Anonymity was ensured through the deletion of names and e-mail addresses (replaced with pseudonyms) and individual contact with participants was done 'off-list' (away from the entire group). Approaches made to list members underlined the importance of not replying to all list members by using my email address in the "reply to" form.

Virtual participant observation

The second data collection method was 'virtual participant observation' (Mitrano, 1999) which entailed casual observation of list exchanges, drawing certain messages for further analysis and interpretation. In this instance, messages were selected and examined should they have met the following criteria:

1. Evidence of how a fan has developed his or her affiliation to a team.
2. Evidence of what factors this affiliation is based upon. (For example, team success, location of club, team associated with other national/ethnic/cultural factors)
3. Message includes stories or tales about relationship with the team while growing up or any other illustration of the origins of the affiliation with the team.
4. Message refers to ways and methods that sustain the affiliation with the club. (Internet, television, newspapers, etc.)
5. Message refers to financial matters of the clubs.*

*While this criteria appears not to be concerned with fandom or identity per se, it is included to illustrate components of consumer-related identity.

This data collected through the group lists was available for public consumption. Anyone with Internet access could observe these e-mail list exchanges. Thus, this part of the data collection process focused on public information to compliment the questionnaire. In order to receive list postings, an individual merely needs to send an email to the list email (saintslist-subscribe@yahoogroups.com or MUFC-subscribe@yahoogroups.com) with 'subscribe' in both the subject heading and the body of the message. In so doing, an individual is automatically subscribed to the list and begins receiving messages from the list either one at a time as they are sent or in a daily 'digest' format. The only requirement is that the subscriber is to adhere to a set of list

policies regarding appropriate language, not attaching files, irrelevant discussion etc. (see Appendix E).

The data collection period began April 1, 2000 and list discussion was observed with messages selected when there were illustrations of identity formation and related dialogue that complied with the aforementioned criteria. Virtual participant observation continued until a sufficient number of messages had been retrieved and saturation of data achieved. A sufficient number of questionnaires had been returned by this time with the final returned survey received March 23, 2001. Saturation, in this instance was considered to have been achieved once no additional themes or topics came from the data. As themes re-occurred and the amount of original material subsided, virtual participant observation was terminated.

Analysis techniques and procedures

As collection methods were a combination of document analysis (list exchanges) and electronic questionnaires, a balance was achieved in data outcomes. Surveys were a controlled method of eliciting responses aimed at a specific line of questioning having mostly to do with demographic information and list use, while observational techniques and list interaction produced supplemental information that was from the mouth of the source and was not constrained by the manner of the research. An observational approach negated any potential for intrusion into normal list discussion and resulted in honest and open discussion.

Quantitative

The more quantitative side of the analysis was in discerning the practical results of the questionnaire. Descriptive statistics were established from the respondent's comments so that numeric values (percentages) could be used to illustrate the arguments about both Internet use and football-associated identity. In establishing basic statistics, descriptive analysis of these values helped to establish points made in reference to both the literature and the original discussion of results. An example of descriptive statistics used were calculated percentages of questionnaire participants who resided in the same city as 'their' club.

Qualitative

Relating patterns of local and global identity to what the literature suggests was the method of analysing and building a scheme for understanding the dynamic between these themes. Reducing the data into a manageable amount of categorized information was the task of the analysis and was accomplished by simultaneously collecting and interpreting. As Creswell (1994) notes, qualitative data analysis primarily entails classifying things, persons and events and the properties which characterize them (p. 166). In my case studies, the persons, events, things and their properties were classified to mirror the literature. Globalization, identity, football fandom, the Internet and other issues

pertinent to the study were all analyzed and interpreted in relation to the academic literature.

This was accomplished primarily through the use of Nvivo Qualitative data management software. Over the course of the collection period, messages that met the criteria previously established were pasted into the Nvivo database for categorization, analysis and storage. Split into Manchester messages and ones from the Saintslist, the collection was comprised of 87 pages of text. The coding entailed organizing the data from 42 Manchester messages and 61 Southampton messages. This data was entered into Nvivo and coded (categorized) by the general themes or activity of the literature (globalization, identity, the Internet, and fandom). From this point, data was coded further as themes emerged and specific categorizations of data could be made. Upon completion of this process, sub-categories resulted under each of the more general themes listed above (these were the steps in the document analysis). No coding was exclusive in the sense that some data (a portion or a message) was coded by more than one theme where appropriate. In the final collection of organized data, the following themes were established and many can be recognized in their more simplified headings that are subsequently presented in the discussion chapter:

Identity:

- Cosmopolitan**
- Consumer**
- Saints as underdog**
- Southampton as local/regional identity**

Globalization:

- Manchester United supporter locality indicators**
- Southampton supporter locality indicators,**
- Manchester opinions on foreign supporters**

Southampton opinions on foreign supporters
 Conflicts between the local and the global
 Opinions and observations on the commercialization of football
 Club corporate strategy
 Globalization of the local (Southampton)

Internet:

Utilization

Fandom:

Origins of support for Manchester
 Origins of support for Southampton
 Passion for football
 Mediated forms of support
 Alternative forms of fandom.

Between these two techniques or analytical tools, the purpose of data collection and analysis was to find evidence of the Internet acting upon sportified identities. How the 'local' and the 'global' involved themselves in this process was an additional purpose of data collection. Together, findings of the collection form the comparative case that is discussed in the ensuing chapter.

It is imperative to understand that this discussion and the conclusions drawn from the data are not generalizable to the entire population of the lists. These results merely reflect the trends and sentiments of the 73 individuals who participated in the study (roughly 3% of the entire list population) and those who commented on issues pertinent to the research issues over the past year. This study has only examined the identities of those who associate with English professional football. It should not be taken for granted that all sports or sports communities have such a vibrant online presence as English football does.

The particular lists that were selected were chosen because of their large number of participants and the standardization in protocol and accessibility each list provided in being administered by the same source. The 73 respondents and

those listees whose messages met the established criteria thus represent only those who volunteered to participate and were likely more connected to the lists as a source of both community and a sportified social identity.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Questionnaire

Limited and conflicting research has been done on the average response rate of e-mail based surveys (see Claycomb, Porter & Martin, 2000, Cook, Heath & Thompson, 2000, Sheehan, 2001, and Sheehan & Hoy 1999). Work by Sheehan (2001) found there to be five influences to response rates: the year the study was undertaken, the number of questions in the surveys, the number of pre-notification contacts, the number of follow-up contacts and survey topic salience. The author also found that response rates to e-mail surveys have significantly decreased since 1986. These are elements that should be considered while reviewing the following results. Given the limited expectations of Internet-based surveys and their high level of unpredictability, the low response rates of 1.8% and 5.7% were not unexpected.

Each email forum provides listees with a sense of place related to the fan experience that they are either trying to find or re-capture. As one listee puts it:

It's bang up to date with all the news and gossip, and it provides the genuine flavour of standing in a pub chatting about the team with one's mates. (SSSY0301).²

² First letter in code indicates that the message is from either a Southampton listee (S) or from a Manchester listee (M). The second indicator is either (S) for survey or (VPO) for virtual participant observation. The final two letters represent the listees initials followed by the month and year the message or survey was received.

These different list uses are identifiable through an interpretation of messages and survey questions that attempt to deconstruct the dynamic between geography, fandom, identification and interactive digital media. In order to assess the value and insight of the two case studies, a brief preliminary presentation of the questionnaire responses will be given. This will establish some basic trends from the list responses that will serve to launch a more detailed inquiry into the themes and issues that this study considers. The inquiry will be illustrated and complimented by direct text from list messages and survey responses.

Locality in the context of the study

Question one was directly aimed at ascertaining the residence of the list user and in so doing discern whether or not this geography was related to supporting their respective club. In obtaining this information, a key comparison between the two can be made that sheds light on the possible differences in fandom, identification and characteristics of list community. The breakdown of listee locality found in the responses to question number one are as follows:

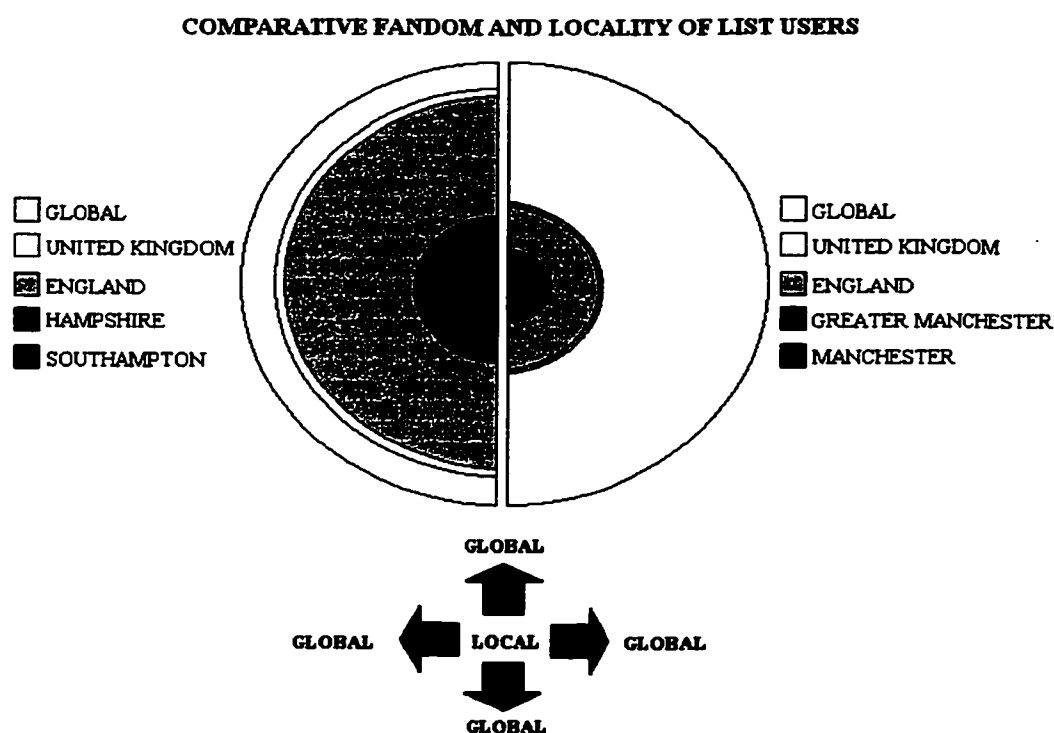
Table 1		
Locality of listees		
Listee's residence	Southampton N=47	Manchester N=26
City	20%	8%
Region*	9%	4%
England	48%	11%
United Kingdom other than England	6%	0%
Global	17%	77%

*The Southampton region is represented by the County of Hampshire while Greater Manchester accounts for the region of Manchester.

These statistics indicate that there is a vast disparity between the number of listees maintaining their fandom from abroad on each list. In fact more than

three times as many responding Manchester listee supporters reside outside of England as do Southampton listees. While a majority of each list's respondents had a connection to the club's city, a whopping 77% of the Manchester list's respondents were from abroad. That is, they access the list from outside of the United Kingdom. This huge majority contrasts starkly with the mere 17% of listees on the Saintslist who identified themselves as living outside the U.K. These figures conform with expected results. These proportionate differences in the locality of listees are represented by the following figure.

Figure 2.



Just as telling as the statistics representing fans abroad are the 8% versus 20% of listees that reside in the actual cities that their teams play in. At first

glance, these differences could be attributable to the sheer global popularity of Manchester United, and accordingly a larger global presence would be expected. Upon further examination however, one sees amongst the distribution of fan geography between the two clubs a colossal difference between the numbers of foreign Internet fans in particular. Whannel (1998) has asserted that the importance of localism to football fandom is in decline. Patterns of support that follow the traditional notion of supporting one's local side are in remission due to the challenge of "media-led" (p. 25) major names. The Liverpools and Manchester Uniteds have established national character, and those who remain tied to traditional support for community clubs label and denounce big club supporters as band-wagoners or glory-hunters. Whannel refers to this tension as being between a situated localized identity, and a mediated symbolic identity, which "lacks any local embeddedness" (p. 25). The comparison between the number of foreign fans for each club supports Whannel's argument and will be further illustrated by the data that follows.

The second question sought the nature of one's association with the city itself. Did the listee have any relevant link to the respective city that makes their support of the club seem logical? Specifically, as Manchester United is to represent the 'global' identity in this study, associating itself with elements of cosmopolitanism and commercialism, it was expected that the proportion of listees from outside of Manchester would be higher than those of the equivalent 'local' representation in the study. This position was confirmed, although not resoundingly so, by the 35% of the United list respondents that had no

association with the city through either birth, family or other significant link.

This percentage compares to only 16% of Saintslist respondents who claimed no significant link to the city of Southampton (See Table 2).

Table 2		
Presence of relevant link to club's city		
Link	Southampton N=45	Manchester N=26
Yes	84%	65%
No	16%	35%

These figures were a result of considering a 'relevant link' as one that tied the listee to the city through either, birth, schooling, family relations or one's current place of residence.

Modes of fandom and list use frequency

Questions three, four, five and seven (see Appendix A) all pertain to why the listee uses the forum, how often and the importance of this medium versus other modes of mediated fandom. These questions also examine what other ways listees follow their clubs other than through the lists. Let us examine first what other forms of mediated fandom compete with the two lists for the attention of the listees (question number three in the questionnaire).

Collectively, both lists named almost exactly the same sources of how they keep apprised of club news and 'keep in touch' with the club. Attending actual matches obviously is the most direct form of support and this was listed by virtually every respondent who claimed to live in either the county of Hampshire or Greater Manchester. Table 3 outlines other sources of team information that each group of listees utilized especially those outside Southampton or Manchester.

Table 3	
Alternative sources of fandom	
Southampton	Manchester
-football magazines & newspapers	-football magazines & newspapers
-televised football	-televised football
-radio broadcasts of matches	-radio broadcasts of matches
-memberships in supporter clubs	-memberships in supporter clubs
-BBC world service radio	-BBC world service radio
-teletext & ceefax (TV based text)	-teletext & ceefax (TV based text)
-collecting match programs	-collecting match programs
-telephone conversations home	-telephone conversations home
-Internet radio broadcasts	-Internet radio broadcasts
-online chat rooms	-online chat rooms
-vidi-printer (online service that scrolls	-vidi-printer (online service that scrolls

scores as they happen)	scores as they happen) -visiting local pub for football conversation -visiting local 'Red Café' or Manchester United mega-store
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Of note are the mediated sources of club interaction that were web-based other than the lists. These included Internet radio broadcasts of matches through club web sites, online chat-rooms, and the "vidi-printer," a device that scrolls scores and details constantly to a web page on match days.

Mediations exclusive to the Manchester listees included visiting the local pub on match-days where other 'reds' would likely congregate to socialize and watch the match on cable or satellite television, and visiting the local 'Red Café' or the 'United mega-store,' (two International club initiatives that revolve around the United theme) for the latest assortment of club goods. A source similar to the second of these sources is unavailable to Southampton fans as their club does not share the same international appeal and thus has no such retail presence abroad.

Given the range of options for following one's club from abroad (dependent on location and subsequent access to these goods), what reasons do listees give for devoting their time to their respective lists? Table 4 presents the reasons given by questionnaire respondents.

Table 4 Reasons for Internet use regarding fandom	
Southampton	Manchester
-access team statistics -purchase match tickets from other listees -arrange transport to away matches -participate in discussion about club -express opinions on club matters -access rumours and gossip -access match broadcast schedule - arrange list team training sessions -facilitate conversation -foster and maintain friendships -arranged booking of group seating -Internet saints sponsorship matters -listee insight	-access team statistics -purchase match tickets from other listees -arrange transport to away matches -participate in discussion about club -express opinions on club matters -access rumours and gossip -access match broadcast schedule -access match photos from the lists web site -information on new club merchandise

Responses to question four suggest that both groups have similar reasons for accessing the list, all of which are unique to the online technology. There were a few reasons given however that were exclusive to Saintslist. The list arranges training sessions and events for the local listees who compete on behalf

of the list against rival team lists, and a number of listees stated that the list facilitates general conversation about the teams and fosters friendships. Saintslist respondents additionally identified the organization of booking group seats for matches and collecting funds for the sponsorship of a squad member (duly listed in match programs as Internet Saints) as additional reasons for using the list.

A number of Southampton listees also identified some of the insight of listees as being a reason for logging on. A number of listees report on matches at great length (5-10 pages) immediately following home games. This attention to detail is complimented by those who go to the trouble of posting goals, scorers and general team news as it happens during matches where they have access to the game but do so to provide listees afar the same sense of action and simultaneity ('being there'). Lastly, a number of listees are privy to special information and the open forum of the list invites their participation. One particular listee, who lives nearby the Saints training ground, regularly attends practices that are open to the public and then informs the list of who appears injured, what formations they were using (an indicator of the upcoming weekend's tactics) and other noteworthy events. Also in the days leading up to a match, a Southampton airport employee posts to the list news of who is and who is not travelling to away games. Again, this information acting as an indicator of upcoming strategy. The only unique reasons for accessing the list for Manchester users that were noted were the ability to access match photos from the lists web site and to find out about new club merchandise.

Other significant data drawn from the questionnaire had to do with the frequency of list use. More than 50% of respondents from both lists indicated the online forums were their primary source of interaction (see Table 5.), so just how consuming is this interaction, and consequently this Internet-based fandom? Results from the 73 respondents to question number five are found below.

Table 5. Frequency of list use		
Frequency	Southampton N=47	Manchester N=26
Multiple times a day	17%	12%
Daily	78%	77%
2-5 times a week	5%	11%
Weekly	0%	0%

These numbers indicate that listees are impressively committed to their respective lists. Interestingly, both lists have an almost identical balance between daily and sporadic users despite whatever geographical or functional attributes the lists may have. Another possible explanation for these sets of statistics is that it is possible that those who responded to the survey are the more frequent users of the lists.

With a broad range of football information available to listees in one central source, it seemed important to question whether or not the list was the

primary source of interaction with the club for listees. Not surprisingly, the importance members of both lists attributed to the forum depended on their proximity to the city.

Table 6		
List as main source of club interaction		
Response	Southampton N=47	Manchester N=24
Yes	51%	62.5%
No	49%	37.5%

As the above table indicates, 62.5% of the Manchester listees indicated that the list was their primary source of interaction, while Saintslist members were nearly evenly split with 24 of 47 indicating this was the case. These numbers are not perfectly reflective of the balance between 'home' and 'away' listees who would be expected to utilize the list more so from afar, however a number of points arise from this. Firstly, the international popularity of Manchester United facilitates a greater number of options, be they through the popular press or fan based communications to keep in touch with the club. This is especially the case with televised matches; the majority of those who did not see the list as their primary source of interaction identified live matches or television. Whether through pay-per-view opportunities or the fact that the club competes in more international tournaments (Cup Winners Cup, UEFA, World Club Championship, etc.),

Manchester United is televised more often. Secondly, a far greater number of Saintslistees (83% versus 23%) reside in the United Kingdom, meaning the clubs are in the press on a day-to-day basis and their ability to realistically attend matches is increased significantly.

Listees conceptualizations of identity

Listees of both clubs who responded to the questionnaire were asked for their thoughts about their identification with the club. Question six was rudimentary in the sense that it only asked if the listee identified with the club, and if so how? The simplicity of how this question was asked diminished the possible complexity of responses. However, despite the complicated nature of identity as outlined in the literature review, responses were revealing. From the Manchester list, the majority of those that lived close to Old Trafford and are thus theoretically able to attend live matches often believed that indeed they identified with the club. These respondents cited the heroes of their youth, family tradition in following the club and living in the city as reasons for identifying with the club. For those fans that lived abroad however, these reasons were less prevalent. Although a number of fans cited civic identity as logic behind their fandom, the majority of global fans without a relevant link to the city or club seemed to admire the success of the club and how they play the 'beautiful game,' referring to the classic and skillful way that they believe Manchester United play football.

Table 7	
Reasons cited for identification with team	
Southampton	Manchester
-civic identity	-civic identity
-sympathy with team's	-family ties and tradition
underdog status	-admiration of success

Reasons for identifying with one's club appear to be quite personal and subjective. Where no civic link was evident reasons varied from respondent to respondent. The list above represents only common responses given to question six. On the Saintslist side, it was apparent from responses regarding identification that the list served to accentuate existing team-related identities that revolved around two central themes: civic identity and the club as an underdog. This mentality of identifying with an 'underdog' was consistent throughout both messages and surveys. Between these two sources of identification, a virtual community exists where its' members feel a sense of belonging, not through success, prestige or strictly an association with the city, but rather a combined sense of pride in the area and the struggles the club has been through.

I identify with the Saints because they represent Southampton and I am proud of my heritage and background. It is easy to support a winning side, but to go through what we, as Saints fans, go through most seasons is what earns respect and recognition. (SSJP0301).

This sort of sentiment was further shared by a number of listees who paralleled their own lives with the fortunes of the club:

Their survival in the Premier League against all odds, being a smaller club, lesser wage bills, nominal transfer kitty, echoes much of my own life, as far as trying to survive by hard work in the real world. (SSCS0301).

These two attributes of the Saintslist lead me to believe that the list acts much more than the preceding list as a collective virtual community based on commonalities that construct identity more so than a list that acts primarily as a medium for news about the team. With 84% of the list claiming a significant tie to the city of Southampton and a full 83% living in the United Kingdom itself (see tables 1 and 2.), how the club, and the list in particular impacts one's identity is more clear. "Collective identities emphasize how people are similar to each other, what they are believed to have in common. People must have something socially significant in common - no matter how vague, apparently unimportant, or apparently illusory – before we can talk about their membership of a collectivity" (Jenkins, 1996, p. 80). The list appears to be a central focus around which members create a collective identity. Referring to Saintslist as a socially significant collectivity seems fair, given the importance members attribute to the medium:

If the list didn't exist my life would be noticeably poorer. (SSSY0301).

There's no doubt that I'm much more attached to the club as a result of Saintslist. (SSPC0301).

I sometimes feel that the list makes overseas listees seem closer to the club than the regular season ticket holders who aren't on the list. (SSDB0301).

These comments are not unique to the Southampton list but the importance attributed to the medium is greater here because of the larger number of ex-residents who find the list a way to additionally maintain their own civic identity. It is these listees abroad on both lists that claim to identify with the team on historical and civic grounds. The idea that the list acts as a community is vivid on both lists but evidence suggests that this role has diminished on the Manchester list as membership has augmented. This increase has included a rise in the number of global fans who have no civic or ancestral relationships to the city, which appear to be the most common traits in sustaining a sense of community through the list.

From its inception, [the list] it was a discussion group with people expressing their views. In recent times it seems to just have multiple posts and reports of news articles from soccernet [a football website] and newspapers. (MSJD0301).

If it is the case that popularity and success have lead to the demise of community on the list, then is the same to happen should Saints ever achieve such heights? Although Saints are having a good season thus far for the 2000-2001 season, they have not won any significant honours in nearly 25 years. The fear that the medium may gradually lose its community character exists regardless:

The list used to mean something, being on the Internet and being a Saints fan made you feel like being a part of something special, being party to something few others could do, some of us actually still feel this way about things, even though we know deep in our hearts that this list is not what it

was 2-3 years ago, we don't have as much fun as we used to because the sheer size of the list prohibits us from being that way anymore. (SSJDo301).

As much a part of losing this sense of this community to the globalization of English football and the resulting increase in supporters, especially abroad, is the augmentation of Internet users worldwide.

Summary of questionnaire results

The unfortunate imbalance between the number of returned surveys from each list was at first a concern. After further consideration however, I believe the response rates to be somewhat revealing. Although only 47 list members of a possible 816 from Saintslist (5.7%), and 26 of 1417 from the United list (1.8%) responded, these numbers can be interpreted as indicative of the trends toward community versus the primarily informative function of each respective list. Rather, the higher participation rates of Southampton supporters may well illustrate the interaction and conversational components of the list that were cited by respondents when asked why they used the lists. Without generalizing about the lists as a whole, the very number of listees who participated in the study itself is perhaps indicative of the amount of interaction on each list, or at the very least the degree of interest listees have in the messages posted.

Fans of both Manchester United and Southampton Football Club similarly perceive their use of e-mail lists as a tool for gathering information. The nature of this informative function however, differs greatly from listee to listee as the relationship between the list and the listee varies greatly depending on the

importance one attributes to the list in sustaining, or in part developing one's sense of identity. Simply put, to some, the list serves strictly as a medium for collecting news and information about the club. For others however, the list acts as a medium through which processes of identification, symbolic community and social interaction occur. This is accomplished in the way that the lists act as a community for those abroad who are unable to otherwise incorporate the team into their day-to-day social world.

The most important results of the questionnaires were the results in the geographical distribution of listees, and their sentiments regarding identification with their respective club. The globalized nature of both lists (especially United's) and the characteristics of community and civic identity evident (especially on Saintslist) will therefore constitute the main themes re-visited and given a more in-depth explication in the ensuing section.

Virtual participant observation

General inferences can be made about the balance of information posted to each respective list from the document analysis herein. As mentioned, the Manchester United list tended to be less original opinion, discussion and content in general, in favour of 'copy and pasted' newspaper, web site and press release stories. This format illustrates precisely what Shields (1997) has referred to as "a sort of pastiche wherein new media refers to old, and vice versa" (p. 127). The Manchester list often uses the new media technology of the list to merely revert to the content of traditional media by pasting newspaper stories onto the email list

forum. The majority of Southampton's list postings follow what is referred to on both lists as 'threads.' That is one, or a few posts may stimulate a series of messages each responding to the previous stream. These sorts of thematic messages are the area from which the majority of identity-related messages were drawn. For instance, when one fan sent out the following to the Manchester list,

Don't get me wrong, I have nothing against overseas/foreign fans supporting United. I think it's great that we have such a worldwide presence/fanbase, and it's excellent to get such diverse opinions on lists like this, but could somebody explain the attraction to me? Say you live in Java or Vietnam or somewhere, and you've never been to Britain, let alone Manchester, nor are you ever likely to and you'll probably never see United play, except maybe on the TV. What makes you want to support them? How did you hear of them? How can you get passionate about a team that you only see on the TV and decided to support because.....? I mean, I know that there's a football league in Japan. I have no idea what most of their teams are called, and even if I decided to follow the one whose name I had heard on the news, I could never get that interested if they were playing 10,000 miles away. So, basically, what I'm curious to know is this: How did you decide to follow Manchester United? When did you decide to follow Manchester United? Do you also support a local team that you go to watch and support United as your global team? Do you cry if they win, cry if they lose? (MVPOSR1100).

Returning to the nature of threads, this one led to a series of postings. In casually seeking information about useful themes (locality, civic links, and mediated fandom) these threads were useful anecdotes, for instance:

I live in the USA now but was originally from Guyana, formerly British Guyana in South America. My dad was a reds fan and I guess I inherited his love of the game and the team. I remember listening to sports roundup on Saturday via short-wave radio and reading the match reports on Sunday. It actually became harder to keep in touch once I came to the USA in 1972 since football (association football) was virtually non-existent beyond the college level. I sort of lost touch over the years until cable TV became more commonplace, as well as the Internet. Now when I read match reports, etc., from UK reds, I can remember the times with my dad

years ago. Sadly, he died in 1987 and was unable to get back in touch with Man. Utd. in the way that I have been able to do. I did visit England in August 1995 but was unable to do any prior planning to try and see the reds live. My dream is to one day see my beloved Man. Utd. at the Theatre of Dreams. (MVPOBI1100).

What was curious about this particular thread was that nearly all those who replied had significant links to the club and thus had an interesting story to tell. This trend is not reflective of the Manchester list questionnaire respondents, 35% of whom had no link to speak of. It appears that again those most passionate about football and its camaraderie aspects are possibly the fans that responded to the survey. Not only did they take the time to respond when a simple 'delete' could have spared them a few minutes, but the overwhelming majority sought the results of these surveys. This further underscores the importance of using the observational approach as a data collection method so that a balance of list contributors was achieved. While some of the same individual's whose messages were selected participated in the survey, a larger number did not, especially on the Manchester United side.

Returning to the messages as a whole, a wide variety of messages met the established criteria. The following discussion uses excerpts from both list collections to both illustrate and challenge the literature, and to further delve into how the Internet effects sport-related identities. The themes that emerged during the coding process in conjunction with the focus of the questionnaire, established the discussion sections that follow.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Identity

Sociological research and football fan autobiographies have emphasized that football fandom is centrally bound up with issues of identity formation. Because fans express their identities and self-understandings through the club, and therefore, “simultaneously define themselves in terms of football, their attachment to the football club is peculiarly strong” (King, 1997, p. 236). Sugden and Tomlinson (1998) explicitly state that, “the dominance of globalized media industries have not eroded the capacity of football to express complex layers of identity” (pp. 172-173). I would agree with this statement as whatever commercial and internationalized factors may influence identities differently, football still is held as a powerful symbol for those who associate with it. As even mediated football has a strong influence in forming and shifting individual’s identities, it is the intention of this discussion to explore how mediated fandom, through the lists in particular effect these manifestations.

Lee (1998) has made a revealing note about the nature of football and identity in the English example. He contends that for those on the lower end of the income scale, the opportunity to access football as a source of collective identity and community is lessened. Although Lee’s observation refers to the ability to attend live matches and consume related commercial and media products, I would argue that this is also the case with Internet mediated football. Access to modern computer facilities and the ability to access these facilities on a

daily basis implies that the listee falls into a certain economic status (especially given that between the two lists combined, 93% of responding listees accessed the list at least once a day). Consequently, it would appear that the lists perpetuate existing class differences in regards to accessing football fandom for the composition of one's identity.

Recognizing that access to football as a cultural identifier is contingent upon class status leads us to a discussion of the number of ways that listees appear to identify with football specifically through the Internet and how this process takes place. Through the themes that emerged from list postings about identity and from questionnaire responses, I've discerned 'consumer identities' and 'cosmopolitan identities' as being unique to the Manchester list, while 'local-regional identification,' and the identification of Southampton as an 'underdog club' as being vital to the identities of Southampton Internet supporters.

These categorizations were derived via the coding of data during the simultaneous collection and analysis phases outlined in chapter three. Specifically, from these categorized themes consumer, cosmopolitan, underdog, and local/regional identity were identified as the unique forms of identification that listees were found to manifest through the Internet. These are the forms of identity that are both manipulated and sustained by the online lists.

Consumer identities

King (1997) has argued that throughout the 1990's, it has been "free market principles that have been the framing orthodoxy for the reform of football" (p. 225). In considering the shift of traditional to new fandom, King envisions the fan as a customer who is now subject to the profit-making motives of clubs and their capacity to exploit the monetary potential that fans inherently provide. Cannon and Hamil (2000b) estimate that the traditional (match attending) English club supporter spends in excess of £23 000 - £24 000 (\$50-\$52 000 Canadian) over the span of their lifetime on the club (p. 38).

Considering these figures represent 'primary' supporters (those who attend matches and consequently whose numbers are limited), it is startling to contemplate the number of ways the sport can be commodified to maximize profits amongst the larger number of 'secondary' supporters (those who follow sport in mediated forms) and in so doing impact their identifications with football in a consumerist way (see pg. 117 for more).

As the concept of 'post-fandom' suggests, many consumer-fans are aware of their changing role in football from fan to consumer. Given the intense passion and involvement that list participation entails, it is not surprising then that many posts should address this change:

I am no longer a supporter of Saints, as much as I am a consumer of Premier League football (Southampton branch). It's almost like football was sold off from us under us in the same way at BT [British Telecom], BP [British Petroleum], British Gas et al...no points to make as such, just a general whine. Fuck "soccer is a business" – this used to be a game the supporters owned. Now we just watch it. (SVPOMM0101).

Lee has referred to the commercialization of English football and its' relationship to players and supporters using adjectives such as "sanitized" and "anaesthetized" (1998, p. 48). These descriptors are meant to define the shift from football's ability to service community and foster collective identity toward a situation whereby the fan experience can be reduced to a series of transactions and individual consumptive actions. Although it is apparent that football remains a powerful identifier, this is a difficult time for those who have associated themselves with football via more traditional forms of affiliation that are not reliant on consumerism and commercialism.

The lists have both sorts of fans, those traditionally identifying with the squad, and those attracted to the gloss and flash that is the commercial side of the game. As football has long provided individuals with an important source of individual, collective and civic pride, what now when the explosion of merchandizing and commodification creates a case of the values of capitalism colliding with the values of traditional football. As fans genuinely believe that they can support their club through mediated forms such as the Internet just as effectively as by 'being there,' I believe that an increase in the homogeneity of fandom is occurring that is more reliant on mediated versions of the game than on the action itself.

Bourke (2000) has outlined how the commodification and commercialization of English football has had the effect of individuals wishing to be identified with a given club, not because of its "working class tradition, but because it is fashionable in a consumerist way which offers a connection to the

authentic" (p. 174). It is this new sense of association that has seen the shift from supporter as fan, to supporter as consumer. The year 1997 was somewhat of a symbolic turning point for Manchester United in particular when they removed the words "Football Club" from the teams crest (Lee, 2000). For traditionalists, this move was indicative of the branding of the club and the crest now resembling a corporate logo. This same year, United announced the plans for today's MUTV which sees the cable and satellite broadcast of anything and everything United (other than matches). Estimates have been made that Manchester United properties could personally fetch as much as £70 million (\$151 million Canadian) a year within three years of the introduction of pay-per-view television services (Lee, 1998).

To illustrate the commercial potential and dominance of the club and to see how easily fans can become wrapped in the club's corporate persona, consider this: Manchester United generated £88 million (\$190 million Canadian) in 1997 which was highest in the Premiership and ten times the revenues of Southampton, the league's lowest income earner (Szymanski, 2000, p. 199). Interestingly, fans with civic links appear to acknowledge the financial benefits of the financial boom to the league, yet at the same time yearn for simpler times:

I have to accept like everyone else the way the game has changed, and everything else that goes with it. Soccer is a cultural industry, it claims special pleading using this criteria when it suits itself. If soccer is so soulless, I suppose you'd better support the 'best product,' Man United after all they're top of this and that, so they must be. (SVPOJDo101).

Interestingly, the new marketing of the game has even reverted to commodifying the history of the game that many traditionalists yearn for a return to. Giulianotti notes that alienated fans may turn to the simulated “authenticity of the past” (1999, p. 104) by purchasing classic football kit replicas that have no sponsors attached. This idea of buying into football’s cultural heritage is most interesting in the way that the game has not completely lost touch with its roots, as even marketers recognize the power of traditional affiliation and the history of the game. All of these observations and anecdotes are meant to emphasise the complexity in fashioning football-based identities at a time when even the game is unsure of itself. The way that the Internet further complicates matters by mixing information and opinions on the club from a multiplicity of vantage points (including commercial ones) is also an essential appreciation.

This said, the influence of consumerism on identification is by no means absolute. There are many football supporters, including Manchester listees who identify with the club on traditional grounds and will continue to form their identity around these facets of history, custom and convention:

After supporting a side like United since I was born you really grow to feel a part of the club. To such an extent that whenever anybody criticizes United [for its commercial orientation] you take it as a personal attack. (MSSBP0301).

Arundel and Roche (1998) have argued that despite the emerging influence of the mediasport complex on identity formulation, local particularities will continue to operate, only subject to the power of the media industry. I concur with this argument given that there will always be those who have

identified with their club well before the overt commercialization of the game in the early 1990's. The diversity of associations and histories present on the lists prompt a consideration that the future of football fandom in general will be a varied collection of fan scenarios. This mélange will continue to include those who identify with a club on geographical grounds. Associations may also be made as a result of cosmopolitan aspirations.

Cosmopolitan identities

“Globalization automatically elicits thoughts of global flows and the erosion of barriers to trade, communication and other international processes. This system also sees however, the emergence of augmented social networks that entail flows of meaning and people, this is the concept of cosmopolitanism.” (Hannerz, 1990, p. 238).

Hannerz' definition of cosmopolitanism suits this study in the way that it captures the idea that as well as making the world a smaller place to do business, globalization has the affect of bringing individuals together and their individual experiences. In the case of the lists, this 'bringing together' is from evidently desultory territories. Upon further examination we see how the Internet-based football lists fit into these processes. Hannerz' (1990) cogitation of the nature of cosmopolitanism asserts that groups and individuals who regard themselves as cosmopolitan wish to immerse themselves in other cultures. They desire to participate in this culture so as not to lead a uniform existence within their own local experience. Those listees who follow the events of a foreign club seemingly arbitrarily in fact may be using professional sport as a way of living beyond their

own local existence. Another possible reason for the immersion into this particular popular culture comes from the notoriety of Manchester United itself:

All over the world, and to many in England, Manchester means football. Organized games, of which the most pervasive is soccer or association football, represent to many people in industrial and urban societies a focus for self-expression, ambition and loyalty (Allison, 1978, p. 203).

Examples of these suppositions from the lists include those who attach themselves to Manchester United on grounds that football 'at home' is not the same. This suggests that the passion is not about football per se (as it's available live almost everywhere), but rather the Internet mediated association is grounded on the popularity and global appeal of the club, in conjunction with an ambition to be a part of the experience:

Local teams here in Malaysia are not worth watching if you watch the Premier League, or other European Leagues. The pace isn't there. (MVPORC1200).

This listee's comment, as well as proposing that quality of the football is a more important factor than where it takes place, indicates that mediated football, and the image it projects is potentially just as powerful as blood ties to one's locality and subsequently its' team. As the section on local-global conflicts attempted to convey, just because an individual lives in a city and is a football fan, due to the potent power of a football club's image (facilitated in part by the Internet), a fan is not bound to support their 'local' side. An example from the list includes the following Manchester United fan who will go to the effort of following 'his' club

online everyday, but not bother to attend his country's own match when the opportunity presents:

When Canada played a couple of international matches on a pitch a couple of miles from my home recently, I didn't attend or watch on television. Usually I have to be playing myself or watching Manchester United to find a match interesting. (MVPOBS1100).

The concept forwarded by Hannerz regarding cosmopolitanism that is most relevant to the lists concerns exiles, expatriates etc. Hannerz (1990) suggests that these individuals maintain a cosmopolitan identity, and I see no more symbolic way of maintaining this identity than through (Internet) mediated football. Hannerz sees those living abroad in their 'surrogate home' as surrounding themselves with compatriots in order to create a sense of home despite their living afar. As he explicitly states that exiles can be cosmopolitans, perhaps then football is one way that a sense of home is created. Both lists exemplify this 'sense of home' to the extent that the virtual community has developed to a point where listees can boast about their support for the club in light of the geographical obstacles they face:

I am moving from South Africa to Ghana in a few weeks time. This obviously is a blatant attempt on my part to be the listee who logs on from the greatest number of countries. I will have been at six (U.K., Poland, Switzerland, Ivory Coast, South Africa and Ghana). Are there any listees out there in Ghana or West Africa? It's a long shot, but then I never thought I would discover 20 Saints supporters in Johannesburg. (SVPOCT0101).

As suggested earlier and juxtaposing this idea, it may too be possible to harness football for the purposes of cosmopolitanism for those who are not exiles,

but rather wish to engross themselves in another culture. This possibility is enhanced by the immediacy of the Internet, which makes possible a sense of inclusion for those who seek this 'experience of the other.' Consequently mediated versions of football, especially the Internet, serve to transform the nature of identifying with a given football club. Arundel and Roche (1998) regard the identity of those associated with Manchester United in particular as being one not fixed on a particular place. Rather, their "place identity" (p. 84) remains strong wherever their matches are played or broadcast to. The identity is re-symbolized and reproduced through organized global media to effectively displace locality and re-spatialize the associated identity and related meaning of the club. Consequently, an identity that is formed around Manchester United is grounded more in commercialism and cosmopolitanism than it is in a given locale.

To return to McLuhan's reference to the compression of global society through communications technology, Hannerz believes that such a compression, or "implosion" as he refers to it, may make everyone a little more cosmopolitan (p. 249). It would appear that the Internet is serving to do just that in the case of English football fans that live abroad as their individual identities are impacted by the transitory nature of cosmopolitanism and the influence of international fans in general.

The Internet is an effective medium for inculcating these cosmopolitan identities, as its global and penetrating reach is so effective. The football lists appear to foster the type of community that Hannerz refers to when he remarks

that “cosmopolitanism in a stricter sense includes a stance toward diversity itself, toward the coexistence of cultures in the individual experience” (1990, p. 239.). Another way that these lists communicate a cosmopolitan identity is by the fact that many online discussions revolve around the players who are trans-national labourers themselves. Jarvie (1993) argues that regulations concerning the flow of footballers in Europe contributes to the reproduction of local, regional and national identities rather than toward European integration (p. 72). This may be so, but in raising awareness of other nations and states through online discussion about these players, the Internet promotes cosmopolitan identification.

Saints as underdog

The first unique identifying characteristic of the Southampton list concerns the club’s Internet fans sensing that their team is ignored, under-valued and under-estimated by other fans and the national media. Although these elements appear to be an inferiority complex, in reality this underdog status is something that listees take great pride in:

Although my connections to the area are fairly tenuous I quickly grew a strong bond with the Saints. I suppose there is something about supporting the underdog that appeals to me. When I was a kid I was a Man Utd fan but as soon as they began to win things I realized I had no emotional connection with them whatsoever. I get more genuine pleasure from Saints winning away [from home] than I did when Utd won a trophy. (SSWPO301).

Jarvie has written that “sport itself often provides a uniquely effective medium for inculcating [feelings]; it provides a forum of symbolic action...” (1993, p. 74). I would posit that in the case of Southampton Football club, and

especially in reference to its listees, sport inculcates defensive feelings about being an underdog. Listees acknowledge that a large part of this underdog label derives from the lack of media attention that the team receives as a result of it being perennially unsuccessful and lacking a large supporter-base (and consequently a large media market base). Listees however, do not hesitate in venting their frustration over this fact:

In Sky's review of Saturday's action, they gave their opinion on the Saints vs. Chelsea game. Guess what? All of the Saints goals were down to Chelsea errors and a mistake by the ref. Both Chelsea goals were down to good play. I am fucking sick of this biased, disrespectful crap we have to put up with every time Saints get a result. You know it wasn't Saints who won the game...oh no, it was Chelsea who lost it. (SVPOMG1200).

As a result, there is a sense that being consistently ignored by the press has resulted in a stronger sense of accord and community amongst Saints fans, especially online where frustrations are easily vented:

Football, I find is often irrational. There doesn't always seem to be a logical reason to explain behavior or feelings. Hard to say to what extent, but often media coverage, or lack of it, reinforces the feeling of belonging/support. (SMPB0301).

This belief that Saints are oppressed by the media brings the list much closer together in that they honestly feel hard done by and collectively maintain a community that shares this feeling:

Sky probably wished we'd been relegated years ago so they could replace us with a "bigger club" full of plastic fans. Ask yourself this, why are there only ever negative rumours in the national press about Saints? Because they don't give a shit about us. (SVPOKLo101).

Although derisive and cynical comments like the one above will continue to be a part of the Saintslist so long as disappointment is a part of the club's personality, identifying through the club as an underdog seems actually to be a positive experience. This interpretation of being an underdog as a positive experience stems from individual listees defining themselves in accordance with the team's struggles. Many Southampton listees identify with the club for other reasons, but believe that the club's image and failures makes them a more 'realistic' identifier worthy of their devotion, as success and respect, just as in their own lives, does not come easily:

I certainly feel that the club profile of perennial strugglers with a fairy tale ending fits me well as opposed to supporting one of the top teams. This decision I will defend in any football discussion so you might say that I do identify with the profile of the club. (SSLG0301).

These underdog sentiments are almost always expressed in conjunction with a more solid form of identification such as one based on citizenship. The following listee illustrates this fused identity and directs this discussion toward civic identity on the lists:

I identify with them [Southampton] because they are my hometown team. They are good to support generally as they build you up and just as you think they are becoming a good team they knock you down again. It is a total love-hate relationship and I must say can be very exciting and never boring. We are always the underdog whatever game we play and I like that to be honest because no one expects much and everyone expects to beat us and thinks we are an easy touch. (SSPJ0301).

Saints as a local civic and regional identity

During the era of working class football and traditional fandom, directors, players and fans alike did not consider the football club a private, profit-making domain. Rather, it was envisioned “as a public institution whose purpose was the provision of an inclusive public good to the working population” (King, 1997, p. 235). It is from these roots that supporters have derived their sense of collectivity with the team. Referring to the club as “we” and the team as “ours” are signs that identification with the sport in general is a deeply rooted one. These deep roots can be found in the history of club supporters most of whom were raised with the idea that it is only normal to support your home club. As an overwhelming 84% (see chapter four) of Southampton listee respondents indicated they had a link to the city (most through birth or education), it is really only the outstanding 16% that defy the traditional logic of sports support. These individuals (and their 35% counterparts on the Manchester list) identify with the team in different ways including those already mentioned (consumer appeal etc.).

“Inclusive concepts of local community can no longer easily hold together the diverse range of identities in play in most urban areas. In the sporting context, the restructuring of class composition and decline of traditional working class community cohesion served to weaken the intense ties of localism that bound boys and men to the local football team” (Whannel, 1998, p. 25).

Whannel’s statement captures some of the difficulties in explaining fans of other clubs who live in Southampton and similarly those who support a club outside of their own country. However what it does not account for, are the majority of

listees who did single out their geographical ties to the city of Southampton as the most important reason behind their attachment to the club:

I identify very strongly with the team/club. I started going to games when I was six (to put in context 36 years ago). I've now lived away from Southampton more years than lived there so, for me, the team/club represents my roots and are my emotional link back to where I'm from. (SSRBo301).

Jarvie has noted that “sport itself, whether it be through nostalgia, mythology, invented or selected traditions, contributes to a quest for identity, albeit local, regional, cultural or global” (1993, p. 78). For Southampton listees, so much of what they point to as their identifying link with the club has to do with their roots, which makes perfect sense given the civic and regional symbolism, history and customs of the club. Even the club’s crest alludes to the landmarks of the city and region; The Hampshire [county] rose is a part of the emblem, a large tree representative of the New Forest (a Hampshire landmark) and arguably the club’s ground the Dell itself (defined as a little wooded hollow), and two sets of waves representing the twin tides of the Southern port city.

Taylor (1992) has noted the difficulty in capturing the complicated nature of identification in football. Referring to it as “an emotional cargo” (p. 185), Taylor argues that despite the increased spectacularization and production of the game, there remains “emblematic community representation” (p. 185) which is sustained through ritualized gatherings, shuffling and singing. It is these actions that make possible powerful ritualized identities. Although not all listees are able to participate in these ritualized shufflings and chants, the Internet-based lists

provide a forum through which supporters can release this 'emotional cargo.' It is online that fans indicate their pride in the city as well as in the club:

I was born and raised in the area and have always identified with the club. I regard SFC as a very special club – not particularly successful, but with a good core of supporters. (SSDS0301).

I would say the most important reason for identifying with the team is the sense that this is my local team. (SSJD0301).

They are from Southampton and so am I. They are my local side, and are a part of my life and my formative years. (SSJD0301).

I feel immensely proud of the city of Southampton, and the football club gives an opportunity to still feel a part of it. The club has always had a family atmosphere that makes you feel an important member, unlike the faceless and predictable corporate giants like Man United. Our highs and lows, triumphs and failures over the years are enjoyed and endured equally by everyone involved with the club. It gives a great sense of belonging. (SSJS0301).

Giulianotti (1999) unknowingly supports this argument in claiming that the importance of the ground is in decline as fans become an imaginary community of supporters who needn't attend live matches or know one another directly, but rather unite around symbols of the club. Giulianotti's argument is convincing in that we have seen that those who attend live matches are becoming a minority relative to the club's global fan base, and also fans online are very knowledgeable about their teams and can make arguments that their 'secondary fandom' is no less valid. I would argue however, that the ground itself is one of these symbols, around which fans still unite, and that its importance is still large as it is one of the main symbols or emblems through which fans create their imaginary community.

Class dimensions in these processes revolve around the opposition of cosmopolitan and consumerist fans against the traditional nature of local support. The new marketing of the game targets a young, middle-age audience whose club affiliations are highly malleable and consequently not so set in supporting their local side. This opposition sees working class and lower middle-class supporters tied to the football of their community, and the mobile middle classes and upper classes more 'cosmopolitan' in their football associations, supporting the local when it suits the need, but favouring the bigger clubs for the most part (Giulianotti, 1999, p.105). From observing list discussions, I would add to Giulianotti's argument that this division is perpetuated by what football is available for fans to 'consume.' In Southampton for instance, with a ground capacity of less than 16 000, the opportunity to be regular 'primary supporter' is limited. Also as one listee alludes to, for lower income fans who cannot afford to attend live matches, the opportunity to associate with football comes in the sport's mediated form. The most 'available' clubs through media, also happen to be these successful corporate giants:

What typically happens is not having a club they can see, people tend to pick teams that they can at least watch (Manks etc.) [Manchester]. A new stadium will give a generation of 'ampshire [Hampshire] kids a local team to watch and support. (SVPOMPO201).

Taylor (1992) has explored the difficulty in achieving a balance between private ownership and the traditional fan power and democracy in English football that has been mentioned. As football has "penetrated the national consciousness" (p. 125), and yet moves toward complete commercialization, ideas

about the new role of the fan and possibilities for their participatory relationship with the game are useful given the changing dynamics of club support and locality.

Conflicts between the local and the global

Whannel (1998) suggests that there exist a series of potential conflicts inherent in the search for identity. In constructing and examining identifications related to nationalism, he identifies possible contradictions between the individual and the group, tensions between geographic community and peer group; and the tension between localism, nationalism and internationalism as being elements of confusion and complexity in the formation of identity. Although this study is not concerned with national identity, Whannel's recognition of localism as a form of potential tension is pertinent. The tension that mediated fandom through Internet-based list exchanges precipitates concerns the geography of the listee against the locality of the club the listee supports. In many cases, listees reside outside of the club's city of 'residence,' for lack of a better term. As such, it is reasonable to suspect that these other cities and towns abroad have comparable football clubs that one could support. Herein lies the dilemma, what conflict is there between the local and the global in the context of the lists similar to the case outlined by Ben-Porat?

The importance of viewing the 'local' as relational to its global context is underscored in reference to the case study by Morley and Robbins' attestation that globalization will never fully transcend "particularities of place and culture" (p. 116) as globalization relies on the "local" to develop a comprehensive world

system. Rather, these authors see globalization as a jigsaw puzzle where a multiplicity of localities fit into the complete picture. This case study suggests that indeed the local is a part of the larger global whole, in that local identities (through football) are sustained abroad to adjoin this 'world system.'

Football clubs inherently have a localist identity. Club names are tied to a specific locality and historically players lived in the community. Modern football however, sees shifting fan loyalties, mobile professional players and ground relocation to "suburban wastelands" (Giulanotti, 1999, p. 15). These particularities and the dispersion of local identities into the world system (as illustrated by the case study) create tensions in the sports sphere through conflicts in loyalties that have been effected by mediated sport and it's coverage. The following are a small number of representations of this conflict as perceived by listees, and their sentiments about their own situations:

As for the local league, well after watching United, there just isn't much entertainment watching the local teams. (MSJDO301).

I'm sorry to say this, but it is hard for me to accept that Malaysian football is really clean from bribery, and I am not going to stick behind a team whose players I am not sure would turn out for their team 100% every single week. (MSJDO301).

These Manchester fans have difficulty in maintaining parallel fan identities on the grounds that local football is weak and consequently not worth following. This would suggest that following Manchester from afar because of civic roots is not a stable or fixed form of identification as the existence of a club in their own locality is not favoured despite the listees current residence. For

these supporters, there must be other factors at work in defining what club they support beyond the city itself. For others, simultaneous fandom is possible for just the same reason. As it is football of a lesser quality it is perceived as not being in conflict with support for an English club:

I go down to USF Le Puy [Denmark] every other Saturday and although its world's apart from Serie A [top Italian league] or the Premiership it is quite enjoyable. So when the Saints haven't got a game I get down the rec. (SVPOLGo201).

Yeah I have found a second division team here in Denmark too, that have a 'stadium' near the place I moved to (second division has a very low profile in Denmark). The local derbies can attract 200-300 people or so, but usually there are a crowd of 100. I have hardly learned the names of the players yet, but I love to see the fairly primitive and aggressive football played. (SVPOJD0201).

There are also those who are able to maintain their identification with Southampton Football club yet also sustain ties with another team:

I bleed red & white [A reference to Southampton's colours]. I was brought up with the Saints but I don't know why I am such a fanatic. The Saints result makes or breaks my weekend although I also have a season ticket for Feyenoord [Netherlands], my local club. (SSJD0301).

These comments suggest that there is no single paradigm for either entertaining or rejecting multiple footballing identities. Rather, individuals create their own system of understanding as to how they can support both the local and foreign, or how this indeed would be contradictory:

Here in the USA, professional sports teams change cities very often compared to European soccer teams and the rich heritage of Man Utd. And all the other Euro clubs in all of the other Euro countries are a huge

factor in my love of Man Utd. And related Euro soccer. The history, the passion, also just because of the intensity of the league generally [is what makes me follow Manchester] rather than following our local MLS team, although I do that as well. (MVPOSS1100).

In most cases, it appears that if there exists no potential for the two clubs to clash competitively, then dual support is possible. On the other hand, (especially in the case of Manchester supporters who see their club participating in numerous international competitions) the potential exists, then the larger club is favoured. Just as Ben-Porat's study found, the data from these case studies suggests that favouring an English club from abroad can even impact the attachment a listee has to his or her national side:

I guess I support England before Finland in footie too, so had a little hard time watching Finland-England live cause wanted to cheer with my friends, and felt bad if did so. (MVPOTO1100).

Many of the postings and survey responses including those quoted illustrate there is a possible tension between the local and the global. The severity of these tensions is in most cases contingent upon the strength of the local English-based identity. For example, it seems reasonable for the listees who have a tie to the club's city to have divided loyalties. They remain supporters of their original 'home club' (Southampton or Manchester because of ties to the city) but also have found football in their adopted or current locality to support. For others however, who appear to only follow English football, there is a strange process at work that sees their identification with the team directed through mediations such as the Internet which are powerful enough so as to manipulate

the traditional identification with the home football club. This allegorizes the power of mediated football and also emphasizes the predominance of the commercialization and internationalization of the sport.

Arguments can be made that the globalization of all sports forms has had the effect of tightening the “symbols, myths, memories, traditions and nostalgia which define various cultural identities” (Jarvie, 1993, p. 61). I think that this study of Internet football fans suggests that this is true for small clubs without international notoriety, however the opposite is the case when the local (In this case Manchester United as a symbolic civic identifier) becomes internationalized and thus traditional forms of sports team identifications make way to commercial and cosmopolitan based identities:

My staunch local football-supporting Dad always wondered why I chose to follow a team so faraway but I’ve always argued that live telecasts, the Internet and now, the Singapore Manchester United megastore has brought the team closer to faraway supporters like us. There’s no particular local team that I support nowadays even though one of the club’s home ground is within walking distance from my house. (MVPOYZ1100).

As these complicated relationships between mediated football and geographic locality suggest, identity through sport is becoming a complex arrangement given the globalization of all sport forms. Morley and Robins (1995) note the increased difficulty in the maintenance of one’s identity in light of the merging of cultural and economic production and consumption. This synthesis stems from the decentralization of media to a small number of global communications giants who control the dissemination of media products (which

include sport). This leads us to a discussion of Identity and the ways it is manipulated and formed through both these decentralized media, and more specifically the Manchester and Southampton lists.

Globalization and mediasport

Media-led football

In reference to the delocalization of sporting affiliations and fandom, Bale (1991) posits that “modernist tendencies in sport have reduced the spatial circumscription of many clubs’ support” (p. 135). This de-emphasis on the importance of locality Bale argues, is a direct result of the concentrated coverage of a select few clubs that partially enables viewers abroad to become instant fans. Bale uses the example of how over half of Liverpool FC supporters must travel over 30 miles to attend home matches, but the idea is easily transferred to the concept of global supporters connecting with the game via mediated coverage such as the Internet. This concept then, of becoming an “instant fan” through mediated football underlines the importance of media in not only determining the balance of power in football, but also in determining the global popularity of clubs and consequently the international involvement of fans with English football.

We have already seen from the questionnaire that fans who associate themselves with an English club need not have geographical or familial ties to the club’s city. The influence of the media then, is the determining factor in one’s connection to a club:

One day as I went down to watch a local match in the stadium, the best thing happened to me. Incidentally, that day was an FA Cup final night involving Manchester United and Chelsea, the spectator stand was buzzing with excitement not only due to the match on the pitch but also on the live FA Cup final to be telecast later in the evening. This got me wondering: "What's the magic of English football?" So out of curiosity, I went home and watched the Cup final, got hooked onto this red devil team, and the rest as they say, is history. (MSJDo401).

For the 16 of 71 respondents who had no logical link to the city, comments such as the preceding were typical. Reference to televised matches as the manner in which a link was established with the club was common, but not nearly as frequent as the use of television or other media platforms to maintain an existing tie:

In Abu Dhabi there was satellite TV which had live games on the same days as the UK as well as a Saturday 3pm game. I got to see Saints on numerous occasions, which was excellent. When you are overseas, you do anything to get news of your team. (SSDBo301)

As previously mentioned, TV, magazines, newspapers, radio and Internet radio are the most common mediums through which fans abroad keep in touch with their club. All of these mediums listed are under corporate media control, and thus form a collection of channels through which football is mediated and globally diffused.

The importance of considering that these mediations are controlled by corporate interest stems from the fact that the game is not diffused for the sake of the game, but rather it is content for the international media platforms. A traditionally local phenomenon becomes a globally diffused product:

Driven now by the logic of profit and competition, the overriding objective of the new media corporations is to get their product to the largest number of consumers. There is, then, an expansionist tendency at work, pushing ceaselessly towards the construction of enlarged audiovisual spaces and markets. The imperative is to break down the old boundaries and frontiers of national communities, which now present themselves as arbitrary and irrational obstacles to this reorganization of business strategies. The free and unimpeded circulation of programs - television without frontiers - is the great ideal in the new order. It is an ideal whose logic is driving ultimately towards the creation of global programming and global markets- and already we are seeing the rise to power of global corporations intent on turning ideal into reality. The new media order is set to become a global order (Morley and Robins, 1995, p. 11).

The single most useful and current illustration of media involvement in sport, just so happens to involve English football. Already in possession of the league's broadcast rights, BSkyB's attempted takeover of Manchester United in 1998 was blocked for a number of reasons having to do with potential anti-competitive practices. For the fans and game however, the takeover would have seen an increased polarization within the Premier League as those clubs associated with large media companies had greater power through capital injection and political influence through broadcast rights and negotiation etc. (Taylor, 2000).

Other British media companies who construct this growing polarization join BSkyB in controlling interests in Premiership clubs. Granada television bought a 10% stake in Liverpool in 1999 and NTL hold 6% of Newcastle. Both companies have not been shy about revealing the logic behind these investments. Both companies wish to have a seat at the table when the next rounds of league broadcast negotiations take place. Their success however will be limited by the

power of BSkyB at such an event. Despite their failure to obtain full ownership of United, they still hold 9.9% of the club (the largest shareholder and largest allowable share) and own one third of MUTV, the club's private broadcaster. Further to this stake, BSkyB owns 9.2% of Leeds, and 9.9% of Manchester City (Finney, 2000).

Findlay, Holahan & Oughton's (2000) summary of wealth distribution in the Premier League notes that clubs at the top earn roughly twice that of the bottom clubs from TV revenues alone. Interestingly, they use a comparison between Manchester and Southampton to illustrate why this is the case. BSkyB's broadcast agreement sees revenue shared in a 50:25:25 format. Distribution is allocated as follows: 50% is equally dispersed amongst the clubs, 25% allocated proportionately as a facility fee to those clubs who are televised, and 25% distributed on merit after league standings are finalized. This unequal redistribution of revenue is founded on what the author's refer to as "units of entertainment" (p. 128) which are directly related to the viewership of given teams to the extent that revenue earnings are reflective of the audience viewership for each club. Findlay, Holahan and Oughton (2000) state that "a leading club such as Manchester United will supply more units of entertainment and therefore attract more viewers for each match that it is involved in than a club in the bottom half of the league, such as Southampton" (p. 128).

Even the passionate fans that carry their support online yet utilize mainstream media outlets such as Sky TV, are skeptical and somewhat cynical about media and big money's involvement in the game. These modern fans

(listees) acknowledge media's role and how it is impacting the nature of the club's orientation as well:

I know there's a bigger picture here, and Sky are single handedly responsible for turning football into what it is today (whatever that is), not just in the UK, but Europe as well to an extent. (MVPOJD0201).

Success breeds success and also strange bedfellows, as they say...the efforts of the PLC [Manchester United's holding company] lie-not in building and maintaining the greatest team on the planet, but making themselves shite-loads of money. Plain and simple, and utterly disgusting. (MVPOPk0201).

The Internet and the facilitation of globalization

Moving from the general to the specific, it is understood that mediated sports information has gone from the localized top-down character of broadcast and print journalism, to the interactive and global capacity of the Internet. For fans in this study, the Internet is attributed great importance in sustaining links and identifications, but is still only a part of the greater mediasport network itself. Regardless, the Internet is gradually becoming the medium of choice for those sports fans abroad who wish to stay in touch, thus influencing the globalization of the game and associated identities of its' fans:

When I first joined the list there were a few web pages set up for Saints information, the list was a lifeline for current information. Now that other sources are online - newspapers, e-magazines, chat-rooms, etc., the list is more helpful in the "soft" news and analysis. (SSUS0301).

This quote also illustrates what survey respondents indicated, that fans are utilizing multiple sources to keep apprised of club action. Extending their

mediated fandom online means using the lists but also includes observing web sites, which raises issues about the ability for information to permeate geographical boundaries through the Internet.

Morley and Robins (1995) forward the assertion that in the modern age, community, regional and national boundaries are less defined by their physicality and are increasingly characterized by the penetration of media and communication networks. Communication networks and infrastructure are, what they believe to be the “spaces of transmission” (p. 1) that define the boundaries of our age by transcending symbolic boundaries of language and culture. Where questionnaire respondents collectively indicated that geographical ties (through the clubs) were not exclusively linked to current residence, it appears that indeed it is these spaces of transmission that demarcate community boundaries in this case. The lists’ sense of community and shared identity, facilitated by communication networks are in fact not defined by geography, but rather what is held in common and dispersed electronically.

As a “far flung” fan I do not have the opportunity to witness events in real life...I find the fans very special, and I care for the people supporting SFC even though I have never met them...It [the list] imparts a strong sense of “belonging,” camaraderie and shared emotional experience. (SSJF0301).

The commercialization of the English game

Stemming from the globalization of the game that has occurred for a number of reasons that this study has already explored, modern football is increasingly a commodified product. Although the lists themselves are not commercial enterprises (in that they are not-for-profit), they still manage to

proliferate the commercial side of the game through ticket exchange, awareness of merchandise available and general financial support for the club. This includes Saintslist sponsoring a player in the matchday program, and list requests such as the following:

I'm an American Manchester United fan, and have been looking online for about a month for a Manchester United leather jacket. I heard that the megastore used to carry some, but I don't see them on the Manutd.com megastore website. Can anybody help me out, or point me in the right direction? (MVPOIM0101).

Beyond the irony of an American fan looking to Westernize the local Manchester experience by wearing a traditionally American garment, the message captures how the globalization and commercialization of the English game means that "fans can buy into the fan cultures of other societies" by immersing ones' self in fan paraphernalia (Giulianotti, 1999, p. 64).

Lee (1998) has argued that the modern free market principles that have been applied to professional English football over the past decade have lead to a concentration of power in footballing terms. This trend, he argues sees an increased homogenization of the "product," an over-emphasis on advertizing and a neglect of the "common good" for the game (p. 33). Noteworthy to this analysis is Lee's additional observation that such a commercial orientation has resulted in a chasm between the haves and the have-nots of the game. As the comparative case study looks at one 'have' and one 'have not' club, how do list postings reflect these commercial and free market characteristics? Primarily, the answer is found

in the cynicism of the lists toward the leagues commercial orientation, and additionally, resentment toward the 'big' clubs:

Sometimes I wish I was supporting a Division Two or Three club because I am very much a traditionalist and I don't care much for big money imagery which clubs like Man Utd, Arsenal, Chelsea and even Sunderland put out. (SVPOGL0201).

Referring commonly to Manchester as 'Merchandise United' and its fans as 'plastic,' Saintslist contributors generally point to Manchester United as the epitome of the commercialized club. However, despite the club's own success both in winning and in financial terms, United fans are not oblivious to the changed character of the club:

There is some unease that the continuing Americanization and commercialization of our club will lead to the game moving further way from its grass roots. (MVPOJD1200).

The movement from football directly connected to working class culture (the grass roots) toward a game directed by the principles of capitalism has seen the "enbourgeoisification" (Moorehouse, 1984) of football. The corporate hospitality suites, increases in ticket prices, and general commodification of the game is not lost on listees. Worthy of note, is that responding listees who follow the commercialized English game perhaps already fall into this 'enbourgeoisified' category merely in having access to the Internet multiple times daily. Regardless, their skepticism about the consumer orientation of the league is very clear:

Basically the aim is to bleed you out of as much money as possible without turning you off from the product they are selling and in that respect football clubs are now no different than any other commercial concern. The only difference now, and it is in the favour of the clubs, is that their clientele "love" the product: if somebody raised the price of dairy milk chocolate to five quid a bar, I'd buy galaxy chocolate, but, almost unfortunately, I have no choice but to support the team I love. (SVPODCo700).

This last point is indicative of how there is the capacity for commercial, professional sport to influence identity constitution and re-constitution, however this discussion deserves special attention and accordingly will follow in the examination of identity.

Taylor (1992) has outlined a few aspects of modern football in England that have affected the game in commodifying terms other than the impact of media and its consequent injection of capital into the game. Taylor sees a strange relationship between club and fan emerging that is the result of both intense emotional attachments to clubs, and also strong desires for winning teams. In particular, Taylor regards fan pressure to win as partially precipitating the move of clubs toward both privatization and an expansion of revenue generating possibilities (marketing, commercialization etc.). Thus, there exists a delicate balance between local supporters who identify with the team and wish to participate in decision making processes, and the larger goals of the club as a business that do not necessarily have the interests of the club as a "community representative" (p. 179) in mind. This leads us to the club strategy of each team and the impacts that these directions are having on the respective listees' identity.

Club strategy in the context of the global market

There can be no doubt that there is a widening gap between football clubs. The financial clout of Manchester United is awesome and anyone looking at the Premiership table will see the increasing dominance of Manchester United, Liverpool, Arsenal and Chelsea. Clubs with limited financial resources such as Coventry, Wimbledon, Southampton and Leicester have done remarkably well to compete in the top flight for so long. The recent decision to allow collective bargaining of the TV rights was essential for the 'smaller' Premiership clubs who struggle to compete with the appeal of the Manchester United brand. (Matusiewicz, 2000, p. 166).

The pressures of the new commercial nature of the Premiership fall directly on the shoulders of those clubs that are both struggling for success and are cash-strapped. In order to be competitive, new revenue sources must be found, new markets tapped, and consequently new strategies formed and consequently relationships with fans altered. As these relationships are altered, so too will the ways in which fans identify themselves via their football fandom. Club strategies, especially those that move away from the importance of civic roots and community-based initiatives, will serve to modify the identities of those who define themselves through professional football in more internationalized and commodified forms. In examining where Southampton and Manchester are heading, we can also speculate how online identities will be manipulated in the future.

Manchester versus Southampton's strategies or orientations are distinct, yet increasingly similar. Manchester's strategy can fairly be classified as global and consumerist. Conversely, Southampton's is locally based and somewhat torn between the pressures of commercialization and the club's traditional roots. For

example, Southampton's current ground is in the city center, but because it does not generate sufficient ticket revenue (the smallest ground capacity in the league), next season will see the opening of a modern, 32 000 seat ground complete with corporate sponsor title (The Friends Provident St. Mary's Stadium) in the city's industrial outskirts. Here, to remain competitive, the club must move away from tradition and its' 'small is beautiful' mentality, towards instead the commercial and lavish trends that the 'successful' clubs have established. This said, listees have generally been able to discuss the new stadium in positive terms and aren't convinced that it will move the club away from its' community roots:

St. Mary's [the new stadium] is almost perfect for football as all it needs are better transport links. So many moan about it but football comes from working class communities no matter how it is dressed up. In fact, sky and everybody else need to realize that and start reminding people of the traditions. Imagine match day: walking through the streets to the game, meeting some friends along the way, talking about the game, sinking a few beers or whatever else you want to do. That is all better than driving to the game, parking your car, walking into the stadium, watch the game, go home with no social interaction. The Saints are staying in Southampton in a real football style neighbourhood. Long live St. Mary's. (SVPOJD0301).

On the lists, fan discussions regarding club strategy revolve around two themes, the local or the global, and the nature of the club, political or consumerist. In the case of Manchester United, the latest commercial enterprises of the club are presented, and discussion ensues. Further, these discussions are about initiatives that are global. From the club's TV station, the upcoming team tour of Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand, or the recent feature film based on United's season. Thus, topics tend to be characterized by their internationalism

and consumerism. On the flip side, Saintslist's discussions that revolve around the club's strategy and future tend to be about local issues (not surprising given almost 30% of respondents live in Hampshire). Further, these local (often civic) issues are political in nature, from club management disputes and player contracts, to the building of Saints' new stadium and what it will mean to the city.

To further illustrate United's corporate strategy and the commercialization of "new fandom" and the game itself, no contemporary move illustrates the globalization and commodification of the league as much as Manchester United's joint-marketing agreement with the New York Yankees established on February 7th, 2001 (Foer, 2001). This agreement sees the two clubs sharing marketing information, sharing merchandizing outlets, and generally being joined at the hip as two of the world's most recognizable sports brands. Fans seem generally supportive of this move, but again, cognizant of its bottom line:

This is going to have almost no real impact from a fan's perspective. It's almost purely financial. (MVPOPR0201).

It would appear that Manchester United will not be decelerating from their current light speed of collecting commercial support and extending their global consumer market. This means too, that there will be no cessation in the way that United's affects identification in a consumerist and cosmopolitan manner. Manchester United generates £78 (\$168 Canadian) of turnover for each supporter entering Old Trafford and yet the number of supporters that can fit into the ground is inconsequential to their overall supporter/consumer base. Within the larger context of the league, the clubs' net assets account for 30% of

the entire Premier League's (Lee, 2000, p.89). Further it has been suggested that if Manchester United were able to obtain the rights to their own matches and televize them on a pay-per-view basis, it is estimated that the club could generate upwards of £380 million (\$820 million Canadian) annually (Giulianotti, 1999, 93). The club strategy of Manchester United is nothing less than expansionist, football imperialism that penetrates the far reaches of the globe. The Internet will be a medium increasingly used for this expansion as it is not impeded by territorial or regulatory restrictions at this time.

For Southampton, it appears strategy is epitomized by localized ambition. One listee recently posted comments from the Club's chairman, Rupert Lowe:

We have two objectives...we want to complete the Friends Provident St. Mary's Stadium and to stay in the Premiership which is more important than ever. (SVPOJG0101).

These objectives underscore both Saint's modest ambitions, and the importance they attribute to the construction of the new stadium in order to achieve their goals. Lowe has also sought support for the club by appealing to the South coast as a whole, thus suggesting that the club is a regional, not strictly civic institution that should reflect the region and not be susceptible to the expansionist appeal of more commercial clubs:

We are looking for a response from people not just from Southampton but right across the region to show they want to watch Premiership football. There are too many Manchester United shirts around Southampton for my liking. (SVPOJG0101.)

The suggestion that Manchester United competes with Southampton for the hearts, if not leisure spending of its own citizens confirms that the local-global tension is not restricted to consumer/fans abroad. Rather, the commercial and cosmopolitan influence of Manchester United strikes a chord domestically as well.

Bale (1991) points out three “manifestations” (p. 130) of the globalization of football regarding the spaces in which the game operates. First, he alludes to the expansion of terrain from which players are drawn into domestic leagues. Rather, following Maguire’s ideas (1996) of professional sporting migration, football players have been increasingly recruited from abroad. Secondly, Bale notes the new concept stadiums that are being built to replace traditional terraced stadiums. These stadia, in response to the Hillsborough disaster of 1989 and the ensuing Taylor report, are both all-seater, located in more suburban areas than before, and built with multiple purposes in mind such as for community use and for additional revenue generation through concerts, events etc. This leads to Bale’s third point that is that these new stadiums are far more bland than before, or are lacking traditional character in favour of what he refers to as “container architecture” (p. 130). These points are exactly the areas that Southampton and Manchester’s strategies mirror one another. Both squads have a large contingent of foreign players, Manchester has recently expanded and altered its ground’s orientation, while Southampton has completely built a new facility. How these developments will impact the identifications that supporters make with the club (through live attendance) remains to be seen, but as is the

case with identification through the Internet, these changes may well reflect the mediated version of Internet-associated identities in that the importance of the live-action atmosphere that Baudrillard (1996), Morrow (1999) and Rowe (1999) have discussed is diminished in favour of a desensitized and highly controlled experience.

Cannon and Hamil (2000a) have discussed the distinction between supporters and fans. It is their assertion that fans, while expressing positive attitudes about the team, usually do not have any active involvement with the team such as attendance at live matches. In their view this distinction can serve to classify individuals as either primary or secondary supporters which is an important distinction as these secondary supporters become a target audience for the marketing of club. In looking at how both clubs have expanded their strategies to reach these 'secondary' supporters, I argue that how these individuals conceptualize their own identity becomes even more relevant as the number of fans that can attend a live match is limited, yet the potential for 'secondary' supporters through the Internet is virtually infinite.

Listees sentiments on 'away' fans

Considering then the dynamics between listees who feel torn between their roots with the club and the commercial nature of the new game, list messages often illustrated both acceptance and rejection of 'away' fans, those that support the team from abroad. Comments did not differ greatly from list to list, for example from the United list:

I have met many United supporters who were not from Manchester...they have shown just as much a love for United, just as much knowledge of them, just as much loyalty to them as do my family. (MVPOOT1100).

I don't feel that you have to live in England to be a Manchester United fan, I also don't feel that you have to have supported them for more than 'X' years to be a 'true fan.' I think that its great there are so many fans for our club. I also don't feel that you have to have been to OT [Old Trafford] or seen 'X' games at OT. (MVPOJDo201).

Comments on the Southampton list about the matter are strikingly similar and suggest an open mindedness to global fandom. One need not be from the city to support the city's team:

I don't think Saints fans should have to justify themselves – I don't regard myself a "better" fan than say, [one] in Australia just because I see 20 games a season and he sees two in a decade (I'm better placed to make judgements on the way the team are playing), but that does not mean that he *supports* them with any less commitment. (SVPODCo101).

This sense of tolerance put forward by domestic listees is partially facilitated by the surprising knowledge of fans abroad on the Southampton list:

I haven't seen Saints play 'in the flesh' for nigh on 14 years, and I reckon I know more about the current team than 98% of you ignorant buggers who disagree with me from time to time on the list...[tongue in cheek]...If anyone knew the lengths overseas supporters go to keep in touch with Saints they would bow down in frank amazement. (SVPOSY0101).

The open-mindedness on both lists is not surprising given that only 20% and 8% of listees reside in Southampton and Manchester respectively. They acknowledge that the list is not as useful a tool for 'primary' fandom as it is for those fans looking to keep in touch from abroad. Further, on the Saintslist at least, through

casual observation and personal accounts from listees, there is a recognition that the majority of those online do have a relevant link to the club. This recognition is in agreement with the survey findings that indicated 84% of Saintslistee respondents had a tie:

I think that most of our overseas listees with the exception of one or two maybe, have a strong connection to Southampton, they were born here, went to Southampton University or lived here for some time for whatever reason. What I don't like is people who support a team for no other reason than they are successful. (SVPOSBo101).

Others on the list shared this listees final sentiment that true club supporters follow their team through thick and thin, and that bandwagon fans were not welcome. They also however, note that fair-weather fans are unlikely to ever support Southampton, a team known more for relegation battles than on-the-pitch success:

As for glory seekers anybody who follows Saints can never be accused of being that, more likely deranged people with a strange sense of humour! (SVPORCo201).

I'd say we haven't really got any 'glory fans' at the mo (bit hard to be when you ain't won anything for nearly 25 years). (SVPORTo201).

Others online who share these sentiments appear to do so out of a sense of inferiority. This inferiority is not as much a sense of being threatened by the success and subsequent attention that other clubs receive, so much as it is a resentment of these clubs' success adding to their domination in the league and consequently creating an environment where it is acceptable to be a passive fan whose associations with the club are limited to merchandised and mediated

forms. Those who feel resentful may well feel they are becoming increasingly isolated as supporters who live and die by the results and events of the club:

The ONLY group of people I wouldn't want supporting Saints, would be those who started to support us because and ONLY because, we became successful. The proverbial 'glory-hunters.' No one would begrudge Manchester United their huge amount of fans if we knew they all supported Man U before they became as massively successful as they have done, but we know that ain't the case. So glory hunters I can do without, but everyone else is as good a supporter as my friend, who has had a season ticket in the same seat at the Dell for 59 years. (SVPOAM0201).

As Manchester United fans are specifically referred to as being notoriously known as glory hunters, what sort of comments do Manchester listees make about fans without a connection to the club? The answer is that comments vary, some listees defend the tradition of the club and appear to feel indignant about foreign fans, while many (especially considering that 92% of survey respondents were from outside the city and 35% had no link to Manchester at all) defended 'away' fans and their reasons for identifying with the club:

On the subject of global football supporters, most people I know support a team from the major European leagues, because that's what gets the most television coverage... (MVPOID1100).

Again there is evidence that mediated football coverage influences listees' decisions about what club to support. On the both lists however, there is little animosity directed toward these listees:

If they are supporters, then good. They love United and, however they started to love United, this is good! (MVPOOT1100).

If you are a proper Saints fan why would you give two hoots about where any fans originate from, who they supported in the past, what ethnic background they come from and what country they live in. Just rejoice in the fact that they are Saints fans. (SVPORCo201).

Although these comments are reflective of both lists as a whole, the apparent increase in the number of fans on the Manchester list without a traditional link to the club has incited some hostility and cynicism. For instance, on the one hand there are those who recognize their place as “secondary” supporters:

I realize that my association is rather different than the one had by those who are fortunate enough to have the chance to go to games regularly or who were born red and so have United as their birthright. [This list] is not the same, but as close as I’m going to get... (MVPOJDo101).

However, there are also listees with strong ties to the city that see the list moving away from it’s community appeal and becoming one more way for fans wrapped in the cosmopolitan and consumer attraction of Manchester United to ally themselves with the popularity of the brand. A case in point was the listee who responded to number four in the questionnaire about the reasons for reading and participating on the list, he cynically, though straightforwardly suggested that he read the list to:

Read the bollocks opinions of 14-year-old know-nots from the Far East – and to get the occasional sensible bit of information/opinion/news. (MSJDo301).

There are also those who offer opinions about what sort of criteria one must meet in order to be a legitimate fan on the list. As one Manchester fan defends himself:

Look I may not be as lucky as you to live in England and have the chance to see United and support them face to face but that gives you no right to criticize my right to be a United fan. I have supported United since I was six and have played football since that age. (MVPOPZ0201).

In general I believe that listees on both lists, and thus regardless of the orientation of the club, are very open to fans wherever they reside. The exception I will note though has to do with fans who support an English club despite having a local football side wherever they may be. Listees find it both discouraging and illogical that success, commercial identity or other globalization-related factor should precede the importance of locality to support:

To me, the sight of the inhabitants of Sofia [Bulgaria] wandering the streets of their hometown in replica Manc [Manchester] gear, passing within a stone's throw of CSKA [Sofia's] ground, is both bizarre and quite repugnant. The cynic and the realist in me knows that far fewer would be prepared to don the shirt in public and fly 14 000 miles to watch their beloved team play Rotheram on a cold February afternoon. (SVPOJDO101)

This comment was not the only remark that referred to Manchester United specifically. One post on the Southampton list included a string of Manchester United jokes, interestingly many were founded on the commercial-orientation of the club and the false-notion that all United fans are from outside the city, for example:

Question: How many Manchester United fans does it take to screw in a lightbulb?

Answer: Three. One to change the bulb, one to buy the '1997 lightbulb changing' commemorative T-shirt and video, and one to drive the other two back to Torquay. (SVPOJDo100).

From these postings, I would argue that despite whatever reservations a listee may have about the authenticity of another's fandom and their cynicism of it, there is a sense of community not only about football but about being a list member as well. This is especially the case on Saintslist where the origins of fans are less of an issue. As a result, most comments on away fans are very positive:

As far as I'm concerned, if you wanna support Saints, then fine. You'll have your own reasons and that's great. Welcome to the world of Southampton F.C. Glad you could make it, enjoy the ride! (SVPOAMo201).

What gives anyone the right to tell anyone who they can and cannot support anyway? I know all those [that support successful teams] grate on a little, but that's their problem if they're so boring that they only support the current flaves of the month. We should forget all that and embrace Saints fans from anywhere in the world. (SVPODT0201).

Recognizing that there is a strange balance on the lists between fans in the city and those abroad and a similarly curious tension between some of these listees, a more in depth discussion of how the globalization of the local plays out on the lists is important.

Fandom and the lists

Lee (1998) describes the dilemma of shifting fandom patterns in terms of one's relationship to the experience of the game. Slowly fading is the intense passion for the game of football stemming from the action and camaraderie of a live game in favour of a sterile fan experience that consists of a "replica shirt and a satellite dish" (p. 49). I believe that the two lists serve to accentuate both of these patterns. They can have the affect of intensifying the passions and identifications one has with the game/club by providing an additional medium through which existing emotions are expressed, and the lists can also serve to exacerbate the anaesthetized version of the football experience (in the Manchester case) by enabling easy access to a medium that proliferates mainstream sports information.

As a result of the increased commercialization of the Premier League over the past ten years, Michie and Walsh sense a "gentrification or yuppification of the fan base, amounting to a form of social exclusion" (2000, p. 209). The preceding discussion on class conflict has covered this as it impacts identification, however how this 'gentrification' impacts the nature of being a fan requires further examination. In order to address this matter, this section briefly explores how the two lists have either been subject to this yuppification or rejected gentrified approaches to fandom. In looking at how passionate support (and subsequent identification) is conveyed online, and what alternative forms of fandom are possible through an online forum, this discussion can take in hand the matter of online fandom's orientation.

Canter, Comber and Uzzell (1989) refer to the active process of viewing a football match in a live setting as “atmosphere.” They describe this atmosphere as including “the experience of being in a crowd, being able to feel that you can encourage your team on the field by your proximity. It enables you to be aware of the weather and other local factors that cannot be readily gleaned from some secondhand account; to see all the action and the crowd response to it” (p. 127). The strength of this description lies in the description of the fan as being engaged actively. Is then, identity through mediated fandom less potent and passionate than those derived and sustained through active support?

Giulianotti (1999) makes reference to the deep affection that is part of the live fan experience as it is directed towards the football space. This “topophilia” (p. 69) of the football ground emerges from the psychosocial relationship supporters have with the space in which their team plays. The online space in which fans operate has no such physicality around which identification can center other than symbolically. Consequently, I believe that online support is a different sort of potency given many listees lack an active physical bond with their passion. Their passion however appears no less valid, the very fact that they go to such lengths to maintain this sportified identity and do so frequently indicates their passions are the same, only expressed differently than those primary supporters who are able to physically support their club.

In considering that Old Trafford’s capacity is currently 55 300 (soon to be extended to 67 400) and yet the club’s local membership exceeds 100 000, what of the estimated 3 million ‘secondary’ supporters abroad? Surely the mere 2% of

supporters who can fit into the ground are not necessarily the most passionate about the club just because they can access a ticket. Access to a ticket should not be the criteria for being classified a 'true' supporter. Those actively engaged in making the activities of the club a part of their own experience by discussing and observing discussions online everyday arguably are as engaged as those who attend a match for 90 minutes.

Financially, the club is very cognizant of these potential consumers and is in the process of meeting their potential demands. United recognizes some 200 supporter clubs in more than 24 countries and there are an estimated 17 000 unofficial web sites devoted to the club worldwide. The year 1997 saw plans for the club to open 150 club shops around the world to meet some of the demand for merchandise and memorabilia (Lee, 2000, p. 89). For traditionalists however, this approach to accommodating these fans must be saddening, as it will be an extension of the club's consumerist and cosmopolitan character. Further, for those fans on the lists and elsewhere, this approach will have the affect of commodifying their own associations with the club and in turn impact their identity accordingly.

There are some indications that resistance against the prevailing commercialization and corporate control of English football is occurring. Sugden and Tomlinson (1999) observe that supporter-based movements are emerging that counter the authorities that rule football. The most effective of these has been Manchester United's main supporter branch, IMUSA's (Independent Manchester United Supporters Association) campaign to block Rupert Murdoch's

proposed takeover of the club. Pressure from this group and other fans on government regulators to examine the increased control of English football properties in the hands of one media company (BSkyB/NewsCorp) ultimately led to success (see Lee, 1999 and Michie & Oughton, 1999 for more). Sugden and Tomlinson also point to the success and popularity of “seriously critical football publications” as evidence that resistance at the grass-roots level is taking shape (p. 189). The idea that fans are not passively subject to the direction of the game is one that listees take to heart. It appears that through discussion and argument, complex issues can be raised online through the lists that are not your run of the mill pub-chat football topics. As we have seen, the future of the game, and its’ increased politicization are such topics on the lists.

Saintslist, and to some extent the Manchester list host a curious form of fan then who is caught between the traditions of locality, history and their subsequent passions, and the modern mediated nature of support. Giulianotti describes these individuals as “post-fans” (p. 148), those who are cognizant of the political structures of football, the vagaries of media-led football and are aware that their power is limited given these understandings. In response, post-fans maintain a reflexive, ironic and sometimes sarcastic character about not only the game, but about their own clubs. It is these supporters who are likely to pressure those in power, and lead fan-based movements. These fans are a part of the “new middle-class who possess the intellectual and technological capital to transfer the critical impulse of football crowds, from the Socratic context of the open terraces to the more permanent medium of the fanzine, the web page or the football novel

(p. 150). I would argue that the online debate and high level of discussion sometimes present on each list suggest that these e-mail list are a prime example of 'post-fandom.'

Returning to the differences between live fandom and Internet-mediated fandom and how these differences impact identity formulation and confirmation, Jenkins (1986) brings forth a thought. Consider the following; "a stadium full of partisan sports fans has an embodied physicality that presents itself with material immediacy...[however] there must be something else if an aggregation of individuals is to be anything other than arithmetical. The fact of a lot of breathing human bodies occupying a territory is not enough to constitute a collectivity...collective identities are to be found in the practices of embodied individuals which generate or constitute them" (p. 127). If then sport, and Manchester United and Southampton Football Clubs in particular foster an identity that is civic, cosmopolitan, civic etc., it is not so much the act of attendance or viewing a match that is relevant to this identity formation as much as it is the social interaction and sense of shared community that football provides. The two lists may not have the physicality of a live match, but they show signs of something greater. The lists facilitate community and provide social interaction and in turn are able to impact the identities of sports fans.

In summary, the lists illustrate a complex and multi-faceted representation of fandom and associated identification. Shields (1997) attests that "the Net paradoxically works to both reproduce and reinforce existing 'hegemonic' structures as well as enabling new forms of interactivity. Virtual

communities display a structural attachment to mass culture” (p. 127). The case study used herein captures this paradox perfectly in using sport as research terrain. The mass culture of football is the content of choice for these virtual communities, and the associated identity manipulated by the medium comes from content that is both reproduced and from internal ‘interactive’ sources.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

McDaniel and Sullivan (1998) proposed that future research on websport required an understanding into how the Internet can bridge physical distances and influence the perceptions of its' users. This study has examined not only the personal and local impacts of the technology but also the broader global issues that websport brings forth.

The two illustrative case studies examined by this research were intended to bring to life the day-to-day affairs of e-mail discussion lists whose subscriber's passions were for sport. In these cases, the passion was for English football, and how the lists served to confirm and create related identities was the challenge of the research. Results for the most part corresponded with expected findings especially in the areas of geographical ties to the club's city, and the ways in which Internet fans sustained their identities, be they strictly fan identities or otherwise. All along however, I had suspected there would be some cultural elements of identity expressed by listees in reference to why they identified with their club. With the exception of a civic identity, which I would argue is less of a cultural identifier and more of a political one, no cultural elements were expressed. Ethnicity, religion, race or other such clear cultural identifiers were not referred to as being important elements of the fan's identity in reference to their support. Although neither club has a history of a strong cultural identification with certain groups (in the way that Scotland's Celtic F.C. is associated with Roman Catholicism or the Montreal Canadiens with French

not referred to as being important elements of the fan's identity in reference to their support. Although neither club has a history of a strong cultural identification with certain groups (in the way that Scotland's Celtic F.C. is associated with Roman Catholicism or the Montreal Canadiens with French Canadian community for example), I still expected to find some cultural elements in supporter's associations with their club.

The identity that the Internet appears to sustain, create and manipulate is more straightforward having to do with fandom. Sugden and Bairner (1993) suggest that football potentially can bring people together regardless of age, gender, nationality, class, religious and ethnic affiliation and political belief. Exploring whether or not mediated football (on the Internet) had these same powers was not possible given the lack of apparent cultural heterogeneity on the lists. The lists did however provide a large community of diverse nationalities, suggesting that indeed that football on the Internet can potentially foster the commonality Sugden and Bairner (1993) allude to.

These retrospective observations lead me to what might have been done differently had I the opportunity to pursue this line of research again. When reviewing the literature on sport-related identities, I was not cognizant of the inadequacy of using sociological categorization to describe what are in essence online communities. Existing research on individual identity in the context of a global society that no longer takes for granted fixed identities, suggests that categories such as gender, race, class etc. are inadequate because they do not describe groups and individuals whose affiliations (and consequently identities)

are short-lived “networks of affinity, interest and neighborhood” (Lury, 1996, p. 252). Arguably, the two lists are examples of such ‘short lived networks.’ As a result, I think it would have been more fruitful to regard identity from a broader perspective. In the case of those who communicated by e-mail, Internet-associated identity was something that as well as being impacted by culture, history and the expansionism of the globalized phenomenon (English football), was characterized by emotional and geographical ties to both sport as a symbolic representative, and the city in which teams played.

One possible explanation for the lack of cultural identifiers encountered online is found in the work of Hakken (1999). Hakken has suggested that “visions of identity” (p. 88) that are produced online are disengaged from cultural processes since technology enables a “postmulticultural” (p. 88) scenario free from sociocultural determinants. Such constructions, it’s argued, are supplanted by “people being judged by what they say rather than judged in terms of who they are perceived to be” (p.88). Thus, without the apparency of cultural attachment, and only the locality of the user available, the Internet facilitated identity construction and maintenance relatively free from constructions of cultural identity. This said, further investigation could examine much of the reasoning behind why a mere 10% of responding Saintslistees and 4% of United respondents were female.

The decentered nature of the e-mail lists suggests that the Internet affects identities in the way it expands the boundaries from which groups and individuals can ‘locate’ themselves and yet also amplify opportunities for

procuring this identity from a local phenomenon. The examples used here illustrate that the Internet can transfer the experience of the local 'football supporter experience' to anyone, anywhere with Internet access and thus impact their identity both socially (through the group) and culturally (through the mass-culture content of discussions). A further observation about online identities is that they appear to be a source of security. Holmes has said that "as a substitute for the world, the computer becomes a second self. We can organize our own world on the desktop, arranging everything according to our own private sense of order and, no matter how chaotic the world becomes, we can return to the safety of our terminal, thinking of ourselves more and more in its image " (1997, p. 34). Thinking beyond the terminal itself, the online community is a space that individuals can claim the persona and character they wish relatively anonymously. Consequently, the way that the Internet makes possible the arrangement of one's identity appears flexible, yet tied to the content, images and words of the online community. The point here is that identities can to an extent be assumed or abandoned virtually at will (pun intended).

Cohen (1985) has posited that it is symbols around which community, or a shared sense of belonging is generated. He argues that sport can contribute to this process by exciting allegiances and fostering unity through its' shared rituals. I think that in the case of the lists, the Internet impacts this process of community strongly. The lists are an ideal forum to generate this 'shared sense of belonging' by concentrating the identities of listees into a forum of like-minded individuals. The list discussions as a whole revolve around the team, and the

affairs and events of 11 men on a field who act as the symbol around which a social identity is formed. This then underlines how the lists act to sustain existing sportified identities, the forum generates 'belonging' and 'excites allegiance' by providing an outlet for the constant expression of one's identity.

Beyond the preservation of one's sportified social identity, the list also facilitates community. Morley and Robins (1995) have argued that new communications media have the potential to transcend differences between cultures and societies. Although sports fandom is not a part of their discussion, nor does sports fandom equate in severity with the sorts of transcendence to which they refer, I believe the ability of the lists to penetrate borders (through spaces of transmission) and consequently bring together divergent societies is a small-scale indicator that new media technologies such as the Internet indeed have a potential role to play in nurturing harmony whilst the globalization of media expands.

This sense of community and common identification that revolves around a mixture of football fandom and online socializing comprise one type of Internet-associated identity. The other Internet-associated identity available to list users sees the commercial and cosmopolitan elements of the sportified identity exacerbated. Rather than a social or civic identity being fostered by the Internet, the corporate production of both professional sport and Internet media is what is propagated online and consequently influencing the identity of the sports fan.

What Coelho (1998) refers to as the 'cultural plasticity' of football is evident amongst many of the sport's fans online. Where civic or regional identification with a club has found to be a very important reason behind supporting a club, it has not been the only one. The Internet is a medium that incorporates many other media. Newspapers post their content online, video is available for streaming, and radio broadcasts are also accessible. What makes this form of media distinct from traditional platforms though is its interactivity. As well as being able to consume these media, one is able to respond to them, interpret them, and be a part of it. Thus, just like football, there is a certain 'plasticity' or malleability to it. The consequence of this is that there is no single way that the Internet modifies or creates an individual's identity. Each sports fan/consumer uses the Internet for different purposes and their interpretations of the medium and its' content are thus unique. For the case studies however and how listees' identities were sustained and manipulated, there is an identifiable trend.

The maintenance of identity online is dependent on the context and content of the lists, and the geographical location of its' users. Where this content was international in scope and concerned a local identity consumed by its global context (Manchester list), identity is manipulated into a more commercialized form for those who are unable to separate the history and tradition of the club from its new consumer orientation in the 'new football' model. Where the list concerned itself with local issues and 'new football' from a 'post-fan' perspective, there was a more romanticized version of identity

maintained. For those who utilized the list as an additional way to sustain their fandom, the lists' malleability garnered listees an opportunity to discuss traditional customs and the roots of the club, all romanticized aspects of what is really an increasingly commodified sports product. The differences in how the Internet effected the identity of those on the lists then, was contingent upon the context and content of each.

Both lists share in common the case of the Internet globalizing the 'local.' Without success and subsequent media attention, small and relatively undistinguished sports teams like Southampton are not easily available for groups and individuals abroad to either consume or take interest in. The Internet serves to bring the local experience of supporting a team into the international realm on a regular basis and provides a means for those abroad to interpret and experience the sociological 'other' in a sporting context.

The bulk of past sociological analysis devoted to football has focussed on violence and hooliganism (Moorehouse, 1998). In his writing on the direction of future football research, Moorehouse contends that there is a lack of work devoted to both local football and its fans (not its hooligans). I hope that this small study in some way contributes to this gap in the literature. Giulanotti states, "The post-fans of the 1990s and beyond represent a new and critical kind of football spectator keen to produce and consume a variety of football media" (1999, p. 169). These 'post-fans' and their reflective cynicism and collective use of the Internet represent a new type of fan and open new doors into sociological research opportunities. Far removed from studies on hooliganism and general

violence in football, 'post-fandom' provides the prospect of research analyzing the dynamic between social identity and sport, and the corporate control of the sport institutions (teams and leagues) that individuals identify with and through.

Claims have been made that the Internet reflects social reality and is not a utopian medium for democratic information exchange and consensus making (see Robins, 1996, Shields, 1996, and Holmes, 1997). The comparative case study used here leads me to agree with this assessment. Each list's processes are a microcosm of the character that each club and its respective fans exhibit. While there are ways that identities can be altered and sustained through the Internet that may not be otherwise available, for the most part these identities are comprised of pre-existing social elements.

One listee eloquently captured the essence of the Southampton list in particular:

Saintslist is a bit like a neural net or perhaps a cooperative colony, individuals send in their thoughts and information is read by the whole membership, this information modifies each individual's opinions and sometimes triggers responses from them and so on until a consensus of opinion is formed (or sometimes it diverges or polarizes). (SSCS0301).

The consequence of this process of information dissemination on Saintslist is that identities seem to be formed more so through the content of this information than through the medium itself. This finding is contrary to the Manchester list where in the McLuhanist (1998 & 1989) sense, the medium is reflective of the nature of the message. Here, the sterile experience of faceless communication manifested itself in primarily through minimal conversation and

frequent re-postings of mainstream media stories and news reports. On Saintslist, the medium is for the most part, re-creating a 'digital pub,' a conversational area online that re-creates what already exists in reality. As Shields puts it:

A clearer case can be made for the claim that that as a populist media, the Net is a microcosm of social reality and that Net relations imitate and intimate real life. Clearly the Net blurs the boundaries between 'reality' and 'virtuality,' but rather than reveling in the idea of ratiocination, we suggest that ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny: on the Net one may try to do things differently, but too often we end up plugging in the same old attitudes (Shields, 1996, p. 126).

Tony Clarke (British Member of Parliament and a football club director) has sarcastically said "Manchester United should move to London to bring them into closer contact with their fan base" (Clarke, 2000, p. 226). All kidding aside, he raises a serious concern as to how their corporate culture continues to leave their community roots behind in favour of appealing to a larger market base outside the city itself. Should these trends continue, identities attached to professional sport (both via the Internet and otherwise) will increasingly be commercialized and de-culturalized. How the Internet facilitates this will be dependent upon its future. Web sites have both the capacity to proliferate corporate interests and to allow for bottom-up sports fandom and advocacy. Online forums such as the lists examined here have the potential to reflect whatever values and associated identities its users desire. For instance, if Manchester listees wished to limit discussions to only matters pertaining to the city, the players etc., in a more conversational manner, then this could be

achieved by regulating what can and cannot be discussed. However, at the moment these lists are reflective of the clubs' orientation as a whole and consequently impact listees' identities accordingly.

This research has stimulated several ideas and related questions that could be examined further. Firstly, a more detailed analysis of how amateur sports organizations could apply the components of community and discussion that the Internet can provide to their own needs would be useful. Related to this idea, an examination of how sport, both amateur and professional, is portrayed online may be insightful given the differences in the interactivity of the medium compared to print media or television.

If further research examining online sportified identities was to be carried out a number of new elements could be incorporated. This study looked only at a single professional sports league and just two sets of supporters. If a similar questionnaire and observational analysis could be achieved with a greater number of teams, especially in a greater range of divisions or even countries, perhaps a more accurate reflection of online identity formation and manipulation could be attained. A broader analysis would be even more useful in a few years when the social ramifications of online communications and media have been explored in more depth. Within just a few years, the character of the online world may be increasingly regulated, or perhaps centralized by the control of a few major corporate media interests. As a result, the ways in which groups and individuals identify with sport online may change dramatically.

APPENDIX A



Université d'Ottawa • University of Ottawa

Cabinet du vice-recteur
à la recherche

Office of the Vice-Rector,
Research

Stuart Kemp
School of Human Kinetics
Montpetit Hall
Intra

March 7th, 2001

Dear Mr. Kemp:

You will find enclosed the Health Sciences and Science Research Ethics Board Certification for your research project *Finding the back of the net: Football and identities in the age of the Internet* (File H02-01-03). If you have any questions, please contact me at 562-5800 extension 1787.

Sincerely,

Lise Frigault
Protocol officer for ethics in research
Tabaret Hall, room 246

c.c. Jean Harvey

APPENDIX B

- 1 In what city/town and country do you reside?**
- 2 Do you have any family, personal connection or another noteworthy tie to the city of Southampton/Manchester?**
- 3 If you live abroad, what other ways do you keep apprised of club activities other than through the Internet?**
- 4 For what purposes do you use the Internet with regards to the team (to get information, to buy tickets, to communicate with other fans, etc.)?**
- 5 How often do you use the Internet for these purposes?**
- 6 Do you identify with the team/club? If so, to what extent? Why do you identify with the team?**
- 7 Is the Internet (the list) your main source of interaction with the team/club? If so, why? If not, what is?**

APPENDIX C

My name is Stuart Kemp and I've been a quiet member of this list for some time and I read everyone's opinions, comments and everything else that is sent out every day. I use the list as my primary source of info on the club (other than watching games on TV and listening to Internet broadcasts) as I live in Ottawa, Canada. When I'm not following the trials and tribulations of the club, I'm a Masters student at the University of Ottawa in the School of Human Kinetics. Currently I'm writing my thesis under the supervision of Dr. Jean Harvey and looking at how the Southampton FC/Manchester United list confirms and spreads a local/global identity abroad via the Internet.

I'd be extremely grateful if you could spare a few minutes to answer the following questions as best you can and return them to me at footballsurvey@hotmail.com or stukemp@hotmail.com. Participation is voluntary, I can assure you that I will not use your name in any published results. You should feel completely free to participate, if you are not interested in completing the questionnaire, please disregard this message. To ensure anonymity I will also delete all identifying information such as your e-mail address. Substituting your name with a code will identify each questionnaire. I will be happy to provide results of the survey to you individually at your request, upon completion of the study.

Responding to this questionnaire in full or in part is indicative that you both agree to participate freely and understand that your responses will remain confidential as only myself and my supervisor will have access to your answers. No harms are present in this research but benefits include understandings into how sport-associated identities are formed and transformed by the Internet, and impacted by processes of globalization. This study has complied with the University of Ottawa's Ethics Review Board, and concerns or comments can be directed to the contacts below.

Feel free to elaborate as much as you like and/or contact me directly off-list with any questions or concerns, not to the entire list.

Thanks for your help and interest,

Stuart

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APPENDIX D

Dear (List Administrator),

My name is Stuart Kemp and I have been a quiet subscriber to this list for some time. I am also a Masters student in the School of Human Kinetics at the University of Ottawa, Canada. With the intention of combining both my interests in football with my studies, I'd very much like to send the following brief questionnaire to the list. Before doing this however, I wanted to gain your approval, to make sure it's in line with list rules. As you can read in the following note and questions I'd like to send to the list, my intentions are strictly research related and I'd be happy to provide more information if you like.

Thank you,

Stuart Kemp stukemp@hotmail.com

APPENDIX E

Southampton FC Discussion List

From: saintslist@yahoogroups.com
To: saintslist@yahoogroups.com
Subject: [saintslist] File - listrules.txt
Date: 28 Jan 2001 09:02:23 -0000

Saintslist - The E-mail List for fans of Southampton Football Club on the Internet.

This list has no official sanction from Southampton Football Club

This list is moderated by ***, ***** and *****, 3 long standing listees who try to moderate the list as best they can. Please bear in mind that they do this for the benefit of all listees on a voluntary basis. This message gives important information and guidelines about using this list, so please read them carefully.**

**To Subscribe/Unsubscribe from this list.
 How to send a message to the list.
 Do's and Do Nots
 In the event of a problem.**

SUBSCRIBING

**To subscribe to the list, send a blank e-mail to:
 saintslist-subscribe@yahoogroups.com**

**To unsubscribe from the list send a blank email to:
 saintslist-unsubscribe@yahoogroups.com**

By blank we mean no subject or title and no actual body of text, the only thing that is required is the "to" address.

Once you are subscribed you can change your preferred method of receiving the list by sending an e-mail to:

**saintslist-nomail@yahoogroups.com / change delivery setting to "web only"
 saintslist-digest@yahoogroups.com / change delivery setting to "digest"
 saintslist-normal@yahoogroups.com / change delivery setting to "individual emails"
 saintslist-help@yahoogroups.com / receive basic group information**

Please note. Only list members may post to the list, this means that the list will for the most part be free from spam, but it also means that you may not post to the list from home or from a friend's computer if you are only

subscribed at work and vice versa.

SENDING MESSAGES

To send a message to the list, simply address your message to saintslist@yahoogroups.com.

Do's and Don'ts.

Do make sure your message is Saints related.

Do make sure your message is in plain text and not html or rich text format. (Outlook Express users in particular need to check this setting - if in doubt ask the duty moderator)

Do edit replies to messages sent to the list to cut out all unnecessary text, this is to cut down on wasted bandwidth, but more importantly makes your message easier to read.

Do make sure you read all messages before replying to a question, there is a strong chance that someone may have answered already. Try and avoid duplication where possible.

Do be considerate of other listees.

Do have fun and enjoy the list.

Do Nots

Do not send attachments to the list (pictures or sound files) under any circumstances.

Do not try to discuss non-Saints related events.

Do not send "test - please ignore" messages to the list.

Do not send virus warning messages to the list. Send them to Saintslist-owner@yahoogroups.com for the moderator to consider if any action needs to be taken.

Do not send "witty" one line replies or puns to the list. The vast majority of listees find them irritating. Bear in mind that many people on the list have to pay for what they download

Do not send direct abuse to people on the list. If you wish to argue, do it off list.

Do not put scores, swearing or rude words in the subject header of your message.

Do not try to use the list for commercial gain.

If you have Saints-related commercial information/offers, please email saintslist-owner@yahoogroups.com for permission before sending it to the list.

Do not "spam" the list.

If the above rules seem heavy handed, then maybe Saintslist is not for you.

Whilst the list generally polices itself, it does sometimes become necessary for the duty list moderator to step in and take a firm line with some listees.

Failure to read and comply with the above rules may result in a listee either being suspended entirely from the list (red card, in extreme cases), have their posting rights suspended/given a warning (yellow card)for constant anti social behavior.

PROBLEMS

If you have any problems, send a message to saintslist-owner@yahoogroups.com and the duty moderator will do his best to help you. Please do not send your problem to the list itself.

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Send a blank e-mail to:

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saintslist-unsubscribe@yahoogroups.com FOR UNSUBSCRIBE

saintslist-owner@yahoogroups.com for HELP

saintslist-nomail@yahoogroups.com set to "web only"

saintslist-digest@yahoogroups.com change to "digest"

saintslist-normal@yahoogroups.com change to "normal"

saintslist-help@yahoogroups.com to receive basic info

Manchester United Football Club Discussion List

Admin:

red11.orgE-mail: admin@mufc.dk

This is a debate list for worldwide supporters to discuss any subject related to Old Trafford – A Theatre Of Dreams Members can share their views, story's or personal match reports by open debate. Anything goes, apart from bad language or personal attacks.

For more information:

<http://www.red11.org/list>

Post message:

MUFc@yahoogroups.com

Subscribe:

MUFc-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Unsubscribe:

MUFc-unsubscribe@yahoogroups.com

List owner:

MUFc-owner@yahoogroups.com

URL to this page:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/MUFc>

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