

Changing Rhythms: Media and Globalisation in the English Premier League

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## **Dedication**

To the numerous people that I have watched football with over the years, from Turkish men's clubs in Toronto to pubs in London, whose comments, experiences and thoughts helped shaped this project.

## Abstract

This dissertation, *Changing Rhythms: Media and Globalisation in the English Premier League*, focuses on two interrelated questions: 1) what are the consequences of globalising the English Premier League, acknowledging that to understand the globalisation of the English Premier League is to fundamentally understand its mediapoly and 2) how has the English Premier League's media policy managed the tension between its globalisation strategy and the embodied rituals associated with English soccer culture. In answering these questions, I argue that the current League structure, while it has been of financial benefit to some, has failed to sustain its founding mission of enhancing the English national team and of improving the experiences of supporters. It is unquestionably true that the League's media policy, through its international broadcasting strategy, has brought more supporters to the game, but this pursuit of international supporters has risked alienating local communities.

Through archival research and an analysis of policy documents, I argue that advances in media technologies and changes in broadcasting policy have allowed the English Premier League to increase both its revenue and global presence, but this global initiative has had profound effects on how English supporters relate to their teams (which have traditionally been deeply embedded within their community). In addition, to changes in broadcasting policy, the structure of the Premier League has been made possible by changes to European Union labour laws that have, unintentionally, posed challenges to the League's structure by, in conjunction with media policy, creating new

opportunities for international players. These new migration flows are at the centre of debates over the future of the English national team.

As the League expands, global fan bases have developed whose only experience of the League has come through its mediatisation. While the League risks alienating local supporters, I suggest that there is also an opportunity to build affective supporter communities outside the local communities where the clubs are located through the development of new television-based forms of supporter rituals. As such, I see the potential of temporal practices as the key to understanding the mediatised rituals, which supporters, both locally and globally, develop. In conclusion, I argue that it might be time for a new model within the Premier League, one that firmly places football as a matter of cultural policy with a re-emphasis placed on the interests of supporters rather than those of the League governing structure, club owners and satellite television.



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## Chapter 1

### **A Game of More than Two Halves? Football from Multiple Perspectives**

In 2012, the English Premier League (EPL) celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. In seeking to capture the last twenty years of play, the Premier League chose to celebrate achievements on the field, honouring players, managers and teams that had come to define the Premier League era. Yet with the exception of a few newspapers, little of the celebration focused on off-field developments, namely what changes to the sport in England the Premier League had wrought. Rather, the English Premier League, or as the most recent branding effort suggests, the Barclay's Premier League (BPL), has been presented as a fully developed and perfectly formed fait accompli. Yet these efforts to uncritically fête the English Premier League serve to obscure both the history of English football that came before and, more crucially, the acrimony that attended the creation of the league. Instead, the league's development has been marked by a number of challenges from various stakeholders (the Football League, Football Clubs, and supporters to name a few) and the outcomes of these challenges have reverberated beyond the English Premier League itself. Twenty years on, it might be time to ask, what does the Premier League mean beyond what happens on the pitch? The English Premier League did not evolve organically, but was rather the result of a series of choices, both deliberate (like the formatting of the league) and unintended (like the League's need to respond to changes to labour laws within the European Union).

It is these choices and decisions that are the focus of this dissertation. While it seems difficult to imagine at this juncture, the Premier League did not have to evolve and develop in the ways that it did. This project seeks to excavate these choices as way to

answer two interrelated questions: 1) What are the consequences of globalising the English Premier League, acknowledging that to understand the globalisation of the English Premier League is to fundamentally understand its mediapoly<sup>1</sup> and 2) how has the English Premier League's media policy managed the tension between its globalisation strategy and the embodied rituals associated with English football culture. At the heart of this tension is an effort to manage how the global strategy orients itself to the temporal dynamic of football rituals. Yet, the globalisation strategy of the English Premier League has given rise to other critical tensions that remain unresolved and even exacerbated twenty years later. In particular, there has been an increasingly heated debate over the English national team itself. Founded as a way to improve the fortunes of the English national team, the English Premier League no longer claims this as its main mission. On this measure, the League has failed miserably. As a result, the Premier League and the Football Association no longer share the same vision, and the role and meaning of the English national team has become less clear.

As the financial fortunes of the Premier League have grown, so too has the League's ability to attract the world's best players, regardless of where they were born. Enabled by changes to European labour law, in only twenty-years, the Premier League has gone from a League in which only eleven players were born outside of Great Britain<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> By focusing exclusively on the interrelationship between football and television, I acknowledge that I myself may be guilty of the kind of ahistory of which I accuse the Premier League. It is not my intention to ignore or erase the important role that both print media and radio have played and continue to play in the development of football in England. While radio continues to be an important medium for listening to the game for supporters within the United Kingdom, my focus on television helps to bring into focus how the adoption and evolution of television's relationship with the Premier League underpins the League's development and globalisation strategy. While radio can also cross borders, it has been television, which has spurred the global growth of the Premier League.

<sup>2</sup> With respect to Great Britain, there is often a lot of slippage when considering who counts or does not count as foreign. This is largely due to the fact that while players born in Great Britain hold British Citizenship, in the context of football, they are considered as a member of their respective home nation. For

to one in which 66.1% of players (327 out of 495) are foreign born (“Foreign Player Statistics” 2012/2013). As a result, new questions are being raised about labour within the English Premier League. While the presence of international players has undoubtedly contributed to the excitement of the Premier League, signified by the high number of international players who won the twentieth anniversary awards, there is an increasing fear that what is good for the Premier League in this area is damaging the English national team by limiting the opportunity for young English players to develop and play at the highest level. The labour question has been rendered more complicated by the presence of competing policy stakeholders. The movement of foreign labour into the English Premier League was enabled by changes from the supra-national European Union. In response to the failures of the English national team, the British government has made noises suggesting that they would like to intervene and limit the number of foreign players in the game, yet the British government has no agency in this area as they are bound by European Union legislation.

These tensions speak to the complicated and often contradictory position that football currently occupies within England. Football has historically been intimately tied to its communities (in the case of club football) and/or an embodied representation of the nation (in the case of the English national team). As a result, the British government has intervened at key moments. This intervention has taken shape as specific policies (in particular the development of the Listed Events list) and commentary from members of parliament concerned with the fortunes of clubs within their constituencies. While at this juncture, interventions on the part of the British government have been limited; the

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example, a Scottish player playing in England would be a British citizen, yet in a football context, they could be seen as a foreign player because they would most likely play for the Scottish, rather than English national team.

current development of the Premier League certainly opens up the question as to whether the British government may feel pushed by the English public to intervene further and more forcefully.

Improvements in media technologies (particularly the growth of satellite television) has made it possible to view the English Premier League anywhere in the world and clubs are becoming increasingly reliant on television revenues instead of revenue from the stadium. While the stadium may be declining in financial import, there continues to be an emphasis placed on experiencing the match in live real time, regardless of where the supporter is viewing the match. The rapid expansion of the Premier League, enabled by satellite television, has contributed to a spatial displacement of support. Given the spatial displacement that television enables, new supporter rituals are developing around the matches. Whereas the rituals would have at one time been built around the journey to and from the stadium, in addition to the experience within the stadium, television is giving rise to new ritual expressions of support whether it is in the pub or in the living room. In order to succeed, broadcasters must create the impression that these new television-oriented supporter rituals have the same import as those enacted by supporters in the stadium. Despite the spatial displacement that television creates, global supporters are still orienting themselves to English time by watching the matches in real time, which provides a common experience that transcends borders. It is through this emphasis on shared match time that supporter rituals develop and it is these rituals which bind supporter communities together. By focusing on key policy moments in the development of the EPL, it is possible to see how mediatization, and in particular its

temporal aspects, makes possible the development of new and, in some cases, global supporter rituals.

My research contributes to a growing body of literature in media studies that focuses on the relationship between television and sport. Previous work in this area has focused on two main issues: how supporters have adjusted to television as their primary viewing medium (Williams 1994; Whannel 2002) and how television uses technology to sell itself as the ultimate viewing experience (Sandvoss 2003; Boyle and Haynes 2004). This work has been invaluable to the following project, but my contribution works to understand many of the ripple effects that the relationship between television and football has brought, in terms of both policy and the expansion of viewing space beyond England itself. By bringing in a focus on how the development of the Premier League has intersected with policy decisions from a number of major stakeholders including the British government and the governing football authorities in England (the Football Association and the Football League), it is possible to see the effects that football broadcasting has beyond the Premier League itself.

This also allows for a greater consideration of how labour in sport intersects directly with its mediated form. While there is an extensive and growing body of literature on the relationship between football and international labour migration (Maguire and Pearton 2000; Lafranchi and Taylor 2001; Magee and Sugden 2002; Darby, Akindes and Kirwin, 2007; Darby 2007; Elliott and Maguire 2008; Littlewood, Mullen and Richardson, 2011), my project seeks to consider this migration specifically within a media context. The movement of international players has been enabled in large part by changes in European Union labour laws, but the fact that so many players have taken up

the opportunities presented by these changes has been made possible by the growth of the television audience. In this light, my project considers the ways in which athletic labour is increasingly intersecting with media labour and how this has created new tensions between both the League and the national team.

Putting football labour into conversation with media labour also points to the ways in which issues within sport can have far reaching consequences. Changes to British media policy created the environment in which it became possible for the newly formed Premier League to partner with the emerging satellite television market in Britain. The question of access to English football on television has hung over the Premier League since its inception. At important moments, often in relation to the English national team and the impact of foreign players on English football, the questions of who should play in and be able to watch the Premier League have been framed as an issue of national cultural import. As such, this project argues for a more inclusive understanding of cultural policy that takes into account the critical role that sports play. English football is intimately tied to notions of community and national identity and has wide-ranging cultural importance that may require more direct policy interventions, including media policy. A clearer engagement with football within a cultural framework allows for a more productive consideration of recent moves from the British government, namely the Football Governance select committee, to more clearly intervene in debates over the Premier League's future.

Football's role in the community is often enacted through rituals that arise around the watching of the match. In the stadium, rituals may develop around pre- and post-match meetings in the pub, singing and waving of flags during the match and the

interaction with supporters that are seated in the same area. With the move towards television spectatorship, numerous scholars have written about how the television experience changes supporters' experiences of the match (Sandvoss, 2003; Weed, 2006, 2007, 2008). This project contributes to work in this area by placing football's mediated rituals within a media rituals framework. While the media rituals literature (Couldry, 2003; Cottle, 2006; Couldry and Rothenbuhler, 2007; Cottle, 2008) has not directly addressed football, the experience of supporters who watch football on television are ritualised in particular ways that suggest an attachment to both their teams and the televisual experience. By placing football supporter rituals within a media rituals framework, this project addresses the experiences of supporters living overseas. While international supporters have been targeted by the English Premier League's expansion, little attention has been paid to the actual experiences of these supporters. Rather than standing in opposition to the experience of domestic supporters, the media rituals associated with viewership bridge the domestic and international supporter experience through a parallel experience of the kick-off time. Supporters are united through their mutual experience of the real-time match. As a result, the time of the match becomes a unifying thread that can help mediate the spatial dispersal of those watching the match. The development of these new television supporter rituals serves as examples of how the global broadcasting strategy of the Premier League has reverberated beyond the League's goals. While the League has never explicitly outlined their vision for how international broadcasting gets taken up amongst fan communities, these new rituals and communities serve to illustrate how the Premier League's global reach has manifested itself.



Towards these ends, this dissertation draws on a number of bodies of critical literature. The first examines the relationship between nations, globalisation and the media. The relationships between these three concepts are critical to this project in providing the framework for understanding how globalisation functions in relation to the televising of the Premier League and how this is changing supporters' relationships to their clubs and/or the England national team. The second examines the construction of English identity as a means of explicating why football comes to occupy such an important role in English discourses both in and outside of football. The third examines in more detail previous work in media studies on the relationship between television and sport. This literature provides the basis for this project's perspective on how broadcasting has shaped of the English Premier League. The fourth surveys how work in the sociology of sport has treated the relationship between globalisation and sport, in particular, its impact on national identity and attitudes towards visible minorities. The fifth examines the growing work that is being done in the area of cultural policy as a way of framing my argument for football's inclusion within this literature.

### **Nations, globalisation and media**

Benedict Anderson's (1983/2006) work *Imagined Communities* offers a framework for understanding the relationship between the development of national identity and media consumption. For Anderson, national communities are imagined communities because they rely on the affective bonds that exist between neighbours. However, not all communities can be constructed as national communities. An imagined national community is one that is both limited and sovereign, and thus has some attachment to a geographic space (Anderson, 1983/2006, p. 3). Anderson's conception of

the imagined community is useful because it does not require congruence between the nation and the state. While the national community imagines itself in relation to a geographic space, this space can be contested (as in the case of sub-state nationalist movements in Scotland and Catalunya) or be one in which the members are not geographically present (as in the case of diasporic groups). For Anderson, the development of these imagined communities was enabled largely through media production, specifically newspapers. The development of daily newspapers allowed members of the imagined community to feel connected to one another through the experience of parallel time, which he sees as the knowledge that one is engaged in the same activity as other members of the community. Thus, a sense of national identity is built through the experience and knowledge of shared rituals.

Anderson's conception of the imagined community as both limited and sovereign does not necessarily map perfectly onto football, but it does provide a useful framework for understanding how the game operates in some ways. While club football teams are not themselves nations (although some can become strong sites of regional or sub-state national affiliation) since they are neither territorially limited nor sovereign, they do create a feeling of imagined relations amongst supporters of a particular team through rituals. In fact, the imagined communities of club football teams exist without borders, particularly as the worldwide fan base for the sport grows, and it is the fluidity of borders that is often at the heart of local supporters' anxiety and fear over their team's global expansion. Local supporters are concerned with how their community will be re-imagined in the face of new global pressures. Anderson's idea of the imagined community and the experience of parallel time, as will be discussed in chapter five, also

helps provide a framework for understanding how supporters in different communities build a sense of shared supporter identification through the enactment of shared media (in this case, television) rituals.

James Carey (2002) shares Anderson's interest in the relationship between the nation and media. For Carey, nations live within both space (defined geographically) and time (bounded by history). He also sees the importance of media in creating a sense of national community. He writes, "this is the psychology of the nation as sociological organism that moves calendrically through homogenous time: a solid community, invisible and anonymous, united by a shared reality existing under the date of a newspaper or the dailiness of television broadcasts" (2002, p. 200). Due to the important role that media plays in creating the nation, Carey argues that nations now live in media space and, not only historical time, but also media time. Media time becomes critical to understanding how societies are organised as it comes to displace "...both liturgical time and natural time and provided temporal architecture of daily life" (2002, p. 205). Our experience of media comes to determine the organisation and structure of everyday life. The notion of media time can help to explain how the experience of football on television has meaning for supporters in ways that are similar to the experiences of those within the stadium. Media time helps to make clear the ways in which the global practices of supporters help bind them to both their clubs and other supporters.

The possibilities for the English Premier League outside of England have been enabled through larger processes of globalisation. The meaning of globalisation, in particular as it relates to the nation and media has been the subject of much scholarly work. Saskia Sassen (1998) offers a definition of globalisation as "economic

globalisation has mostly been represented in terms of duality of the nation – global when the global gains power and advantages at the expense of the national” (p. IX). This illuminates how the processes of globalisation engage with the global and national at various points in ways that are not static or fixed. Sassen is interested in the ways in which cities get taken up as a site of analysis within the discourse of globalisation, in particular in relation to the movement of global labour. Sassen, in her later work, names this process of globalisation as “denationalisation” which she defines as the:

Historicising categorisation with the double intent of de-essentialising the national by confining it to a historically specific configuration and making it a reference point by positing that its enormous complexity and large capture of society and the geopolity make it a strategic site for the transformation—the latter cannot simply come from the outside. (2006/2008, p. 423)

What Sassen (2006/2008) makes clear is that while she sees globalisation as bound up with a process of denationalisation, this does not mean that the nation-state has lost its import in the process. As she shows throughout the book, many of the organisations seen as products of globalisation continue to articulate themselves to the nation-state system (for the example, the WTO). Instead of a complete collapse of the nation-state, Sassen uses the language of de-assemblage and re-assemblage. This allows her to capture the way that de-nationalisation in some areas can also lead to re-nationalisation in others (she uses the example of the ways in which parts of the economy can be de-nationalised at the same time that immigration gets re-nationalised) (2006/2008, p.2). Sassen’s (2006/2008) view of globalisation captures one of the key contradictions present in the Premier League’s current juncture. On the one hand, the League’s broadcasting and labour

strategy seem to point towards an erasure of the import of English borders. Yet on the other hand, the continued importance placed on the English national team and the growing rhetoric around the presence of foreign players points to the ways in which the League remains (perhaps, stubbornly) nationalised.

Richard Giulianotti and Roland Robertson (2009) in their key text, *Globalization & Football*, borrow from Robertson's previous work to define globalization as:

...a concept that 'refers both to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole'. To put this statement in another way: globalization is characterized by increased global interconnectedness, or *connectivity* (for example, through greater migration and digital communication); and by stronger forms of *globality*, as people are increasingly reflexive about the world per se. (p. xi)

The authors use this definition as a means of placing football at the centre of an analysis of globalisation processes. For them, major football events, like the World Cup, become critical sites of understanding both connectivity and global consciousness (Giulianotti and Robertson, 2009, p. xi). Football becomes a means through which connectivity is possible and normalised. They argue that this connectivity exists in ways that might not exist in other social realms (Giulianotti and Robertson, 2009, p. xi). Giulianotti and Robertson use the examples of British clubs' participation in European club competitions at a time when there was deep scepticism over European integration or of matches played between two militarily or diplomatically warring countries during international competition (2009, p. xi). What Giulianotti and Robertson (2009) point to is the ways in which football is implicated as a major site of contestation and possibility for understanding processes of

globalisation. In particular, they point to the ways in which football creates the possibility for connectivity beyond the game itself.

Like Sassen, Arjun Appadurai (1996) places migration at the centre of his work on globalisation. To migration, Appadurai adds media to form, what he sees as the two constitutive features of modern subjectivity (1996, p. 3). For Appadurai, migration and media can no longer simply be bound within local, national or regional spaces. He is particularly concerned with what he calls the creation of diasporic public spheres, which challenge the dominance of the nation-state in determining social change (1996, p. 4). In order to develop his notion of diaspora, Appadurai relies on the idea of the imagination, which he argues is no longer confined to the space of art, myth and ritual. Rather, imagination can now be found in the space of everyday life. What becomes critical is the ways in which imagination moves beyond the individual into what Appadurai sees as imagination as a “property of collectives” (1996, p. 8). This becomes critical for “it is the imagination, in its collective forms, that creates the ideas of neighbourhood nationhood” (1996, p. 7). Appadurai (1996) specifically identifies sport, using the example of the Olympics, as a site where a collective experience of a mass-mediated event can create mass mediated solidarities. I would extend this argument beyond the Olympics to include the Premier League, which I would argue has become, like the Olympics, an international event that extends beyond nation-state borders. The English Premier League has the potential to take up Appadurai’s understanding of the possibilities for collective imagination through its stretching of local, regional and national borders. As chapter five will discuss, through the enactment of mediated match rituals, supporters outside England

and within England create a kind of mass-mediated solidarity, in which support for a localised club can extend that town's imagined space well.

Throughout his work, Appadurai (1990) uses the concept of scapes to help ground his understanding of the new global economy, which he sees as complex, disjunctive, overlapping and no longer fitting within traditional centre-periphery models. For Appadurai, scapes help to build the imagined world, "That is, the multiple worlds which are constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread around the globe" (1990, p. 7). He identifies five scapes: ethnoscapas, technoscapas, financescapas, mediascapas and ideoscapas. The scape that is most relevant to this project is the mediascape, which, for Appadurai (1990), refers:

...both to the distribution of the electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information (newspapers, magazines, television stations and film production studios), which are now available to a growing number of private and public interests throughout the world, and to the images of the world created by these media... What is most important about these mediascapas is that they provide (especially in their television, film and cassette forms) large and complex repertoires of images, narratives and ethnoscapas to viewers throughout the world, in which the world of commodities and the world of news and politics are profoundly mixed. (p. 9)

It is through media that ideas about nationhood circulate and, critically, cross state borders. Whereas Appadurai is thinking specifically in terms of already established diasporic groups, the televising of the English Premier League leaves open the possibility of circulating a national English ideal and/or connecting those in the English diaspora to

home. The work on the relationship between media, nations and globalisation helps to ground this project's understanding of the ways in which media comes to both structure everyday life and create and sustain national (and other forms of) community. I would like to now turn to this question of the meaning of English identity and how this identity does or does not include an embrace of visible minorities has evolved.

### **The making of England**

Given the often-complicated political and national relationship that commonly exists between the different communities within Great Britain, the question of Englishness and/or Britishness has often been fraught. Within this context, the English national team plays an important role as a national symbol, which illustrates why the fate of the national team was seen and continues to be seen as a critical issue for the Premier League. Focusing on work that considers the question of British/English identity during the 1990s/2000s (the Premier League era) helps provide a framework for what is at stake in the fight between the FA and Premier League over the development of the English national league. This literature also helps to illuminate how debates over the impact of foreign labour in the Premier League have consequences that extend beyond what happens on the pitch and enter into political discourses over the meaning of English identity.

In considering the meaning of English identity, a number of key themes emerge: inclusion/exclusion, the meaning of citizenship and rights, the question of Empire and England's position within the United Kingdom. Often these themes work in conjunction with one another, pointing to the complicated terrain of trying to understand the essence of Englishness. These debates became more prominent in the wake of decolonisation.



With the end of colonialism, a major component of British identity began to dissolve and in the 1970's, challenges to "Britishness" arose from both the home nations (Scottish and Welsh nationalism) and the emerging postcolonial consciousness. Emigration from former colonial countries in the post-WWII era was premised on the promise of a better life for the children of the immigrants in question. Instead, the second generation of post-colonial immigrants continued to face marginalisation and structural inequality that made their attempts to join the middle-class nearly impossible. Immigrant communities quickly became coded as threats to the health of the British nation.

Ian Baucom (1999) argues that from the 1707 Act of the Union with Scotland until the 1981 British Nationality Act, British citizenship was based on territory rather than genealogy. As a result, Baucom argues, "Englishness has consistently been defined through appeals to the identity-endowing properties of place," (1999, p. 4). As late as 1948, the British Nationality Bill declared that while commonwealth states could confer their own separate citizenship on its citizens, they still remained British subjects. Everyone born within British territory was guaranteed British citizenship including the right to move freely within British territory. The decades that followed began a long series of immigration laws that sought to restrict the access of commonwealth citizens to come to Britain proper, culminating in the 1981 British Nationality Act<sup>3</sup> (under Thatcher) that finally, as Baucom (1999) argues, divorced Britain from its Empire.

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<sup>3</sup> The 1981 British Nationality Act was the culmination of decades of wrangling over the legal, cultural and economic implications of British citizenship. The post-World War Two era ushered in decolonisation, which forced a serious re-examination of Britain's identity and its relationship to its former colonies. This anxiety over decolonisation and the loss of Empire often manifested itself in hostility towards immigrants from the former colonies. Whilst British nationality law until this point had drawn no distinction between the space of Britain and the space of homeland, there was a rising fear over immigration, particularly from the Caribbean. It was one thing for Afro-Caribbeans to be subjects "over there" but quite another for them to be subjects "at home." The 1981 British Nationality Act changed the previous definition of citizenship which emphasised subjecthood as the main criteria for belonging for one that was more based on blood and

This conception of British identity has also created problems for how Englishness has come to be understood. As Baucom (1999) writes, “like the theory of Britishness grounded in *ius soli*, localist conceptions of English identity, in both their subtler and more utilitarian forms, thus envisioned Englishness as an unbounded seriality, as something that was not immanent in the blood but was sort of “second nature,” as something that could be acquired, or lost” (p. 20). The meaning of English identity lacks a clear understanding, instead relying on a vague belief that one simply “knows” what it means to be English. As such, the English national team becomes particularly salient as one of the only material representations of what it means to be English. It becomes a clear symbol that can be pointed to as representing a clear vision of what (and who) England is.

The question of Empire is central to how many scholars have come to conceptualise multiculturalism. Paul Gilroy (2005) argues forcefully in his book *Postcolonial Melancholia* that Britain has a problem with how it relates to its imperial past, by seeming to lurch between a desire to forget the period and nostalgia for the better days that Empire represented. Gilroy (2005) rejects any attempt to try and forget Empire and argues instead that Britain cannot divorce itself from its imperial past. He stresses the importance of confronting the imperial past in order to understand how current multicultural relations have been shaped and also to challenge the current order of sovereignty that has emerged. Instead of multiculturalism, which he feels has lost its meaning, Gilroy (2005) uses the term *conviviality*, which he believes better captures the

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lineage (Baucom, 1999). Thus, those that were born in the British Commonwealth were no longer automatically afforded British citizenship.

ways in which cohabitation and interaction have made multiculturalism a fact of life for most people in Britain (p. xv).

Stuart Hall (2006) shares Gilroy's concern for geographic space in his lecture "Cosmopolitan Promises, Multicultural Realities." In this lecture, Hall is interested in how multiculturalism intersects with cities in the face of the globalisation of capital finance. According to Hall (2006), cities are always socially, economically, and culturally constituted, but also exist in the imaginary through regimes of representation. Under colonialism, the problems of difference were kept away from the imperial metropolises, but since the end of WWII and decolonisation, the movement from the periphery to the centre has reconfigured cities. Yet, as Hall (2006) points out, capitalism is the driving force behind and main beneficiary of this re-configuration of the city. What Hall seems to be suggesting is that there may be multiple forms of multiculturalism that exist, including one that is structured by class (2006, p. 45). Hall's distinction may speak to the ways in which international players in the Premier League exist in a liminal space. While, on the one hand, their 'foreignness' marks them as distinctly non-English bodies, their class position as highly mobile and high-wage earners does not necessarily allow for a solidarity with the experiences of other immigrant populations.

In 2000, Bhikhu Parekh led the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain, which released a report of its findings. The report develops the idea that Britain is a community of communities (Parekh, 2001, p. 694). The report argues that this is a more inclusive and responsive way of conceptualising identity because it sees citizens as both individuals within their chosen community, but also sees these communities as fostering a sense of collective identity that interacts with other communities (Parekh, 2000, p. 694).

The report does not see these communities as in conflict with one another, but rather wants to allow space for citizens to both identify with their community and as individuals depending on how they are feeling in a particular moment. As will be discussed in the next chapter, this represents an example of the kind of language popular with the New Labour government of ‘empowering’ citizens to exhibit choice. The most important conclusion that the Report develops is that in order to become a cohesive political community, Britain needs to do a better job of fostering a common sense of belonging amongst its diverse communities. One of the key elements of developing this cohesive community is that everyone is entitled to equal citizenship and that the values that underpin this collective sense of belonging are constantly being re-evaluated and contested within the public sphere (Parekh, 2000). As parts of this dissertation will show, football has become a key policy tool for trying to foster this sense of belonging between all communities and foster a sense of English national identity.

One of the central concerns in debates about British and/or English identity<sup>4</sup> is whether such an identity actually exists. Much of the literature has directly addressed whether there is even a cohesive sense of what is meant by British identity. Asari, Halikiopoulou and Mock (2008) argue that there has been a failure to produce a discourse that unites minority groups under a common British identity. They take the position that all countries are to a certain extent multicultural and thus the concept of multicultural citizenship is not new (Asari, Halikiopoulou and Mock, 2008, p. 8). For the authors, multiculturalism is by its nature inclusive, so it is up to the society to determine the extent

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<sup>4</sup> It is important to note that there has often been a lot of slippage between British and English as terms, with the idea that the two are often synonymous. This conflation has often been at the heart of the growing separatist movements in Scotland and Wales, which argue that when people say British identity, what they really mean is English identity.

of this inclusion (Asari, Halikiopoulou, and Mock, 2008). As a result, Asari, Halikiopoulou, and Mock (2008) argue that too much of English identity is based in Empire (which they also see as having been multicultural). The question of English identity and its relationship to Empire sees a lot of resonance with the English national football team, which is one of the only clear symbols of Englishness. The team itself gets overlaid with the imagery of British Empire and war. Gilroy (2005) shares his discomfort with the English national team because of these associations with white symbols of Empire and war. He looks especially at the England's favourite chant, which celebrates their two world wars and one world cup (this chant is most potent when directed at German supporters) (Gilroy, 2005).

Mark Perryman (1999) addresses this contradiction, suggesting that the English national team has acquired a central role in projecting what it means to be English (p. 19). This comes in large part because of the increased international visibility of the sport through international broadcasting, which gives England one of the few stages on which it gets to stand apart for the rest of Great Britain. Perryman (1999) argues that following the England national team is a way for England to discover itself as a nation (p. 20). However, Perryman is not advocating for a return to a 'Little Englander' mentality. Rather he is advocating for a new kind of England, or Ingerland as the team is often called, support that is less laden with history and more open to the various other groups that might now also be cheering for England (Perryman, 1999). Perryman represents a view of the potential for the English national team that stands in contrast to much of the criticism we will see in chapter three.

## **Television and sport**

The relationship between television and sport is becoming an increasingly popular area of study for a number of scholars. This literature has been critical for understanding the ways in which television has changed our experience of sporting events and the spaces in which we view them. Yet while television may create new modes of viewing, it is also contributing, as I argue, to the development of new ritual viewing practices that expand borders and create the possibility for new forms of community. Before I turn more explicitly to the relationship between sport and television, I would like to begin with Raymond Williams' early work on television flow as a way of framing how sports on television has been conceptualised.

Raymond Williams (1974/2008) was the first to address the question of television flow. Williams (1974/2008) argues that flow is the characteristic experience of broadcasting systems since it is the principle structure that is used to organise television broadcasts. Planned flow in television is both a technology and a cultural form (Williams, R., 1974/2008, p. 86). The role that flow plays as a technology in relation to sport can be seen to alter the game itself in particular ways (altering ideas about televisual vs. human perception, which will be discussed further) and as a cultural form in terms of the ways in which television alters how the game is now being experienced (stadium vs. pub vs. home). Whether sport should be constructed as a cultural form is a critical question that impacts policies around both government intervention and broadcasting. Williams (1974/2008) wants to emphasise that while television's appearance in the private sphere is significant, it is not its only defining characteristic. Rather it is also important to investigate how television offers us a sequence or sequences.

Williams identifies three kinds of examples of flow. The first refers to the sequence of programming that appears on a particular evening, afternoon, etc (Williams, 1974/2008, p. 97). The second is the flow of items between and within the sequence (Williams, R., 1974/2008, p.97). This is key to our viewing of television because it brings together what might be otherwise disparate items (ex. ads and programming). The third is the most detailed and related to the actual succession of words and images (Williams, R., 1974/2008, p.97). Williams sees flow as tied to a move for greater social and physical mobility—cultural expansion, but also a move towards a more consumer rather than a community-driven cultural organisation. Crucially, Williams (1974/2008) argues that flow turns collective experiences into individual ones (p. 88). This tension between the individual versus the collective experience will also become more explicit in discussions related to fan practices and rituals. While television may have its roots in a privatised family sphere, football and sports more generally, can render television a public event. This is becoming increasingly the case as football becomes more expensive to view on private television, pushing supporters towards the pub. Victoria E. Johnson (2009) argues that sports programming may in fact challenge the notion of flow in two ways. The first is that sports exist as a form of event television that disrupts normal programming (Johnson, 2009, p. 114). A sports match becomes a kind of must see event that a fan or supporter will make a point to tune in at the exact time of the game. The second is due to the unpredictable nature of sports (Johnson, 2009, p. 123). This makes it impossible to fit a sporting event into the television schedule perfectly. For example, a game going into overtime will disrupt an evening's planned flow. In this sense, sports programming may be provide a counterpoint to some aspects of Williams' conception of flow.

Mimi White (2002) provides an overview of the concept of flow that examines both Williams' conception (and its critics) as well as a second understanding of flow as a global exchange and movement of cultural products. White (2002) argues that this second notion of flow has emerged in the context of questions related to global mobility and tourism (p. 99). White explains that many of the first studies that emerged in the 1970s were more concerned with the distribution of television shows than with reception practices. The emphasis seemed to be on a belief that somehow understanding the global distribution of programming reveals something about international relations more generally. White's examination of flow in this context points to some of the tensions that globalisation raises within the relationship between the local and global in terms of whether the study of television needs to focus more on its localised context or whether the focus should be on a more global perspective.

While Williams' conception of flow has a lot to offer in terms of understanding how television schedules are developed, in the context of sport, and more specifically football, this second conception of global flow may be more useful for understanding how television and football intersect. Sinclair and Cunningham's (2000) study of diasporic flow demonstrates why this may be the case. They begin by surveying the work that has been done on migratory flows, arguing that it is wrong to see these as one-way flows (Sinclair and Cunningham, 2000, p. 13). Instead, it is important to see migratory flows as incorporating acts of resistance and negotiation in relation to the connection between the "host" and the "guest." Media becomes a key site for working out these processes. Sinclair and Cunningham use the literature on diaspora to develop this argument further. The authors note that the study of diaspora used to be primarily focused



on the most marginalised groups that were in some way forced to leave their home. Sinclair and Cunningham (2000) place media practices at the centre of the development of these new hybrid cultures that have arisen as a result of migration, cultures which they see as a function of globalisation. Sinclair and Cunningham's understanding of diasporic media flows is particularly relevant to the case of football and television. The ability to broadcast football around the world is creating opportunities for diasporic groups to remain connected to their former communities (by being able to keep up with a local team), but in new ways (by watching the game live on television, which given time differences necessitates different fan rituals). Diasporic media flows also help to make sense of some of the reasons and motivations that international supporters have for supporting particular teams or players. As such, the relationship between international supporters and their teams/players can have deep national, ethnic, regional, etc. attachments that go beyond an interest in a sports product.

Dave Rowe (2004) argues that sports and the media have always had an intimate relationship. One of the reasons that sports are so attractive to the media is that sports are able to deliver a loyal audience that can easily be sold to advertisers (Rowe, 1999, p. 31). However, as both Rowe (2004) and John Williams (1994) make clear, the relationship between television and football has not always been smooth in large part because of the idea that football is a cultural institution that needs to be protected from commercial interests. This debate has mainly manifested itself in regards to whether football should be available on free to air television so that all citizens can have access to the sport. Another important criteria that televised sport had to overcome was the prejudice towards the experience of the live game in the stadium. In order to overcome the bias towards the

importance of being there, televised sports had to emphasise its advantages over the stadium. Rowe (2004) argues that television has become so successful in structuring the supporter experience, that televisual elements are now incorporated into the stadium (for example, the Jumbotron). In addition, Rowe (2004) argues, in contrast to John Williams' (1994) view that television is threatening the collective experience of sport spectatorship, that sports viewing has been able to resist the more individualising aspects of television viewing and remains a collective and social pursuit (in bars, pubs, etc.). Yet despite the advances that television has made in staking a claim to sports viewing, there continues to be a lot of cultural capital attached to being in the stadium.

Surprisingly, studying the sports audience is a relatively underdeveloped area within the literature on television and sport. Garry Whannel's "Reading the Sports Audience" (1998) is one of the first attempts at understanding the practices of the sports audience. Like Rowe (2004), Whannel (1998) argues that the sports audience is attractive to media producers because it is large and loyal. Whannel (1998) argues that there are a lot of similarities between the sports audience and the television audience more generally (both tend to be working-class), but that the sports audience tends to be more segregated along gender lines (the sports audience tends to be overwhelmingly male) (p. 228).

Whannel (1998) sees pleasure as being central to understanding the sports audience and so he wants to try to develop a more psychological approach. He sees pleasure as coming mostly from the opportunity to identify with a team or with an individual player on a team. This seems to further support the idea that televised sports continue to be about a collective rather than individual experience. Even if an individual is watching the game alone at home, part of the pleasure is about identifying with the collectivity of the team

itself.

Susan Eastman and Karen Riggs' (2001) work on fan rituals seem to support Whannel's (1998) assertion that fan practices, even in relation to television, are about forging a relationship between both the team and other supporters. The authors conducted an empirical study to discover why fans still engaged in particular rituals (for example, wearing jerseys or carrying a good luck charm) even if they were only watching the game on television. What emerges is that these rituals are often used to define who is and who is not a real fan and also to allow fans to feel like they can exert some control over the game since they cannot actually be in the stadium (Eastman and Riggs, 2001, p. 257). The authors also discovered that many fans actually preferred the television experiences to that of the stadium, which demonstrates the extent to which television has succeeded in establishing itself as a viable alternative to the stadium (Eastman and Riggs, 2001). While it may be an alternative to the stadium, watching televised sports is often still a collective experience, particularly in the diasporic case where sports events are often an occasion for a particular community to get together and either celebrate or commiserate depending on the result. In this sense, sport are a profoundly collective experience whether experienced in the stadium or on television.

The use of fan rituals is particularly important in the context of diasporic fan experiences. In this case, going to the stadium is not an option. Yet when Premier League supporters watch their teams, many will come dressed in jersey and will sing and shout throughout the game as if there is a possibility of influencing the game in this capacity. Many supporters engage in these practices in order to, as Eastman and Riggs (2001) point out, solidify their position as "true" supporters (as opposed to those that only come out a

few times a year) and to forge a connection with those in the stadium. In a sense it is an attempt to overcome geography in order to show that there is no difference in the passion and support for the club between those that live locally (in relation to the team in question) and those that live abroad. John Horne, Alan Tomlinson, Garry Whannel and Kath Woodward (1999) argue that this compression of geographic space is one of the major aspects of globalisation's relationship to sport. Clubs that once had a deep connection to their communities are now becoming global commodities. While this has benefitted clubs financially, this relationship has not been without tension. While it may, on the one hand, bring international attention to cities that otherwise lack an international profile, on the other hand, The authors argue that the view of the geographic space that emerges is a limited one (1999). While the international supporters may bring attention to a particular city, it is limited and provides only a very narrow understanding of the city's cultural and social complexities.

John Williams (1994) in his article "The Local and the Global in English Soccer and the Rise of Satellite Television" takes a more pessimistic view of the possibilities that globalisation and the global flow of the game can offer supporters. Williams (1994) argues that media corporations (and increasingly sporting organisations) are driven by profits and thus are constantly looking to build their audiences. As televised football becomes a bigger and bigger business around the world, the teams lose their connection with their local communities. Williams is making a similar argument to the one that often emerges from the local fan base at what is seen as the commercialisation of their club and their sport (which again goes back to the idea that football is a cultural form that must be protected).

Williams (1994) is particularly concerned with what he sees at the increasing restrictions being placed on the government's ability to make policy decisions related to broadcasting. In the English case, this relates to question of whether football is a cultural institution and if so, whether it should be available on free-to-air television in order to increase access to the game. Williams (1994) seems to be pointing to an interesting contradiction that is emerging in relation to the question of access. On the one hand, the broadcasting of football globally has increased access to the game exponentially. This is also the case with domestic broadcasting, which allows those not able to attend the match in the stadium to still enjoy the match. On the other hand, this is not a universal form of access. As broadcasting rights become more expensive (Sky's last deal with the Premier League was worth more than a billion pounds), so too does the cost of subscribing to Sky.

While the increased commercialisation of football is certainly not without its problems, new technologies seem to offer some new ways for fans to interact with the sport and their teams. Victoria E. Johnson (2009) argues that sports' broadcasting represents a kind of hybrid form in-between what she calls network and post-network television (pp.115-116). Sports broadcasting can be seen as part of the network television paradigm because it is one of the last forms of programming that draws a mass audience with national cultural resonance. While Johnson (2009) also argues that televised sports do not always conform to traditional notions of flow, she also sees this as one of its strengths in resisting some new technologies that threaten traditional broadcasters. For example, the possibility of a sporting event exceeding its time slot, while disrupting television's flow and sense of temporality, also makes sporting events resistant to technologies like DVRs. In addition, the importance of sport as a live event also makes

them resistant to recording devices. Yet Johnson also argues that sports are particularly well-placed to succeed in the post-network era because sports are a multi-platform leader. Television broadcasters are increasingly using sports as a way of building an audience for online content by developing fantasy leagues or providing replays and highlights online.

In addition to moving sports on to various platforms, television technology and innovation has also had an impact of how fans experience the game itself. In his book *A Game of Two Halves*, Cornel Sandvoss (2003) examines how television has altered how supporters see the game itself. He and other authors argue that televised sports try to fit games into a narrative structure. This includes trying to heighten the drama of the event through the choice of close-ups on players' faces in the hopes of seeing their reaction to particular plays (Sandvoss, 2003, p. 142). This has some effect on the flow of the game, by focusing attention on the individual rather than the team play, which is ongoing while the camera lingers on one player. Sandvoss (2003) argues that the style in which matches are filmed has actually changed how the game is perceived in terms of how much of the field of play is visible. By focusing on individual players and by privileging certain angles and shots, only a small portion of the field is visible and the viewer is only aware of the action that is taking place on the ball. Sandvoss (2003) argues that this contributes to a standardisation of how supporters view the game (p. 14). It is no longer possible to see the whole field of play to get a sense for positional play or for how players are using the space off the ball. Instead, as viewers, we are now only able to see the game as being about the action that is occurring with the ball. Sandvoss (2003) (along with Johnson (2009)) also argues that certain technologies like the instant replay and slow motion are changing both the temporality and flow of the game itself. The flow of the game itself is

interrupted by the decision of the broadcaster to replay a goal or foul multiple times from various angles and speeds. Instead of being about how the match ebbs and flows, the game in some cases gets reduced to a series of incidents that through their repetition come to define the match (for example, focusing on a missed goal as the turning point of the game instead of looking at the team's performance as a whole).

In addition, Sandvoss (2003) sees a move towards privileging the televisual over human perception, and as a result, television becomes the ultimate authority on the game (p. 148). Supporters often look to television replays to confirm whether a referee has made a good or bad call with the implication being that television is an objective arbiter (Sandvoss, 2003). Yet as Sandvoss is quick to point out, this fails to account for the deliberate decisions that broadcasters make regarding which angles to shoot from or which players to focus on. As a result, the "objectivity" of television's view on sport is constructed by how the camera is placed. This tension between the human eye (and the possibility of human error) and the view of camera is become increasingly important in the case of football (Sandvoss, 2003, p.147). This also points to tension that exists between whether the stadium or the television at home provides the best experience for the game. Using the work of John Bale, Sandvoss (2003) argues that the stadium offers an individual view within a collective environment whereas the television offers a collective view (since all TV viewers see the same thing) within an individual environment.

Raymond Boyle and Richard Haynes (2004) emphasise that sports have always been seen as a leader in terms of developing new television technologies. They give the example of interactive television, which has sought to allow the viewer to customise their

viewing experience by allowing them to change the angle that they are watching the match or to have multiple angles on the screen at the same time (having the same match on from two views with picture-in-picture) (Boyle and Haynes, 2004, p. 148). Boyle and Haynes (2004) also point out that the move towards multiple platforms (in particular, the Internet) is creating new battles over how sports broadcasting rights are being bought and sold. For example, does owning the exclusive rights to broadcasting the Premier League on television also include Internet broadcasting? This is becoming an increasingly important question as more and more people are watching matches online (both legally and illegally).<sup>5</sup> In addition, teams themselves have seen the Internet as a way of building their own brands by offering access to watching or listening to games online (often through membership fees), but it is unclear if this undermines television broadcast deals. As new technologies continue to be developed, questions of ownership will certainly continue to be important as long as sports remains big business.

Television, globalisation, and new technologies have all had a profound effect on sport. On the one hand, all three have brought sport to a wider international audience. In particular, the flow of televised sports around the world has allowed diasporic groups (and new supporters) to remain connected to their favourite teams. On the other hand, there is a growing concern that the televising of sports, and football in particular, may be weakening the bond between teams and their local communities. Television is also seen as the driving force behind the commercialisation of the sport, which is alienating many supporters through rising costs, which are restricting access. This has renewed debate

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<sup>5</sup> A clearer answer to this question may evolve during the 2013/2014 season as BT telecom, which was awarded part of the broadcasting rights to the Premier League beginning next season, has promised to show Premier League matches for free on television for its broadband customers (Gardside, Gibson and Sweney, 2013).



over whether sport should be considered a cultural institution that needs government protection.

### **Sport and sociology**

Sociological approaches to sports offer a rich literature for understanding the intersection of sport, nation and globalisation. Surveying the literature on sport, globalisation and nation, a number of common themes related to sport's role as an outlet for identity construction and expression, the use of symbols and rituals, and questions of representation and inclusion/exclusion have emerged. This is particularly important to this project's understanding of the role that football comes to play in the formation of national, regional and local communities. This literature also offers possibilities for considering the ways football can reconfigure and create new forms of identity and community. One theme that emerges is the role of sport as social formation in which identities and experiences are constructed and expressed. Related to the idea of sports as a space for identity construction, sport can become a place for questions of inclusion/exclusion in relation to both the team and the body politic.

C.L.R. James' (1963/1993) *Beyond a Boundary* is a key text to work out the relationship between how national and racial identities get constructed and for the ways in which James articulates the role that sport can play as a social force in the creation of national consciousness. It was through cricket that James was able to realise his political consciousness. James argues that social and political passions (denied traditional outlets) could be expressed through cricket precisely because it was a game. Cricket was also a constant reminder of the class and racial inequality that existed in Trinidad. For James,

unlike most Marxists, sport does not deflect people from politics; rather it can be integral to political awareness and consciousness.

Pierre Bourdieu (1984) has also contributed greatly to the development of the sociology of sport. In particular, Bourdieu (1984) identifies the critical role sport plays in the formation and maintenance of personal identity. For Bourdieu (1984) sports are seen as constituting a set of ready-made choices, rules, values, equipment, etc. "...which receive their social significance from the system they constitute and which derive a proportion of the properties, at each moment, from history," (p. 209). However, this is not to say that all participants in a sport will perceive the sport in the same way. Rather participants will each bring their own interpretations of the sport to the field of play. As such, sport takes on a different meaning for individuals, even amongst those of the same habitus.

Critically for Bourdieu (1988), sport cannot be understood without considering the totality of sporting practices. The development of sport, in particular the ways in which sports are played, are shaped by the social spaces in which they are located. However, this is not to suggest that there is always consensus on the rules of the game. Rather, as a greater diversity of participants engages with the sport, there is an increase in the ways in which the sport can be both played and interpreted. As both Bourdieu (1988) and James (1963/1993) argue, sport exists as site of struggle and a contested terrain. These struggles can encompass battles over social meaning of identity, including race, class and gender and over access to sports participation. As such, Bourdieu argues that sports serve as cultural products that are shaped by those who practice them, which grants a certain degree of agency to those that participate in sport (Clément, 1995).

In his important text, *Global Sport*, Joseph Maguire (1999) argues that sport remains an area where processes of habitus and identity formation are worked out. As such, it is not uncommon for sports to be seen as embodying national characteristics. As Maguire (1999) writes, “in fact, the emotional bonds of individuals with the nations they form with each other can have, as one of their levels, ‘sleeping memories’ which tend to crystallize and become organised around common symbols—national sports being one example,” (p. 184). Sports can be a place in which myths about common national character can be both sustained and naturalised. This seems particularly evident in relation to the English national team, which stands as one of the clearest markers of English identity.

Dave Rowe (2003) has argued that the boundaries of the sporting nation are often incongruous with the boundaries of the nation-state. The sporting nation, which is often seen as the symbolic manifestation of the hopes and aspirations of the nation (embodied in the athletes themselves), has deep historical boundaries that may cross nation-state boundaries and divisions of identity. Yet the sporting nation is not necessarily congruent with the nation-state. Rowe (2003) writes, “international sport can, then, be a key marker of national fantasy or aspiration, but above all it is generative of a symbolic entity that comes into being by affixing a notion of identity that is likely to be an impediment to the free-floating cosmopolitanism so crucial to the ethos of globalization,” (p. 287). As a result, sport will continue to provide a space within the context of globalisation that encourages forms of national/regional/local identification.

Vic Duke and Liz Crolley (1996) draw on the work of Benedict Anderson (1983/2008) to argue that sport presents one of the clearest representation of the imagined

community. This view is shared by Eric Hobsbawm (1990/1992) who has argued that the nation is never more real than when represented by eleven bodies on the field. The nation-state is able to re-define notions of inclusion and exclusion through the bodies that are included in the national team. As a result, the national team comes to be seen as a literal embodiment of the nation. The notion of this construction of the sporting nation as imagined seems particularly apt given that what is represented on the field is often about how the nation wants to see itself rather than how people actually identify. For example, many European nation-states point to their multicultural soccer teams in order to claim that they are tolerant and anti-racist. Yet the unity on the field is often not reflected in the wider society. In this way, it is possible for a sports team to be used to construct a vision of national identity that may not truly exist. The team makes claims to inclusion in the nation that do not reflect the real experiences of minority communities in the society in question.

While the imagined sporting nation does not always match up to reality, Raffaele Poli (2007) argues that sports present an interesting terrain for examining ideas of de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation (in similar ways to Sassen's arguments on the same subject). Sport has the ability to de-territorialise through re-imagining borders and membership in a given nation. This can be seen in the somewhat fluid criteria that football allows players to use to claim their national affiliation. In football, players are entitled to play for either their place of birth or the place of birth of either a parent or grandparent. As a result, this may allow a person the opportunity to play for the team that they feel best reflects their identity. Yet sport also re-territorialises by demanding loyalty to one nation-state once a player has chosen where they want to play. In football, once a

player has played for one national team at senior level, they are not allowed to play for another national team even if they change their legal citizenship.

As with all forms of nationalism, it is possible for the expression of national identity to have both positive and negative outcomes. On the positive side, as many of the authors have shown, sports can provide an outlet for marginalised or sub-state groups to find a venue to express their sense of identity. Sports can also provide a venue for the contestation and re-inscription of particular identities. On the negative side, sports can become a space for determining inclusion and exclusion from the nation in ways that can be highly racialised. Ben Carrington (1999) in his piece, “Too Many St. George Crosses to Bear,” examines his own discomfort with identifying with the English national team. In the context of the complicated terrain of identity in Britain, there is a perception that there has been a failure to construct an English identity separate from Britain (unlike the Scots and the Welsh), which overburdens the English national team as a symbol of the English nation. Carrington (1999) argues that much of the imagery used in the promotion of the English national team seems to relate to a very particular view of the English nation that does not seem to reflect any of the post-WWII changes. This fetishisation of England’s imperial past fails to acknowledge the clear problems related to race that Empire created. As a result, it becomes difficult for minority communities within England to want to cheer for the English national team when the culture around the team seems to efface their past (despite the inclusion of English people of colour in the team).

This question of representation seems particularly important with regards to race. Grant Farred (2008) develops the idea of the burden of over-representation in relation to the expectations that get placed on black athletes. Farred (2008) is referring specifically

to the first prominent Black English soccer player, John Barnes, arguing that Barnes' ability to succeed or not succeed was seen as a reflection on the ability of all black soccer players. His physical presence on the English national team was also seen as suggesting a form of inclusion and a multicultural England that was not reflective of the true conditions on the ground. Les Back, Tim Crabbe and John Solomos (2001) echo Farred's (2008) point in their book *The Changing Face of Football: Race, Identity and Multiculturalism in the English Game*. The authors concur that the actions of Black athletes were seen as reflection of the actions and ability of the entire Black English community to be included in the nation. The 1970s/1980s in English football were rightly seen as a period of stadium violence that was often associated with xenophobic, far right politics. While not disputing that this was the case, Back, Crabbe and Solomos (2001) develop the notion of the racist-hooligan couplet to explain how racism came to be located within a very particular kind of body, the white working-class hooligan. While many hooligans were racists, Back, Crabbe and Solomos (2001) argue that the racist-hooligan couplet was used by the soccer institutions in England to deflect attention away from any examination of the institutional racism that existed in the sport.

The kind of casual xenophobia that can often be found within English football is perhaps best exemplified by press coverage of the English national team during international tournaments. Maguire, Poulton and Possami (1999) examined English press coverage of England-Germany at the 1996 European Championship in order to trace English press coverage of the England-Germany rivalry. Germany is often constructed as England's fiercest rival, and the authors note that the press constructed a clear narrative that distills matches between the two nations through the lens of World War Two

(Maguire, Poulton, and Possami, 1999). War imagery becomes particularly important in relation to how this match gets constructed. In addition, the press is quick to fall back on stereotypes of the two countries' perceived character, emphasising the bravery and heart of the English team and the efficiency and organisation of the German team (Maguire, Poulton, and Possami, 1999). The authors also argue that this was a reflection of the anxiety that the English were feeling about European integration at the time of the 1996 European Championship (Maguire, Poulton, and Possami, 1999). Germany was seen as a leader in Europe at the time and England was having a lot of anxiety about a perceived decline in their position within Europe.

While press coverage of Euro 1996 seemed to fall back on old stereotypes, Pablo Alabarces, Alan Tomlinson, and Christopher Young (2001) saw some new narratives emerge from English press coverage of Argentina-England in the 1998 World Cup. Rather than fall back on particular narratives about the Argentinean team, the English press looked inward to the team for its own failing (scapegoating David Beckham). Raymond Boyle and Claudia Monteiro (2005) looked at English press coverage of Euro 2004, which was held in Portugal. Rather than look at how the press covered particular matches, Boyle and Monteiro (2005) were interested in how the English press covered English supporters in Portugal. England supporters had gained a reputation for being violent while following the national team. Boyle and Monteiro (2005) focused on how the English press at Euro 2004 tried to create the image of a more inclusive England supporter and tried to draw a clear distinction between the hooligan and a 'true' England supporter.

## **Football as Cultural Policy?**

My project also draws heavily on the growing body of literature on cultural policy, and I wish to place sport, or at least football in the English context, within this scholarship. Doing so allows for a greater and richer consideration of the ways in which football is constructed as a cultural good in need of intervention from governing institutions. Football operates in a liminal space between economic enterprise (where we might find the Premier League) and a national good (where we might place the England national team). Sport governing bodies have always sat separate from state governing institutions, but at particular key moments, football's governing bodies have interfaced with state institutions in ways that suggest football has value as a public good. Placing football within a cultural policy framework allows for a greater understanding of the battle between the English Premier League and the English national team.

As will be discussed in more detail in chapter two, Britain has had a historic commitment to the principles of public service broadcasting, and sports broadcasting has since the beginning been considered as being within the interests of the nation and a public good. Broadcasting for many years remained unchanged within Britain. Looking specifically at television, the medium was seen as shaping society in three critical ways: as a part of national culture; rhythms of receptions that connected with everyday life; and, embedded within bureaucratic and centralised concepts of broadcasting (Drake and Haynes, 2011). It was not until the 1980s, that a major shift in broadcasting policy was undertaken by the British government. While not the intended consequence of the deregulation of broadcasting policy, football's commercialisation (and globalisation) was a direct result of this policy shift. This is one example of why I argue for considering



football as part of the large cultural policy framework. It is impossible to separate the changes within broadcasting policy (which are intertwined with changes within football) from the larger processes of neo-liberalism and changes to the governing structures of Britain.

Much of the cultural policy scholarship is indebted to Michel Foucault's work on governmentality. For Foucault (1991), governmentality is:

The ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has as its target population, as its principle form of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security. (p.102)

Put simply, governmentality is "the art of governing" or "the conduct of conduct" (Foucault, 2003). The state and government are no longer synonymous as power is now seen as diffuse and present in all sectors of society. Thus, rather than focus on the macro-processes of the state or Government, governmentality encourages an examination of micro-processes of practices and techniques that render populations governable and incorporate them into the rationality of governing. As a result, society is no longer oriented towards community, but rather towards individualisation and "the multiplicity and differentiations of enterprises" (Foucault, 2008, pp. 149-150). Culture, thus, becomes one of the spaces of governance and "of formatting public collective subjectivity" (Lewis and Miller, 2003, p. 2). As a result, culture becomes a key component of the programmes for social improvement that develop within a framework of governmentality. Reflecting this shift, Tony Bennett (1998) argues:

Culture emerges as a pluralized and dispersed field of government which...operates through, between, and across [civil society, the state, and the social formation] in inscribing cultural resources into a diversity of programs aimed at directing the conduct of individuals toward an array of different ends, for a variety of different purposes, and by a plurality of means (p. 77).

As a result, we now see the rise of cultural and/or creative industries as a space in which the logic of the market can be brought to bear on artistic and/or cultural output (Banks, 2007).

Toby Miller and George Yúdice (2002) define cultural policy as "...the institutional supports that channel both aesthetic creativity and collective ways of life – a bridge between the two registers. Cultural policy is embodied in systematic, regulatory guides to action that are adopted by organizations to achieve their goals" (p. 1). Miller and Yúdice (2002) identify two positions that they see Western cultural-capitalist countries embracing in relation to cultural policy. The first is one in which the market is seen as the mechanism by which public cultural preferences are identified (Miller and Yúdice, 2002). Thus, the state's role is only to determine who owns what cultural objects. The second is one in which the state recognises that there are certain cultural artefacts that have transcendent value, but may not always have popular appeal (Miller and Yúdice, 2002). Thus the state needs to play a role in trying to promote these artefacts amongst the populace (Miller and Yúdice, 2002, p. 16). As a result, cultural policy is often about balancing between economic and aesthetic/non-market driven goals. Sports' lack of incorporation into the cultural policy framework is, in part, as result of the second policy orientation, which sees a clear distinction between high and low culture, with high

culture being worthy of protection. Miller and Yúdice quote George Graham in discussing sports' absence from the cultural policy discourse, with Graham writing, "Sport, though valuable, is essentially a release and distraction. Great art is concerned with human experience and its ennoblement" (quoted in Miller and Yúdice, 2002, p. 16). Sport's place as a form of popular culture has seen it historically excluded from cultural policy discussions. Sport is constructed as being mere entertainment that lacks resonance with the real world, but, as I will argue, football in England is deeply intertwined with human experience, in particular the ways in which people relate to and construct their community/national identities.

David Hesmondhalgh (2005) suggests that it is noteworthy that cultural policy and media/communication policy are rarely paired with one another (p. 95). Rather cultural policy is seen as belonging to the sector of subsidised arts and media/communication policy has been considered in terms of economics/politics (Hesmondhalgh, 2005, p. 95). This echoes Jim McGuigan's (2004) work suggesting that cultural policy and media policy have much in common as both are concerned with national/civic identity as well as symbolic representation (p. 34). Both Hesmondhalgh (2011) and McGuigan (2004) are framing their discussion in terms of the British government's, in particular Tony Blair's New Labour government, approach to public service broadcasting (PSB), which has seen a shift to a more market-oriented PSB. This might also help to make sense of the particular role that sport has (or has not played) in trying to understand football as part of government policy. As I discuss in chapter two, sport has always played a role in the development of media policy in Britain, but has lacked consideration within the realm of cultural policy. The New Labour government,

through its more market-oriented public service model, sought to incorporate football as a kind of social policy to help address integration and anti-social behaviour within the community (Lister, 2003).

This should become clearer when examined within the context of attempts to define the meaning of cultural or creative industries. Robert E. Blake (2009) argues that, “first and most obviously, cultural industries manufacture, buy, sell, and distribute symbolic wares for money” (p. 3). Like other forms of culture, football does sell symbolic value – the promise of community and shared identity. As we will see in a moment, it is exactly this symbolic value that becomes the basis for selling football as an attractive broadcasting opportunity. Jacqueline Best and Matthew Paterson (2010) as part of their argument for why a cultural political economy is needed, argue, “the notion of culture refuses a clear separation between the ideal and the material. Culture gives meaning to and becomes embodied in concrete institutions, practices and rituals but cannot be reduced to those material effects” (p. 10). Football within England can be seen as operating within their definition as it is embodied within sports governing institutions and state institutions as well as being the source of rituals and practices (the regularity of attending matches and the sense of identity that comes from supporting a team).

Part of why football has never explicitly been considered as part of the literature on cultural industries may stem from the difficulty itself of establishing what counts a cultural industry. Joseph Lampel, Jamal Shamsie and Theresa Lant (2006) argue that the difficulty of defining cultural industries stems from the fact that notions of culture do not fit easily within our understanding of business. The difficulty also comes from a confusion as to whether the focus of what constitutes a cultural industry should be

whether they produce a specific and tangible cultural product or whether the focus should be on the system of production and distribution of cultural products (which are not necessarily tangible products) (Lampel, Shamsie, and Lant, 2006). David Hesmondhalgh and Andy C. Pratt (2011) have also discussed the difficulty that can come from trying to define what is meant by cultural industries. One of the issues they identify is the question of “breadth” of cultural industries in terms of what gets included, in particular with “low art” forms like sport (Hesmondhalgh and Pratt, 2011, p. 6). In the same special issue of the *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, Pratt (2011) argues that it is in fact depth (in terms of all the different kinds of work and labour that goes into cultural production) rather than breadth that has been missing from definitional discussions. To try and capture all the various stages of cultural production, Hesmondhalgh and Pratt (2011) advocate that, “a more sensible option is to recognise that the main interest in such industries is the symbolic, aesthetic and, for want of a better term, artistic nature of their output because these outputs can potentially have such a strong influence on the very way we understand society –including, of course, cultural production itself” (p. 6). Mark Banks (2007) offers a similar understanding of cultural industries, “as those involved in the production of ‘aesthetic’ or ‘symbolic’ goods and services; that is, commodities whose core value is derived from their function as carriers of *meaning* in the form of images, symbols, signs and sounds” (p. 2). Stuart Cunningham (2004) adds another dimension to the definitions of cultural industries already offered, suggesting that a key component is the ability of cultural industries to deliver popular culture to a national audience (p. 106). Given these definitions, it seems possible to include football as a kind of cultural industry. I would argue that football also operates as a carrier of symbolic

meaning which impacts the ways in which we understand society. Indeed, much of the tension that this dissertation explores between the interests of the Premier League and those of the English national team is over the symbolic meaning and societal impact being generated.

Nicholas Garnham (2005) argues that within Britain, there has been a move towards a focus on the processes of production and distribution that is reflected in the linguistic shift from cultural to creative industries. This shift can only be understood within a framework of neoliberalism and the move towards managerial and economic language within culture and media policy under Thatcher (Garnham, 2005). Garnham (2005) points to the renaming of the Department of National Heritage to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport in 1997 as an indication of “... a shift of focus away from support for the ‘traditional’ high arts, with their association with the protection of the values of some golden age, towards the creatively new (often associated with young, trendy and ‘cool’)” (p. 27). Hesmondhalgh (2005) echoes Garnham’s assessment, arguing that this re-naming was part of New Labour’s move away from “traditionalist connotations” as part of its modernisation campaign (p. 104). The inclusion of sport within a department of culture and media shows the extent to which the three cannot be separated from one another. It is also an indication of the state’s growing interest in regulating football as a good that needs to be protected.<sup>6</sup>

While the deregulation of broadcasting was not directly aimed at football, changes to media policy within Britain have clearly contributed to the current process of

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<sup>6</sup> While outside the scope of this chapter, it is important to note that football is becoming increasingly instrumentalised by the state as a tool of social inclusion as evidenced by the publication of the Football Communities Reports. This move towards sport as policy can be seen within the larger neoliberal framework that seeks to download services previously provided by the state and uses private-public partnerships to address social problems.

globalisation the sport is undergoing. Yet the state has also made explicit interventions within the sport. As previously mentioned, the state has always been directly involved in the regulation of both stadiums and the bodies of supporters, although it could be argued that the state's attitude towards stadium was one of benevolent neglect. The Hillsborough stadium disaster and the subsequent Taylor Report forced the state into more direct interventions within the governance of the sport. With the recommendation that all stadiums should become all-seaters, the government charged the National Football Trust, which was to use state money (largely collected through state lotteries) to help clubs with the financial burden of converting their stadiums. The National Football Trust had been established in 1975 and its very existence points to the belief in football as serving a public good. While football clubs have always been commercial enterprises, the government was willing to contribute public money to ensure that clubs remained viable. The question of foreign ownership will be treated in more detail later, but the government has recently turned its attention to the question of ownership with the DCMS select committee on football ownership, which directly considered the question of whether current ownership rules are in the national interest (DCMS, 2011). This indicates that the government may be interested in intervening more forcefully in football within the logic of preserving its cultural import.

### **Chapter breakdown**

This dissertation examines primary documents from the founding of the League, newspaper articles, and government documents as a way of isolating the different interests and discourses have shaped the direction of the Premier League. Chapter two, *The Terrace Becomes an Armchair*, seeks to provide a historical account of the key event

and political developments that created an environment that made the founding of the Premier League possible. This chapter is an attempt to construct the Premier League not as an ahistorical entity but rather as an organisation born out of particular historical circumstances. As such, it brings together three important historical and/or theoretical moments, the rise of Thatcherism, the ‘hooligan’ crisis and changes to British broadcasting that are necessary to make sense of the Premier League. These three moments created the framework through which the Premier League’s globalisation strategy is able to operate through the creation of new legal (in relation to football supporters) and broadcasting policies that made possible both the domestic and international broadcasting of football matches.

Chapter three, *Did Football Exist before 1992? The English Premier League Goes Global*, examines the foundation of the Premier League in 1992. Examining the two competing policy documents produced by the Football Association and Football League and the decision to adopt the Football Association’s plan, it is possible to see the difference between the promise of the Premier League and its current reality. In particular, what emerges from this battle is the growing tension between the Premier League and the English national team. While the league’s establishment was meant to be a vehicle for the development of the English national team, the interests of the Football Association have been rendered subordinate to those of the League. This tension has raised questions over football’s role in wider English society, and as a result, I argue for the inclusion of football within the wider cultural policy literature as a means of explicating the tensions between the current media environment and the interests of the English national team and football supporters (both of England and club teams). It is the



concerns over the failure of the Premier League's protection of the England national team that is, in part, the subject of chapter four.

Chapter four, *What Do They Know of England: Football, Labour and Migration* examines how international sports labour migration has impacted the English Premier League. The chapter begins with the 1995 Bosman ruling from the European Court of Justice, which determined that sports leagues could no longer utilise national quotas and that members of the European Union are allowed to exercise free movement of labour between European leagues. As a result of both this ruling and the increased revenue from television, clubs are increasingly employing non-English players. The movement of players between their clubs and national teams complicates how we might begin to think about football labour, in relation to both the tension between its club and international incarnations and its media presence. It is this increased media presence that has brought greater scrutiny of the relationship between the rise in the number of foreign players and the failures of the English national team. Examining newspaper coverage from England's failure to qualify for the 2008 European Championship and their early exit from the 2010 World Cup, it becomes clear that the debate over the presence of foreign players intersects with a larger debate over English identity and football's and the media's role within it.

Chapter five, *What Time's the Match? Football and the Production of Mediated Supporter Rituals*, examines the growth of international supporter bases and how television has changed supporters' relationship to both their clubs and their viewing practices. This chapter places supporters' experiences within the wider literature on media rituals as a way of understanding the ways in which supporters' perform their

support in relation to the television. As the Premier League becomes increasingly commercialised, there is a perception amongst some domestic supporters that some of the more recent converts to the game, often called “new consumer fans,” lack a commitment and deep relationship with their clubs. While much attention has been paid to developing taxonomies of these emerging categories of supporters within England, little has gone to differentiating amongst international supporters. This chapter draws a distinction amongst international supporters to give voice to the different motivations that people have for becoming supporters. For those diasporic supporters, support often becomes a way of connecting with their home country, region and/or city. While television has led to a profound spatial dislocation of English football, this chapter argues that time cannot be overcome in the same fashion and, in fact, can come to serve as a bond between supporter communities internationally and domestically. While reaching wider and wider audiences is an attractive prospect for clubs looking to raise both revenue and their international profiles, it is unclear whether this is a realistic pursuit for all clubs. Rather it might be time for a re-orientation back towards the domestic communities in which clubs are located.

In conclusion, I return to a discussion of the stakes of the current tensions over broadcasting, labour and supporters that have emerged within the Premier League. I turn to two recent challenges, one for the European Court of Justice regarding broadcasting exclusivity and one from supporters angry at the rising costs of tickets, to the current Premier League order to help suggest new possibilities for how the League might alter its current strategy. I then offer my own policy suggestions for how the League might address the current challenges related to broadcasting, labour and supporters, which focus

on breaking the dominance of the satellite broadcasters in favour of a policy that is more attuned to the needs and interests of the League's local supporters.

Despite the celebratory tones offered by the Premier League's recent 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary festivities, it is unclear if the party will continue. In the 2012/2013 season, no Premier League team reached the semi-finals of the UEFA Champions League (the premier intra-European competition) for the first time since 1996. In addition, the implementation of UEFA Financial Fair Play regulations suggests that the current financial arrangements at clubs may soon be under scrutiny. This season also saw a number of large-scale supporter protests, which show no signs of abating. With the continuing failure of the England national team to make the latter stages of international tournaments, it has become clear that the Premier League's mission to save the national team has been a failure. The Premier League was born from the promise of satellite television to bring untold riches to the League (which it has), but it might be time to re-evaluate whether this system is benefitting all the game's stakeholders, in particular the supporters who are becoming increasingly alienated from their clubs. The League's current priorities of large television contracts and ever-increasing profits are distorting the economics in the game. As will be made clear, not all clubs can compete within the current model, and this is impacting the overall health of the game and its competitive balance. It might be time for a new model, one that firmly places football as a matter of cultural policy with a re-emphasis placed on the interests of the community rather than those of the League governing structure, club owners, and satellite television.

## Chapter 2

### **The Terrace Becomes an Armchair: New Modes of Viewing**

England has historically considered itself the birthplace of modern football. While the origins of the game itself have been long debated, it was the 1863 founding of the English Football Association (the FA), the governing body that would come to oversee the Football League, and the English National team, and later the Premier League, that first sought to codify and regulate the rules of the game. Twenty-five years later, the Football League was established, the first recognised national league structure in the world. From 1888 until 1992, the Football League was structured in four tiers: the First Division, the Second Division, the Third Division and the Fourth Division. The League operated according to a system of promotion and relegation in which the top three teams in a division would be promoted to the division above and the bottom three teams would be dropped into the division below. In 1992, the First Division broke away from the Football League to form what is now known as the Premier League (but was called the Premiership at the time). While the Premier League remains linked to the Football League through the system of promotion and relegation, the two are not financially linked. The question of finances was critical to the formation of the Premier League as the League was born out of a desire of the top clubs in the League to retain and acquire larger profits. The decision to form the Premier League in 1992 did not occur in a vacuum. Rather it was born out of the historical conditions of the time governing both the game itself and British broadcasting more generally. This chapter will examine: 1) political changes under Thatcher, 'New' Labour, and the rise of neoliberalism; 2) how the 'hooligan crisis' and response to the crisis changed the Football League and paved the

way for the Premier League, and; 3) changes to British broadcasting policy which led to the rise of satellite television and its use of sport.

### **The rise of neo-liberal Britain**

While the impact of Thatcherism on football may not be immediately apparent, the 1980s were such a profound period of change for Britain that it would be impossible for football to have remained untouched by the Thatcher government. As result, Thatcherism had a number of indirect effects on football, especially given the strong association between football and working class culture. The decline and demonization of industrial labour and the working-class, as I will outline in greater detail later, led to a change in how football supporters were constructed and treated by the British state (and the media). In addition, changes to broadcasting policy under Thatcher were directly responsible for ushering in the era of satellite broadcasting, which led to a profound change in football's relationship to television. Given the important role that Thatcher played in changing the environment in which football operates and the residual effects of the Thatcherism that still underpin British society, it is worth exploring the ideologies that drove British policy under Thatcher.

Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques' (1983) edited collection, *The Politics of Thatcherism*, offers an understanding of Thatcher's rise through a Gramscian lens. In Hall and Jacques' (1983) view:

'Thatcherism' appears at a historic conjuncture, where three trends converged: first, the point where the long-term structural decline of the British economy synchronized with the deepening into recession of the world capitalist economy; second, in the wake of the collapse of the third post-war Labour government and

the disintegration of the whole social democratic consensus which had provided the framework of British politics since 1945; third, at the resumption of the ‘new Cold War’, renewed at a frighteningly advanced point in the stockpiling of nuclear weaponry, and with Britain sliding, under Thatcherite inspiration, into a mood of intense, bellicose, patriotic fervour. (p. 9)

Thatcherism offered a departure from the British welfare state by marrying ideology to the free market. What was being offered was a radically different understanding of society.

For Hall (1983), the key to Thatcherism resided in the fact that it was about more than simply enacting economic ‘freedom’; it was about ideology. He argues, “Thatcherism discovered a powerful means of translating economic doctrine into the language of experience, moral imperative and common sense, thus providing a ‘philosophy’ in the broader sense—an alternative *ethic* to that of the ‘caring society’” (p. 28). As part of this new philosophy, Thatcher argued that there existed an essence of the British people, one of self-reliance and personal responsibility, which was being effaced by the ‘coddling’ of the welfare state (Hall, 1983, p. 29). In addition to the development of an emerging neo-liberal subjectivity, Thatcher’s creation of a singular British identity<sup>7</sup> began to offer ways of understanding who counted and who did not count in relation to the British state.

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<sup>7</sup> In addition to the themes of personal responsibility and self-reliance, Thatcher’s British identity served to naturalise signifiers of Englishness as signifiers of Britishness, completely effacing the separate identities of the other home nations. It is somewhat ironic that it was under Thatcher, with its emphasis on ‘one nation,’ that the Scottish nationalist movement experienced a strong renewal.

While Thatcher was deeply committed to the idea of ‘freeing’ labour from the state, this was not an absolute understanding of freedom. The Thatcher state was a moralising state and this fed directly into her emphasis on ‘law and order’:

On law and order, the themes—more policing, tougher sentencing, better family discipline, the rising crime rate as an index of social disintegration, the threat to ‘ordinary people going about their private business’ from thieves, muggers, etc., the wave of lawlessness and the loss of law-abidingness—are perennials of Conservative Party Conferences, and the sources of many a populist campaign by moral entrepreneur groups and quoting editors. (Hall, 1983, p. 37)

Thatcher’s law and order rhetoric was based on creating a division in society between the governable and the ungovernable with the criteria seemingly built on a person’s ability to embody the entrepreneurial spirit.

Thatcher’s ‘law and order’ policy was also underpinned by her firm commitment to individual rights over collective rights (a departure for Britain), which required the strong rule of law to ensure individual liberties (Terrill, 1989). The move from collective to individual rights was a common trope in Thatcherist policy-making, with an emphasis on downloading and off-loading previously state-provided services. For Thatcher, crime was a moral, rather than a social issue, that could be solely attributed to individual failings. Regarding some of the common tropes that she saw emerging in response to the rule of law, Thatcher said:

The first heresy in that if only a determined minority gather together in large enough numbers to bully or to intimidate others the law either will not, or cannot, be enforced against them. The inference is not only that there is safety in numbers

but that this brings with it some kind of collective immunity from legal process...  
(quoted in Terrill, 1989, p. 433).

While not referring explicitly to football, the sentiments expressed above seem equally applicable to how the Thatcher government saw football supporters. The football stadium continued to be a space in which large groups of working-class men would gather together.

At this juncture, it is necessary to make clear what governance means, particularly as it relates to neo-liberalism and Thatcherism. Borrowing from Foucault's notion of governmentality, Nikolas Rose (1999) offers a useful way of understanding what it means to analyse political power through governance. He argues that a governmentality perspective requires a multifaceted investigation:

They distinguish between historically variable domains within which questions of government have been posed: the ways in which certain aspects of the conduct of persons, individually or collectively, have come to be problematized at specific historical moments, the objects and concerns that appear here, and the forces, events or authorities that have rendered them problematic. They investigate the ways in which debates and strategies concerning the exercise of political power have delineated the proper relations between the activities and political rule and different zones, dimensions or aspects of this general field of conduct... (pp. 20-21)

In this view, the terms and parameters of governance are constantly shifting. This view shifts from Hall's understanding of Thatcherism within a frame of ideology. Yet these two views are not entirely incompatible as Hall is similarly concerned with how the



conduct of certain individuals comes to be regulated and problematised in certain moments, particularly within the frame of Thatcher's 'law and order' campaign (Hall, Critcher, Jefferson, Clarke, and Roberts, 1978).

However, within this frame of governance, Rose (1999) offers a view of Thatcherism that rejects the idea that her government was in anyway tied to ideology. He argues:

For example, the various tactics enacted by the British Conservative government under Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s were not realizations of any philosophy—whether it was Keith Joseph reading Adam Smith or one of his advisers reading Hayek. They were, rather, contingent lash-ups of thought and action, in which various problems of governing were resolved through drawing up instruments and procedures that happened to be available, in which new ways of governing were invented in a rather *ad hoc* way, as practical attempts to think about and act upon specific problems in particular locales, and various other existing techniques and practices were merely dressed up in new clothes. But, in the course of this process, a certain rationality, call it neo-liberalism, came to provide a way of linking up these various tactics, integrating them *in thought* so that they appeared to partake in a coherent logic. (Rose, 1999, p. 27, emphasis in original)

Rather than an overarching ideological project, for Rose, Thatcherism is a series of techniques that together form the basis for what we have come to understand as neo-liberalism. Rose's understanding of neo-liberalism is clearly in line with Foucault's (2008) argument in *The Birth of Biopolitics*, that neo-liberalism is simply the reactivation of old economic ideas by way of establishing strict market relations in society (p. 130).

Foucault (2008) argues further, “the problem of neo-liberalism is rather how the overall exercise of political power can be modelled on the principles of the market economy” (p. 131). While the Foucault’s and Rose’s understanding of neo-liberalism is clearly at play in Thatcherism, it does not tell the whole story. There is something else at play, particularly in the context of how groups get policed that is better explained through Hall’s understanding of Thatcherite ideology.

One of the defining incidents in Thatcher’s regime was the 1984-85 miners’ strike. Thatcher had long been adamant that labour, and in particular the National Union of Miners (NUM), had far too much power and influence over the state and society. The miners’ strike became a key moment in development of the British neo-liberal state. Football had historically been a sport associated with the ‘rougher’ parts of the working-class (Murphy, Williams, and Dunning, 1990). Some of the largest clubs in the country, like Leeds and Nottingham Forest, were located in Yorkshire and both these clubs had well-known (and feared) hooligan firms. It was the South Yorkshire Police (SYP) that became charged with the enactment of the repressive techniques used to break up picket lines. The strike became a laboratory for the police force to develop techniques for dealing with a large mass of people. These techniques were often brutal, and it emerged that there was often an easy transference of the skills developed for dealing with striking mineworkers and other public ‘disturbances’ to the football stadium (Armstrong and Hobbs, 1993). Nikolas Rose (1999) argues that governing “is also a matter of space, of the making up of governable spaces: populations, nations, societies, economies, classes, families, schools, factories, individuals” (1999, p.31). Techniques used to govern the

picket line (factory) would go on to be used to govern the football stadium. The previously ungovernable space of the masses was now being put into sharper focus.

Thatcherism itself also appeared at a particular historical conjuncture characterised by the decline of industrial Britain, a worldwide recession, and the beginning of the collapse of the post-war social democratic consensus (Hall, 1983, p. 9). In uncertain times, Thatcher was able to present a coherent narrative that sought to revive a sense of British pride. The result was a combination of populist appeal coupled with a contradictory emphasis on free markets and state authority in the realm of law and order. As Hall (1983) argues, “it managed to marry the gospel of free market liberalism with organic patriotic Toryism. ‘Free market, strong state, iron times’: an authoritarian populism” (p. 10). The result was a new kind of reactionary ‘common sense’ (Hall, 1983, p. 11).<sup>8</sup> All relationships could be understood through the logic of the market with the exception of the importance of maintaining a strict sense of law and order. As a kind of “common sense,” Thatcherism shifted the political terrain. It became impossible to develop political strategies that did not respond to Thatcherism.

To say that Thatcherism left a profound social, political and economic mark on Britain is an understatement. One only has to look at the Conservative failures in Scotland and large parts of the North to understand the Thatcher’s legacy. As Hall (1983) writes:

More significantly, Thatcherism had evolved not just an effective occupancy of power, but a broad hegemonic basis for its authority. This ‘revolution’ had deep philosophical foundations as well as an effective popular strategy. . It was grounded

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<sup>8</sup> Here Hall is adopting the Gramscian term of ‘common sense’ which Gramsci (1971) developed to help explain how certain ideas become naturalised within society to the point where they are seen as simply ‘the way things are.’

in a radical remodelling of state and economy and the ‘colonising’ of civil society by a new neo-liberal common-sense. Its effects were ‘epochal’ (i.e. defined a new political stage). (p. 10)

As a result, when the Labour party re-made itself in the mid-1990s, it was within the logic of Thatcherism. Like Thatcherism before it, New Labour was/is characterised by a desire to set the corporate economy free and to utilise the state to ensure the smooth operations of both global and national markets. ‘New’ Labour continued and, in some cases, extended many of the policies that began under Thatcher, particularly in relation to football.

Third-way politics, as conceived by Anthony Giddens, was seen as a way to reconcile the left with significant societal changes, in particular globalisation. The third-way indicated an acceptance by the left of the new terrain established by neo-liberalism. Responding to the departure of Tony Blair, one of the first third-way politician, Giddens (2007) reiterated the key principles of the third-way as:

The first is: hold the political centre-ground. No social democratic party can succeed today through a class-based appeal. The point is to try to shift the political centre of gravity leftwards.

The second is: ensure the economy is strong. Securing greater social justice depends upon a robust economy, not the other way around.

The third is, invest heavily in public services, but insist that this is coupled to reform, to make the public services more effective, responsive and transparent.

Choice and competition are essential to these aims; they are the means of generating reform and of empowering citizens who use these services.

The fourth principle is to create a new contract between state and citizens, based upon responsibilities as well as rights. Government should provide resources to help people shape their own lives; but should expect people to deliver on their part of the bargain.

Finally - and most controversially of all, although crucial to Labour's success - don't allow any issues to be monopolised by the political right... The right has always tended to dominate in areas such as law and order, immigration and terrorism; we need to look for left-of-centre responses to these problems (June 28, para. 6-9).

The principles that Giddens articulates demonstrate the extent to which the Labour party has absorbed the language of neo-liberalism while still making claims to social democracy. This makes for an awkward marriage in which the language of strong public services is tempered by an appeal to competition and choice.

### **New Labour's citizen-consumers**

As discussed above, one of the key features of the Labour party's return to power in 1997 after eighteen years was its complete absorption of Thatcherite principles. Rather than returning to the welfare state built under post-war Labour governments, New Labour's project was, in the words of Stuart Hall (2003), "...the transformation of social democracy into a particular variant of free market neo-liberalism" (August 6, para. 6). In an attempt to marry social democracy and neo-liberalism, New Labour attempted to utilise the market as a means of fostering social mobility. As Hall (2003) writes, "however, New Labour has adapted the fundamental neo-liberal programme to suit its conditions of governance – that of a social democratic government trying to govern in a neo-liberal direction while maintaining its traditional working-class and public-sector

middle-class support, with all the compromises and confusions that entails” (p.14). As I will show in the following chapters, this tension and confusion between balancing the needs of football’s traditional constituency, the working-class, and those market-oriented owners and administrators, has been central to the Premier League project.

One of the central figures in the New Labour’s policy logic has been that of the citizen-consumer. Toby Miller and Geroge Yúdice (2002) suggest, “there is a complicated relationship between the citizen and its logocentric double, the consumer” (p. 73). The two are shadows of each other. As Toby Miller (2007) writes:

The citizen and the consumer have shadowed each other as the *national* subject versus the *rational* subject – with politics rendered artificial and consumption natural, a means of legitimizing social arrangements (Marx, 1994, 140). Adopting the tenets of the consumer, the citizen becomes a desirous, self-actualizing subject who still conforms to general patterns of *controlled* behavior. Adopting the tenets of citizen, the consumer becomes a self-limiting, self-controlling subject who still conforms to general patterns of *purchasing* behavior”. (p. 30)

Within the framework of neoliberalism, the citizen-consumer has become the critical actor. This was particularly true for New Labour, who attempted to balance their socialist past with their neo-liberal future with their belief that the market could be harnessed to build the welfare state.

This confusion can perhaps best be seen in New Labour’s approach to public services, which were seen as in need of ‘modernisation,’ and their turn to the language of citizenship in several iterations (Lister, 2003; Clarke, 2005; Vidler and Clarke, 2005; Clarke and Newman, 2007). While a robust discussion of New Labour is outside the

scope of this project, I would like to briefly outline how public service reforms turned to the language of the citizen-consumer as a means of balancing between social democratic and neo-liberal impulses. This turn to the figure of the citizen-consumer has relevancy for the ways in which conflicts arise between the interests of the English Premier League and the English national team and because this turn also animates how the government approaches football.

John Clarke and Janet Newman (2007) examine how the figure of the citizen-consumer gets taken up in New Labour's public reform literature. They write:

Indeed, they [citizen and consumer] might be said to embody a powerful and persistent binary distinction between the state and the market (a binary shared by neo-liberals and social democrats, even if their evaluation of the relative terms is different). As a result, the distinction between the citizen and the consumer carries a whole series of related binaries: public/private; collective/individual; de-commodification/commodification and so on. The binary also seemingly condenses temporally divergent images of the social: the 'old' social of collective identifications and citizenship rights and a 'new' social of individualized and consumer oriented identifications. (p. 740)

While these binaries are clearly at play in defining the citizen-consumer, Clarke and Newman (2007) point to a less clear-cut binary, specifically at play in New Labour policy decisions. Rather they see the decision to use the hyphen between citizen-consumer (which began to appear in official New Labour policy documents in 1998) as a "...site of hybridity where divergent positions are elided and contested" (Clarke and Newman, 2007, p. 742). This hybridity characterises the belief of New Labour that the logic of the

market can be brought to bear on social policy reforms in ways that align with social democratic values.

In particular, Vidler and Clarke (2007) argue that the New Labour government conflates the idea of the consumer (in relation to public service reforms) with the modern. In opposition to the collective ‘one-size-fits-all’ model of the post-war period, a consumer-oriented model of public services would allow for a more individualised and choice-oriented experience of the social services (Vidler and Clarke, 2007, pp. 20-21). As a result, the government turned to a focus on evidence-based policy making, through the Culture and Sport Evidence program, which sought to evaluate what contributions the cultural sectors could make to social and economic goals (O’Brien, 2012). Sports, in particular football, came to play an integral role in some aspects of public service reform.<sup>9</sup> Alan Warde (2006) points to the 1997 re-naming of the department of National Heritage to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport as reinforcing the importance of sport (pg. 108). Culture, of which sports was considered a key area, was seen by the New Labour government as a useful tool in social and economic regeneration projects (Coaffee, 2008, pg. 379). In particular, as a series of government reports made clear, sports was seen as critical to community regeneration efforts (Coaffee, 2008).

Steven Bradbury and John Williams (2006) assert that the modernisation processes that both football (evidenced by the creation of the Premier League) and that the Labour Party (in becoming ‘New’ Labour) can be seen as similar in their efforts to distance themselves from their historic alliances and troubled pasts (pg. 68). One of the

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<sup>9</sup> It is perhaps not surprising that the Labour Party turned to football as a vehicle for social reform given that the two have traditionally shared the same working-class constituency. So closely aligned were the traditional Labour and football audience communities that early crowds at football matches were often referred to as ‘the Labour Party at prayer’ (Mason, 1980).



key areas where New Labour believed that football could be used as part of a wider social agenda was in the area of racism and social exclusion. Bradbury and Williams (2006) argue that despite the production of numerous policy and government initiatives, this agenda<sup>10</sup> has been largely ineffective in combating racism and social exclusion due to a lack of oversight and statutory powers (p. 80). Gavin Mellor (2008), echoing Bradbury and Williams (2006), sees the failure of New Labour's efforts as a reflection of the Party's embrace of 'third-way' values (p. 320). In particular, the effort to use football to 'empower' children<sup>11</sup> to make "better choices" as citizens was inadequate to address long-standing structural inequalities in "at-risk" communities (Mellor, 2008). As such, New Labour's efforts in relation to football attempted to integrate the notion of the citizen-consumer as a way of trying to turn previously excluded communities into active citizens.

I would now like to turn to the period of football violence in the 1970/1980s that came to be known as the Hooligan 'crisis.' This period proves critical to this project as a way of understanding, in conjunction with the large political processes associated with Thatcherism, how the Premier League was made possible. In addition, this period marks a turn in how both the state and football authorities came to understand and think about football supporters as a group.

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<sup>10</sup> As an example of one of these efforts, almost immediately after its election in 2007, the Labour government set-up the Football Task Force made up of a number of key stakeholders (including the FA, Football League, FA PSFA and fan organisations). It was meant to address several key issues: racism and exclusion; disability access; community issues and players as role models; greater supporter involvement in the running of the game; ticketing and pricing policies; merchandising policies; and the need to reconcile the legitimate needs of shareholders and supporters where the clubs had been floated on the stock exchange (Bradbury and Williams, 2006, pg. 69). While an assessment of the Taskforce's handling of these issues is outside the scope of this project, it is important to note that many of the issues that remain at stake within this dissertation were flagged as early as 1997 as areas that were in need of intervention.

<sup>11</sup> Ruth Lister (2003) has written about the efforts of New Labour to specifically target children as part of its re-emphasis on citizenship.

## **The hooligan ‘crisis’**

Violence has always been present in football, but it did not become an issue that needed immediate attention until the 1970s and 1980s. The upsurge in interest in the activities of men (and in the 1970s and 1980s, it was mostly men attending football matches) at the football stadium can be placed within a larger societal concern over the behaviour of youth, particularly working-class youth. The question of youth culture was examined in Stanley Cohen’s now classic text *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*. In his updated introduction to the 2002 re-print of the book, Cohen writes:

In the gallery of types that society erects to show its members which roles should be avoided and which should be emulated, these groups have occupied a constant position as folk devils: visible reminders of what we should not be. The identities of such social types are public property and these particular adolescent groups have symbolised—both in what they were and how they were reacted to—much of the social change which has taken place in Britain over the last twenty years.

(p. 2)

While many of the ‘folk devils’ Cohen discusses in the book, like the Mods and rockers, have largely faded from public view as a source of moral panic, the football hooligan endures as a figure to be feared and avoided. Indeed, Tim Crabbe (2003) refers to football hooliganism as Britain’s most enduring ‘moral panic’ (p. 414). In part, this may be because football hooligans (and supporters more generally since the groups were so often conflated) were perhaps never a true subculture since their numbers and visibility always placed them within mainstream society. What is clear is that changing reactions to and

dealings with football supporters do, as Cohen (1972/2002) writes, reflect the social change that has taken place within Britain.

Two of the first authors to turn their attention to football hooliganism were Ian Taylor and John Clarke. For Taylor, "...the hooligans are a form of working-class 'resistance movement' which is trying to reassert control in the face of changes imposed by middle-class groups in order to secure middle-class interests" (quoted in Dunning, Murphy, and Williams 1986, p. 227). Clarke took a similar view, seeing football hooliganism as the reaction of working-class youth against the disintegration of working-class football communities as a result of the game's commercialisation (Dunning, Murphy, and Williams, 1986). The 1960s became a period in which concerns over the game's 'bourgeoisification' attempt to attract middle-class and skilled working-class supporters to the stadium, began to get articulated (Murphy, Williams, and Dunning, 1990, p. 38). This concern has not abated and has accelerated in the 1990s/2000s, which may begin to explain the current nostalgia that circulates in some quarters for the rougher, 'golden era' of the terraces.

Early work, like that of Taylor and Clarke, took a somewhat positive view of hooliganism as a resistive movement. Steve Frosdick and Peter Marsh (2005) argue that:

For Clarke, however, whilst new generations of working-class youth had inherited the traditional ties to football and patterns of 'supportership' characteristic of previous generations, they had failed to inherit the tacit social controls which went with that behaviour. Violence became their way of doing what their fathers had done—demonstrating loyalty and commitment to their local team and all it stood

for. The problems arose from inter-generational changes reflecting much wider shifts in the class structure of British and, in particular, English society. (p. 91)

Hooliganism was a way for young men to gain prestige and status at a moment when it seemed that with the onset of deindustrialisation, their labour was of dwindling value to the state. Patrick Murphy, John Williams, and Eric Dunning (1990) have argued that much of this early work did not acknowledge the severity of football violence due to their desire to see hooliganism in this particular light (p. 228).

As attention to the ‘problem’ began to increase (in terms of the police/judicial system, state and the media), academic work turned to empirical data that sought to dampen the rising moral panic. Peter Marsh (1977) alone and with Steve Frosdick (2005) has argued that despite the attention that football hooliganism received as a category of crime, there was very little statistical evidence to support the claim that it posed a serious threat to public safety. The first government attention paid to the football violence came with the 1969 Lang report, which was the product of a working party that had representatives from the Football Associations and Leagues (from all the home nations), Home Office, police, Scottish Office, and player/manager representatives (Frosdick and Marsh, 2005). The report offered recommendations for increasing co-operation between the police and the clubs and a move towards seating and standing (Frosdick and Marsh, 2005, p. 88). Yet Steven Frosdick and Peter Marsh (2005) argue that “what was remarkable about the Lang Report was that it was the first to seek solutions to a problem which, at that time, had not been clearly defined—even less understood” (p. 88). What becomes clear is that one of the reasons that may explain the lack of clear evidence of

overwhelming football violence was the lack of a coherent definition of what constitutes football violence.

As Cohen (1972/2002) and Hall et al.'s (1978) work makes clear, it is not possible to have a 'moral panic' without the media to echo and amplify the crisis. Press boxes first appeared at the stadiums in the late 1890s, but it was not until the late 1950s, that match reports began to emphasise the disorderly nature of the crowds (Murphy, Williams, and Dunning, 1990; Frosdick and Marsh, 2005). Patrick Murphy, John Williams, and Eric Dunning (1990) point to the press' contribution in this rising phenomenon. The first was, as mentioned, the general rising concern and anxiety around youth culture and violence in particular (Murphy, Williams, and Dunning, 1990, p. 117). The second was that the tabloid press, as it exists today, was only just beginning to emerge and facing fierce competition from other tabloids and television. Stories of youthful disorder sold (Murphy, Williams, and Dunning 1990, p. 117). There emerged evidence that media coverage contributed to an escalation in football violence, as hooligans began to believe their own press. Believing press reports that rival firms were planning to arm themselves for matches caused an escalation in violence (Murphy, Williams, and Dunning 1990, p. 121). The press became instrumental in labelling and naming the problem of football violence with their frequent references to 'thugs,' 'savages,' 'louts,' etc., which also fed into a general anxiety around the perceived global decline of Britain (in the face of decolonisation).

Retrospectively, it is easy to see that hooliganism would become an easy target for the press. The media had constant access to the 'problem' through the presence of match reports and the stories were always sensational and guaranteed to sell. Yet this led

to an over-exaggeration by the press of the severity of the problem and beginning in 1978 with the publication of the *Report on Public Disorder and Sporting Events*, the media was criticised for their role in amplifying the problem (Frosdick and Marsh, 2005). The press were rarely interested in providing social explanations for football violence as it was not as likely to catch a reader's attention like a sensationalist headline would. The result is, as Stuart Hall explains, "If you lift social violence out of its social context, the only thing you are left with is—bloody heads" (quoted in Frosdick and Marsh, 2005, pp. 116-117). While a more detailed analysis is beyond the scope of this discussion, it is important to note that aspects of the football hooligan movement came to be associated with far-right politics (Dunning, Murphy, and Williams, 1986; Murphy, Williams and Dunning 1990; Greenfield and Osborn, 1996, 1998; Frosdick and Marsh, 2005). Even amongst non-political firms, there was a strong sense of English patriotism and nationalism that developed that was often at the root of the violence that occurred, particularly abroad amongst followers of the English national team (Frosdick and Marsh, 2005). While the tabloid press was (and is) often the first to condemn the behaviour of football hooligans, it is their coverage that often stoked the jingoistic and xenophobic views that get expressed (Frosdick and Marsh, 2005, p. 118). What emerged from the press was the message that football hooliganism was a threat to both the public and the British state.

Stanley Cohen (1972/2002) gives a general description of hooliganism as acts of violence and vandalism (p. 24). Dunning, Murphy, and Williams (1986) build on the idea of violence, but add that it is the "...the pattern of fighting between rival groups that has

come to be regularly associated with soccer” (p. 221). They argue that football hooliganism takes a variety of forms that must be understood along a continuum:

Central among these continua are: (1) the degree to which the hooliganism is match-related; (2) the degree to which violence is involved and, when it is, the forms that it takes; (3) the degree to which the hooligan groups are organised and to which their disruptive behaviour is planned before the match; and (4) the degree to which heteronomous values, values entirely unconnected with the idea of football as a ‘sport’ are expressed. (1990, p. 81)

Murphy, Williams, and Dunning feel that it is necessary for hooliganism to be seen as multifaceted because of the different motivations that might be behind particular incidents. For example, the difference between a pitch invasion motivated by the joy of a goal versus a pitch invasion motivated by the desire to disrupt the match and intimidate the officials (Murphy, Williams, and Dunning, 1990, p. 10).

Safety also became the rationale for increased surveillance in the stadium, but it became increasingly unclear whose safety was in need of protection. Patrick Murphy, John Williams, and Eric Dunning (1990) argue:

The ‘pacification’ of stadia has been achieved by the employment of such means as sophisticated policing techniques, segregation, penning and closed-circuit television. However, an unintended consequence of this policy of containment has been a tendency to compromise on the issue of spectator safety, together with the generation of enhanced levels of solidarity among certain hooligan groups and commensurate expansion in their organizational abilities. (p. 216)

Historically, the most common way of watching a football match was by standing on the terraces, which were generally poured concrete on which supporters stood. The advantage of the terraces was that more people could fit into a smaller area (which would ultimately become the problem with the terraces). In response to earlier problems at stadiums, many introduced the use of crush barriers to separate sections of the terraces to help prevent over-crowding. Another early development was the segregation of the away and home fans into different terraces to try to minimise fighting inside the stadium. However, this did not always have the desired effect as, ‘taking’ the terrace of opposing fans (by charging the area) became a point of pride for many hooligan firms.

Containment became synonymous with safety. Containment as a strategy fit within Thatcher’s framework of ‘law and order,’ which attempted to identify and manage particular populations. As Ian Taylor (1989) argued:

It is vital to understand that this process of caging-in a section of the soccer audience, identifiable with that portion of the underclass seen to be generally and universally capable of violent behaviour is a *social* process—prioritising ‘secure containment’ – and a product or expression of a particular historical *and political* moment deriving from the late 1960s and 1970s. (p. 95)

The emphasis on the idea of ‘secure containment’ points to the ways in which hooliganism became ‘overdetermined’ as the designated mindset through which reformers and police approached the issue (Taylor, 1989; Scraton, 2005). The solution became to try to contain the mass, and if possible, deal out penal discipline to individual offenders. Taylor (1989) goes onto argue that the football violence “...actually intensified (especially during the late 1970s and early 1980s) *in parallel with*—and *as if in response to*—the intensification



of the containment-and-discipline strategy of state authority seems to have escaped the attention of most commentators” (p. 96). Like the media’s disregard for social context, there was little interest on the part of governing bodies to recognise that their treatment of football supporters contributed to and encouraged acting out against the disciplining techniques.

In response to the number of pitch invasions that occurred, many stadiums put up fencing around the perimeter of the pitch in order to prevent those standing on the terraces from getting onto the field. There was initially very little interest in improving the quality of stadia (Johnes, 2005). Football was a profitable sport (although football’s fortunes then pale in comparison to the revenues the game brings today), but there was little incentive to invest profits into the stadium. Instead clubs spent their money on upgrading the quality of their squads by buying better players and keeping ticket prices low. Another major problem at stadiums was that no one kept track of ground capacities (Johnes, 2005). This rendered many of the safety guides that were issued ineffective. It meant very little that there were regulations governing the number of people that could stand on a terrace if there was no one to enforce this. Part of this was borne out of confusion and stubborn inaction on the part of the Football Association, the Football League and the Government over who was responsible for the enforcement of safety regulations (Houlihan, 1991). The 1985 ‘Green Guide’<sup>12</sup> placed the responsibility for maintaining safety within the ground with management, meaning the football clubs themselves (Houlihan, 1991, p. 22). However, this was not put into practice, and the clubs failed to take full responsibility. This meant that both the league and the

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<sup>12</sup> This is the colloquial name for the *Guide to Safety at Sporting Grounds* that was first produced in response to the Bradford fire. The guide is the main source for safety instructions and is updated periodically (it was last updated in 2005).

government were producing safety guides with no organisation in place to monitor and enforce the recommendations.

The first attempt at safety legislation was the 1975 Safety at Sports Ground Act, which established “a system of inspection by local authorities and established a series of technical safety requirements in football grounds” (Johnes, 2005, p. 17). The act was passed as a result of recommendations that appeared in the Wheatley Report’s response to the 1971 Ibrox disaster in Glasgow when sixty-six supporters were killed when there was a crush on a stairway (that had already experienced three previous accidents in the previous ten years). While the Report recommended the creation of a licensing system for stadiums, the cost of upgrading safety procedures was seen as being beyond the means of smaller clubs (Johnes 2005, p. 17). In light of the prohibitive costs to smaller clubs, safety risks were not seen as being large enough to risk the financial survival.

The run-up to the Hillsborough stadium disaster demonstrates how the breakdown of safety enforcement became a factor. After the May 11<sup>th</sup>, 1985 stadium fire at Valley Parade in Bradford claimed the lives of fifty-six football supporters, the British Home Office produced the *Guide to Safety at Sports Grounds* in 1986 that was meant to establish the regulation safety on the terraces. Fire extinguishers had been removed from Bradford’s wooden stand from fear that they could be used as weapons, exits had been locked to help control the crowd and trash had been accumulating under the wooden stand since 1968 (Johnes, 2005, p. 18). The guide clearly outlines how terraces should be assessed and how many persons should be able to stand (54 persons per 10 square metres when the terrace is in good condition and 27 persons per 10 square metre when the

terrace does not conform to recommended guidelines) on a terrace and under what circumstances ('Green Guide', 1986, p. 65).

The Hillsborough stadium had been used for an FA Cup semi-final between Wolverhampton Wanderers and Tottenham Hotspur in 1981 with Spurs occupying the Lepping Lane end. During the course of the match, thirty-eight Tottenham supporters were injured and as a result the FA suspended the use of the stadium for FA Cup matches. The South Yorkshire Police recommended that the capacity be lowered (it had been assessed at 10,100) and divided into sections with lateral fencing erected to create five pens (McMillan, 2009, p. 6). Despite the modification to the terrace, the capacity was never re-assessed and remained at 10,100 (McMillan 2009, p. 6). In addition, there was no way of assessing how many people were standing within the pens once they had entered through the turnstile, rendering any attempt to keep track of the crowd, meaningless (Scruton, 2005). Crushing on the terraces was reported again at the 1988 FA Cup semi-final, but there was no modification made to either the capacity or the safety certificate (Conn, 2005, p. 94).

In addition to the Bradford fire, 1985 signalled another important incident in the trajectory of football violence. On May 29<sup>th</sup>, 1985, at the European Cup final in the Heysel stadium in Brussels, 39 Juventus supporters (an Italian team) were killed when Liverpool supporters charged the Juventus supporters and managed to breach the fence separating the two sets of fans. The Juventus supporters retreated, which caused a dilapidated retaining wall to collapse on the supporters. This resulted in the banning of English clubs from European club competitions for an indefinite period of time (it ended up being five years, plus an additional year for Liverpool). Having already begun the

Popplewell Inquiry to look into the Bradford disaster, Thatcher, as a result of her revulsion at the behaviour of British supporters, called for the inquiry to cover the Heysel disaster as well (McKie, 1985). Thatcher also pressured the FA to voluntarily pull English clubs out of European competitions before they were thrown out. It was also in this moment that the possibility of utilising television cameras in order to have ‘total observation’ of football crowds was broached. The suggestion to use CCTV first appeared in a 1984 Working Group Report on football spectator violence that suggested it could both aid police and be a deterrent to would-be hooligans (“Working Group Report,” 1984, p. 22).

The Heysel disaster was an international embarrassment and heightened the belief that football hooliganism was a problem that was ruining Britain. Despite the publication of the 1986 safety guide, in the wake of the Heysel disaster, it became clearer that safety was more about policing and surveillance than about conditions within the stadium. Again, many of these developments linked up to the developing neo-liberal state. Discussing the introduction of CCTV television, John Garland and Michael Rowe (2000) argue:

An increasing reliance on technology and environmental design has been another important development in the policing of football. The ‘electronic panacea for crime’ that is CCTV was introduced in football ahead of other areas of society—in much the same way that private sector policing made an early appearance in the sporting environment (p. 149).

As technology improved in the 1990s, CCTV would be hooked into how football legislation, in particular the 1991 Football Offence Act, would be enforced. A popular

technique for dealing with rowdy supporters has become quietly pointing out the presence of CCTV as a reminder that their behaviour is being watched (Frosdick and Marsh, 2005).

Megan O’Neil (2005) argues that there has been a shift in the post-Hillsborough period from the idea of “crowd management to crowd safety and comfort” (2005, p. 19). As a result, there has been a reduction in the police presence at matches in favour of stewards. The introduction of private stewards at matches hired by clubs themselves and governed by a private body outside the state would become a popular way of off-loading the labour of security, although this move would not be made until the early 1990s, post-Taylor report (produced as a result of Hillsborough) era. O’Neil (2005) argues that this move towards a greater presence of stewards is a result of the fact that “from 1979, the government initiated a system of reform whereby the public sector began to purchase services from private companies, rather than provide them itself” (p. 54). This move was part of the marketisation of state services.

The police began to operate within a mindset of hooliganism that often came at the expense of the safety of spectators. Police treated all supporters at football games as if they were potential hooligans, and the crumbling infrastructure and cattle-like conditions within the fenced-in pens did little to discourage supporters from engaging in dangerous behaviour (Frosdick and Marsh, 2005). Again, the Hillsborough disaster illustrates that the police’s concern over violent behaviour was greater than their concern for the safety of spectators. Despite having the larger number of travelling supporters, Liverpool had been given the smaller stand in the stadium, which was inadequately served by turnstiles. Twenty minutes before the kick-off, the majority of Liverpool supporters were still

waiting to get into the ground. Fearing violence outside the stadium, if Liverpool supporters did not get inside for the kick-off, the police decided to open a gate intended for use as an exit. There were no stewards or police present to help direct Liverpool supporters to empty pens (since the two central pens were already filled), which were obscured from the narrow tunnel they travelled down. As a result, Liverpool supporters continued to filter into the already full central pens, causing a crush at the front of the terrace. From the observation area, the police could see that there were supporters attempting to climb the perimeter fence to escape the crush. Believing it to be a pitch invasion, the police refused to open the perimeter fence. It eventually collapsed under the pressure of the crush.

A technique that became increasingly important in the 'fight' against football hooliganism was undercover policing, and it was seen as an accompaniment to the strategy of containment. The need for undercover police work in addition to containment strategies were seen (and disseminated by the media) as being a necessary endeavour because of the highly organised and complex structures of the hooligan firms (Frosdick and Marsh, 2005). In presenting the need for undercover policing to the public, the military-like structures of the firms were emphasised (Armstrong and Hobbs, 1994, p. 202). Undercover police operations resulted in several raids that included the arrests of many 'top' hooligan bosses. Most were charged under the 1986 Public Order Act, which updated the 1936 Public Order Act. In addition, beginning in 1986, there was a renewed use of conspiracy charges that had previously been used to prosecute labour organisers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and political activists in the 1960s (Armstrong and Hobbs, 1994, p. 198). The raids and arrests were done as a very public show of force, but charges were often

later dismissed or reduced because evidence was found to have been obtained illegally (Armstrong and Hobbs, 1994; Forsdick and Marsh, 2005). In 1988, the National Football Intelligence Unit was created in order to deal with football-related violence. The unit is in charge of carrying out covert operations, developing a network of informants and maintaining a database of mugshots and names (Armstrong and Hobbs 1994).

Gary Armstrong and Dick Hobbs argue that Britain has a history of antipathy to techniques of covert policing that violate civil liberties (1994, p. 224). The authors go on to argue that it was the ‘moral panic’ around football violence that “...has made it possible for the British police to introduce and normalise covert tactics and strategies of surveillance” (Armstrong and Hobbs 1994, p. 224). Many of the techniques that have been developed for dealing with football violence have become normalised as police procedures. Armstrong and Hobbs (1994) argue:

The policing of football supporters is a political issue which has seen the normalisation of surveillance and control without political protest. When applied to other citizens, voices are raised. During the miners’ strike commentators of the liberal left questioned certain procedures which, when used on football supporters, produced silence. (p. 215)

One of the techniques that they point to is the 1984 decision by the Home Office to allow police officers to photograph suspects in custody without their consent. While the Home Office stipulated that the photographs should be destroyed if no charges are brought against the suspect, in reality the photographs were not destroyed and were often kept in police stations as a sort of ‘rogues gallery’ of suspected hooligans (Armstrong and Hobbs, 1994, p. 215).

In the wake of the Hillsborough disaster, the police attempted to cover up their failures by claiming that drunk and ticketless supporters caused the accident. The attempt to blame the supporters themselves was reinforced by the treatment that families received when they came to claim the bodies and were asked about the deceased's level of intoxication and history of violent behaviour at football matches, even for the parents of the children that died (Scruton, 2005, p. 69). In his study of penalties for football related offences, Eugene Trivizas (1981) found that simply placing an incident within the context of football resulted in a stiffer sentence and that the link between the crime and football was becoming increasingly tenuous (p. 346). Again, there is the emergence of how to determine what counts as football-related violence. It was this question that was of the greatest concern to football-related legislation.

The Taylor Report did provoke a change in how safety was conceptualised in relation to football. In the wake of the Hillsborough disaster, the 1989 Football Spectators Bill was passed, which was:

An Act to control the admission of spectators at designated football matches in England and Wales by means of a national membership scheme and licences to admit spectators; to provide for the safety of spectators at such matches by means of such licences and the conferment of functions on the licensing authority in relation to safety certificates for grounds at which such matches are played; and to provide for the making by courts and the enforcement of orders imposing restrictions on persons convicted of certain offences for the purpose of preventing violence or disorder at or in connection with designated



football matches played outside England and Wales. ('Football Spectators Act, 1989)

The national membership scheme was never implemented after being criticised in the Taylor Report (Pearson, 1999).<sup>13</sup> Geoff Pearson (1999) argues that in the formation of legislation, there has been an interchange between 'fan' and 'hooligan' (p. 30). As a result "this confusion has led to many socio-legal responses which have been targeted at football fans in general, rather than football 'hooligans' specifically" (Pearson, 1999, p. 30). It became a need to be constantly vigilant against a possible return of hooliganism.

What the 1989 Football Spectators Act did introduce, and which has become further restricted in later pieces of legislation, was the use of what came to be known as 'banning orders,' but are referred to as restriction orders in the bill. Section 15 of the bill states that:

(1) A court by or before which a person is convicted of a relevant offence or, if a person convicted of such an offence is committed to it to be dealt with, the Crown Court on dealing with him for the offence, may make a restriction order in relation to him.

(2) No restriction order may be made unless the court is satisfied that making such an order in relation to the accused would help to prevent violence or disorder at or in connection with designated football matches.

('Football Spectators Act', 1989)

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<sup>13</sup> The 1989 Football Spectators Act would have forced supporters to carry I.D. cards to matches. Geoff Pearson argued about the proposed scheme "the attempt to separate the civil liberties of football fans from those of the rest of society (who would continue to be excused the need to carry I.D. cards due to fears of infringing civil liberties), remains an illustration of the attitude towards football fans. This in turn demonstrates the precarious position of the civil liberties of football fans" (1999, 30). Pearson is pointing to the ways in which legislation blurred the lines between supporter safety and surveillance.

Banning orders initially started out in relation to matches outside of England and Wales (but have since been expanded to include stadiums within England). Banning orders were introduced to limit the mobility of people that were seen as key instigators of football violence by preventing them from travelling overseas. If a person receives a restriction order under the 1989 bill, they are required to report to a police station during the period of the match.

The next piece of legislation to appear was the 1991 Football (Offences) Act, which set out in detail what constitutes disorderly conduct while attending a match, including setting out a time period for football violence. The key passage reads:

(2) References in this Act to things done at a designated football match include anything done at the ground—

(a) within the period beginning two hours before the start of the match or (if earlier) two hours before the time at which it is advertised to start and ending one hour after the end of the match; or

(b) where the match is advertised to start at a particular time on a particular day but does not take place on that day, within the period beginning two hours before and ending one hour after the advertised starting time. ('Football Offences Act', 1991)

The Act also establishes the throwing of missiles, racist chanting and running onto the pitch as punishable offences. If the 1980s had been a period of disorder, the 1990s quickly became a time to try and establish legislative order.

Football supporters have not only been subjected to football-specific legislation. One of the most extreme measures that has been used in anticipation of football violence

is section 60 of the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act. This section reads, in part:

- (1) Where a police officer of or above the rank of superintendent reasonably believes that—
- (a) incidents involving serious violence may take place in any locality in his area, and
  - (b) it is expedient to do so to prevent their occurrence,
- he may give an authorisation that the powers to stop and search persons and vehicles conferred by this section shall be exercisable at any place within that locality for a period not exceeding twenty four hours.

(“Criminal Justice and Public Order Act”, 1994)

Once the area is established the police are allowed to stop and search any person within the area that they reasonably believe may be intent on committing violence. An entire football ground and surrounding area could theoretically be open to this kind of search and seizure. The 1994 CJA also makes it illegal for a supporter to sell, exchange or give away a ticket in a public place.

In 2000, the Football Offences, now the Football (Disorder) Act, was updated. Banning orders, which became the language adopted by the Act, are no longer only enforced by the person in question reporting to a police station during the period in question nor do you have to have been convicted of a football offence. Now a person can receive a banning order on the basis of the police applying to a magistrate (Section 14b). In addition, banning orders are now enforced by the confiscation of passports, up to five days in advance of the match in question. Legislation is becoming increasingly draconian

and banning orders are no longer simply applicable to those that have convictions for football violence, but can also be applied to those the police merely believe may cause trouble (Frosdick and Marsh 2005, p. 170).

As the stadium became an increasingly restrictive and surveilled space, the possibility of commercial broadcasting of football matches was beginning to be considered as a viable alternative to the 'live' sporting experience. While chapter three will detail the rise and growth of the satellite broadcasting of the English Premier League, I would like to conclude this chapter by looking briefly at the historic development of sports broadcasting in the United Kingdom. While the BBC has come to play an increasingly complicated role in the story of the Premier League, this project would be remiss without a consideration of the important role that the notion of Public Service Broadcasting, as exemplified by the BBC, has played in the history of British Broadcasting.

### **The BBC and beyond**

The development of sports media in Britain grew out of changes and decisions within British broadcasting more generally. British broadcasting has historically operated with a strong public service broadcasting mandate. The public service model of the British Broadcasting Corporation (né British Broadcasting Company) would become a model for public service broadcasters throughout the world. Yet the question of how to define public service broadcasting has been the source of some debate. In particular, public service broadcasting in the current moment is being confronted by questions over both the meaning of its existence and its utility. The inability to develop a universal definition of public service broadcasting is mainly because public service broadcasting

norms tend to be determined by national contexts (as will soon become clear with Britain). The question of public service broadcasting is becoming increasingly important within the context of European integration, but its definition continues to be elusive. For example, while the importance of public service broadcasting and the ability of European member states to provide it are enshrined in Article 16 of the Treaty of Amsterdam, there is no clear EU directive on what qualifies as public service broadcasting (Harrison and Woods, 2001).

In Britain in 1985, the Broadcasting Research Unit attempted to provide a more general and non-BBC specific (how the BBC defines public service broadcasting will also be discussed) definition of public service broadcasting by outlining eight principles of PSB:

1. Geographic universality
2. Broadcasting to be directly funded by the viewing and listening audience
3. Independence from government and vested interests
4. Concern for national identity and community
5. Catering to all interests and tastes
6. Catering to minorities
7. Quality of programming
8. Creative freedom for program makers (quoted in Brown, Allan, 1996 p. 4)

According to these principles, it is possible to see that public service broadcasting applies to not only specifying how programs are produced and presented, but also sets out the relationship that exists between the public, media broadcasters, and the government.

Allan Brown (1996) argues that in general, despite differences among national contexts, public service broadcasting is underpinned by a belief that broadcasting should have objectives beyond entertainment and the profitability of media companies (p.5). As arguably the most recognised emblem of public service broadcasting, the BBC has

constantly been both navigating the definition of public service broadcasting and how it looks in practice.

Within Britain, the media was crucial to the process of harmonising and professionalising sports. By the time the Football League was founded in 1888, Britain was supporting the circulation of three national daily sports newspapers (Mason, 2007). By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, all the national newspapers included extensive sports sections that were instrumental in creating a national interest in star athletes.<sup>14</sup>

The British Broadcasting Company, Ltd. was founded on October 18<sup>th</sup>, 1922 as a privately owned radio service with a mission “to inform, educate and entertain,” the motto that remains in place to this day. In 1927, the BBC was granted a Royal Charter (becoming the British Broadcasting Corporation) and became the BBC that we recognise today. From its very inception, the BBC has carried a strong public service mandate, which helped shape the BBC’s view of itself as being closely tied to British national identity. The BBC began broadcasting sports in 1925, but they were not able to begin providing eyewitness accounts of some events until 1927 (Whannel, 1992). However, the Football League banned all live broadcasting of its events, presenting the first incarnation of its argument that media coverage of football matches would discourage people from attending the live event.

The broadcaster quickly saw that sporting events could contribute to this shaping of a national audience. The BBC treated the Oxford-Cambridge boat race, the Grand National Horse Race, the Derby horse race and the FA Cup Final as important national events. The BBC’s identity as the national broadcaster was largely shaped by its close

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<sup>14</sup> Interestingly, and in contrast to all other major European football nation-states, there remain no national sport dailies within Britain.

proximity to both sports and state occasions. The two were so closely related that they were handled by the same department, Outside Broadcasting productions, within the BBC and largely adhered to the same broadcasting codes/practices and conventions (Whannel, 1992, p. 16). As Garry Whannel (1992) argues, “in contributing to the production of the imaginary coherence of national identity, it [the BBC] was articulating two elements of national culture most decisively de-politicised – sports and the monarchy” (p. 20). The BBC staked its identity on its ability to be there for the big national moments, of which sport played a key role.

While the BBC recognised the benefit of radio (and later television) broadcasting of sporting events, the major sporting bodies were not initially convinced. In particular, there was concern over the fees being paid to the organisations themselves for the transmission of the events. For their broadcasts, the BBC was simply paying the same ‘facility fee’ that print media outlets paid to cover the event, rather than paying a broadcasting rights fee (which would have generated more revenue for the sporting associations), arguing that their right to sport was “analogous to the press” (Whannel, 1992, p. 21). In 1944, the major sporting bodies including the All-England lawn tennis association, Rugby Union, the Football League, National Hunt committee, British Boxing Board of Control and the Jockey Club formed the Association for the Protection of Copyright in Sport (APCS) in order to generate a better deal with the BBC. The APCS wanted a copyright on sporting events that was similar to the one granted to authors, giving them greater control over the broadcasting of sporting events (Whannel, 1992). The BBC vigorously objected, seeing the broadcasting of sport as something that was ‘mutually beneficial’ to both parties. At the same, given the increased value that sport

was seen to have building a sense of national identity and with the end of the war, there was a desire within the government to see more sports broadcast and the government was willing to help facilitate this.

With the BBC and the sporting bodies still at odds over the price of broadcasting, the Postmaster-General (the government department responsible for regulating broadcasting) established the Sports Television Advisory Committee in 1950 to try and improve relations between the two parties. As a result of the government's intervention, it was decided that the sporting organisations would each negotiate with the BBC over the transmission of a hundred sporting events per year (Whannel, 1992). The BBC was also starting to recognise that the facilities fee was not sufficient payment, especially as television broadcasting started to take off. In fact a 1947 BBC memo clearly articulates this point, acknowledging the broadcaster would eventually have to pay more television broadcasts "as we are buying the event, and not merely the right to have someone describe it" (reprinted in Whannel, 1992, p. 22). Even in this early period, the BBC was acknowledging that there was something different about television broadcasting, in particular over who "owns" the event once it is on television.

The BBC began experimental television broadcasts in 1932, but television was slow to develop. It was not until the broadcasting of the 1953 coronation of Queen Elizabeth that television became an important medium (another example of how the BBC developed its identity through a close proximity to important national events). In order to combat both the perceived London bias and the monopoly of the BBC, the 1954 Television Act outlined the creation of a new broadcaster and discouraged granting exclusivity of events that were in the "national interest" to one broadcaster (Whannel,



1992). As result, Independent Television (ITV) was launched on September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1955. Britain was divided into regional areas with each region being represented by its own ITV station. Despite not receiving funding from the government, ITV was expected to conform to the principles of public service broadcasting; particularly the need to serve currently underrepresented minorities. In addition, talks were held to establish a collection of listed events (FA Cup Final, Oxbridge boat race, Wimbledon, Test Match cricket, the Grand National and the Derby) that could never be exclusively sold to one broadcaster.

ITV did not initially present a major challenge to the BBC's already extensive coverage of sport. By the 1960s, the government determined that ITV needed to provide more sports coverage as part of its public service broadcasting remit (Whannel, 1992, p. 50). For the 1965/66 football season, ITV was able to negotiate a deal with the Football League for a Sunday evening highlights show of the weekend's matches. By the late 1980s, ITV had decided that it was no longer interested in broadcasting sporting events if they did not have exclusive coverage of the event (with the exception of the World Cup) (Whannel, 1992, p.58). Despite the improved efforts that ITV made in covering sports, the BBC continued to maintain its position as the 'natural' home for sporting (and other) events of national importance.

### **Broadcasting under Thatcher**

Broadcasting, with the 'comfortable duopoly' of the BBC and ITV, clearly violated Thatcher's belief in the free market and consumer choice. As Anthony King argues, "on the one hand, Thatcherite broadcasting policy was ideologically motivated by an antipathy to the very concept of public service broadcasting and, on the other, a desire

to implement a free market system of television production and broadcasting in Britain” (King, A., 2008, p. 281). Thatcher took a personal interest in broadcasting policy, seeing it as her job to reign in the perceived excesses of the BBC, an organisation that for too long had been shielded from the marketplace. In addition, technological changes were presenting new opportunities. In 1977, the World Radio Administrative Conference allocated Britain five Direct Broadcasting by Satellite (DBS) TV channels. In 1980, the Home Office commissioned a study on Direct Broadcasting by Satellite in order to determine what should happen to Britain’s five DBS channels. The study had very few concrete answers, but did recommend that an early start on DBS broadcasting could benefit industry, but was less committal on the impact that DBS might have on broadcasting (Home Office, 1980)<sup>15</sup>.

Initially it was felt that it should fall to the BBC to try and develop DBS broadcasting, but by 1981, the BBC withdrew its sole involvement, citing the project as unmanageable. The BBC decided to try and partner with ITV to negotiate with satellite providers, and the two broadcasters held several meetings between 1982-85, but these ultimately fell apart. The government decided to hand over the decision-making process to the Independent Broadcasters Association (the body which oversaw the ITV franchises) in the search to find a partner for the franchises (Goodwin, 1998). In 1986, the IBA awarded three of the channels to British Satellite Broadcasting. The other two channels were reserved for development later once the first three were up and running.

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<sup>15</sup> The study also notes a concern that DBS might contribute to “overspill,” which was the ability to access channels from other European countries and vice-versa (Goodwin, 1998). This indicates that there was a growing recognition that within the new media landscape, it might not be possible to think only in terms of national broadcasting environments.

Broadcasting was of a particular concern to Thatcher as she recognised the potential power that television in particular had. As Anthony King (2008) writes:

Thatcher's sense of the symbolic roles of the television, as a central definer of the nation's self-understanding, was instinctive and uncritical but Thatcher's deep concern with television demonstrated that she recognised that television was not simply one economic sphere in need among many but that it had some priority over other areas". (p. 282)

Thatcher recognised that there was something different about television as compared to other industries that she sought to de-regulate, not least because the use of single flat fee for service delivery (the licence fee) made it similar to other institutions, like the National Health Service, that put it at the heart of British identity. Yet it was the flat fee delivery of the same service to all citizens, which Thatcher saw as akin to welfare, making the licence fee come under pressure during her tenure (King 2008, p. 283). Thatcher was also a firm believer in television's ability to influence both individuals and the government and saw it as an important medium for presenting herself as well (O'Malley, 1994, p. 67).

During this period, Thatcher developed a close friendship with the head of an emerging media empire, Rupert Murdoch. It should come as no surprise that Thatcher and Murdoch would develop a relationship given their common world-view, but it is a relationship that would have a profound impact on the British media landscape.

Murdoch's first foray into British media began with his 1983 purchase of the Times and Sunday Times newspaper.<sup>16</sup> Agreeing with Thatcher's views on the BBC, the press, led

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<sup>16</sup> Benefitting from his close relationship with Thatcher, Thatcher personally intervened to prevent Murdoch's purchase of the Times and Sunday Times from being referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission despite breaching the rules (O'Malley, 1994; King, 2008). This would become a pattern, as Thatcher would help Murdoch avoid government oversight with his Sky television brand as well.

by Murdoch, spent much of the early 1980s attacking the BBC for being poorly managed and overly ambitious (O'Malley, 1994). Thatcher was also being lobbied by ad agencies that wanted to see the licence fee abolished in order to provide them with more opportunities to promote their clients' products (O'Malley, 1994, p. 11). Tom O'Malley (1994) argues that in addition to a belief in free-market economics, Thatcher's broadcasting policy during this period was also driven by a kind of technological determinism. Not only was a market-driven framework seen as the best one for providing the conditions for developing new technologies, but technological change itself was seen as providing social goods (O'Malley, 1994, p. 14). What the government needed to do was intervene in order to create the best (free-market) environment for technological innovation to occur.

In addition to regular attacks in newspapers, which overwhelmingly supported the Conservative government, the BBC found itself under attack within parliament itself, largely over its coverage of the Falklands War, which was seen as being insufficiently patriotic (O'Malley, p. 47). The BBC was also attacked over its coverage of Northern Ireland,<sup>17</sup> and both the Falklands and Northern Ireland coverage were seen as being evidence of the Corporation's leftist leanings. One of the first clear showdowns between the BBC and Thatcher came in 1985 when the Corporation wanted to raise the licence fee from £45 to £65 per year. The government would only sanction a rise of £13 to £58 and the rise in the licence fee would be accompanied by an enquiry into the licence fee itself ('Report on financing', 1986). Thatcher was opposed to the licence fee because it was

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<sup>17</sup> It is important to note that the 1980s was a particularly bloody period in the Northern Irish conflict. The Irish Republican Army (IRA) was in its most active periods and several bombs a year in England were going off. How the conflict was being presented became extremely important, especially if that coverage was seen as being sympathetic to the IRA.

particularly antithetical to market principles, creating an indirect relationship between the consumer and the corporation in which the consumer had very little choice (King, 2008). Questions about the efficiency of the BBC and the debate over the licence fee led to the creation of what was known colloquially as the Peacock inquiry, which was appointed in 1985 with the express purpose of investigating whether the licence fee should be abolished and the BBC be forced to seek advertising. Despite stacking the enquiry with free-market economists who shared Thatcher's world-view (O'Malley, 1994), the inquiry ruled against abolishing the licence fee because, ironically, it was seen that doing so would actually reduce consumer choice (O'Malley, 1994; King, 2008). Despite supporting the continuation of the licence fee, the Peacock report took the opportunity to alter the definition of Public Service Broadcasting, arguing that PSB does not have social and cultural importance and should instead be seen as simply serving an economic need (primarily servicing minority groups that might otherwise be ignored) (O'Malley, 1994, p. 100).

The question of consumer choice would soon dovetail with the emerging satellite environment that was developing. IBA had chosen the BSB bid largely because it was going to make its satellite dishes in Britain, thus helping to develop and support a new British industry. The government was supportive of this effort and wanted to support this endeavour. In 1985, the government had relaxed the licensing of Single Master Antenna Television Systems (SMATV) to make it easier for people to obtain low to medium powered satellite dishes (subject only to planning permission) (Goodwin, 1998, p. 48). It was believed that the high costs of the dishes would mean that few people would exercise this option. However, changes in technology meant that dishes were continually getting

smaller and cheaper. By 1988, the Luxemburg licensed Astra satellite meant that there was a satellite that could compete with the official BSB's high-powered DBS satellite (Goodwin, 1988, p.49).

On June 8<sup>th</sup>, 1988, Murdoch announced that he was partnering with Astra to provide four UK-directed channels direct-to-home service that would launch in November 1988. As a result, Sky TV (as the Murdoch service was named) launched fourteen months before BSB's service and already had 600,000 subscribers by the time that BSB launched. BSB's ability to enter the market had been severely damaged by Sky's ability to launch first and the satellite market was proving to be a very expensive environment to compete in. As a result, in November 1990, BSB and Sky TV merged, forming BSkyB, changing the British broadcasting landscape forever. Sky TV recognised early on that the best way to attract subscribers was through the provision of premium content (Goodwin, 1998). When Sky TV initially launched, securing the rights to Hollywood films that could not otherwise be seen on television represented that premium content. Films presented a strong draw, but were not providing enough subscribers given the high costs associated with satellite transmissions. It was clear that in order to solidify their existence Sky TV, now BSkyB, would need to find an even more enticing draw.

Until 1988, the BBC and ITV had shared the broadcasting of the Football League. The same year, BSB intended to offer the Football League £200 million for the rights to broadcast the First Division for ten years (Barnett and Curry, 1994, p.136). The BBC knew it would be outmuscled financially and declined to bid, but ITV got nervous and bid £44 million for the right to show the First Division for four years. Despite the high cost, the investment was a good one for ITV with broadcasts of football matches

averaging eight million viewers. The Football League decided to accept the ITV bid, concerned about both the audience for BSB (which had not even launched yet) and the long duration of the contract (Barnett and Curry, 1994). Football was becoming big business on television and BSB, now BSkyB would not be outbid again.

### Chapter 3

#### **Did Football Exist before 1992? The English Premier League goes Global**

It is estimated that the English Premier League reaches a worldwide audience of 600 million homes in 202 countries (Bevan and Stevenson, 2008). The growth of the audience for the English Premier League has grown at a staggering pace, prompting domestic concern that the League, in its bid for worldwide domination, is losing its English character. This concern is not without merit, especially when considering how far it has strayed away from its initial goal, improving the quality and prospects of the English national team, and where it is now, a global enterprise comprised mostly of non-English players. The Premier League's extraordinary global growth has been enabled through the television broadcasting of matches. While football broadcasting on television in England began comparatively late (in relation to North American sports), the lag has been made up through an intense process of commercialisation.

The commercialisation and internationalisation of the English game has provoked significant and intense discussion centred on English identity. Initially, in the words of Cornel Sandvoss, "new communication technologies helped to establish the national dimension of sport by enabling sports results to be communicated instantly over vast distances" (2003, p. 7). Communication technologies have always played a role in the development of English football culture, beginning with early radio and print media coverage of games in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. As discussed in chapter two, these initial technological innovations were approached with caution by football clubs, concerned that the use of these technologies would discourage in person attendance at the stadium. In the Premier League era, satellite television has been embraced rather than shunned by clubs



who rely on television riches to sustain themselves. As such, there is now less of an emphasis on sustaining the stadium audience and more of a move towards to growing the television one.

The story of the Premier League as we know it today is one in which the power of the television broadcasting was able to save and improve the fortunes of English football to produce the most successful and lucrative league in the world. While this may have become the dominant narrative, and the recent celebrations of the Premier League's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary certainly suggest that this is the League's narrative, the story of the League's foundation and subsequent broadcasting deals is far more complicated. At the moment of the League's foundation, there were other options presented that would not have seen the creation of the Premier League. In addition, the move to satellite television was not guaranteed as alternative proposals were made. Through an examination of the competing reports produced by the Football Association and the Football League as well as newspaper coverage of both the League's foundation and negotiations over the television rights, this chapter argues that the League's development was not a given and a number of other possibilities existed and that the history of the Premier League was fraught with contradictions and conflicts.

By returning to the competing reports produced by the Football Association and the Football League, I support the claim the contours of the Premier League were shaped by a number of feuding forces with different interests in English football. In particular, an examination of both these documents excavates the forgotten debate over the League's role in developing and fostering the England national team. An almost forgotten original premise for the League's existence, the re-examination of this argument helps to

elucidate current debates around the League's relationship to the English national team (which will be examined in more detail in chapter four). Similarly, a return to newspaper coverage of the League's foundation and the subsequent broadcasting negotiations reveals the contentious nature of the League's creation. In particular, I demonstrate with these newspaper discourses how current debates within the Premier League over access and the rising costs of being football supporter have been shaped by debates that appeared at the moment of the League's foundation.

Currently four broadcasters have the rights to show football within England: the British Broadcasting Channel (BBC), Independent Television (ITV), ESPN Sports and BSkyB (through the Sky sports channels).<sup>18</sup> ESPN and BSkyB hold the Premier League rights (with the BBC holding the highlights rights) and ITV and ESPN jointly own the rights to the FA Cup.<sup>19</sup> Both the BBC and ITV are free-to-air channels. The BBC is state-run and commercial-free. The television license fee (which applies to all television-viewing households) funds the BBC (£ 142.50 per year for a colour television set) and is required of all British households regardless of whether they choose to also purchase a satellite television package (BBC website). ITV is a privately owned terrestrial television channel. Both BSkyB and ESPN are satellite television channels that are available for a monthly subscription fee.

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<sup>18</sup> This will be changing again for the 2013-2014 season. Setting another new record, BSkyB has agreed to pay £2.3 billion to show 116 matches a season for 3 years. ESPN lost their one package, having been outbid by British Telecom for the last package for a price of £738 million pounds to show 38 games (including 19 first pick games). British Telecom has taken over ESPN broadcasting within Britain.

<sup>19</sup> The FA Cup is the oldest domestic Cup competition in the world and it points to some of the complications that exist within English football in terms of moving between the FA, the Premier League and the Football League. The FA Cup is open to any team that plays within the FA football pyramid, which includes amateur teams playing at the lowest level of football. While this project is focused on the development of the English Premier League, English football, and European football more generally, does not always fit in neat categories and the FA Cup remains an important competition for Premier League clubs, who are almost always the winner of the competition.

The television deals have been the major contributor to the increased commercialisation of the English Premier League. This has been a symbiotic relationship that has benefited both the league and the broadcasters. By looking at the television deals, what should become clear is that the story of the English Premier League is the story of its global mediatisation. While the League has since the earliest part of the century been mediated in some ways through newspaper reporting and radio, this process has been accelerated and shifted in particular ways since the inception of the League. I use the term global mediaopoly to capture how this process has accelerated both in terms of pace (not only the speed with which television was adopted, but also the ways in which television coverage has seeped into other areas, particularly expanded newspaper coverage and the Internet) and reach (as the number of places the League can be viewed has grown). Yet through its mediaopoly, the League has been shaped in ways that are contrary to its initial goals. While the relationship between the league and broadcasters has been mutually beneficial, what becomes apparent is that, despite initial intentions, it is not footballing decisions, but rather broadcasting ones, that are now largely responsible for driving the direction of the League's growth. As a result, a number of new conflicts have developed: between the Premier League and the English national team (a conflict the Premier League was meant to solve rather than exacerbate) and between supporters whose main form of support is televisual rather than the stadium, suggesting a split between television and stadium supporters. In order to succeed, the Premier League needed to create the impression that the televisual experience was equal or better than the stadium experience by focusing on how television provides a better viewing experience

(Sandvoss, 2003). The televising of football has changed the spatial experience of the game by creating new spaces and opportunities for watching the match.

This chapter will trace the emergence of the English Premier League as the biggest league in the world by examining the development and selling of television rights in the Premier League era. By outlining the reason why the Premier League was conceived in the first place and its subsequent development, it will become clear that the goals of broadcasters and those of the football governing bodies are not always in sync and whose priorities win out go a long way towards determining whose interests reign supreme in the English game. Rather than the balance between the interests of the FA (the England national team) and the top teams in England that the creation of the Premier League was meant to encourage, the current situation has seen the financial interests of the Premier League become the driving force. Given the longstanding tension between the broadcasting/commercial interests and the national/cultural interests of the game, it will also become clear that it is not possible to simply examine football as an economic enterprise separate from its cultural interests. In this vein, it is useful to place football within the larger framework of British cultural policy. Football broadcasting was enabled largely through processes of deregulation and neo-liberalism that were happening within Britain, particularly in the area of broadcasting. I will begin by outlining the particular economics of sports broadcasting and how English football fits within this model. I will then outline the developments of the English Premier League since its inception to highlight how the league has been shaped by its mediatisation, including how television established itself as the ultimate football experience. I will conclude with highlighting the contradictions that the Premier League's current television strategy has brought into

being and whether the conflicts created by this strategy are solvable under the current configuration.

### **The economics of sports broadcasting**

Sports' broadcasting by its very nature suggests a shift away from sports "purer" aspects and towards a more commercial/entertainment value. This shift has been explored by a number of authors. Terje Gaustad (2006) argues that this paradigm shift away from sports as an idealised activity towards sports as an entertainment product has resulted in two tendencies. The first tendency is towards adjusting sports to fit the needs of broadcasters and television schedules (Gaustad, 2006). This might include moving games to days and times that are seen as better able to capture a large audience. The second tendency is towards the creation of new sports, which are shaped to fit the needs of broadcasters (Gaustad, 2006). An example of the second tendency would be the creation of 20/20 cricket, which is designed to last a more broadcast friendly one-day (as opposed to test cricket which lasts days). One of the central tensions that appear when sports are broadcast on television is between the public and private value of the broadcast. Gaustad argues, "Television programming has, like other media products, both public good and private good elements. The performance in itself, which is caught on video or film or transmitted directly, is a public good. The physical medium and transmission capacity, however, are private goods" (2006, p. 104). It is the public good within sports, the uncertainty of the outcome and the performance of the athletes, as opposed to the production value of the broadcast that broadcasters use to determine the value that they will ascribe to the sport.

The unique production elements of sport are what sets sports apart from other industries. Bill Gerrard (2006) identifies these three peculiarities as: the jointness of production, competitive regulation and excessive allegiance. Jointness of production means that sporting contests cannot exist without teams (or individuals) agreeing to join together in competitive contest (often through the existence of leagues (Gerrard, 2006). As a result, no team, no matter how successful, can exist without other teams of similar capacity, in order to produce competitive balance, to play against. The second, competitive regulation is the regulatory mechanisms that sporting governing bodies put in place in order to ensure competitive balance (Gerrard, 2006). This might include the joint selling of television rights to ensure a somewhat level financial playing field between clubs or the implementation of a salary cap on players' salaries. The third, excessive allegiance is the brand loyalty and affective bonds that supporters are seen to embody (Gerrard 2006). In particular, it is the third particularity that makes sports such an attractive prospect for broadcasters. It is the sports with higher supporter loyalty that are likely to get the biggest contracts.

Despite the attractive qualities of the sporting audience, it is ultimately nearly impossible to place a tangible material value on team loyalty (although broadcasters and teams continually try to make it a tangible asset). Stefan Szymanski (2009) argues:

As an entertainment, sports create huge benefits for consumers measured by the amount of time devoted to thinking and talking about them...But sports clubs extract very little of the economic surplus they generate – largely because they cannot tax the discussions and arguments that their activities feed. Sport broadcasting has enabled the clubs to take a larger share of the surplus they

generate, first through advertising on free-to-air TV, but increasingly through pay TV services. Improvements in technology are generating new ways to extract revenue from sports, including mobile phones and broadband Internet. (p.126)

As a result, the question of the ownership of broadcasting rights becomes an especially prescient question. Szymanski (2009) argues that the question of who owns football matches has never been clearly answered in England. He argues that there are four main groups that could potentially lay claim to ownership over the game. The first are the owners of the stadium in which the games are being played as they have the right to determine who can and cannot enter the stadium and can charge a fee for the privilege (ex. the facilities fee that broadcasters pay to be allowed to film in stadiums) (Szymanski, 2009). The second group are the owners of the teams who are playing (often the same group that owns the stadium) since they determine whether the team will be participating in the competition (Szymanski, 2009). The third group are the players themselves since they are the ones whose performance is central to whether anyone would be interested in the game. This may also manifest itself in players attempting to copyright their images as a way to protect their image rights (Szymanski, 2009). Lastly, the fourth group would be the League itself since they are responsible to organising the competition and for its promotion and branding (Szymanski, 2009). Interestingly, Szymanski identifies neither the broadcasters nor the supporters themselves as laying claim to ownership of the game.

Wyn Grant (2006) offers an economic analysis that is more sympathetic to the interests of the supporters who engage with the sport. Grant is specifically examining English football in his attempt to determine whether or not a political economy of football is possible. Grant argues that while football, particularly since the creation of the

Premier League, has managed the economic questions well (putting in place deals which made a lot of money), it has been unable to deal with the political questions, in particular the question of access (2006). Grant is particularly concerned that while attendance figures and the high prices paid for the broadcasting rights indicate good financial health, there are a number of problems facing the league, most importantly the high ticket prices and the ageing supporter population (2010, p. 13). He writes, “Brand loyalty is exceptionally high in football, particularly compared to other product markets, and this does constrain the use of the exit option [for supporters] and create a relatively inelastic pattern of demand” (Grant, 2010, p. 13). While it is brand loyalty that makes football an attractive commercial proposition, the League and clubs are no longer as invested in nurturing the affective bonds between the club and its local community. These are the kind of political questions that Grant feels football is no longer answering. By pushing the cultural/national aspect of the game to the side in favour of its commercial interests, the League risks having the whole project collapse.

### **The Football League versus the Football Association**

English football had always been governed by two separate entities with differing responsibilities and, in some cases, conflicting interests. The tension between the Football Association (the FA) and the Football League has its historical roots in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century over the question of amateurism versus professionalism (Fishwick, 1989). The FA, as the representatives of the English game at all levels saw themselves as protecting the spirit of the game. This was also a reflection of the make-up of the FA’s governing board whose upper-class status believed in amateur Corinthian values including the belief that football players should not be paid. The Football League with its working-class roots



and move towards professionalism (and thus the possibility of making money from sport), was seen as simply interested in more commercial matters (Fishwick, 1989). The Football Association (FA) was responsible for the organisation of the English national team in addition to the grassroots/youth football development and non-professional leagues. The Football League was responsible for the administration of domestic league football at the professional level. In the post-Hillsborough era, there was a strong sense that the governance of English football needed to modernise and that the FA and the Football League would need to work together to implement the changes outlined in the Taylor Report (in particular in regards to the administration of the Football Trust).<sup>20</sup> As a result, the Football League and the FA produced competing documents that outlined their vision for the future of English football and they could not have been more different. The adoption of the FA's *Blueprint for the Future of Football* over the Football's League's *One Game, One Team, One Voice* led to the creation of the Premier League.

The Football League was the first to present their vision, publishing *One Game, One Team, One Voice* in October 1990. The report endorsed a unification of the FA and the Football League through a joint board that would work together on matters of joint consideration (The Football League, p. 4). *One Game, One Team, One Voice* highlights all of the issues on which a unified approach from both bodies would be beneficial. In particular, the report highlights the need for a common policy on commercial and marketing affairs. The report recognises that football can no longer resist broadcasting and other commercial activities, and thus a common approach that takes into the account the historical development of the game is desirable (The Football League, 1990, p. 27). In

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<sup>20</sup> The Hillsborough disaster and its fallout was discussed in chapter two.

the Football League's view, a joint venture between the FA and the Football League would ensure the strongest possible broadcasting and commercial bids by offering the most comprehensive packages (broadcasters would no longer have to choose between broadcasting the League or the English national team) (the Football League, 1990, p. 30). In regards to broadcasting, the Football League presented a number of innovative and interesting proposals, especially in light of how broadcasting has developed in English football. The Football League proposed that rather than selling exclusive rights to broadcast games, what the joint League-FA board should do is sell pictures (which stood for televised coverage) (the Football League, 1990, p. 30). The Football League had already been filming and transmitting its own broadcasts overseas and felt that this provided the best guarantee of quality and control over the product. In addition, this would guarantee that the rights and licensing would remain with the governing body, rather than the broadcasters. This would allow the governing body to exert greater control over the shape and direction of the League.

The FA did not respond positively to the Football League's proposal and through press leaks, it became clear the FA would be presenting a very different plan, one that included a radical proposal in the form of a Super League. The FA responded to the *One Game, One Vision, One Voice* report by proposing its own vision in the form of the *Blueprint for the Future of Football* on April 8<sup>th</sup>, 1991. The FA council approved the FA's plan over the Football League's proposal on the same day, setting up a conflict between the two groups. The FA rejected the Football League's suggestion of a joint board by reaffirming its belief that the FA must remain the most important governing body in English football and the English national team must remain at the top of the

football pyramid (The Football Association, 1991, p. 28). As a result, the FA proposed that the top tier of the Football League should breakaway and form a Super League that would ultimately be reduced from the current 22 in the First Division to only 18 clubs. By reducing the number of teams in the division, the FA felt that greater attention could be paid to the English national team, whose interests must be placed above all others (including commercial considerations) (The Football Association, 1991, p. 30). As the report states:

The establishment of a Premier League within The Football Association's administration has to be considered first, in relation to the achievement of our purpose – that of establishing The Football Association as the Government of the game in England; second, in relation to our prime objective of establishing the England Team at the apex of the pyramid of playing excellence. These two factors outweigh all other considerations. (1991, p. 30)

What becomes apparent is that the FA is concerned with its own position of power above even its stated goal of developing the national team. While the FA argues here that its first and second objectives are working in tandem, the FA's decision to partner with a breakaway Premier League indicates the primacy of the first objective. The new league would present heightened commercial opportunities for both the broadcasting of England internationals and one Premier League match a week. In addition, no Premier League game would be played the weekend before an England international match to allow the team to prepare fully. Even before releasing their proposal, the FA had outmanoeuvred the Football League by securing the support of the Big Five clubs (Liverpool, Everton, Arsenal, Tottenham Hotspurs and Manchester United).

The FA's proposal had the support of most of the English first Division clubs, but the Football Supporter's Association quickly came out against the proposal, citing concerns over the rising costs of football and whether some clubs would survive without gate receipts (Cowling, 1991; Ginsberg, 1991; White, C., 1991). A breakaway league had previously been proposed and rejected in 1988 and as a result the Football League had passed a regulation mandating a three-year notice period of intention to resign for any clubs that wanted to leave the Football League. On April 14<sup>th</sup>, 1991, 18 of the 22 First Division clubs signalled their intention to resign from the Football League, but the FA disputed the Football League's regulation, setting up a high court battle. On May 22<sup>nd</sup>, the management committee of the Football League voted unanimously to fight the breakaway, in part by offering increased financial inducements to the 22 First Division clubs (21 of whom had accepted the FA's *Blueprint* in principle) (Ball, 1991a). Outlining their position, Arthur Sandford, the Football League's chief executive, wrote in a letter that the FA's proposal threatened the survival of many clubs and "certainly there would be little consolation for the supporters, who would have up to a third fewer matches to see in the First Division" adding that the FA's proposal and refusal to negotiate with the Football League was "...unfair, unethical and un-British and, frankly, unworthy of the representative body for our biggest national sport...[and] risks destroying 100 years of endeavour not for a new dream but an illusion" (Ball, 1991b). Even at this early juncture, the commercial interests of the Premier League were being pitted against the interests of the supporters. By referring to the actions of the FA as "un-British," Sandford was alluding to the ways in which football operates as a cultural industry that cannot simply be reduced to its economic interests. The Football Supporter's Association was largely

sidelined during the debate and had no role in the decision-making process. Rather it was left to people like Arthur Sandford to articulate the interests of supporters.

Further indicating the depth of importance that football holds in wider society, a parliamentary motion was put forth on May 13<sup>th</sup>, 1991, urging the FA and the Football League to negotiate together. MPs were motivated to take-up the issue because of the fear that some football clubs would fold, which would have serious consequences for some of the constituencies in which the clubs were located (Ball, 1991c). In addition, the MPs may have been reacting to a Gallup poll, which indicated that a majority of supporters did not support the Premier League (Ball, 1991c). The government also had a vested interest in the conflict because of the money remaining to be paid out from the Football Trust to help with the modernisation of stadiums in line with the Taylor Report with the office for the minister of sport suggesting that clubs that chose to break away would no longer be eligible for the funds (Ball, 1991d). In addition to the dissatisfaction being expressed by supporters, the proposal received a lukewarm response from the Professional Footballers Association (PFA), which is meant to represent the interests of professional players in the English game. The role of the PFA would become more important as the court case approached, as any proposed league would fail without the support of players.

In the *Blueprint for the Future of Football*, the FA makes clear that their interest in the Premier League is entirely based on its ability to help promote and improve the interests of the English national team. In this sense, any deal to be struck is meant to serve national interests (which are constructed as being beneficial for a wide spectrum of supporters) and any financial benefits (largely accrued by the top tier clubs) would be secondary. However, in an indication of the first early crack between commercial and

national interests, as the court case approached, it became clear that it was the club owners themselves that had approached the FA with the Premier League idea (Ball, 1991e). In addition, the clubs were prepared to form their own breakaway league with or without the support of the FA. A further break between the FA and clubs emerged over the reduction of the League from 22 to 18 clubs by the 1994/1995 season. Yet despite the FA's contention that a reduction to 18 clubs "was vital to uphold the 'flagship' of a successful England team" the FA was willing to accept a reduction to only 20 teams (Harman, 1991a). This move was seen as capitulation to the interests of the big clubs, with Neil Harmon writing in *The Daily Mail* that the FA could expect to be embarrassed by "...what would be seen in many quarters as a climbdown on the blueprint principles in order to satisfy the richest and mightiest clubs in the land" (Harman, 1991a). Similarly reflecting a concern of what the new league would mean for the clubs left in the Football League, the PFA indicated that it was prepared to strike if necessary to protect the interests of lower division players. It was clear even from this early juncture that the FA's ability to claim to be looking out for all of English football was tenuous. Soon it became evident that the biggest clubs were the ones driving the changes that the FA sought, rather than the interests of English football writ large.

In the lead-up to the court case, 16 of the 22 first division clubs signed a "Founder Members' Agreement," on July 17<sup>th</sup>, 1991, which legally bound the clubs together (Ball, 1991f). This was the clearest indication that the clubs were prepared to go ahead with the breakaway regardless of attempts at negotiations and the upcoming court case. It also signalled a willingness to abandon the FA, if needs be by including clauses that proclaimed, "the Premier League must have constitutional independence with its own

rulebook” and “the Premier League must have commercial independence” (Ball, 1991g). While the FA would remain at the top of the governing pyramid within English football, its role in governing the Premier League would be peripheral. Rather it would be the clubs themselves that would dictate policy. The agreement did not specify what was meant by “commercial independence,” an omission that I would argue was intentional. By failing to specify what was meant by both “commercial” and “independence,” the newly minted Premier League was giving themselves flexibility in the future in terms of claiming both the ability to make television deals and to claim all the financial benefits from these deals (the desire not to share revenues equitably was part of why the big clubs wanted to create the Premier League in the first place). The document only made cursory reference to the England team and by emphasising the commercial independence of the clubs, further indicated how far away from the FA’s initial goals (which would have seen the FA responsible for co-ordinating commercial interests) discussions had moved. The court case began on July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1991 to deal with three challenges from the Football League: whether the FA has the right to institute the Premier League; whether the FA can disregard Football League regulation ten requiring clubs to give three years notice to resign and; the FA’s decision to amend its own rules to allow the Premier League.

On June 29<sup>th</sup>, 1991, the High Court ruled in the FA’s favour paving the way for the Premier League to become a reality. Importantly, the High Court ruled that the FA was not blocking Regulation Ten, which meant that the Premier League could be established for the 1992/1993 season. The judgement rejected the Football League’s claims on the basis that the FA’s rules and regulations gave them the right to act in way which they felt was in the best interest of English football (Malam, 1991). Yet the court

failed to specify what was meant by “in the best interest of English football,” an important omission given the number of groups that wanted to lay claims to knowing what those interests were. While the FA ostensibly felt that setting up the Premier League was acting in the best interest of English football, the England team manager Graham Taylor was less enthusiastic about the proposed changes. Speaking after the court verdict, Taylor stated, “People think that there must be a lot of my thinking in the blueprint but there’s none. I’m not totally convinced that this is for the betterment of the English team. It is shame when the game seems to take second place to so many other things. I think a lot of this is based on greed. People talk about what’s good for the game but when you look at it closely what is good for the game is also good for themselves” (quoted in Harman, 1991b). This was hardly the ringing endorsement that would have been expected from the England manager if the FA’s plans for supporting the English national team had truly been adopted. Rather, Taylor is expressing scepticism for the plans, which would be borne out over the next twenty years.

There was a mixed response to the possibility of the Premier League. *The Guardian* and *the Observer* were the two papers that were the most negative about the prospect of the Premier League. Prominent football journalist David Lacey argued that the Blueprint was putting the short-term interests of the big clubs ahead of the long-term interests of both the English national team and the overall health of the English game (Lacey, 1991). Lacey went further in an August 13<sup>th</sup> piece wherein he argues that that something will soon be lost in the English game as commercial interests enrich a few at the expense of football as a whole (Lacey, 1991). He further argues, “A system which embodies an independent Premier League made up of one part ambition and nine parts



fear while the rest pick up the crumbs looks a poor alternative that the bulk of the English game – clubs, managers, players and fans – does not want” (Lacey, 1991). *The Observer* further published an editorial on the eve of the new season, arguing that the history and good of the game was being thrown away in favour of power and financial greed (Duncan, 1991). Not all commentators saw the Premier League as a negative. Steve Curry, writing in the *Daily Express*, argued that the Premier League was inevitable, and it was unfair and unreasonable to expect the biggest clubs to provide financial support to the smaller clubs (Curry, 1991). While Lacey and Curry represent opposing viewpoints on the issue, what is clear is that the pretence of the Premier League being primarily a vehicle for the improving the fortunes of the English national team has already been abandoned by those in the media. Both those for and against the Premier League recognise that it was being driven by the financial interests of the bigger clubs. Instead the disagreement seems to be along the lines of whether the Premier League will improve or harm English football (in terms of both the England national team and lower league football).

Sensing a losing battle, the Football League decided against appealing the High Court decision and looked towards negotiating a deal with the FA, thus eliminating the final hurdle standing in the Premier League’s way. Despite deciding against an appeal, the Football League remained in crisis with a deep division within the League between the first division clubs and lower divisions clubs hanging over the beginning of the 1991/1992 season. On July 16<sup>th</sup>, 1991, twenty-four hours before the first game of the season, the twenty-two clubs of the First division resigned from the Football League en masse and the Premier League had taken the final step towards existence. By early

September, the second division clubs had agreed to drop their objections to the Premier League's violation of Regulation Ten in favour of negotiating a financial compensation package for the clubs being left behind. In exchange for dropping their objections to the Premier League, the remaining League clubs made a number of demands, the most important of which were: guaranteed promotion and relegation of three clubs (instead of the one that was initially proposed) and a compensation package of £6 million (£5 million to be paid by the FA and £1 million to be paid by the Premier League clubs) for ten years (to be reviewed after five years) (Gibson, C., 1991). On September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1991 the remaining Football League clubs voted to accept the offer from the FA, which accepted the promotion and relegation of three clubs per season, but only offered £ 3 million per year for five years (£2 million from the FA and £1 million from the Premier League). With the last hurdle removed the Premier League was set to debut in the 1992/1993 season. All that was left to do was tap into the untold riches that were promised to the Premier League clubs. While sponsorship was expected to bring in some revenue, it was to television that the nascent league planned to turn.

### **The Sky's the limit**

At the dawn of the Premier League, football broadcasting in Britain was relatively underdeveloped. When the last round of television contract negotiations took place in 1988, BSkyB had tried to enter the market, but lost out to a terrestrial broadcaster, ITV. BSkyB was not intending to make the same mistake twice as discussions began for the more lucrative launch of the Premier League. In addition to the question of money, the question of access hung over contract negotiations. Football, when it had been on television, had always appeared on terrestrial television due to consensus that football,

given its cultural import, should be readily available to all citizens (as exemplified by the continued existence of the protected events list). There was some concern that moving entirely to satellite would alienate viewers. BSkyB's decision to team up with the BBC, who would help finance BSkyB's bid by agreeing a deal to show match highlights on the revived *Match of the Day* (Ball, 1991f). The BBC defended its decision to team up with BSkyB by arguing that its public service remit demanded that it show football in the national interest. This fits into the larger issue of trying to account for football within a cultural policy framework. Football is often claimed within the national interest, but what this means is often left purposefully obtuse. In this case, for the BBC, football's role in the national interest is related to the desire of viewers to have easy access to football. Given that the Corporation could not afford to purchase the full Premier League rights, it needed to find another way to ensure that football appeared on terrestrial television (Conn, 2005).

There were palpable objections to the joint BSkyB-BBC deal; accusations arose that football was selling out supporters in favour of a commercial interests given the cost of obtaining a satellite in order to watch the Premier League. Neil Harman in a column entitled "Bad day as soccer sells its soul to the screen," expressed this sense of betrayal writing "the game stands accused today of an act of betrayal, selling its soul for 304 million pieces of television silver. Where are the shining principles of the FA's blue for Football, whose blue riband was the Premier League with its promise of a quality future, the essence of which was a successful England team? Sold down the river to Rupert Murdoch's henchmen, that's where they've gone" (Harman, 1992). What Harman is expressing is the belief that the naked commercialism of the sport was being exposed by

the recent television deals. It was not necessarily the move to broadcasting football on television, but rather that its availability would be cost prohibitive that was at the heart of the criticism. While the Premier League paid, and continues to pay, lip service to the interests of supporters, their actions did not match the rhetoric being put forth. The Premier League may speak of an interest in the England team and club supporters, but ultimately making money would be the driving force behind the League.

The promise of television and sponsorship riches was the inducement offered to the first division clubs in order to secure their resignation from the Football League. The promise became a reality when it became time to bid for the Premier League rights. One of the initial bids proposed was from Full Time Communications, which proposed the introduction of a 24-hour sports channel to be available on the Astra satellite (the main satellite competitor to BSkyB) at a cost of £10 a month. The deal would have been worth £50 million a year (Taylor, L., 1992). However, despite this lucrative offer, there were only two serious bids that were considered. ITV was keen to retain their rights both as a way to prevent BSkyB from establishing a real foothold in the British television marketplace and because of the huge audiences that football would bring in for the channel (Conn, 2005). ITV initially suggested that it would be willing to offer £34 million pounds a year (£18 million to show 30 matches a year, £10 million for sponsorship and advertising provided by Dorna UK and £6 million a year for overseas rights) (Ball, 1992a). ITV later upped their bid to £200 million over four years (£40 million per year for 30 games) when it became clear that the BSkyB/BBC bid had become the favourite. However, it was too late and on May 18<sup>th</sup>, 1992 the Premier League clubs voted in favour of accepting the £304 million over five years for 60 games a

season from BSkyB/BBC (the BBC would contribute £4.5 million a year to show highlights on the revived *Match of the Day*). Under the terms of the deal, each club would receive a minimum of a £1 million a year. ITV was left with a £24 million deal to show the Football League and Rumbelows Cup (now the Carling Cup) over four years, confirming fears that the Football League would become a financial afterthought.

Those involved with the Premier League hailed the BSkyB/BBC bid as a watershed moment. Rick Parry, the chief executive officer of the Premier League who helped negotiate the deal with BSkyB/BCC, argued that the deal represented “a partnership and a way forward for both football and television for the next century” and was a visionary deal that “enables football to have a say in its own destiny” (Millward, D., 1992). Not everyone shared the Premier League’s belief that this represented a great leap forward for football. Supporters groups continued to object to the fact that football was being removed from terrestrial television and moved to satellite at an approximate cost of £250 pounds year. In addition, there was displeasure at the prospect of matches being played on Sunday and Monday night as opposed to the traditional Saturday afternoon (although Parry claimed that the Monday night game was always part of the Premier League’s plan after seeing the success of Monday night NFL games in the United States) (Millward, D., 1992). In addition, MPs voiced their displeasure. Both Tory and Labour MPs expressed disgust that football would no longer be readily available to the wider citizenry (Ball, 1992b). There were calls for a parliamentary inquiry into the deal to be convened by the Minister for Sport (Williams, D., 1992). In addition, ITV decided to seek a High Court injunction against the deal when it was revealed that BSkyB had been allowed to see the ITV bid and increase their own bid in response without ITV’s

knowledge citing this as an unfair advantage for BSkyB's bid and demanding that they be allowed to improve their own bid (Conn, 2005). Their application was ultimately rejected, but as will become clear, it would not be the last time that BSkyB would be accused of receiving favourable treatment in the regards to television deals.

Compared with the relatively muted objections that emerged when the Premier League was created, the criticism that followed the announcement of the BSkyB/BBC bid was more vociferous. Much of the criticism was centred on the belief that the decision to accept the BSkyB bid simply because it was the highest showed a disregard for the average supporters (who would have more clearly benefitted from the ITV bid given that it would keep football on terrestrial television). Much of the criticism was framed in nationalist language, arguing that the process of commercialisation that football was pursuing would separate supporters from their clubs and undermine traditional forms of football support (both national and local) (Taylor, R., 1992). While it is certainly debatable whether football ever truly existed outside commercial/financial concerns, what is important is the perception that football supporters have a relationship with their clubs that run deep within their communities and ordinary English life. Moreover, there seemed to be little response to the critique that football supporters were being asked to pay more to engage with their teams as the price of attending matches was increasing at the same time they were being asked to purchase satellite dishes (Lacey, 1992; Conn, 2005). England manager Gordon Taylor once again expressed his scepticism of the coming Premier League era, warning: "when they let the genie out of the bottle, they didn't know what they were letting themselves in for. Now you'll never have that genie back in that bottle" (Thomas, 1992).

## **The genie is out of the bottle**

The initial BSkyB/BBC deal ran from 1992-1997 and was a huge success for the company. BSkyB's entry into the football market was a watershed moment in both the English football and the British television worlds for two key reasons. First, the ownership of the rights to show football became the cornerstone of Sky's satellite television strategy, and it has been argued that fee-paying television would never have taken off in England without the showing of football (Conn, 2005; Jeanrenaud and Késenne, 2006; Gannon, Evans, and Goddard, 2006). David Conn goes so far as to claim that Sky's bid on the football rights was a last-ditch effort by Rupert Murdoch to "...salvage his ailing News International empire on the generations-old, in-the-blood loyalties of English football fans" (Conn, 2005, p. 103). Second, the astronomical fees Sky offered changed the structure of both the Football League and the individual clubs. Prior to the breaking away of the Premier League, television revenue was shared equitably with the Football League with fifty percent going to the First Division and the other fifty percent to the clubs in the two lower divisions. Additionally, the clubs became increasingly reliant on the large sums of television money to support the everyday operations of the clubs (rather than gate receipts). On average, English Premier clubs rely on television money for 44 per cent of their income (Jeanrenaud and Késenne, 2006) with some clubs relying on television money for 60% of their income (Gibson, 2009a).

By forming the Premier League, the top twenty-two clubs (later reduced to twenty) were able to share the television money only amongst themselves without having to contribute to the lower league teams. Fifty percent of television money now goes to the twenty clubs equally, twenty-five percent is paid out to clubs on the basis of whether Sky

picks their game to broadcast, and twenty-five percent is paid in increasing order according to where a club finishes in the league (Conn, 2005). It was this move towards a more unequal distribution of wealth that had been a major incentive for the top clubs. For thirteen years, Sky monopolised the Premier league television rights until the European Competition Commission threatened to take action against the Premier League (*BBC News*, 2005). Prior to this ruling, Sky maintained their dominance through a deal with the Premier League which allowed them the option to present an improved bid if any other broadcaster out-bid Sky the first time around (Harbord and Binmore, 2000). This led the Restrictive Trade Practices Court (RTPC) to turn their attention to this issue (Harbord and Binmore, 2000).

Anticipating a ruling from the RTPC that would discontinue their preferential bidding led BSkyB to launch a \$1.2 billion (US) bid to purchase Manchester United. This move was met with a lot of resistance due to fear that it would ensure a permanent television monopoly for Sky and preferential treatment for Manchester United (Robertson, 2004). In addition to the case pending in the RTPC, there was another impending case with the power to derail BSkyB's dominance. This case was centred in the Office of Fair Trading (O.F.T) and had been in process for three years. This case alleged that the Premier League was operating as an illegal cartel and the O.F.T. was seeking to allow the individual clubs to negotiate with broadcasters independently of the league (Robertson, 2004). In this context, BSkyB's attempted takeover of Manchester United comes into sharp focus. If the O.F.T. ruled against BSkyB, then as the owner of the largest and richest club in England, they would be well situated to strike a broadcasting deal with the club. Without ownership of one of the major clubs, BSkyB's



ability to dominate the television football market would have been seriously compromised.

This was not the only reason that Manchester United was an attractive prospect for BSkyB. At the end of the 1990s, Manchester United was emerging as a global marketing and merchandising powerhouse. In 1998, Manchester United was generating thirteen percent of English football's gross income (this included their share of the television rights) and had announced plans to build 150 merchandising megastores around the world (Robertson, 2004). The club would have been a clear income generator for BSkyB. It would have also ensured that BSkyB continued to have a stake in football broadcasting if the Premier League ever decided to produce its own channel to broadcast games (Robertson, 2004). One of the main objections to BSkyB's takeover of the club was coded in very nationalistic language. While the incessant march of commercialism may suggest otherwise, there remains a belief that the football league serves a "public good" and has close ties to its local community. There was a fear that BSkyB's takeover of Manchester United would ruin both its local and English character (Robertson, 2004). The Monopolies and Mergers Commission (MMC) ultimately rejected the attempted takeover on March 12<sup>th</sup> 1999 (Harbord and Binmore, 2000; Robertson, 2004). The MMC ruled against the take-over on the grounds that having the same company involved on both sides of broadcasting would damage competition between broadcasters and might lead BSkyB to favour Manchester United in terms of television coverage (Dobson and Goddard, 2001, p.84).

The ruling by the RTPC created a blind bidding process, which would allow other broadcasters a better chance at succeeding. This allowed Setanta Sports, an Irish sports

broadcaster, to enter the bidding process. Founded in 1990, Setanta Sports had previously mainly broadcast overseas, bringing British sports to a North American ex-pat community and American sports to ex-pat communities in Europe (George, 2006). As a result of the Commission's ruling, the rights to the Premier League were broken down into six packages of twenty-three matches. Conspicuously missing from the six packages is the 3 p.m. Saturday kick-off, which is the traditional football kick-off time. There is an agreement between the Premier League and the Football League that no 3 p.m. Saturday matches will be televised in order to encourage people to continue attending lower league matches. However, Setanta was able to show a Saturday 3 p.m. match in its other markets (including Ireland), which opened up the possibility of this rule being violated by illegal satellite feeds. In 2007, BSkyB bid £1.3bn for the rights to four packages for a total of 92 matches for three seasons. Setanta bid £392m for the rights to two packages for a total of 46 matches for three seasons (*BBC News*, 2006). The deal re-negotiated for the three-years beginning with the 2009/2010 season and BSkyB bid £1.782bn for the rights to five packages for a total of 115 matches (*The Independent*, 2009). Setanta was left with only one package of 23 matches at a cost of £156 million (O'Carroll, 2009). As a result of only capturing one of the football packages, Setanta went bankrupt, indicating the importance that football broadcasting rights have come to occupy in many network's broadcasting policies (Gibson, O., 2009b). Setanta's bankruptcy allowed ESPN to purchase the last package and enter the British sports market for the first time.

### **Capturing the Sky audience**

While football has long been part of English culture, fandom was not explicitly commercialised until fairly recently. Many of those now considered, "traditional

supporters” (white, heterosexual and working-class males) are less interested in the purchasing of club merchandise. With the changes to the Premier League (which substantially raised the price of tickets), there was the rise of what Anthony King has dubbed “the new consumer fan” whose fandom is largely structured by commodity fetishism for the latest club merchandise (King, 1997). Closely related to the “new consumer fan” is Steve Redhead’s “post-fan” who he constructs as a non-participatory fan whose support is structured by the opportunities the television allows (1997, p. 29). Sky (and now ESPN) has become an active participant in the cultivation and promotion of this new kind of fandom. While football support is still largely coded as masculine, the League is engaged in an effort to cultivate a middle-class familial atmosphere at the football stadium. However, it is these fans that are most often tagged as ‘new consumer fans.’

There seems to be little research available about the demographic breakdown of the television football audience. However, the 2006/2007 Summary Report of the Premier League’s National Fan Survey does include a section on television, which offers some clues to the television audience. In the report, 91% of supporters that attended live matches reported also watching matches on television (‘Fan Survey’ 2006/2007, p. 50). The average respondent watched six live Premier League games a month. In terms of where supporters chose to watch televised games, at home was the most popular response with 82%. The pub/social club followed this at 62% (‘Fan survey’, p. 51). There was an increase in popularity for the Saturday 5:15 pm kick-off slot, which may help to explain why BSkyB put effort into taking that package away from ESPN in the last round of

bidding, leaving them with the package that consisted of the least popular kick-off (Monday at 8 pm).

Women have never been completely absent from the football stadium; however, their position within it has been a source of anxiety, particularly in the post-Taylor report era, which has seen the sport become increasingly commercialised and marketed towards women and families. The visibility of female fans has become a stand-in for a perceived loss of authenticity for the sport and a symbol of its declining working-class nature and support. While trying to attract more women to the sport, clubs have not yet figured out how to incorporate them into fan culture in a way that does not fall back on the stereotype of women as being consumption-oriented. The attempt to attract women and families to the game can be seen as an attempt to feminise the sport as the price of attending the match rose and more emphasis was placed on selling branded merchandise.

Female fans were not always the source of anxiety that they are presently because they were largely invisible (even when they were physically present). While the football stadium was clearly not immune from sexist behaviour, women were able to actively participate in male supporter culture (Crolley and Long, 2001). In the last seventeen years, with the more commercial and business-oriented outlook of the clubs, women have become a source of concern. The presence of female fans (and families) has become a site on to which male anxiety has been projected. There is a concern that the traditional working-class culture that football has long represented is being lost and that 'traditional' fans are being left out. Football culture has long been constructed itself as hyper-masculine: white, working-class and often violent. The construction of femininity in football is a recent phenomenon and has fallen back on the stereotypes identified by

Huyssen's argument about the association of women and consumerist mass-culture (1986). Part of the reason that the broadcasters need to work so hard to both naturalise football as both part of English identity and to establish themselves as part of this identity, can be seen as a partial reaction to this association. Purchasing a Sky or ESPN subscription is not about consumption; it is about fandom and passion.

While it is clear that the anger of these male fans who feel excluded is misdirected at the so-called new consumer fans, their claims of exclusion are not without merit. King (1998) argues that there have been widespread allegations that clubs have systematically skewed the ticket allocation system to make it unfavourable to single males applying for tickets in addition to the proclamations of club officials about their preference for more affluent and family fans. What becomes problematic is the way in which this outrage gets characterised as a feminisation of football culture. Dominic Malcolm, Ian Jones and Ivan Waddington (2006) have found that despite the efforts of clubs to market themselves as family- and women-friendly, there is little evidence to suggest that women's attendance has increased (p. 133). However, what has changed is the increasing attention that female fans garner. Female fans often bear the brunt of male fans sense of outrage at the changing nature of football. Sky and ESPN subtly play into this dichotomy by focusing their attention on the bodies of male supporters.

### **Anything the stadium does, television does better**

In order for football broadcasting to succeed, the unique features of television as a medium needed to become selling points for why television viewing is part of the ultimate fan experience (Boyle and Haynes, 2004). Cornel Sandvoss (2003) argues:

Football fulfils the desires of the audience classically associated with other forms of televisual entertainment. It is home-centred, fitting neatly into the rhythm of daily life...it transports an ongoing narrative and a sense of drama not dissimilar to popular soap operas or other television series; it is visually pleasing and colourful...In brief, television football is first of all television with all its related everyday practices and conventions. (p. 138)

Televised football is sold as being an easy way to enjoy the sport without the inconvenience of having to leave the house. However, this leads to the concern that there is something being lost between the mediated and unmediated (going to the match) experience of football. In order to answer this concern, broadcasters have moved to try and establish television viewing as an equally, and perhaps even more, authentic experience. Sandvoss argues that this is done by offering the viewer more than they could possibly see at the actual game itself through the introduction of new angles, camera perspectives and slow motion (2003, p. 149). The result is that "...it is television rather than the actual *in situ* game event that is credited as the ultimate authority" (Sandvoss, 2003, p. 148). Television has also created new kick-off times that disrupt the traditional notion of attending matches at 3 p.m. on a Saturday. This has contributed to a temporal, in addition to spatial, displacement. A big part of match days is the full sensory experience that the stadium provides. Through these new technologies and excessive information, the broadcasters are attempting to create a new, authentic sensory experience.

The focus on the innovative aspects of televised football was certainly at the forefront of how BSkyB chose to launch itself in 1992. In part the need to emphasise the

innovation of Sky's television broadcasting was necessary to try and overcome the reluctance of supporters to pay for a service they were used to getting for free (Langford and Hunt, 1992). Describing Sky's coverage in 1992, journalists Adrian Langford and Richard Hunt (1992) write, "Thrilling camera-work is the trademark of BSkyB's coverage of the games themselves. The viewer is transported to the pitch in the television equivalent of virtual reality, racing own the touchline with the winger or seeing goal crash home from the back of the net" (A13). Yet the authors go onto critique the excessive commentary and pre-and post-game shows that Sky introduces (Langford and Hunt, 1992). Much of Sky's embellishment is dismissed as a trick that is meant try and convince the viewer that they are getting a whole new game, when in fact they are simply getting the same football matches in a fancier package. Yet for the most part, newspapers could not resist covering the new technological advances that would be on display when the Premier League kicked off.

In an example of perfect corporate synergy, *The Sun* newspaper, owned by News International, Rupert Murdoch's print media wing, was given behind the scenes access to Sky's television coverage. In *The Sun*, Sky's chief sports correspondent, Martin Samuel (1992), describes the home viewing experience as follows: "You'll have the best seat in the house – the chairman's seat. The chairman has the best view of the match, access to the players and the strategic secrets of his team. We will put our viewers in that very same hot seat" (p. 36). Here there is a clear attempt to suggest that the television experience offers a better view of the game than the stadium ever could (particularly sitting in the cheaper seats). The fetishisation of the newness and innovation that Sky's broadcasting is perhaps best summed up in Sky's advertising slogan for the 1992/1993

season; “A whole new ball game.” This posits televised football as a new experience of the game and reflects the profound transformation that Sky was going to bring.

In this chapter, I have argued that changes in British broadcasting policy enabled a profound change in how English football operates. The most profound of these changes has been the creation of the English Premier League, which through its relationship with television broadcasting, has become the biggest sports league in the world. Yet these changes to English football did not happen in a vacuum and are reflective of larger shifts in neo-liberal governance. What I hope has become clear is that football within England occupies a complicated space as something that is in between a national cultural artefact (and thus in need of direct government intervention) and a wholly private enterprise. The state has intervened at key moments in the regulation of football, but has so far resisted the possibility of direct intervention in the sport’s governance.

While it is now hard, twenty-years after the fact, to imagine a time before the Premier League, it is important to note that the League was not met with universal support and praise. Indeed, a lot of criticism was raised at the time. Much of this criticism was directed towards what these changes would mean for supporters and whether the sport would lose its national character. Over the next chapters, it will become clear that many of the fears expressed at the founding of the Premier League have been realised and many of the current battles being fought over the Premier League are the same ones raised at its inception. The Premier League’s success has mainly been built on the success of the league’s ability to posit television as the best sports experience possible and the attraction of a wealthier, middle-class audience. By promoting new technologies, broadcasters have been able to position their football coverage as better than the naked



eye. By attracting a more affluent crowd, football clubs have been able to sell more merchandise and make teams more attractive to sponsors. The question of supporters is one I will return to, but there is a growing concern that while the football audience is growing more affluent, they may also be less loyal, which may have negative consequences in the long-run.

In the chapters that follow, I will examine the consequences of this global push through an analysis of the increase in foreign players in the English Premier League and a deeper analysis of how supporters are experiencing these changes within the game, both from the perspective of English and non-English supporters. The increase in foreign players has been a by-product of both changes in broadcasting policy, which has created unprecedented levels of wealth in the game and changes to European Union labour law. As such, we are seeing a shift in how to understand and make sense of migrant football labour. In the same vein, the demographics of football supporters are also becoming increasingly foreign as the Premier League makes a push for popularity outside of England. As a result, supporters relationships to their clubs are becoming increasingly detached from their clubs as spatial ties appear to be loosening, but the importance of the kick-off time as an orientation point for supporters is increasing and may provide a resistive possibility.

## Chapter 4

### What Do They Know of England? Football, Labour and Migration

On November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2007, a British asylum and immigration tribunal held a deportation hearing for a 19-year old from Sierra Leone. While this is a fairly ordinary occurrence, what made this case different from the thousands of other tribunals, was that Alhassan Banguara was a promising football player. In a first, his manager was able to speak at the hearing on Banguara's behalf, arguing he was an asset to his team and would not have access to adequate resources in Sierra Leone to develop his talent should he be returned to Sierra Leone. Less than two weeks before Banguara's case was heard, in the wake of England's and the rest of the home nations (Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) failure to qualify for the 2008 European championship, the British prime minister Gordon Brown, as a remedy, suggested that his government would be looking into ways of increasing the number of British players playing in the English league by limiting the number of foreign players.<sup>21</sup> These two separate incidents draw into sharp focus many of the complicated issues related to questions of citizenship, nationalism and the meaning of 'foreign' in relation to European football.

The Banguara case demonstrates the extent to which foreign players have become an integral part of European football leagues. While Banguara's case is not necessarily typical for a foreign player, few come as refugee claimants, his case nevertheless points to another important question of identity: would Banguara continue to be Sierra Leonean or English? Which national team would he play for? Football is unique in the ways it makes claims at the local, global and international level, often at the same time. While

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<sup>21</sup> For the purposes of my discussion today, when I refer to a foreign player, I mean a player that continues to hold their home citizenship while playing in England and/or does not play for the English national team, and most likely does not intend to stay in England once their playing career has ended.

Banguara's local identity need not be fixed, with players frequently moving between club sides (which are located within particular cities), once he has declared his national allegiance, his national identity is fixed.<sup>22</sup> Brown's comments also indicate the increasingly complicated relationship that exists between the local and national level (which then plays games at an international level) by proposing the regulation of labour at a local level in order to benefit the national team (a variation on the idea of British jobs for British workers).

The view that the presence of foreign players, as demonstrated by Gordon Brown, is impeding the growth of local players, is a common argument in favour of restricting the number of foreign players (of course this is a hypothetical restriction as EU law is unlikely to allow quotas again). However, this position cleverly elides the question of capitalism in favour of an appeal to the nation. It costs clubs money to develop local players through investment in youth development. Since the clubs pay player salaries (as opposed to the national team), they have little incentive to secure the national team's future (particularly when international matches can injure the club's biggest stars). A player not getting paid for international duty perpetuates the myth that club football is what players do for money, but playing for the national team is about love for the nation. It is much cheaper for a club to secure the services of a foreign player than to invest the money to develop local talent, yet this economic motive is hidden within a discourse that

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<sup>22</sup> The rule regarding national allegiances is good example of the contradictory message of FIFA. On the one hand, the governing body allows a fair amount of flexibility in which nation a player is allowed to identify with in the sense that a player can play for any nation that either they, their parents or grandparents were born in. Players are also allowed to play for more than one national team up until the under-21 team. On the other hand, once a player has played for the "senior" national team, their identity is fixed. They can no longer switch national teams, even if they switch citizenships. In addition, this denies a player with dual citizenship to the ability to play for both of their national teams.

argues that club owners are simply giving the supporters what they want—the biggest and best international stars.

Another recent case has added to the already complicated questions raised by the Banguara case and Gordon Brown's comments. In early November 2012, England manager Roy Hodgson called up three promising young players, Raheem Sterling (17 at the time), Carl Jenkinson (20) and Wilfried Zaha (20) to play for England against Sweden in an international friendly match. On this surface, this would seem like a fairly ordinary occurrence, but what sets these three players apart is that all three are dual nationals and their decisions about which team they would like to play for has not been set. While Jenkinson has made his intentions clear, both Sterling and Zaha were only willing to be called up for this match because it would not impact their future decision-making process. While England in the past has recruited players that either immigrated to England (John Barnes from Jamaica or Cyrille Regis from Guyana) or claimed English heritage (Owen Hargreaves from Canada), it is a more recent phenomena that players both raised in England and eligible to play for England would instead opt for the place of their birth. What this example illustrates is the increasingly complicated nature of global migration and its intersection with football. What it also illustrates is the extent to which international football remains an affective relationship. While both Sterling and Zaha have benefitted economically from playing in England (and indeed would most likely benefit more economically from playing for England given the increased possibility of lucrative sponsorship), it is familial ties that might persuade Zaha and Sterling to place for their birthplaces (Ivory Coast and Jamaica respectively). As Zaha said in a recent

interview, “it’s 50:50 because I was born in Ivory Coast, but all I know is England. When the time comes, I’ll make a choice” (Ronay, 2012).

Roy Hodgson offered a somewhat sympathetic response to the struggles that these two players face, commenting on Sterling’s failure to commit himself thus far:

“of course if you do have the option to play for two countries you can choose... He might come to me and say ‘Look, I don’t want to play for you, I want to play for Jamaica’. But I hope that won’t be the case. Certainly I’m hoping that when he’s called up here he’ll be happy about that. I suppose I have the somewhat naïve point of view that if you’ve been brought up in England and you have the chance to play for the national team that should be a very joyous occasion. I don’t know that you should necessarily be looking over your shoulder to see if there are any other national teams that want to take you.” (quoted in Ronay, 2012)

On the one hand this represents a somewhat more progressive view of who gets included in the national team.<sup>23</sup> Yet on the other, these comments show a lack of understanding of the affective reasons that a player might use when selecting a national team and also suggests that it is not possible to imagine a player choosing to play for a team other than England (especially one located in the global South).

This chapter examines the questions raised by these three examples. What becomes evident is that the globalisation strategy of the League, which has become reliant on foreign players to produce the best product, is out of sync with the FA’s goal of improving the English national team. As suggested in chapter three, what we are seeing with the changes in labour migration in the English Premier League is a triumph of the

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<sup>23</sup> John Barnes, the most prominent non-English born player to play for England was often criticized for what was seen as a lack of commitment to the team, a perceived his foreign birth (Hill, 2001).

League's interest over the stated goals of the FA in championing the establishment of the League. Flowing from the League's strategy, a number of secondary crises emerge that help to illustrate many of the contradictions that have developed as a result of the League's globalising moves. What emerges is a debate over the future of the England national team and the League's failure to contribute to its development. We are also seeing the ways in which governmental policies, both national and supranational, intersect with football in unintended ways. Yet we also see, with examples like Gordon Brown's comments, the limits of governmental interventions. While Brown may be comfortable making comments about this issue, it is the connection of this rhetoric to action that becomes another source of contradiction.

In particular, government intervention within the area of football labour is limited by larger European Union structures of power. By focusing on European labour laws and European court of justice decisions, I argue how the League's ability to conceive of how both labour is defined and the identity of those performing football labour is structured in large part by the European Union. As such, laws beyond the Premier League and the British government have come to shape of the League's direction by creating a framework that allows for the free movement of labour within football. In the European Union's view, football labour is an entirely economic enterprise without a sense of cultural import. These legal documents support my claim that labour policy cannot be separated from cultural and/or media policy. The consequence of labour policy's imbrication with media and cultural policy is that labour itself becomes an object of governance that limits the autonomy of the both the British government and the League to regulate the movement of labour within the League (and the country). As such the

Premier League, given its high visibility, becomes a critical site for understanding how European labour functions as a limit and check on the abilities of national government's to make decisions. All these branches of policy come together in critical ways to shape how the Premier League has developed. This conflict between the European Union's conception of labour and the notion that the interests of the English national team need to be protected as a cultural resource speaks to the larger cultural/financial split.

An examination of European Union labour policy's relationship to football in conjunction with previous work on cultural labour, in particular the New International Division of Cultural Labour, helps to complicate circuits of cultural labour. As a result of the European Union's regulations on labour, we are increasingly seeing labour from the global South incorporated into the Premier League. Though this pattern fits within the New International Division of Cultural Labour, I argue the presence of these athletes within the Global North and as visible within the media presents a critical addition to previous work done in this area (Miller et. al., 2008). Football labour within the Premier League complicates the model of global Hollywood, in particular by runaway production, by moving labour from the global South to the sites of production in the global North rather than moving production to labour markets within the global South. In addition, the visibility of the Premier League complicates the relationship between above and below the line labour by creating and incorporating stars from the global South into the metropolis. As such, athletes of colour from the global South become stars through their high media visibility who are then sold back to the global South through Premier League broadcasting rights. Yet, as this chapter will show, for all the stars that emerge from the global South, there are a multitude of young players who fail to make it through the

academies of Premier League clubs. European Union legislation has also made possible the increasing circulation of young players from the global South. As a result, in addition to the above the line labour we see performed on television, there exists a stratum of young players who labour below the lines in hopes of making it into the first team and on to television. Yet, I argue these changes to labour created by the supranational European Union has created conflicts within England over how the presence of international players within the League impacts the national character of the game.

Through a critical examination of newspaper articles surrounding the England national team failure to qualify for Euro 2008 and their early exit from the 2010 World cup, I argue that the presence of international players is framed as a threat to the future of the English national team. Within this discourse, the gains of international players have come at the expense of young English players. What becomes clear is that the construction of international players as a threat to the English national team only makes sense within a framework that sees the development and future of the English national team as part of the League's mission. While this premise has been dropped from official Premier League discourses, I argue these newspaper articles still believe that the Premier League should have a role to play within the England national team set-up. Critically, these newspapers reveal anxieties and concerns over European Union labour regulations that supersede national laws. As such, the discourses that emerge during these two critical moments reflect larger anxieties over the regulatory powers of the European Union. Football's visibility, in large part due to its media presence, makes it a crucial site for working out larger anxieties about the national's relationship to the supranational.



What also emerges is a discourse within England that sees the presence of international players as a threat to the future of the English national team. Within this discourse, the gains of international players have come at the expense of young English players. In this chapter, I argue that changes in European labour laws, coupled with the intensification of media attention towards the League, has changed the make-up of the League in ways that are challenging ideas about both who plays in the English League and the nature of their labour. In particular, given the intersection of football labour and television broadcasting, I suggest that it might be possible to include football labour within a larger framework of cultural labour. Doing so may help to make sense of the anxiety surrounding foreign players and the future of the England national team, by illuminating the ways in which this debate relates to larger concerns about the loss of national and/or local communities. To these ends, I begin with a discussion of early work done on the nature of cultural labour and place football labour within these conversations. This is followed by an examination of the impact of changes to European labour laws, which have challenged the ability of the Premier League (and Britain) to regulate international migration. I then turn to previous work done on the migration of international players, which helps to explicate concerns being raised within the debate over international players. I conclude by examining newspaper discourses after England's failure to qualify for Euro 2008 and early exit from the 2010 World Cup as a way of excavating what is at stake within this discussion.

### **Labouring to play**

Associated with play, but coupled now with the extraordinary salaries being earned by top players, it can be difficult to conceive of sports as a kind of labour. Yet

football players (and those in other sports) are engaged in forms of labour that, while perhaps difficult to capture, are certainly real. The fight over football as labour has permeated the history of the sport in England, beginning with the earliest fights over the sport's amateur versus professional status to more recent battles over European labour laws. While the European Union has been clear on its vision of football labour as the same as any kind of other labour being performed within the European Union, and thus subject to the same laws, the EU and/or nation-state legal frameworks may not be adequate to capture the global and cultural aspects of this kind of work. Toby Miller, David Rowe, Jim McKay, and Geoffrey Lawrence (2003) argue that sports can now be seen as operating according to the new international division of labour,<sup>24</sup> which has seen the relocation of cultural production (in the case of football, the recruitment of players) to the global South. In particular, Miller, Rowe, McKay, and Lawrence (2003) were looking at the developing trend of Major League Baseball clubs setting up academies and recruiting players in the Caribbean, especially the Dominican Republic. While football has also embraced the use of youth academies in the global South, there seems to be something about the media production aspect of sports labour that challenges more conventional constructions of the new international division of labour. The mediatisation of the League means that football slightly alters the circuit of the international division of labour by moving cultural production to the global North. Players from the global South are labouring in the global North, but their labour is being sold back to their home countries through the mediatisation of the League. Before the Premier League, a country's best players were often found in their own national league. In the Premier

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<sup>24</sup> The New International Division of Labour was initially developed as a way to account for the ways in which production was no longer confined to national economies. This captured the movement of production into the global South as companies sought cheaper labour markets.

League era, it is often necessary to watch the English Premier League in order to see a country's best players. Thus, in keeping with the League's push towards greater international broadcasting presence, the inclusion of non-European players in a team becomes a way of building an international market.

With the increased attention to football labour migration, there has also been an effort to pay attention to the unique features of sporting labour, in particular the features that set it apart from other, often manual, forms of labour. What becomes clear is that sports labour is one that is highly visible (through its mediated performance) and embodied. Martin Roderick (2006) argues that one of the key factors that sets football labour apart is the close connection that exists between a player's sense of self-worth and their work (p. 15). This helps to reinforce the idea that football is not necessarily a 'job,' but should be something you love. Roderick (2006) writes:

There is a strong sense of 'special-ness' imbued in the identities of players who are often told that, as an activity, football holds the prospect of being a source of satisfaction, gratification and pleasure. It is assumed by many bound up in the football industry that, in some ill-defined sense, players are 'out of the ordinary' and that, if offered an opportunity, 'you should be playing football because you love it'. (p. 15-16)

As such, being a football player is never simply something that a person does, but is rather something that they are (Roderick, 2006, p. 17). Roderick's descriptions of football's totalising immersion echoes the work of Mark Banks (2007) on the politics of cultural work.

Mark Banks (2007) argues that cultural work is often not taken seriously because it is seen as creative and its practitioners as extraordinarily gifted. As part of larger shifts in cultural policy, like the ones outlined within my previous discussion of the cultural/creative industries, cultural workers are increasingly encouraged to think of themselves as individuals, which has led to an increased sense of anxiety (Banks, 2007, pg. 58). Cultural workers are now encouraged to think of themselves as always “on” and always working. Roderick (2006) sees a similar dynamic at play with football players who are increasingly being told to think of themselves as individuals. While not categorised as cultural labour per se, Roderick (2006) sees football labour as a form of highly mobile and highly skilled manual labour. Yet he also sees them as having something in common with commodity production:

The highly commodified status of players is unlike other commodities that are manufactured, since what is exchanged is *labour power*. Thus, footballers differ from conventional commodities because of their marked variability and plasticity and because the individual ‘abilities’ that are being purchased – playing talent, athleticism and the *desire* to play well – cannot be separated from their owners. (Roderick, 2006, p. 30)

This definition may place football more firmly in the realm of cultural production since ostensibly what is being purchased is their creativity. While they may be “owned” by their club, they sit outside normal circuits of commodity production.

Roderick (2006) also points to the ways in which changing wage structures have altered the ways in which players relate to the game. He writes, “The footballer as local hero is, for Critcher (1979), culturally defined by his ability on the field and his role as

public figure off it; Cricheer argues convincingly that the ‘new’ deals in labour relations fractured the social and cultural relations by which the identities of players had previously been structured” (p. 24). Players are no longer able to see themselves as part of the same community as the supporters who come to watch them play (who historically have come from working-class communities). While this move makes sense within larger neo-liberal shifts, it creates potential problems for entities like the English national team. If players are meant to think of themselves as individuals, it becomes increasingly difficult for them to come together and think of themselves as part of a team. In addition, the English national team does not pay their salaries, and the idea of the national team is meant to be a labour of love, specifically love of the nation. However, without the sense of connection to a larger collectivity, it may become increasingly difficult for players to see the utility in playing for their national teams. This is further complicated by the introduction of international players, who by their very nature are unable to play for England. The presence of international players may make this transition more difficult by disrupting what may at one time have been seen as a natural move between club and country. When it was only English players in the league, it was taken for granted that players would see themselves as part of the national team, in large part because their club teammates were also their national teammates. As teams have become more multi-national, it is becoming increasingly common for players to spend less time with their national teammates and more time with their club teammates. Media has also contributed to this shift. Before the global broadcast of the league, international tournaments, like the World Cup, were the only matches that could be seen on television. As a result, players’ international profiles were most often linked to their exploits for their national team.

With the broadcast of the League and the rise of European-wide club competitions,<sup>25</sup> players are increasingly being associated with their club, rather than national teams. This may also contribute to a weakened sense of commitment to the national team. While the increase in media visibility has made European leagues more attractive, this movement would not have been possible without changes to European labour laws, which eliminated the ability of European nation-states to restrict immigration. The legal framework created by the European Union was not initially directed at football leagues, which were able to escape regulation under these laws initially, but a key legal challenge forced compliance from the European leagues. What I hope becomes clear through this chapter is the ways in which European laws have worked in conjunction with the league's mediaopoly to create new possibilities and debates over football labour.

### **Regulating migration**

At this juncture, I would like to outline how the European Union has impacted this question of international football migration. Players' ability to move from club to club is structured by transfer fees, which is the money paid from the player's future club to their current club in order to "buy" them. Initially, control of players' movement was weighted more heavily in favour of the clubs. Even when a player was out of contract, a club could restrict their ability to move to a new club. It was this question that lay at the heart of the case that would come to be known colloquially as the Bosman ruling. The case centred on the question of whether a club could restrict a player's ability to play for

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<sup>25</sup> A more detailed discussion of the two major UEFA club competitions, the Champions League and the UEFA Cup, lies outside the scope of this project, these two competitions provide the opportunity for European clubs to compete with each other. While these two competitions have existed in some iteration since the 1960s, like the Premier League, it was the international broadcasting of the competitions that their visibility and prestige has grown. These competitions also provide an alternative to internationals in terms of showcasing talent and teams from across national leagues.

a new team once their contract expired. Before a discussion of the landmark Bosman ruling, it is critical to understand how the movement of players was governed for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century within Europe in order to understand how that ruling revolutionised the system under which players moved between clubs and made possible the flow of international players into the European leagues.

The practice of player transfers points to the complicated relationship that often exists between the international governing body (FIFA), regional/continental body (UEFA), and national bodies (individual FAs). Reflecting the hierarchical nature of international football, national associations transfer regulations must comply with those of both FIFA and UEFA. Pre-Bosman ruling, FIFA allowed each continental federation to create its own transfer regulations within the bounds of FIFA's own regulations (which were in place mainly to regulate transfers between international club teams, i.e. a player moving from South America to a team in England). UEFA in turn developed its own set of transfer rules to govern transfers between national associations that fell under UEFA's jurisdiction, i.e. a transfer between a player from Spain and a player from England. National associations in turn were allowed to set their own rules for transfers within its own borders, i.e. players transferring between English clubs. The adoption of the transfer system by UEFA was based on the retain and transfer system developed by the English FA in 1893. As noted in chapter two, the foundational years of English football were characterised by a conflict between amateurism and professionalism. The introduction of the retain and transfer system was a direct response to the emergence of the professionalism within the English game. The FA introduced a system of player registration that saw players register with a club each season and once a player was

registered, he was not allowed to move to another club that season without the permission of both the FA and the club that owned his registration (Mason, 1980). With the creation of the Football League, players were able to move clubs at the end of the season, and the best players would often move to bigger and better clubs that could afford higher wages. As a result, there was an inequitable distribution of talent throughout the league.

In order to address this growing imbalance the FA introduced the retain system in 1893, which restricted the ability of players to move and was strongly weighted in favour of the clubs. Under the retain and transfer system, players were prohibited from moving to another Football League club without the permission of the club that held their registration, even if their contract had expired (Mason, 1980). Perhaps the most restrictive aspect of this system was that players were not allowed to move clubs without their club's permission even when the club did not want to renew a player's contract, meaning that clubs could restrict the movement of players that they did not even want playing for their team. As a result, players were forced to either accept the contract being offered or quit football entirely. Within a few years, clubs realised that they could demand payment from other clubs as incentives for releasing a player's registration and this created what became the transfer system. In 1963, the British High Court determined that the retain part of the retain and transfer system violated the rights of players to free movement of their labour. Clubs were no longer able to hold onto players, whose contracts had expired. Crucially, the transfer system remained in place.

When UEFA was founded in 1954, it adopted a similar structure that was used to govern transfers between UEFA members. In particular, two key provisions would become subject to dispute under European law. The first was over the regulation and



imposition of transfer fees. In UEFA's view, transfer fees were necessary in order to compensate a player's former club for the player's training and development costs, yet in actuality the transfer fee often far exceeded training and development costs and instead became a key source of revenue for many clubs (Lembo, 2011). The second provision was over the rights of foreign players to play in European leagues. In 1991, in response to a direct challenge, UEFA imposed the "3+2 rule" on its national associations as a way of limiting the number of non-national players in the top European leagues.<sup>26</sup> Under this rule, clubs were limited to fielding three foreign players in its first team and were additionally allowed to include two "assimilated players." To qualify as an "assimilated" player, a foreign player had to have been playing in the national league for five years, three of which needed to be played at the youth level (Lembo, 2011). Like the rules developed by the English FA, UEFA's regulations were weighted heavily in favour of the clubs. Initially, the relationship between UEFA and the European Union was one of blind neglect with neither taking a great interest in the other (Lembo, 2011). This changed when the European Court of Justice agreed to hear the Bosman case, which directly challenged UEFA's refusal to comply with European law on the free movement of labour. In 1991, through consultation with the European Commission, UEFA introduced the aforementioned "3+2" rule, which they believed addressed the European Commission's concerns. In UEFA's view, the matter was closed and movement of players within Europe would not face further scrutiny (García, 2007).

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<sup>26</sup> While the Bosman case is by far the more important case that the European Court of Justice (ECJ) has heard regarding football's compliance with European law, a 1976 case had an important impact of the development of the of '3+2' rule. Gaetano Donà v Mario Mantero directly challenged the imposition of nationality quota rules imposed by the Italian football association, which did not allow non-Italians to participate in Italian domestic football, were permitted under EU law. The ECJ determined that nationality quotas did violate European laws and were therefore not permitted. However, UEFA failed to move quickly on this decision and nationality quotas remained in place (García, 2007).

Supporters of the “3+2” rule and the principle of nationality quotas argued that these measures were necessary to protect the integrity of the sport and, crucially, that sport was different from other kinds of enterprises due to the need to put in place rules that ensured competitive balance could be guaranteed (McCutcheon, 2002). Additionally, supporters of the rule argued that nationality quotas did not represent an economic interest because they were put in place to “...uphold the link between the players, the clubs and their countries” (Lembo, 2011, p. 549). This link, in particular, was necessary to the continued health and strength of international football. Opponents of these measures argued that sports did include an economic dimension since athletes, at the professional level, were paid for their labour and thus these measures restricted the ability of athletes to earn a living (McCutcheron, 2002). The question of whether sports comprised an economic dimension was raised in an earlier European Court of Justice case, *Walrave v Union Cycliste Internationale* in 1974. In that case the ECJ established two critical precedents. One, sports comprised “an economic activity” under Article 2 of the Treaty (later Article 39 and then Article 45). Second, the ECJ had the jurisdiction over sport-related disputes that encompassed an economic activity (McCutcheon, 2002). The early legal understanding of sport as an economic enterprise that was no different from other economic enterprises was critical to how the Court would approach the Bosman case. Additionally, and perhaps curiously, this determination was contrary to how UEFA saw itself. As will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, it was after the Bosman ruling and the clear establishment of football within the European club context as an economic enterprise that the commercialisation of the game accelerated.

The gentleman's agreement between UEFA and the European Commission collapsed when the European Court of Justice agreed to hear the case, *Jean-Marc Bosman v. Union Royal Belge des Sociétés de Football Association* (Case C-415/93 ECR 1995 1-4921). Belgian footballer Jean-Marc Bosman's contract with his current club RC Liège expired in June 1990 and rather than accept the reduced salary offer from Liège, he chose to accept an offer from French second division club Dunkerque. However, under a provision of transfer regulation that allowed clubs to ask national associations to withhold the release of the transfer certificate that is required by FIFA for moves between national associations, Liège asked the Belgian FA to not issue Bosman's transfer certificate. The Belgian FA complied, and Bosman was unable to leave the Belgian league even though his contract had expired. In response, Bosman decided to take both Liège and the Belgian FA to the European Court of Justice. In addition, Bosman named both FIFA and UEFA in the lawsuit as the architects of the transfer system and as a way of providing another challenge to UEFA's nationality quotas (García, 2007).

The ECJ heard the case in 1995 and ruled that "any transfer fee claims imposed on players moving, out of contract, from one EU country to another" was illegal under article 39 (now article 45) of the European Commission (Magee and Sugden, 2002). Specifically, what the ECJ ruling did was to decide that football has economic interests and consequences, which meant that it must conform to laws governing other types of commercial enterprises within Europe. Article 45 specifically states that workers be allowed to move freely between member states in pursuit of economic activity (Amsterdam treaty, 1999). In addition, the article requires, "the abolition of any discrimination based on nationality between workers of the Member States as regards

employment, remuneration and other conditions of work and employment” (Amsterdam treaty, regulation 1612/68, 1999). This requirement is perhaps the most difficult to understand within the context of football as it seems to point to the contradictions inherent within the game. If this provision were enforced, it would seem to restrict the existence of international football writ large. If no discrimination is allowed on the basis of nationality, then on what grounds could the English FA deny the right of a non-English player to play on the English national team? While there is the possibility of exceptions based upon other interests to EU labour laws, like a national one, with the Bosman ruling, the ECJ seems to be clearly articulating that football does not merit such an exemption since it is an economic activity. The ECJ has, in light of this potential contradiction, tried to establish a distinction between international and club football on the basis of economic pursuit. In the Court’s eyes, national eligibility rules are compatible with Community law, which allows for exemptions in the interest of the community (McCutcheon, 2002, p. 313). The Bosman ruling reiterated the decision made in *Dona* that the decision does “not prevent the adoption of rules or of a practice of excluding foreign players from participation in certain matches for reasons which are not of an economic nature, which related to the particular nature and context of such matches and are thus of sporting interest only, such as, for example, matches between national teams from different countries” (*Dona* decision’, 1976). Given the acceleration of commercialisation at international tournaments, it seems like it might be increasingly difficult to draw a distinction between club and international football on the basis on economic versus sporting interests. If the distinction cannot be drawn in this basis, then can we see the

distinction as one that is based on how club and international football might understand labour?

The ECJ appears to articulate a confused and contradictory understanding of how football might operate within particular communities. McCutcheron (2002) argues, “In particular, it [ECJ] was not persuaded by the contention that the ‘3+2’ rule preserved a bond between club and country: the Court pointed out that there were no rules which restricted a club to fielding players from its own town or district in competitions (e.g. Aston Villa was free to field an unlimited number of players from London, Manchester or Liverpool but not from Dublin, Paris, Milan or Munich” (p. 312). It seems particularly strange that the ECJ would fail to see that there might be some distinction between fielding players from within the same nation-state versus those from another nation-state. Presumably, there would be a much greater cultural, linguistic, etc. difference between Paris and Birmingham, and this understanding seems also to negate feelings of national solidarity. While it may be true that a supporter of Aston Villa may not mind that their team is not fielding local players, this sentiment may change at the moment they become an England supporter in which case the provenance of the team’s players may in fact matter. At the level of an England supporter, Aston Villa’s decision to field players from within England rather than from outside potentially has consequences for the health of the national game. In this scenario, domestic club football is seen as a purely economic pursuit, which has little relationship to international football.

As will be discussed in more detail shortly, this brought into focus a similar conflict between the economic interests of football and the cultural/national interests of the game. Like in England, the European Union and UEFA, since Bosman, has struggled

to balance between these two conflicting impulses. In addition, the Bosman ruling forced the European leagues to conform to European labour legislation, which meant that domestic leagues were no longer able to impose quotas on the number of foreign players that could play in a domestic league. Quotas had been instituted to help protect the development of a country's domestic players (Magee and Sugden, 2002, 425). This forced the European leagues to open themselves up to players from across Europe and, ultimately, the world. UEFA, unsurprisingly, was angered by the decision, seeing the imposition of European law on football as both a threat to the health of domestic leagues and national teams and an attack on football itself (García, 2007). Unlike previous decisions, the European Commission was aggressive in forcing UEFA into compliance with the ECJ's ruling and in February of 1996, UEFA was forced to eliminate all nationality quotas in European club competitions (García, 2007).

This ruling also points to one of the central tensions within football, that between the local and the national. At the local level, club teams come to be associated with the towns and cities in which they are located (in some cases, cities have more than one team, in which case a team becomes associated with a particular area of the city). While club teams engage in fierce competition week in and week out in the league, at the national level, these club (and by extension local or regional) rivalries are ostensibly set aside to cheer for the national team. A player that you might have booed days ago now becomes someone that you cheer. This relationship has never functioned perfectly, as regional differences did not always transfer easily onto the national, but it has been complicated by the presence of foreign players. Increasingly what is seen as being good for a club side, the ability to sign a top international footballer, is seen as bad for the nation by

stunting the development of local players. The local is now coming into increasing tension with the national.

The view that the presence of foreign players is impeding the growth of local players is a common argument in favour of restricting the number of foreign players (of course this is a hypothetical restriction as EU law would never allow quotas again). However, this position cleverly elides the question of capitalism in favour of an appeal to the nation. It costs clubs money to develop local players through investment in youth development. Since the clubs pay player salaries (as opposed to the national team), they have little incentive to secure the national team's future (particularly when international matches can injure the club's biggest stars). Players do not get paid for international duty perpetuating the myth that club football is what players do for money, but playing for the national team is about love for the nation. It is much cheaper for a club to secure the services of a foreign player than to invest the money to develop local talent, yet this economic motive is hidden within a discourse that argues that club owners are simply giving the supporters what they want—the biggest and best international stars. The question of whether the increase in international players does impede the development of national team players has been a central trope in work done on the question of football and migration.

### **New forms of labour migration?**

While globalisation may be responsible for the current pattern of football labour migration, colonialism was largely responsible for the initial spread of the game in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Lanfranchi and Taylor 2001; Magee and Sugden, 2002).<sup>27</sup> Indeed, the work

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<sup>27</sup> The game spread mostly through the presence of English, Scottish and Irish workers (underscoring the game's initial existence as a working-class sport).

of Peter Lanfranchi and Matthew Taylor demonstrates that, contrary to popular belief, the movement of foreign players is not a new phenomenon and has always been linked to general migratory patterns (2002, p. 3). What has changed is the *visibility* of these players, as well as definitions of who counts as a foreign player. For example, there has always been a movement of players from Scandinavia to the English league, but the meaning of these players' 'foreignness' has changed with the advent of the European Union, which has created new regulations in relation to the free movement of labour. In addition, the question of visibility is also a question of race. While the Scandinavian players may have been foreign, they were not necessarily marked as such. The question of race, which I will return to, was made visible through the post-war migration of immigrants from former colonies and this was reflected in the movement of players as well. The Afro-Caribbean migration also challenged the existence of football as white, working-class sport.

Pierre Lanfranchi and Matthew Taylor's (2001) book, *Moving with the Ball: The Migration of Professional Footballers*, sees football labour migration as being primarily economically motivated. As a result, they see three main situations that motivate player mobility. The first motivation that they identify is economic crises and national financial weakness (Lanfranchi and Taylor, 2001, p. 4). Under this model, South American and African players are motivated to move to European clubs as a result of their domestic leagues' inability to pay top salaries and the precarious financial positions of their home countries. The second motivation is due to their home countries lack of structured leagues, which has left the player unable to ply their trade at home (Lanfranchi and Taylor, 2001, p. 5). The third is the ability of the top European leagues to offer the most



lucrative contracts (Lanfranchi and Taylor, 2001, p. 5). Within this schema, foreign players are entirely motivated by money, which suggests that they would be unable or unwilling to attach themselves in a meaningful way to either the club or community they move to. This completely elides the affective motivations of players that structure a desire and willingness to belong to the communities that support them and perpetuates the idea that they can never truly belong.

Building on the work of Lanfranchi and Taylor, Jonathan Magee and John Sugden's (2002) article, "The World at their Feet": Professional Football and International Labour Migration" develops an overlapping typology of football labour migration that seeks to encapsulate motivations beyond the economic. The first is the mercenary, "who is motivated, above all else, by earning capacity and thus has moved to English football for associated economic reward" (Magee and Sugden, 2002, p. 429). The second, the settler, is someone for whom "money is a secondary reward coupled to lifestyle issues" (Magee and Sugden, 2002, p. 431). In this case, the settler will remain in England for a sustained period. The third category is the ambitionist, which contains three potential motivations. The first is happy to play professional football anywhere, the second has a strong preference for playing in England above elsewhere, and the third wants to increase their standing by moving to a better league (Magee and Sugden, 2002, pp. 431-432). The fourth category, the exile, is "someone who, for football-related, personal, or political reasons (either voluntarily or through domestic threats to his career, his liberty, or his life) opts to leave his country of origin to play abroad" (Magee and Sugden, 2002, p. 432). The fifth category is the expelled, who are essentially forced to move to England (Magee and Sugden, 2002, p. 433). Magee and Sugden's typology

allows more space to understand the affective dimensions that may motivate a player to migrate. For example, the settler suggests that a player may be motivated by a desire to live in the community as opposed to money or the second type of ambitionist, who is motivated by a desire to play within a particular country for historic or affective reason. Yet these typologies still do not seem to capture how the movement of football labour may be putting pressure on the various conceptions of citizenship.

The recent trend of European football clubs opening youth academies in South American and African countries speaks to this maxim. Opening these academies locally within the Global South ensures that the top clubs have first access to the most talented foreign players (completely bypassing the local teams and leagues) with minimal investment (in some cases, it also means avoiding child labour laws). Yet these academies do nothing to build the local infrastructure or develop the game at the local level. Their sole purpose is to extract the most talented footballing labour. This trend has been the subject of criticism, most prominently from the president of the Federation Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), Sepp Blatter, who argues that these academies are an example of neo-colonialism since they contribute nothing to the local society (Blatter, 2003). In addition, Blatter contends that this neo-colonial relationship affects the richer nations, who by employing so many foreign players cause the European leagues to lose their national character, which brings us back to the sense that something about local or national community is being lost.

In recent years, many scholars have turned their attention to this growing phenomena of overseas football academies often to complicate the narrative that all African football academies are bad. Speaking of earlier work, Darby, Akindes, and

Kirwin (2007) argue “the body of this work argues that the recruitment of African playing talent by European football clubs can be interpreted as a form of neo-colonial exploitation in that it involves the sourcing, refinement, and export of raw materials, in this case African football talent, for consumption and wealth generation in the European *core* and that this process results in the impoverishment of the African *periphery*” (2007, p. 144). In this view, the movement of players from the outside of Africa<sup>28</sup> into European leagues contributes to a lack of development and infrastructure in Africa. Yet as the authors seek to show, there has been a growing effort on the part of African officials and FIFA to try and regulate these practices (Darby, Akindes, and Kirwin, 2007).

The authors remain critical of the processes that have allowed, in many cases, young African players to be brought to European cities for trials and then abandoned there if they do not succeed, but want to try and nuance the different kinds of academies that do exist. As such, they identify four types of academies that exist in Africa and are subject to the possibility of varying levels of exploitation. The first type of academies that the authors identify are those that are run by African clubs or federations and bear some resemblance to European academies (Darby, Akindes, and Kirwin, 2007). The second type of academies are those that have a European club either has a stake in or has opened itself (Darby, Akindes, and Kirwin, 2007). The third type are private academies that are operated in conjunction with either high-profile individuals (often famous African players), foundations or corporations (Darby, Akindes and Kirwin, 2007). The last category and potentially most exploitative, are non-affiliated, improvised academes which are often ad-hoc and lack proper facilities. These academies are seen as more

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<sup>28</sup> Little attention has been paid to labour migration from Asian countries, most likely because it has yet to be a region of significant migration and, while South America is a significant source of football labour, the region has a more established football culture and infrastructure.

difficult to regulate (Darby, Akindes and Kirwin, 2007, pp. 148-149). The authors believe that the first three categories have the potential to contribute to the development of African football.

One of the areas that scholars have been most interested in is how this movement from Africa to the European Leagues developed. In particular, scholars have become interested in how different networks have contributed to this migration (Elliott and Maguire, 2007; Darby, 2007; Poli, 2010a, 2010b). The flow of athletes is not spontaneous and established or developing networks are critical to understanding why and where players move (Poli, 2010a). As Poli argues, “in the case of footballers’ transfer market, networks are made up of a plurality of actors playing distinct and complementary roles. From a relational perspective, each flow is a concrete, empirical and synthetic output of networks involving, among others, club officials, managers, agents, talent scouts, investors, and last, but not least, players themselves and quite often their relatives” (2010a, p. 494). Often the most influential networks are those that reflect colonial pasts (Darby, 2007). This is particularly true for African countries that have seen a lot of migration into the French and Belgian leagues.

In recent years, FIFA has strengthened its regulations on the transfer of young players as a way of trying to protect against the possibilities of trafficking. In an attempt to stifle the transfer of younger and younger boys to European clubs, Article 19.1 of FIFA’s transfer regulations state that players under the age of 18 cannot be transferred between nations (‘FIFA statutes’, 2003). However, FIFA does allow for three important loopholes to this statute. The first is when a player lives within fifty kilometres of the national border of the new club. The second allows for players to transfer if their family

is moving to the country for *non-footballing reasons*. This second loophole has been utilised by clubs who will miraculously find jobs for the parents of promising young players that would allow them to move. The last loophole allows for the transfer of players over the age of sixteen within the European Union. This rule has also become contentious in recent years, in large part because it is in fact British labour laws that allow this loophole to exist. Unlike other European countries where players cannot sign contracts until the age of eighteen, Britain allows sixteen year olds to sign professional contracts. This has led to accusations from other European nations that Britain is skewing the labour market by poaching young European players at 16 without compensation for the academies that were responsible for the majority of their development.

Given these loopholes, English football academies are seeing an increasing number of non-English youth in their ranks. However, it is not simply FIFA regulations that allow for the increase in non-English youth players, and many critics point to flaws in the Premier League's own regulations. The Premier League restricts the distance that youth players are allowed to travel, meaning that clubs are often drawing on a limited and competitive pool of youth players. The regulation stipulates that players age 9-12 can only travel within one hour, 13 and ups can travel ninety minutes and once they reach 16, they can travel anywhere ('Premier League Handbook', 2012/2013). This forces clubs to compete with each other over both a very small area and potential number of recruits. For example, within the North-West, historically the most successful footballing region of England, there are five Premier League clubs within one hour of each other (Everton, Liverpool, Manchester City, Manchester United, Stoke City and Wigan Athletic) plus a number of teams within the Football League structure. As a result, an increasing number

of, primarily young EU players, are finding themselves within the English academy system (especially once they turn 16 and are attracted by the possibility of a professional contract) (Elliott and Weedon, 2010). This has led to a belief, as we will see in the next section, that the academy system is no longer focused on the development of English talent. Yet, despite the fear of an increase in non-English youth players, Elliott and Weedon (2010) have found that the focus of English academies remains on the development of young English talent.

This reflects the larger question at stake in trying to understand the changing dynamics of the Premier League of whether football clubs can be both economic and cultural institutions. Whereas the academy system used to be focused on what Maguire and Pearton (2000) identify as a nation-based system of talent identification, which remains focused on promoting and developing English talent for the English national team, there seems to be a shift in focus towards what the authors see as a club-based system which looks more to the periphery rather domestically as a way of serving the interests of the club (winning) over those of the nation (also winning, but relies on the players produced by clubs). This conflict between the national interests and clubs was meant to be solved by the Premier League, but has instead been exacerbated by it.

As will be demonstrated in the next section, there is a common perception that the increase in foreign players in the Premier League has contributed to a decline in the quality of English players and limited the capacity for English players in the academy system. While this perception may have taken on the quality of truth, scholars have shown that the correlation between the number of foreign players in the Premier League and the fortunes of the English national team are not linked and in fact, England team

performances have actually improved in the last twenty years (King, 2007). While it is certainly interesting that the increase in foreign players has had little effect on English players, I am more interested in why this ‘truth’ continues to circulate, by whom and why. It is to these questions that I now turn.

### **Foreign legions threaten England (according to *The Daily Express*)**

In November 2007, England failed to qualify for the 2008 European Championship, their first failure to reach a major tournament since the 1994 World Cup. This failure to qualify for the Euros, prompted a lot of hand-wringing and accusations in the media. This moment produced discourse that centred around two main themes that are relevant to the discussion of labour: the impact that foreign players have on the fortunes of the English national team, including whether there should be action taken at an institutional level through the reintroduction of quotas and what is/should be the relationship between the Premier League and the English national team.

The criticism of foreign players began to appear in the media even before England’s loss to Croatia on November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2007, which saw them fail to qualify for Euro 2008. Mirroring the disappointing qualifying campaign of the senior English team, England’s under-21 side was underachieving at the U-21 European championship. In a Wednesday, June 13<sup>th</sup>, 2007 article in *The Daily Mirror* on the eve of a critical match against Italy’s U-21 side, the headline boldly proclaimed, “...why England youngsters will always disappoint. The Kids Aren’t Alright” (Bird, 2007). Reflecting a trope that appeared amongst many of the articles written on this topic, the article appealed to the expertise of an ex-Premier League player, in this case Italian Gianfranco Zola (who also happened to be the coach of the Italian under-21 team at the time) to assess the harm to

English youngsters being done by foreign players. Reflecting on the failures of England's record in the under-21 tournament (no wins since 1984 compared to Italy's five in the same period), Zola suggests that the Premier League has been utilising too many mediocre foreign players who are blocking the paths of young English players (Bird, 2007). As a result, Zola suggests that the England team will be unlikely to find international success in the near future. This belief is bolstered by the revelation that England has been the worst European nation at producing top-level players (Bird, 2007).

The start of the 2007 Premier League season also prompted a discussion over the impact of foreign players. Writing an op-ed in *The Sun*, former England international and current FA director of Development, Trevor Brooking also warns that the presence of foreign players will hurt England's chances especially in light of the fact that only one in three players starting on the opening weekend of the Premier League were English (Brooking, 2007). Brooking points to the increased pressure on Premier League clubs to achieve success instantaneously. As a result, there is little space for young players to be introduced into the first team gradually and to make mistakes. The emphasis on instant success is reflective of the economic motives that exist within the Premier League. While the English national team might benefit from Premier League teams utilising youth team players, the financial stakes of the league make this nearly impossible given that teams are rewarded financially, through their share of the television money, based on their final league position. This means that the difference between league positions can be million of pounds.

Brooking (2007) supports the possibility of introducing quotas on foreign players, but recognises that European law makes renders this an impossibility. Instead, Brooking



(2007) is left making an appeal to Premier League clubs to improve their youth policy by appealing to the interests of the nation. This position is echoed by a statement released by the government that reads, “Overseas players have made an extremely valuable contribution to the English game. But we recognise the concerns that an over-reliance on foreign players may hamper English players’ development. While the running of the academies is the responsibility of the clubs, we would like to see them focus on nurturing English football talent. Otherwise the national team will suffer” (Brooking, 2007, para. 23). As was shown in chapter three, the government recognises the importance of producing young English players, but seems incapable of determining how forceful and what its intervention should look like.

Managing director of Economics at HSBC bank Stephen King explicitly examines the connection between football and migration in a November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2007 op-ed in *The Independent* by drawing a link between the growing movement within wider British society to limit foreign immigration and the calls for quotas in the English Premier League (King, 2007). Drawing on the concerns of England captain Steven Gerrard and former England player and current manager Steve Coppell that limiting the number of foreign players is necessary in order to protect the integrity and identity of the English national team, King argues that English team is in fact not flailing, but improving due to the presence of foreign players and financial incentives of the Premier League. He writes:

For the economic debate on immigration, the English Premier League is a bit of a laboratory. The rational economist might argue that if the England football team continuously underperforms, England should give up on football altogether and concentrate on other national sports where the nation can, in fact, excel. Life,

though, isn't like that. The real issue is whether the current arrangement in the Premier League –supposedly the richest league in the world – are consistent with the production of a top-performing national team, which might, once in a while, win something” (King, 2007, p. 42).

While King identifies the potential conflict between the economic model of the Premier League and the interests of the England national team, he offers little in the way of an answer to this question. Rather than blame foreign players, King suggests that the salaries in the Premier League disincentivizes English players from playing abroad, and that it is this lack of exposure to other styles of football, rather than the presence of foreign players in England, that contributes to the failures of the England team.

While opponents of foreign quotas, like Stephen King, suggest that foreign quotas would damage the Premier League, the movement in favour of quotas was gaining strength, and in October 2007, FIFA president Sepp Blatter introduced the idea of a foreign player quota in the form of the ‘6+5 rule’ which we would require each club team to field a minimum of six national players and maximum of five foreign players. The announcement of this rule has provoked the clearest articulation of the conflict between the interests of the national team and the Premier League. Blatter argues, “This is a matter of principle. We need to protect the national identity of the football clubs. The EU says that this is not possible based on the free circulation of workers but in football principles are different – footballers are not workers and you must be 11 players not one” (quoted in Moore, 2007, p. 84). Blatter is clearly articulating the position that there is something special about football, particularly international football that marks it as separate from other kinds of economic enterprises. While this view does seem to ignore

the rapid commercialisation of the game, in which FIFA under Blatter has been a key player, it does seem to reinforce the notion that international football somehow represents a labour of love. Representing the opposing view, Arsene Wenger, the French manager of Arsenal and one of the first managers to bring in foreign players in large numbers, responded to the proposal by stating, “Sport is competitive and competition is based on merit. It does not matter where you are born. It matters who you are. It is my first responsibility for my club for us to play the best football, with the best players” (quoted in Moore, 2007, pp. 84-85). While Wenger seems to be making an appeal to fans’ desire to see their club team succeed by suggesting that his responsibility is to the club, he is not clear on which groups of people related to the club he is responsible to. Is his responsibility to the fans or is it to the club’s shareholders and/or the league and the need to turn a profit? In addition to the complicated question of how to characterise the labour of players, neither Wenger nor Blatter seem able to capture the affective dimensions of fans’ relationships to their clubs. Rather it seems likely that a fan might want to see both their club and national team succeed and that there might be a desire for these two prospects to not be in conflict with each other. This was reflected in a BBC poll, which found that 56% of 1,055 respondents wanted to see some form of quota put in place (Moore, 2007). The poll was conducted in the early part of a season that would see an all-time low of English players in the Premier League, 170 out of 498 in the English Premier League (*Daily Mail*, 2008a).

Days after England failed to qualify for Euro 2008, *The Daily Mirror* carried two headlines: the front of the sports section screaming “You’ve Lost Your Soul” and the next page declares “Choked by Foreigners: How We Flung Doors Wide Open” (Lipton,

2007). Weighing in with his assessment of England's display, UEFA President Michel Platini (a former France player) stated, "when you lose with the national team, that is the soul of your football losing. English football allows too many foreigners and it's not so good" (quoted in Lipton, 2007, p. 55). In perhaps a foreshadowing of Platini's attempt to bring financial regulation to European football through the Financial Fair Play Regulations, he further argues that the English game risks being ruined by moneymen and boardroom decisions (Lipton, 2007, p. 55). Echoing *The Daily Mirror's* state of panic, *The Daily Mail* ran a week-long series entitled "Broken England" in which they convene a panel of ex-England players to examine the game (*The Daily Mail*, 2007). The panel concludes that a big part of the problem is youth players being brought in from outside of England and that there would need to be a collective decision taken by all the Premier League clubs to emphasise the development of English youth talent. Yet the panel ultimately concludes that there is little chance of this happening, as Lee Clayton puts it, "Clubs have a vested interest [in the status quo], the Premier League as a collective are only interested in the Premier League" (*The Daily Mail*, 2007, para. 30).

Given the fact that the '6+5 rule' had little chance of being adopted given EU labour laws, the proposal was a key topic of discussion through much of 2008, especially in light of England's failure to qualify for Euro 2008. A number of stakeholders within the English game weighed in. Richard Scudamore, the chief executive of the Premier League, shares King's feelings, arguing instead that Premier League clubs care deeply about nurturing a successful English national team (Bond, 2008, p. 4). Instead, Scudamore argues that Blatter's argument in favour of quotas have the potential to descend into "...a difficult, jingoistic, almost racist debate about who can and who cannot

play for your country” (quoted in Bond, 2008, p. 4). Scudamore further argues that the money flowing into the Premier League is also a boon to the development of the English team because the money is being reinvested in youth development and social responsibility programmes. Yet while professing to be strongly supportive of the English national team, Scudamore states, “Our [the Premier League] responsibility is to put on the best possible show, with the best possible talent on the field and played in the best possible stadia” (quoted in Bond, 2008, p. 4). It is statements like this that further demonstrate how far from its original purpose, of supporting and developing the national team, that the Premier League has moved and the extent to which these two endeavours may be in conflict with one another. In contrast, the Premier League chairman Sir David Richards contradicted his colleague Scudamore in arguing that having too many foreign players in the Premier League did contribute to England’s failure (*The Daily Mail*, 2008b). This split within the Premier League may point to this rift between the economic imperative versus the intended purpose of the League to help shape and develop English football. As the chief executive, it makes sense that Scudamore would defend the financial interests of the Premier League, which are entirely dependent on producing an exciting and well-watched league. Sir David Richards, as a former chairman of Sheffield Wednesday (a once successful club whose fortunes have fallen since their relegation from the Premier League in 2000) may have a different perspective on the role that clubs play in their communities.

In covering the ‘6+5 rule’ proposal, the most vocal support for the plan (other than FIFA) seemed to come from former English players, English managers (both present and past) and certain members of football institutions (like Trevor Brooking). Despite

being the manager during England's failed qualification campaign, Steve McClaren came out in support of the proposal arguing, "Eventually the Premier League could be all foreign and do we want that? I don't think we do. I always talked at Middlesbrough of having more home-grown players because there is then more soul in the club and the more home-grown players you have, the bigger the soul is. But we are in danger of losing our soul if we have too many foreign influences in our football" (quoted in Nursey, 2008, p. 73). On the one hand, McClaren's comments represent a kind of narrow, Little Englander view that seems to suggest that foreign influences are bad for English football and, more importantly, that foreign players can never come to embody the soul of the clubs they play for. Yet on the other hand, he seems to be gesturing towards the affective bonds that supporters have with their club that goes beyond a financial investment in whether they win or lose. Rather, by using the idea of soul in relation to a football team (and by extension the community since this seems to place the football club at the heart of a community's identity), the implication is that there is some intangible part of football that may be beyond commercialisation.

Football is not the only European sport struggling with how to balance EU labour laws with the interests of their sport. In July 2008, the six most popular team sports in Europe (football, rugby union, handball, basketball, ice hockey and volleyball) delivered a proposal to the European Union, which urged a relaxation or the exemption to employment law for the sports in question (Warshaw, 2008). In particular, the report was critical of the lack of regulation and development of youth players. According to the report, "Clubs have a duty to invest in the local training of players. They are not merely businesses. Concrete proposals must be developed [to prevent] the trafficking or

exploitation of young players. Otherwise the risk is that more and more young players move abroad too early in life” (Warshaw, 2008, para. 4). What this report reveals is the continued confusion over the relationship between sport and business. Journalist Andrew Warshaw (2008) interviewed a source close to the report who said, “We have to get a proper definition of where sport ends and business begins. The EU have been too scared to make a ruling on this, preferring to let the courts make decisions, which is a chaotic way of developing policy. We don’t think sport should be treated like selling shoes or baked beans. This is the EU’s chance to finally connect with the public and tell us what we can and can’t do” (para. 10). The EU’s approach to the question of sports’ commercial versus cultural value seems to mirror the British government’s reticence to clearly establish a space for government intervention. As a result, the response to EU employment labour within sport has been uneven and narrow (in the sense that the implications may not have been fully thought through). The British government, while perhaps lacking the legislative will, did come out in support of restricting the number of foreign players in the League with Culture, Media and Sport Secretary Andy Burnham urging the EU to recognise that sports is a special case and that “ultimately sport is about national teams” (Thomson and Sylvester, 2008, p.11).

Largely absent from debate given their financial marginalisation by the advent of the Premier League (as detailed in chapter three), the Football League came out in support of the proposal. In recent years, the Football League has tried to position itself as the local alternative that has not become fully co-opted by commercialisation, in large part because the League represents a wide spectrum of clubs with varying fan bases and financial means. The Football League is also invested in this debate because many clubs

rely on the revenue that they generate by selling young English players to Premier League clubs, and thus their academy systems are critical to their financial health. As a result the Football League put forth a proposal that fit within the EU framework by stipulating that each team in the Football League needed to include four ‘home-grown’ players in their sixteen man match-day squad (Winter, 2008). Speaking before the Football League voted on the proposal, the Football League’s chairman Lord Mawhinney stated the importance of the Football League taking a stance on the importance of developing young players, stating “Local fans watching locally-developed players at their local club is at the very heart of what the Football League is about. I believe that by introducing this rule League clubs, once again, will be taking a lead that others will want to follow” (quoted in Winter, 2008, para. 12). Mawhinney is articulating where he thinks fans interests lie in the promotion and development of English talent.

Similar to the Football League plan and as a more palatable version of the FIFA plan, Platini put forth a plan from UEFA, the ‘home-grown’ rule. While not as bold as the ‘6+5 rule,’ UEFA proposed a plan that they knew was acceptable within European employment law. Beginning with the 2008/2009 season, teams playing in UEFA competitions (Champions League and Europa League) were required to include eight home grown players (defined as any player who has spent three years within a national league between the ages of fifteen and twenty-one).<sup>29</sup> Buoyed by UEFA’s success with the rule, the Premier League introduced a similar requirement for the 2010/2011 season, although the impact of this rule has not been fully assessed yet. Given the broad definition of who counts as a ‘home grown’ player (a definition that did not rely on

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<sup>29</sup> UEFA’s plan was introduced in the 2006/2007 season, which required the inclusion of four home grown players.



birthright was necessary to fit within the EU framework), there has been concern that all the rule will do is encourage clubs to seek out younger and younger international youth players in order to naturalise them within the 'home grown' framework (Venables, 2010; Shearer, 2010).

In part what seems to be at stake in this debate is a split between international players as citizens and employees, a split akin to the citizen-consumer divide. International players cannot be called upon as citizens (or at least as English<sup>30</sup>) and thus cannot perform Englishness. This also ties back into the notion that international football exists as a labour of love in comparison to the economic concerns of football. International players are unable to transcend a paradigm in which economic motivations are the primary determinant of a player's interest in playing in England. This failure represents an inability to assimilate culturally, which is weakening the English national team. This is evident in the newspaper coverage, which advocates limiting international players by critiquing their weakness, like their perceived lack of 'heart' and proclivity for diving, which are not evident in English players. Rather English playing culture is seen as more honest, robust and committed to the English nation. Yet as Ian Baucom (1999) argues, the meaning of English identity is not easily knowable. As a result, international players are constructed as lacking intangible qualities like 'heart' and 'fight.' A similar debate has arisen over foreign ownership of English clubs, in which foreign owners are constructed only a financial, rather than communitarian interest in their club.

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<sup>30</sup> This again speaks to the complicated nature of the split FA structures within Britain and the British nation-state. While citizenship rights are accorded by the British state, given how football functions, international players within the Premier League are failing to be English.

## **Foreign ownership in the spotlight**

While not the focus of this chapter, I feel it is important to point to the important and growing role that foreign ownership of football clubs is playing in the English Premier League. As the playing personnel of the League becomes increasingly diverse, so too does the cadre of owners. Similar to foreign players, foreign owners have been lured into the Premier League by the promise of riches on the basis of huge television contracts and international fan bases. Since the purchase and transformation of Chelsea FC, previously a middling club, by Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich in 2003, there has been an explosion in the number of clubs bought by non-English owners (when the Premier League began in 1992, there were no foreign owners). In the 2012/2013, twelve of the twenty were either owned outright or had majority owners that were not English.<sup>31</sup> In common with concerns over the presence of foreign players, foreign ownership has raised similar concerns, in particular that owners' investments in their teams (and subsequent lack of investment in the England team) is purely economic rather than affective. As a means of elucidating the contours of some of the issues being raised by foreign ownership in the Premier League, I would like look briefly at the takeover efforts at Liverpool FC and Manchester United, historically the two most important clubs in England.

Giulianotti and Robertson (2009) point to two critical ways that football ownership models have shifted. The first is that the old motives for owning a club, 'custodianship' and/or local and national personal aggrandisement, have been replaced by

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<sup>31</sup> This number represents the ownership structure of Premier League clubs for the entire season and does not reflect the relegation and promotion battle. In addition, while the ownership structure of Swansea FC is Welsh, for the purposes of this project, I have included them an 'English' club. My apologies to Welsh nationalists.

a pursuit for raw profit. The second is that we are seeing new kinds of capital being invested in the game, “...notable through interlocking global relationships between football and business institutions (such as club and media corporations)” (Giulianotti and Robertson, 2009, p. 64). With the creation of the Premier League, club ownership structures have come to more closely resemble those that are found in North American sports league (Nauright and Ramfjord, 2010; Williams and Hopkins, 2011). This, coupled with a growing feeling that North American sports may soon hit a ceiling in terms of expanding profits, has made the Premier League an attractive ground for American (and other) investors (Nauright and Ramfjord, 2010; Williams and Hopkins, 2011). While many of the concerns over foreign ownership seem to border on xenophobic (Williams and Hopkins, 2011), a number of issues have been raised by supporters over the running of foreign-owned clubs. This was certainly the case with the Glazer family takeover of Manchester United in 2005 and the George Gillette and Tom Hicks takeover over Liverpool FC in 2007.

The Premier League ostensibly has a provision that asserts that anyone interested in purchasing a Premier League club must be adjudicated a ‘fit and proper’ person. However, supporters groups have repeatedly called the legitimacy and application of this provision into question. While there were serious protests from Manchester United supporters over the Glazer takeover, which I will return to in a moment, it was the takeover of Manchester City by Thaksin Shinawatra in 2007 that seriously ignited the debate over foreign ownership. The former president of Thailand, Shinawatra was allowed to purchase the club, while under investigation for human rights violations and other crimes (he would later be charged and found guilty of tax evasion). There was both

political and supporter pushback against the idea that the Premier League could have assessed Shinawatra to be a 'fit and proper' person (Culf, 2007). While the example of Shinawatra may seem an obvious case for raising concerns over the 'fit and proper' nature of a club owner, the cases of Manchester United and Liverpool FC provide an equally stark example.

As discussed briefly in chapter three, Manchester United resisted the takeover efforts of Rupert Murdoch and BSkyB in 1998-1999. A minority shareholder in the club, in 2005, Martin Glazer was able to purchase a controlling stake in club and force through a complete takeover of the club by the end of May 2005. The Glazer takeover faced intense opposition from the beginning with fans protesting the Glazer family in a number of public demonstration and through the formation of FC United, a team formed by disgruntled Manchester United supporters who felt abandoned by their club (Brown, Adam, 2007). It also led to a conflict between supporters who became increasingly ambivalent about the takeover (largely because the club remained successful) and those that continued to object to what they saw as the destruction of the club (Brown, Adam, 2007). The main objection raised by the Glazer family takeover was the way in which the takeover was structured, with the Glazers borrowing money against the club, £265 million worth of loans, which meant that the club was responsible for the annual interest payment of £25 million, which rose to £38 million in 2010 (Bond, 2010). In 2010, months before the debt payment rose, the debt of Manchester United's parent company (which was created to take over the club, but offers the club no protection against creditors) rose to £715.5 million (*BBC News*, 2010). By the fall of 2012, the club's debt level has fallen to £359.7 million, its lowest level since the Glazers took over (Jackson,

2012).<sup>32</sup> This has done little to abate the objections of supporters who continue to express anger at the fact that the Glazers did not have to put in any of their own money and have saddled the club with such a large amount of debt.

Liverpool FC experienced a similar takeover on February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2007 when George Gillett and Tom Hicks bought the club for £185 million. However, like the Glazers takeover of Manchester United, Hicks and Gillett borrowed £298 million in order to finance the takeover (Conn, 2007). Almost immediately after the sale went through, Hicks and Gillett placed the debt burden on the club through a holding company registered in the Cayman Islands (Conn, 2007). Almost immediately, Liverpool supporters began to express dismay with the ownership structure in place at the club, in particular over the failure of the owners to proceed on the construction of a new stadium and the requirement of the club to service the debt (Millward, P., 2012). On February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2008, Liverpool supporters created a formal organisation, Spirit of Shankly,<sup>33</sup> to protest the owners. Liverpool supporters began organising at matches and protesting the American owners through the use of banners, chants, and leafleting. By 2009, Gillett and Hicks had been forced to refinance once again at increasingly unfavourable interest rates (Millward, P., 2012). As it became increasingly clear that the pair would be unable to retain ownership of the club, they put the club up for sale at a price of between £500m and £800m (Millward, P., 2012). In October 2010, and after a protracted legal battle,

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<sup>32</sup> Manchester United were able to lower their debt last year through an extraordinary number of sponsorship deals and through financial manipulations that saw them receive a tax credit for registering the parent company in the Cayman Islands (Jackson, 14 November 2012). Whether this is sustainable is an open question.

<sup>33</sup> In, perhaps, a sign of changing times, the organisation was initially called the Sons of Shankly, but was quickly changed to spirit so as not to alienate female football supporters. The organisation was named after one of Liverpool FC's most famous managers (and noted socialist) Bill Shankly who was well-known for his passionate commitment to both the club and the community.

Liverpool FC was purchased for £300m by NESV (now Fenway Sports Group), the same North American consortium that owns the Boston Red Sox.

The experiences of both Manchester United and Liverpool FC demonstrate the extent to which foreign ownership has become an increasingly central issue in discussions within English football. While outside the scope of this project, foreign ownership is also present within the Football League. The question of foreign ownership has become so pressing that both the Conservative and Labour party manifestos in the 2010 general election included promised action on how clubs could be turned into fan-owned associations (Millward, P., 2012, p. 634). The example of the intense supporter protests at Liverpool FC during the Gillett and Hicks period serves to help set-up the central theme of the next chapter: supporters. While it may be difficult to determine the exact degree to which supporter protests influenced the outcome, it provided the opportunity for supporters to engage with each other on matters of importance to the running of the club and to allow them to imagine other possibilities for how the club might exist. Yet what became critical is the ways in which this movement included supporters from outside Liverpool. This inclusion of international supporters within protests against Gillett and Hicks creates the possibility for new kinds of connections that help get beyond the dichotomy that sees anything foreign as a threat to the English game. Rather what emerges is that it is not a question of national identity that determines commitment to English clubs, but rather an emotional connection that transcends borders. I would like to turn briefly to two examples that help elucidate the possibilities of forging connections amongst international supporters in ways that might demonstrate Appadurai's (1996) notion of neighbourliness.

While the Spirit of Shankly started out as a mostly localised organisation, through digital technologies, in particular Liverpool FC message boards, it started to become a more open organisation (Millward, 2012). While initially skeptical of international supporters input (an issue that will be discussed in detail in chapter five), the leadership of the organisation quickly recognised the potential of international supporters. Speaking to a supporters' group in New York City, Spirit of Shankly chairman Paul Rice stated:

We either pretend these people [non-Liverpool-based fans of the club across the world] don't exist – poo poo them – or we say, okay: if you want to support Liverpool, there are certain standards that go with that; that set us apart. And we would hope that they're the reasons you support Liverpool. Not because we win lots of trophies but because we have a certain attitude to things and we go about things in a different way. And there's lots of lighthearted stuff about wearing [replica] shirts and whatever, but that's not what it's about. It's about having a bit more class and culture, and understanding where Liverpool Football Club has come from. And where it is and how it got there, and the values that are instilled in the club. (quoted in Millward, 2012, p. 638)

Rice's comments open the space that is available for international supporters to forge connections with Liverpool supporters within Liverpool. Rather than geographic proximity, shared values become the basis upon which club support is built.

In addition to sharing a mutual hatred for the club owners, international supporters were able to engage with the protests in unique ways that also demonstrate the extent to which capital, ownership and support within the Premier League has been globalised. When a Liverpool supporter in New York City saw Tom Hicks outside a bank

on September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2010, he took a picture, which he posted to social media sites. Within hours, there was an organised campaign of letters and e-mails being sent to JP Morgan and Deutsche Bank urging them not to lend to Tom Hicks. It is this kind of free-flowing exchange between supporters that points to the possibilities of the League's globalisation strategy. While the labour question has been dominated by a negative view of migration, supporter rituals, as I turn to in the next chapter, articulate the ways in which supporters can forge meaningful connections aimed at protecting the importance of the club's community character.

Football's meaning extends far beyond that of merely a game. As I hope I have shown, football intersects profoundly with questions of labour, national identity and belonging. Identity, whether it be national or local, is tightly bound up with football, but this relationship is often fraught. On the one hand, football provides for a fluid and changing conception of identity, but on the other, this identity can become fixed and immutable. Previous work on football and labour migration has tended to focus on the economic motivations for moving (Lanfranchi and Taylor, 2001; Magee and Sugden, 2002; Darby, Akindes, and Kirwin, 2007). While these political economy analyses are important, they tell little about the cultural and political implications of the appearance of foreign players. These analyses have also focused mostly on economic globalization and have not considered the ways in which fandom has also been globalised. While economic motivations are clearly a factor in player labour migration, a focus on the media's role reveals how international sports migration is perceived and understood by supporters.

What newspaper coverage of these recent debates indicates is the growing tension that exists between the Premier League and the needs of the England national team. The



question of international football migration is now at the centre of the question of whether football remains a community/cultural asset or whether it represents an economic enterprise whose sole purpose is to make money and put on a good show. While changes to EU employment law were critical to changing how international players were integrated into national league, what has emerged since then is an uneven and unclear legislative path that seems reluctant to either cast football as an economic enterprise or a cultural product in need of protection.

## Chapter 5

### What time's the match? Football and the Production of Mediated Supporter Rituals

The 2009 film from director Ken Loach, *Looking for Eric*, tells the story of a postman who, encountering turmoil in his personal life, manifests one of Manchester United's legendary players, Eric Cantona, as a kind of a life coach. While the plot of the film alone alludes to the passion and reverence that football has come to occupy in everyday life, one scene in particular illustrates the contours of the key debates that football supporters are currently engaged in. In the scene, Eric (the postman who shares a name with his favourite player) is with his friends preparing to watch Manchester United play in a Champions League match in the pub. One of his friends is wearing an FC United jersey, which was formed in protest to the takeover of Manchester United by American owners Malcolm Glazier. His jersey provokes a discussion that illustrates the issues at stake in the "new football" when another friend, Judge, accuses Eric's friend, Spleen, of "leaving" Manchester United and the following exchange ensues:

Spleen: They left me.

Judge: Who left you? United? The most famous team in history? Who've got 300 million fans? They've left you?

Spleen: Yes.

Judge: I've told you this before. You can change your wife, change your politics, change your religion, but never, never can you change your favourite football team.

Spleen: You know what? We may be small [referring to FC United], but there's no fat bastard chairman can sell us out for 30 pieces of silver. Our club [he kisses the badge on his jersey]

Meatballs (another of Eric's friends): I'll tell you what, that's what they said about United 1878, money, Newton eighty, that's what they were called. Lowly railway workers. What about that? You're pissing on your own history.

Judge: [Patting the badge on his jersey] It's still there. It's all in the heart. It's still there.

Meatballs: You never fucking go anymore.

Judge: I've told you the fact I can't afford it. I can't afford to take the kids.

Meatballs: Exactly, that's the point, you daft git.

Judge: Car parks don't like.

Spleen: You have a look. What kind of car parks in there on a match day? Not the kind of cars we can afford. How many postmen you know go to the game?

Eric and his friends then break into singing a song disparaging Manchester United's city rivals, Manchester City.

Judge: Hypocrites, yeah.

Spleen: Look at ya? Sponsor's name on yer chest. We don't have sponsors on our chest, eh. We're like Barcelona!

Judge: Who would sponsor you?

Spleen (standing): You sit there on a Tuesday, Tuesday night, you little fuckers who put 50, 60 million quid in Edward's pocket. Filling Murdoch's fucking pockets.

The scene ends with Spleen leaving in disgust, only to come rushing in one minute later when the men in the pub pretend to celebrate a United goal, causing Spleen, who has been lingering outside the pub trying to look in at the television, to come rushing back into the pub. Despite the dubious claim of United being the most famous club in the world, this scene is illustrative of a number of important issues that this chapter seeks to address. First, this scene is notable for the fact that it is taking place in a pub, which demonstrates the extent to which modes of support have shifted. The pub has now become a space for the kind of social bonding that used to be found exclusively in the stadium. More importantly, this exchange articulates the deep ambivalence and fear that

many supporters feel towards how media and money are transforming the game. Yet what the scene also demonstrates is, despite these reservations, people's identification with their clubs runs so deep that abandoning their clubs is not an option. Lastly, Spleen's FC United jersey gestures towards some of the ways in which supporters might be finding space to challenge the orthodoxy of the Premier League and re-imagine what it means to be a football supporter.

One clear example of the kind of proposal that provoked deep animosity from football supporters was the February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2008, announcement that the English Premier League was considering playing an extra game, the 39<sup>th</sup>, abroad each season in a bid to further cultivate its global audience (Bevan and Stevenson, 2008). This proposal provoked outrage in both the English press and fan-produced media incensed by the idea that a match between two English teams could be played outside England. In the face of the massive backlash, the Premier League shelved its plans for the 39<sup>th</sup> match (for the time being). The 39<sup>th</sup> match proposal helps to bring into focus the role that international or overseas supporters are beginning to play in this discussion. While international supporters are not explicitly mentioned in the *Looking for Eric* scene, their presence, with the claim that United has 300 million fans, is felt and underpins much of the anxiety on display. Yet, what the 39<sup>th</sup> match also represented was a possible spatial *and* temporal displacement of the English Premier League. While the televising of the Premier League already entails a spatial displacement by its very nature (spectators no longer need to be in the same country let alone the stadium), the temporal importance of English time remains. Regardless of where the match is watched, the television broadcast adheres to the English schedule. While television has introduced some new kick-off times, so far it

has not been able to displace the schedule's adherence to Greenwich Mean Time (GMT). It does not matter where the match is being televised; the kick-off is always according to the English clock.

The experiences of supporters have been the subject of previous work, it has tended to focus on spatial and consumption practices. In particular, this work has focused on the experiences of English supporters and experiences in the stadium. As a result, media consumption of football has rarely been considered as a form of ritualised supporter practice. Drawing on my experiences as a North American football supporter, I isolate the temporal and media consumption practices at the centre of supporter rituals. I use autoethnography as a way of using personal narratives to help ground theoretical interventions and as a way of connecting the experiences of bodies to text (Spry, 2001). By connecting the actual consumptive media practices of North American supporters, which I argue, centre around gathering for the live televised kick-off, I provide alternative ways of understanding the viewing experiences of supporters. This temporal focus finds resonance with English supporters whose experiences, especially in relation to the media blackout of the 3 p.m. kick-off, is structured by time. This allows the mediated experience of the match to be placed at the centre of football rituals.

My own experiences and interactions as a supporter who has watched Premier League football in several North American cities helps build on previous supporter typologies (Giulianotti, 1998, 1999; Duke, 2002) by adding the a deeper understanding of non-English supporters whose motivations and experiences differ in key ways from their English counterparts. However, this is not to argue that English and international supporter experiences have little in common. Rather a focus on the temporal experience

of the game makes clear that these two communities are bound through their simultaneous experience of the live kick-off. This simultaneous experience allows for a kind of bending of time in which English time is experienced in different iterations around the world.

This chapter argues that while the expansion of the EPL's television rights has re-made the spatial experience of the game, what television is unable to alter, so far, is the time in at which the match is played. In this way, stadium time and television time remain the same. Using the work of Benedict Anderson (1983/2006), I argue that the stadium and the television exist in parallel time, which allows for a recognition that domestic and international supporters are engaged in similar practices (of watching the match) at the same time. In the case of football, media policy is used to regulate the time of the kick-off in an attempt to mediate between supporter rituals and the League's globalisation strategy. This chapter will begin by discussing theories of ritual communication and media rituals as a way to begin to think about how support might be understood across the experiences of domestic and international supporters. I will then use the idea of the kick-off time as a way of bringing together the different experiences of local and international supporters. I will conclude by arguing the temporal experience of the match and its itinerant rituals may be a way to bridge the practices of domestic and international supporters and perhaps even create new spaces and alternatives to current practices in the game.

### **Media rituals**

A growing area of media studies has focused on the theorisation of media rituals. While little of this literature has addressed the nature of sport in relation to media ritual

practices, the experiences of football supporters seem to place sport within these larger discussions. Nick Couldry's (2003) in the text *Media Rituals: A Critical Approach* attempts to develop a clear definition of media rituals and their practices. Building on anthropological work, Couldry (2003) argues that within that discipline ritual has been primarily understood in three ways: as habitual action, as formalised action and as actions that are seen to involve transcendent values. As a result, much of the work on rituals has focused on religious or large-scale mass rituals (like royal coronations). Even much of the work on media rituals has focused on media spectacles or what Dayan and Katz (1992) have called media events. In contrast, Couldry (2003) wants to take a smaller-scale approach that focuses more on the quotidian.

For Couldry (2003), what media stands for something more substantial that is linked in some way to the organisation of society and our imagined sense of identity and belonging (p.4). As such, media has come to be seen as having the ability to stand in for the whole and is seen as representing what Couldry (2003) calls 'the centre,' the fundamental essence of society. Media comes to be seen as reflecting our values and beliefs, both real and imagined. Rituals draw their power not specifically from their form and content, but rather from their regularised practice. As Couldry (2003) writes:

Far from every ritual therefore expressing a hidden essence in which the performers explicitly believe, rituals by their repetitive form reproduce categories and patterns of thought in a way that bypasses explicit belief. On the contrary, if made explicit, many of the ideas apparently expressed by these rituals might be rejected or at least called into question; it is their *ritualised* form that enables them to be successfully reproduced without being exposed to questions about their 'content. (p. 24)

As such, media rituals are as much, if not more, about their processes rather than their content, which suggests that there is a potential to simply accept the ritual as it exists rather than thinking about what has shaped it as such. As I hope to show, this certainly has much in common with the experience of football supporters, whose lives are as much shaped by the experiences and routines of matching going as the content of the match itself.

Much of Couldry's (2003) work on media rituals has focused on occasions when ordinary citizens have interfaced with media production formally (ex. appearing on reality television) and informally (ex. taking a tour of a media production facility). As such, he defines media rituals as "...formalised actions organised around key media-related categories and boundaries, which performance frames, or suggests a connection with, wider media-related values" (Couldry, 2003, p. 29). While Couldry (2003) is not necessarily thinking about viewing practices per se, viewing football on television invites a kind of ritualised practice that is specific to the medium itself. While these rituals have much in common with the stadium, they are also centred on television as a medium, which as I have shown, television companies have made a great effort to sell as a different (and better) viewing experience.

Simon Cottle (2006) sees media rituals as moments that tell us about how media may periodically intervene in contemporary society and how this might contribute to the "...formation of plural solidarities or 'publics'" (p. 411). Cottle (2006) wants to challenge the idea that rituals are only ceremonies working in the service of dominant interests or to manufacture consent (p. 411). As such, media rituals have resistive possibilities. As Cottle argues "mediatized rituals are those exceptional and performative media



phenomena that serve to sustain and/or mobilize collective sentiments and solidarities on the basis of symbolization and a subjective orientation to what should or ought to be” (2006, p. 415). Cottle envisions a degree of agency on behalf of both the media producer and the audience that suggests a greater consideration of the role that audience plays in media ritual practices. Audience engagement is thus a crucial part of the ritual itself.

Carolyn Marvin (2002) sees media as being part of a larger ordered system of bodily gestures, or rituals, that hold enduring groups together (p. 182). For her, enduring means groups in which members are willing to die for other group members (2002, p. 182). Marvin (2002) argues that media satisfies the bodily performance that is inherent within ritual practices, even if media does not lend itself to these practices at first glance (pp. 182-83). Like Dayan and Katz (1992), Marvin is particularly interested in large-scale media presentations. As she argues:

... mass media presentations are a type of ritual genre because they do satisfy the bodily performance requisites of ritual practices, even if they seem at first glance to be the antithesis of whatever ritual means.

The term *media ritual* includes face-to-face rituals presented through media and patterns of presentation and audience engagement peculiar to media, especially news coverage of community triumphs, dangers, and disasters. Logically, the distinction between so-called mediated and so-called face-to-face rituals is an unstable one. Since every rituals refers to already established (previously encoded, in Rappaport’s terms) structures of socialibility, every ritual recalls persons, processes, and events that are not immediately present. (Marvin, 2002, pp. 182-184)

While Marvin (2002) does not directly address the practice of routinised rituals, there is nothing in her definition that suggests that her reading of media rituals could not be applied to these smaller scale rituals. Indeed, football seems to oscillate between the spectacular and the occasional mass media spectacle (like the World Cup which certainly works, at least in part, to promote and embody enduring national communities) and smaller-scale mass media spectacle (like regular league play, which is increasingly being sold every week as mass media spectacle, but happens on a more regular schedule than something like the World Cup).

Many authors have addressed the ways in which football contributes to building and sustaining national identity, but Sven Ismer (2010) specifically addresses this within the context of media rituals. Using Michael Bilig's (1995) concept of banal nationalism which focuses on how national identity is created and reinforced through daily routines and practices (ex. singing the national anthem every morning in schools), Ismer argues that football can be part of this routinised development of national identity. As Ismer (2010) writes, "on the one hand, it is important to investigate mediatized discourses on national identity, while on the other hand the practices of embodying identity involve a range of performative acts of nationalizing the self and the body" (p. 550). Football operates as both a mediated discourse in the sense that the audience is most likely to experience the sport through a mediated form and an embodied practice as football players come to be seen as the embodiment of the nation (Crabbe, et. al, 2002). Football represents a cultural routine that is regulated and repeated which creates a sense of identity and social order (Ismer, 2010, p. 553).

The use of fan rituals is particularly important in the context of diasporic fan experiences. In this case, going to the stadium is not an option. Yet my own experiences with being a long-distance fan are indicative of the importance that these rituals take on. When Premier League supporters watch their teams, many will come dressed in jerseys and will sing and shout throughout the game as if there is a possibility of influencing the game in this capacity. Many supporters engage in these practices in order to, as Eastman and Riggs (1994) point out, solidify their position as “true” supporters (as opposed to those that only come out a few times a year) and to forge a connection with those in the stadium. In a sense, it is an attempt to overcome geography in order to show that there is no difference in the passion and support for the club between those that live locally (in relation to the team in question) and those that live abroad.

Building on Eastman and Riggs (1994), Aden et al. (2009) attempt to utilise media rituals as a way of understanding the experience of Nebraska Cornhuskers who follow the team from outside Nebraska. The authors argue that Cornhuskers fans outside of Nebraska transform spaces in ways that make those spaces seem less “non-Nebraska” through things like decorating the spaces (often bars) with Nebraska colours (Aden et. al., 2009). Thus the Nebraska fans “attempt to replicate many of the ritual communication practices enacted by fans attending the game in person” (Aden et. al, 2009, p. 32). This might be through singing of particular songs, wearing certain items of clothing, etc. These practices are also utilised by Premier League fans who also seek to engage in ritual practices similar to those who attend matches live. Yet I will argue that time has as much, if not more of, an impact on how this experienced. While it is true that supporters seek to transform spaces to appear more like that of the team they are supporting (in North

America, bars often come to be associated with particular teams, which means you get situations in which rather than the name of the bar, they get referred to as “the Liverpool pub” or the “Arsenal pub”), this is only made possible through the simultaneous experience of the game itself.

### **Conflicts between supporters**

While the spatial location of supporters may vary, the temporal experience of the kick-off unites all supporters. The advances in media technologies have increased the spaces in which the English League can be viewed, but what cannot be altered is the time at which the match is played. Previous work on football supporters has tended to treat domestic (Redhead, 1997) and international supporters (Giulianotti and Robertson, 2006; 2007a, 2007b, 2007c) as distinct groups whose rituals do not intersect. In addition, the focus on English supporters has tended to examine football violence and hooliganism (Buford, 1991; Garland and Rowe, 2000; Crabbe, 2003; Frosdick and Marsh, 2005; Spaaij, 2008) rather than some of the more quotidian supporter practices. By focusing on supporters’ experience of parallel time, I hope to begin to think about moving away from the strict division between international and domestic supporters.

As discussed earlier, football clubs have long been regarded as key sites of common identity in large part because many of them began their lives as community organisations (Brown, Crabbe, and Mellor, 2008). Football clubs are one of the key sites through which collective identities (whether that be at the local, regional or national level) are created and sustained and that communities get to know themselves (Brown, Crabbe, and Mellor, 2008). Within football literature, there has been debate around whether football support has its support in pre-modern forms of bonding in the sense that

clubs encourage face-to-face affective communities (Brown, Crabbe, and Mellor, 2008). Those that subscribe to this view see football communities are closely tied to their geographic communities. This has tended to be the prevailing view throughout the history of football. However, as Brown, Crabbe, and Mellor (2008) point out, clubs have been drawing support from outside their geographic area since the 1930s, well before the televising of football became commonplace.

Tony Blackshaw (2008) argues that this tendency to see football communities as reflecting their immediate geographic region is tied to a yearning for a type of community that no longer seems to exist, “its narrative is a hymn to the perception of a gentler, more innocent way of life, to days when folks knew their neighbours and stopped on the street to talk to one another” (p. 326). Yet Blackshaw (2008) wants to make clear that while all football communities rely on a romanticised past that plays an important role in sustaining these communities in the present, these communities are not without their dark sides as football communities are always defined against an “other” and can spill over into conflict that can occasionally have violent consequences.

The experience of the local supporters has changed in relation to the time of the match itself. As a result of the English Premier League's heightened profile, teams are no longer made up of local players, but are increasingly global in character. This has also contributed, in some cases, to a sense that the local character of the team is being lost. This anxiety, while less sensational than the fears over international supporters, is related to my discussions in chapter four. Contributing to this sense of lost local identity is the sense that supporters, like players, are also becoming increasingly foreign. The question of foreignness does not simply apply to the players, but to the development of global fan

bases. The development of non-UK fan bases for English teams has been facilitated by the increase in the global television coverage of the English Premier League. Local identities are being re-negotiated in the face of this loosening of local ties (and in the face of globalisation more generally). Yet, in many cases, through the re-enactment of match day rituals, local supporters are reasserting their relationship to their club by making claims to the importance of the liveness of the sporting event (Rowe, 2004, p. 174). In order to better understand how supporters have been constructed, I would like to turn to a discussion of how scholars have constructed different categories of supporters. In particular, this work has focused on how supporter identification has changed within the context of globalisation.

### **Taxonomies of supporters**

A number of theorists have attempted to develop taxonomies of supporters in the Premier League era in order to elucidate the different relationships that supporters have with their teams. In his article, “Supporters, Followers, Fans, and *Flâneurs*: a Taxonomy of Spectator Identities in Football,” Richard Giulianotti (2002) develops four ideal types of supporter identities. He places the four types along two axes. The horizontal axis goes from traditional (more local and cultural identification with the club) to consumer (more market-oriented relationship) and measures an individual’s investment in a particular club (Giulianotti, 2002, p. 31). The vertical goes from hot (intense identification and solidarity) to cool (little investment) and measures the role that the club plays in a person’s sense of self-identity (Giulianotti, 2002, p. 31).

The first type that Giulianotti identifies is the supporter and is located at the intersection of traditional/hot. The supporter “has a long-term personal and emotional

investment in the club” (Giulianotti, 2002, p. 33). One of the key features of the supporter is their deep personal identification and solidarity with the club and other supporters mainly through their attendance of home matches. The attendance at home matches becomes a critical part of their routines (Giulianotti, 2003, p. 33). The second type he identifies is the follower of clubs, which is located at the intersection of traditional/cool. Followers identify strongly with clubs, players or nations, but this identification is structured by their interaction with the cool medium of electronic media (Giulianotti, 2002, p. 35). Followers can display varying levels of commitment and investment in their chosen football institution.

The third type is the modern football fan located at the intersection of hot and consumer (Giulianotti, 2002, p. 37). The fan strongly identifies with particular players and clubs, but this identification is authenticated through the consumption of related products (Giulianotti, 2002, p. 37). The last type, Giulianotti identifies is the football flâneur located at the intersection of cool and consumer (Giulianotti, 2002, p. 38). The flâneur has a market-oriented view towards support and is more interested in collecting football experiences than supporting one specific club (Giulianotti, 2002, pp. 38-39). In this sense, the flâneur would be more likely to suggest which football-related products to consume on the basis of aesthetics (i.e. liking the colour or design of a jersey) rather than the cultural, community or historical meaning of the club (Giulianotti, 2002, p. 39).

Giulianotti is not the only person who has attempted to develop a way of classifying and understanding how supporter relationships have changed in the 1990s. Vic Duke (2002) has developed what he calls a pyramid of support to reflect the changes in the game. At the apex of the pyramid, Duke places what he calls core fans, who attend

both home and away matches, and are totally committed to the team. Core fans self-identify as real fans and they argue that the club really belongs to them as opposed to the chairman, shareholders, etc. (Duke, 2002, p. 10). The next layer of the pyramid is where Duke places what he calls regular supporters, those who attend most home matches and are likely to be season ticket holders (2002, p. 10). According to Duke (2002), it is from these two categories that football has traditionally drawn its support. The last and largest layer of the pyramid consists of distant supporters who are those that follow the results, but rarely attend matches (Duke, 2002, p. 10). Duke (2002) further sub-divides distant supporters into two categories: those who stop attending matches because of age, finances, geography, etc. and armchair supporters, who are those that will tune into watch the big games and teams or sympathetic locals (p. 10).

For Duke (2002), modern football has produced a kind of paradox whereby clubs seek to capture as many of the distant supporters as possible and in ways that might alienate core and regular supporters (changing away match kick-off times to suit television that might inconvenience travelling support), while at the same time relying on the loyalties of core and regular support to prop up their finances (p. 10). As Duke (2002) writes:

According to the new breed of financial analysts (for example, Deloitte and Touche's annual review of football finance) and commercial managers, demand for professional football is inelastic. Up to a point, ticket prices can be increased and supporters will still attend. This is only possible because of the traditional fan culture with its unwavering brand loyalty. Football club support is for life. (p. 10)



While core and regular supporters continue to object to these changes, their loyalty to the club, which is often bound up with feelings of civic pride and identity remains unwavering.

While Giulianotti (2002) is more oriented towards the experiences and practices of supporters within Great Britain (Giulianotti writes extensively about Scottish football), his taxonomy could also reflect the experiences of non-England based supporters. Duke (2002) has also sought to capture the varying loyalties of football supporters in the Premier League era in generalised terms that could include the interests of international supporters. Yet with Giulianotti (2002), Duke (2002) and Anthony King's (1997) work on the new consumer fan discussed earlier, there are aspects of the taxonomies that fail to take into account the specificities of the international or long-distance experience. As a result, I would like to suggest a new taxonomy that builds on this work, but also seeks to capture some of the unique motivations of long-distance supporters.

The taxonomies discussed above are able to capture the varying degrees of commitment that supporters might show towards their clubs and I argue that these varying degrees of commitment are also evident amongst international supporters. While international supporters cannot attend live matches as frequently as Giulianotti's (2002) supporter, follower and even fan or Duke's (2002) core and regular supporters, many international supporters display a similar level of commitment to their attendance of the live broadcasting of matches and develop similar senses of community bonding and loyalty to the team they support. I turn to how the live broadcasting of the match comes to play a critical role in the construction of international supporter identities in a moment, but first I would like to develop a taxonomy that takes into account the different

motivations of international or long-distance supporters. I use both the terms international and long-distance supporters as part of my effort to capture the differences between supporters. I see international supporters as those that were either born outside England or members of the English diaspora that have settled overseas permanently. I use the term long-distance as a way of trying to capture those supporters that were born in England, but are temporarily residing overseas.

To attend further to the differences between supporters, I propose three other categories that can be found overseas. I develop these categories from the observations and conversations that I have had with countless supporters in several North American locations. I see these categories as building on the work previously discussed as the varying levels of commitment described by Giulianotti (2002) and Duke (2002) can be found within each of these categories. As such, these categories do not necessarily describe the level of commitment of each type of supporter, but rather their possible motivations in becoming supporters. In doing so, I hope to show that there are a number of factors that can motivate the level of commitment a supporter displays and to try and begin to treat international and overseas supporters as distinct categories rather than a monolithic bloc.

The first category I would like to suggest is that of diasporic supporter. The diasporic supporter refers to overseas supporters that were born in England, but have relocated overseas permanently or those that claim a clear link to English heritage. Diasporic supporters' interest in their chosen club is generally as a result of family or geographic solidarity. As such diasporic supporters tend to support a club from either the city or town they (or their relatives) came from and/or the team that their family has

traditionally supported. Diasporic supporters may be more likely to show the kind of topophilic commitment (Bale, 1993) to a club than other types of international or overseas supporters in large part because there is a good chance that they themselves have visited the community in question and/or continue to have family members who reside in the community in question. In addition, the diasporic supporter will tend to identify with the English national team. As such, the diasporic supporter has the potential to most closely resemble the traditional and core/regular supporters identified by Giulianotti (2002) and Duke (2002).

The second category is what I am calling the double diasporic supporter. The double diasporic supporter refers to someone who was not born in the country they are residing in, but also do not come from England. I call them double diasporic because they are both removed from England in the sense of having no clear familial or citizenship tie to England, but that they are also living outside the country of their birth. In addition, the double diasporic supporter comes from a place in which football is the dominant sport. Thus their inclination towards the sport itself might come from a familial, geographic, cultural commitment, but their support for an English club may be a matter of choice or because they cannot watch their chosen club on television (if they support a team from a league that is not readily available internationally). An example of a double diasporic supporter would be a person who emigrated from Africa residing in North America who supports an English club. In general, the double-diasporic supporter will not support the English national team and will instead support the team from their home country. While the double diasporic supporter will not necessarily have the same topophilic connection

to the club that the diasporic supporter does, they will still have a cultural and/or national identification with the sport.

The third category is what I am calling the non-aligned supporter. I use the term non-aligned not because the supporter lacks commitment to their chosen team, but as a way of capturing their lack of connection to either England and/or a cultural, geographic or national connection to the sport itself. Thus, the motivations for becoming a supporter in this category may be more varied than within the other two categories. Non-aligned supporters may become supporters of particular teams for a variety of reasons such as through friends, educational experiences, playing the sport themselves or simply because of the Premier League's increased media visibility. At first glance, the non-aligned supporter may seem to most closely resemble Giulianotti's (2002) football flâneur with an interest in purchasing merchandise and collecting football experiences. While this may be true for some non-aligned supporters, many supporters within this category develop deep and meaningful affective bonds with their chosen team and other supporters. Thus, non-aligned supporters can also be invested in some form of football community.

Beginning to sketch out differences amongst international supporters is a step towards seeing international supporters as a diverse group. International supporters are often subsumed under the label of new consumer fans (King 1997; Redhead 1996), and while this can apply in some cases, it does not pay attention to the diverse motivations of international supporters and the kind of affective bonds that can develop out of these relationships. When scholars have turned their attention to the experience of international supporters, the focus has been on the role that clubs can play in sustaining diasporic identities (Giulianotti, 2000). While football can still play a critical role in sustaining

diasporic identities, this alone cannot account for the large audience that the Premier League is bringing in. Rather what we might be seeing is the construction of different kinds of supporter communities. While the mediatisation of the Premier League has undoubtedly displaced the special importance of the game, in the sense that one no longer needs to be in England, let alone the stadium, to watch a football match, the kick-off time continues to organise the ritual of football support whether one lives in England or abroad. The kick-off time and its simultaneous experience by domestic and international supporters serves a marker that can bring together the complexities of these different supporter experiences.

### **Same time, new communities?**

Benedict Anderson's work *Imagined Communities* offers a theory of nationalism predicated on the affective bonds of its imagined neighbours (1983/2006). As Anderson argues, the imagined community is imagined because one will never meet all their fellow national community members, but a shared sense of community continues to exist (1983/2006). For Anderson (1983/2006), the development of print capitalism contributed to creating this shared sense of community and the experience of parallel time, which is the belief that when we engage in certain rituals, it is with the knowledge that other members of the nation are also engaging in that ritual at the same time. This belief in the existence and practice of parallel time constructs our recognition of other members of the nation. For Anderson (1983/2006), the source of these shared ritual practices were national newspapers. In the case of football, it is through its mediation that parallel time is experienced. Parallel time is experience through the kick-off time. Whether it is 3 p.m. in Liverpool or 9 am in Minneapolis, there is recognition that all supporters are engaged

in a similar viewing practice at the same time. In the case of football, media policy is used to regulate the time of the kick-off in an attempt to mediate between supporter rituals and the League's globalisation strategy.

Like Anderson, James Carey has examined the role that media has played in the construction and maintenance of the national. For Carey (2002), it is the repetitive movement of nations through time that builds a sense of community. While acknowledging the importance of space (geographically bounded), Carey sees time as being critical to understanding the organisation of modern life. In particular, Carey argues that it is a sense of media time rather than either liturgical or natural time that comes to provide "the temporal architecture of modern life" (2002 p. 205). This seems to build on Harold Innis' work on the difference between time-bound (durable and enduring) and space-bound (less durable) media (1950/2007, p.26). While football and its transmission on television may lean towards ephemera, in the sense that once a game has been played, the game itself loses its importance (although the score can continue to hold much importance), the meaning of the match endures mainly through the rituals that develop around the *time* of the match. James Carey (1992) argues, "a ritual view of communication is directed not toward the extension of messages in space but toward the maintenance of society in time; not the act of imparting information but the representation of shared beliefs" (p. 18). It is this notion of shared beliefs that coalesces around the soccer matches themselves. The time of the match produces ritualised expressions of identity regardless of where the supporter is located.

English football at all levels has traditionally kicked-off at 3 p.m. on a Saturday afternoon. However, the 3 p.m. kick-off is conspicuously absent from the English

television schedule. In order to satisfy the increasing demand for televised Premier League football, a number of new, made for television kick-off times have developed. Within England, it is now possible to watch football at the following times: the Saturday early kick-off (either 12:45 p.m. or 1:30 p.m. GMT), the Saturday late kick-off (5:30 p.m. GMT), the Sunday early kick-off (1:30 p.m. GMT), the Sunday late kick-off (4 p.m. GMT) and the Monday night kick-off (8 p.m.).<sup>34</sup> The 3 p.m. Saturday kick-off in the League is barred from broadcast on English television as a way of encouraging people to continue attending lower league football. This restriction does not apply to the international distribution of the English Premier League, and the Saturday 3 p.m. kick-off is readily available outside England (in addition to the match times listed above). As a result, it is possible to watch more English Premier League football on television outside England than within. The continued refusal to broadcast the 3 p.m. kick-off domestically demonstrates the extent to which the Premier League's globalising strategy comes into conflict with the embedded English cultural time of a football match (3 p.m. on a Saturday), and it is unclear if both interests will ever find themselves in sync.

Previous research on supporter rituals have tended to focus on the more extreme forms of support, in particular the figure of the football hooligan (Stone, 1997). Yet what the focus on these spectacular forms of support fails to acknowledge is the imbrications of football in the everyday lives of its supporters. As Chris Stone (1997) writes, "...although football may at times transcend everyday life it is also very much embedded within the daily routines and spatial practices of people's lives. For many it is a way of

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<sup>34</sup> Kick-off times are sometimes determined by policing concerns. Matches that have a history of being contentious are given early kick-offs (either 12:30 or sometimes 11:30). In addition, there are occasionally matches played in mid-week (usually Wednesday) as a result of re-scheduling due to conflicts with other competitions or weather. These games are also televised.

overcoming the monotony of the daily routine, for others it offers the only routine around which their lives can be structured. For the majority, football provides both transcendence and routine at different times” (p. 175). This seems critical to understanding football’s role as something both ordinary, a normal part of everyday life, and as something special. While Stone (1997) does not focus specifically on media and its attendant rituals, it seems both of these are at stake in trying to understand how football comes to operate in both these capacities. Media becomes important because which media the match is being consumed through may determine whether the match in question is routine or extraordinary in the sense that if football is usually consumed on television, then going to the match takes the experience out of ordinary life. This is particularly true for international supporters whose trip to the stadium may take on the sense of a pilgrimage. While lacking the kind of topophilic relationship to the ground that local supporters might have (Bale 1993; 1994; 2000), grounds can still play a critical role in international supporters understanding of their relationship to their clubs. Much as Svetlana Boym (2001) describes the role that nostalgia comes to play in constructing diasporic identities as a romantacised version of the culture in question so too does the stadium take on magical properties for committed international supporters.

Nostalgia also permeates other aspects of the support experience. The recollection of old matches and players becomes currency through which supporters communicate with each other, whether they be local or international supporters. In fact, the ability to speak knowledgeably about a team’s past, whether one is a local or international supporter, becomes a way through which to determine someone’s level of support. It is this ability to confirm oneself as an “authentic” supporter that is being gauged through



the ability to recite and remember past glories. It is also football's increasingly pervasive nature that is also allowing this switch. As Stone writes, "furthermore, the activity space of football extends into people's homes, workplaces and many spaces in between, connecting supporters within and across spatial boundaries to one another, to the products, images and discursive renderings of football culture and to collective memories of embodied experiences across space and time" (2007, p. 181). What becomes important is not the in-person liveness of the event, but rather the temporal experience of liveness. The location of support becomes less important compared to the simultaneous experience of the kick-off time of the match. In this way, all supporters of a team are united through their joint experience of the match.

As discussed earlier, the stadium has undergone profound changes both physically, through the move from terraces to all-seaters, and demographically, with the move towards more middle-class supporters. As a result, fans increasingly complain that English stadiums have become too quiet and regimented (Williams, J., 2006). In the stadium's place, the pub is getting reconfigured as a space in which more "traditional" supporters and rituals are able to find expression (Weed, 2007). The scene from *Looking for Eric* described earlier exemplified this shift. The group of postmen represent football's "natural" constituency, and yet ticket prices are keeping them out of the stadium. This is not to suggest that the pub has not also had an important role to play in match-day rituals. Indeed even before the advent of football on television, the pub was a key site of bonding as the place where match attendees would gather before the game in anticipation and/or after to either commiserate or celebrate. What has changed is that the pub now also serves as the site where the match is consumed.

The experience of the local supporters has changed in relation to the time of the match itself. As a result of the English Premier League's heightened profile, teams are no longer made up of local players, but, as discussed in chapter four, are increasingly global in character. The temporal real-time experience of the match becomes a way for supporters to develop their identity. As Carolyn Marvin (2002) argues, mass media presentations are themselves a kind of ritual practice and this finds resonance with the experience of supporters. Both global and local supporters orient themselves to the time of the match, but it is the enactment (the stadium versus the television) that is different rather than the ritual itself. The stadium remains a crucial site even within the enactment of global supporter rituals as, in many cases, global supporters model their own behaviour on that of supporters within the stadium (for example, replicating songs that they hear on television by singing them in the pub).

Football chants and singing have been an integral part of match-day rituals as creative expressions of both identity and history (Schoonderwoerd, 2011). Football chants have a few iterations with some songs being sung to either support the team or individual players/the manager and some songs being sung to disparage the opposition team or individual players/managers. Football chants and songs also have varying degrees of endurance with some songs becoming officially integrated into both official and unofficial match-day rituals (the most famous example may be Liverpool's playing of the Gerry and the Pacemakers recording *You'll Never Walk Alone* before every home match as an official integration of the song and the singing of the song by Liverpool supporters at the end of almost every Liverpool match) (Schoonderwoerd, 2011). As stadiums get accused of becoming quieter, a large part of this critique is the lack of

singing that is now on display. While many English supporters have expressed scepticism and distrust about the ability of North American supporters to prove themselves as real supporters, singing and chants may be one way that these supporters may be able to prove their commitment (Schoonderwoerd, 2011).<sup>35</sup>

While many supporters are re-positioning their notions of support by returning to a clear affiliation with the local (Schoonderwoerd, 2011), chants and songs as part of the match-day ritual may be a way of letting international fans in, both to the club and a kind of localism. Songs and chants are traded and discussed through the Internet forums and chat rooms, with international supporters often learning and performing them within their own supporters clubs and/or pubs. It is not unusual to hear international supporters begin to sing with the supporters in the stands when they hear particular songs during the match. As many of these songs and chants are rooted in a kind of localism, describing historical events and places within which the communities clubs are located in, this may also be a way of bringing international supporters into a kind of local history and culture. While I am not suggesting that these ties will in some ways render international supporters as being of that particular community, I do wish to suggest that this may create the opportunity for a greater sympathy and concern for particular localities. For example, international supporters of teams like Manchester and Liverpool may never have given a thought or been able to find these cities on a map before becoming supporters of these teams. Through their support, there may be at least a sense of what these places mean and their historical development. Again, this is not to suggest that international supporters will suddenly take an interest in local politics (except perhaps as the intersect with the

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<sup>35</sup> While Schoonderwoerd's article only examines perceptions of North American supporters by English supporters, I would argue that this argument would apply equally to supporters from other parts of the world.

construction of new stadiums), but only to suggest that this brings a kind of attention to places that otherwise currently occupy very little space in the global imaginary (this is obviously less true for London, which has an important role to play on the international stage).

Football, and sports more generally, are built around the importance of the real-time experience. In this sense, while the English Premier League may continue to grow internationally, the local will always be able to exert control over this key aspect of the game (football will always conform to GMT). The foreignness of these new fan-bases does not exclude the development of new and what might be called, diasporic supporter rituals. While the space in which they watch may be different from those of the local supporters, the time of the support does not change. The importance of the live, real-time kick-off remains paramount. Watching televised sports may create the opportunity for new rituals to develop around the medium of television itself or even for the enactment of old rituals to find new life in a different space. As Mike Weed (2007) has written about in his work on the viewing space of the pub, supporters in pub are able to, in some cases, get away with songs and chants that would not be allowed in the more regulated space of the stadium.

The move towards television as a vehicle for football spectatorship began before the boom in international broadcasting of the English Premier League. In this way, the claims to a similar domestic and international supporter experience have become clearer. In addition to selling itself to domestic viewers, BSkyB heavily invested in the marketing itself to pubs beginning with the first deal in 1992. It is also important to note that the move towards television viewership, while a function of the greater availability of

football on television, is also the result of the increasing prices of football tickets, which are excluding many from the stadium itself. Mike Weed (2007; 2008) has written extensively of the growth of the pub as a significant venue for viewing football, in part because of the televisual qualities outlined earlier. Weed (2007) argues that there are two main pleasures that come from sport spectatorship, which Weed defines simply as watching live and in-person: the immediate pleasure of attending live events with other people and that live presence allows for the recall of events at a later date. In Weed's (2007) estimation, the pub is able to fulfil the first pleasure by mimicking the kind of close proximity of supporters that one would find in the stadium, but is unable to fulfil the second as recalling one's presence at a match watched in a pub will never be quite the same as the ability to re-call one's presence at the live match (this is an example of one of the ways in which space still matters).

While the ability to make claims to having 'been there' may be insurmountable for supporters within England, this becomes less of a problem for supporters outside of England whose ability to attend matches in the stadium is quite limited (however, it is important to note, that trips to England in order to view matches does take on the aura of being able to make claims to "having been there"). As a result, the temporal may take on some of the import that gets placed on being there. Rather than emphasising one's presence at the stadium, what becomes important is the ability to show up at the pub on time, particularly for the early kick-offs, which can often be at 7:45 a.m. or 6:45 a.m. (or even earlier on the west coast). In a global context, pubs can themselves become transformed spatially in ways that evoke more traditional modes of sports. Similar to what Alden et al. (2009) describe with the Nebraska Cornhuskers, pubs get transformed

into spaces that represent particular clubs often by decorating a part of the pub in the colours, flags and scarves of a particular team. Often times, supporters will also form official supporters clubs, which meet regularly and are officially recognised by the club in question. In seeking recognition of their positions as supporters, international supporters are seeking validation for their position within the fan base. Through official supporters clubs, supporters within a city can easily find both other supporters and a place to watch a game engendering the kind of weekly ritual and camaraderie that is seen with domestic supporters. As such, the experiences of international and local supporters are experienced in parallel time. Similar rituals at the same time being performed within different spaces.

This interplay between the global and the local may function both as a form of glocalisation (Andrews and Ritzer, 2007) for the local community, which uses its football club to negotiate between global and local identities, but it might also provide the key to promoting the cultural aspects of clubs both at home as abroad. As Schoonderwoerd (2011) suggests that football clubs face competition:

...in meeting the needs (not merely from a business perspective) of its global audience while facing up to the responsibilities of a pastime whose roots originate in 'the local'. And this is a 'local' which, whether driven by a mythical, eulogized vision of 'the local', a symbiosis of the local in a field with global connections/implications, or a real resistance to the effects of globally-imposing business interests at a local level, is for some still an emblem of the upholding of cultural uniqueness. (p. 136)

While the Premier League has, at times, been uncertain how to negotiate between the global and the national, clubs have similarly, at times, struggled to negotiate between the local and the global.

### **Wigan as international sporting power?**

Previously, I have argued that the Premier League has the potential to create connections between international supporters and the localities in which their teams are located in ways that would not exist without football. While I still believe this to be true, what is more difficult to ascertain is whether these links are meaningful and, more crucially, whether all clubs can access the same global potential. While it is clear that the Premier League has enriched all clubs, this enrichment has been uneven. Yet there is little attention paid to whether a strategy of globalisation will actually benefit all clubs in the Premier League. One of the problems in trying to determine the success of the strategy in the question is how to measure support levels. While the Premier League released a survey at the start of the 2011/2012 season claiming that the League reaches a global audience of 1.4 billion, there is no context for understanding what that number means. How often are 1.4 billion people watching the Premier League, and most crucially, what games are they watching? If the audience was broken down by individual matches, it is likely that it is games like Liverpool versus Manchester United, rather than Wigan versus Reading.

While several of the big Premier League clubs claim large international fan bases, it is again difficult to understand exactly how to find meaningful numbers in this area. How does one count international supporters? Is it based on the number of international supporters clubs that exist globally? Is it based on revenue turnover, with the assumption

that a high revenue turnover would imply that lots of merchandise is being sold? If revenue is the determining factor, then the Premier League has five of the top ten clubs in the world in terms of revenue in the 2011/2012 season (Manchester United, Chelsea, Arsenal, Manchester City and Liverpool) (Deloitte, 2012). Yet using revenue as the marker includes television deals, sponsorship and other financial deals and seems to not be able to capture anything specific about supporters' numbers (except the implication that the ability to secure large financial deals is based on a belief that clubs are attracting large supporter bases). Another measure has been the number of unique visitors to a club's website (comScore, 2007) in which case four of the top ten most visited sites, including the number one and number two spots were held by English clubs (Manchester United, Liverpool, Arsenal and Chelsea). Yet again this measure does nothing to capture the level of commitment to the team. In particular, the number of visitors to the website was deeply influenced by how the clubs were performing that season (the number one club, Manchester United, was in the FA Cup Final and the number two club, Liverpool F.C. was in the Champions League Final).

In 2011, a German sports marketing firm, SPORT+MARKT attempted to estimate the international support base of clubs through a survey of 1,000 people from thirty-four countries (talksport.com, October 13<sup>th</sup>, 2011). Setting aside the small sample size, the survey found that the top Premier League clubs in terms of support were:

1. Manchester United – three hundred and fifty-four million
4. Chelsea – one hundred and thirty-five million
5. Arsenal – one hundred and thirteen million
7. Liverpool FC – seventy-one million
11. Manchester City – eighteen million
12. Tottenham Hotspurs – eleven million
13. Newcastle United – six million



While it is easy to see why these numbers have been attractive to the League and used to drive up the price of television rights, two things are notable about these numbers. One, it is interesting to note that with the exception of Chelsea, all the other Premier League clubs in the top thirteen were clubs that had large support bases and/or had already won a number of trophies. The potential presented by television money has made Premier League clubs attractive to foreign buyers, who have invested heavily in a number of clubs. When the Premier League began in 1992, not one of the twenty-two clubs were owned by foreign ownership. In the 2012/2013, foreign owners controlled eleven of the twenty Premier League clubs, including four of the six cited above. As a result, Chelsea may represent the Premier League dream. During the 1970s and 80s, Chelsea were best known for their feared hooligan firm the Chelsea Headhunters and spent the first ten years of the Premier League in mid-table until they were bought for eighty million pounds by Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich in 2003. Since then, Abramovich has pumped over five hundred million pounds into the club winning the Premier League title three times, the FA Cup three times, the League Cup twice and the Champions League once and creating a new global powerhouse.

Perhaps more crucially, once again looking at these numbers, what seems to get left out is what does it actually mean for teams to have such large international fan bases. Is it simply the promise of increased revenue? What category of Giulianotti (2002) or Duke's (2002) supporter taxonomy do these supporters represent? This question is more important than the raw numbers because it determines the extent to which clubs can build and invest. For international supporters, it is easy to claim an affinity for a certain club, but that affinity may have very few material (unless someone is purchasing a jersey) or

cultural consequences. While I have argued forcefully that international supporters represent a varied and often as committed a fan base invested in the rituals surrounding their chosen club, international supporters are not a monolithic bloc with the same levels of support (the same is also true for domestic supporters). The pursuit of ever-larger fan bases may be blinding clubs to the consequences of ignoring local supporters in favour of the elusive international supporter. In times of difficulty, it is the local fan base that sustains the club. Manchester United may boast of their three hundred and fifty-four million fans, but how many of those supporters would remain if Manchester United ended up with Leeds (a not unimaginable situation given Manchester United debt level)?<sup>36</sup>

Some clubs, beginning to sense the resistance from local supporters, have begun to position themselves as the local alternative. While the fortunes of Manchester City have changed vastly since the use of the “Our City” branding campaigns, the work of Tim Edensor and Steve Millington offers some critical insights into how smaller clubs might utilise locality as a selling point both at home and perhaps even abroad. The “Our City” campaign was introduced in 2007 as a way of positioning City as the ‘authentic’ Manchester club in contrast to “crass and exploitative” Manchester United (Edensor and Millington, 2008, 172). Rather than pursuing a global fan base, City is using United’s

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<sup>36</sup> Leeds A.F.C. was one of the early success stories of the Premier League. A club with a long history, the club found success in the Champions League and the Premier League in the early 2000s. Their success led club owners to make a number of investments in the club on the basis of future television and Champions League income. When the club failed to qualify for the Champions League two seasons in a row, the club went bankrupt in 2003/2004 season and was relegated to League One. Despite their financial difficulties, the club has continued to sell out its stadium Elland Road (capacity 37, 900) and has been promoted to the Championship where they narrowly missed promotion to the Premier League. Leeds has come to serve as a cautionary tale for clubs that bet too much on television and European revenues (in fact, “doing a Leeds” has become shorthand for clubs that go bankrupt or are threatened with bankruptcy). Leeds was the first and biggest Premier League club to go bankrupt (a number of clubs have gone bankrupt once they have been relegated to the Championship after being unable to adjust to the change in revenue).

international growth against them, implying that United lacks roots within the local community. In contrast, City is reaffirming its position within the local community. While City is not explicitly disavowing the global, the campaign seeks to re-position the local within the global in contrast to the ‘bad’ globalisation strategy of United, which completely disregards the local community (Edensor and Millington, 2008). Much of this positioning is mediated by a notion of authenticity, which is bound up with questions of class, a category that continues to dominate supporter identities (Edensor and Millington, 2008, p. 184). While questions of authenticity have come to dominate discussions around supporters within England, authenticity is also an issue for international supporters who are also invested in the idea of what makes a ‘proper’ football supporter whether it be through learning songs and chant to regularly showing up to game. In much the same way that English supporters are sceptical of new supporters, so too are international supporters. Ironically, it is now Manchester City supporters who are accused of bandwagoning as any new City fan is suspected of only becoming a fan of City once they became good.

### **Whither England?**

Television broadcasting has changed the experiences in a number of critical ways. It has increased the opportunity for supporters overseas to enjoy the Premier League, creating new and varied fanbases for English clubs. This has also given rise to a number of television-based supporter rituals, which have the potential to create new links with supporters within England. Television has also changed the ways in which supporters in England experience the game with an increasing number of supporters preferring or being forced (for financial reasons) to experience the match on television. This move to the

televisual experience has raised concerns about whether this is also eroding the relationship between supporters and their clubs. As the League continues to construct supporters as consumers first, there is a risk that supporters' commitments to their teams might loosen. This, similar to my discussion in chapter four, also presents a clear threat to the English national team. As the Premier League continues to sell itself as the most important football entity in England, a risk is being run that people will lose interest in the England team. Adam Brown (2008), writing about Manchester United supporters, found that the number of supporters that were also England supporters seemed to be declining. The split between the Premier League and the England national team might be understood through the citizen-consumer split that became so prevalent under New Labour. The England national team hails supporters as citizens, asking them to come together for the good of the nation. The Premier League hails supporters as consumers, asking them to see themselves as individual supporters of a unique team. In attempting to toggle between these two identities, club supporter and England supporter, the hybrid nature of the hyphen between citizen and consumer seems to be faltering.

As so often has been the case within the story of the Premier League, the fate of the England national team has both little and everything to do with this story. As the Premier League produces more of what I have called the double-diasporic and non-aligned supporters, the incentive of the Premier League to think seriously about the England national team diminishes. While I have argued that local and international supporters can find themselves in solidarity through their simultaneous experience of match day rituals and the kick-off time, the fate of the England national team may present itself as the wedge between these two groups. While local supporters have long had the

experience of toggling their support between their local team and the national team, international supporters, with the exception of the diasporic supporter, has both no experience with this dual identity, and, perhaps, no interest in adopting the position of England supporter.

In recent years, a few football writers, mainly non-English have begun to wonder out loud whether we may be moving towards an end to international football given the growing strength of international club competitions like the Champions League. The argument about the end of international football finds resonance within the notion that the nation-state is withering. If the national is no longer important then who would assemble sports teams to embody and compete against one another? However, this view seems somewhat premature and short-sighted. International football has come under scrutiny because it cannot as easily fit within a capitalist logic as the Premier League<sup>37</sup> because of a clearer sense of cultural and national import (for example the World Cup's position as a listed event which prevents it from being sold exclusively to one broadcaster). While England lacks the potential mass appeal of a club team, there will never be three hundred and fifty-four million England supporters no matter how you count them. Support for England runs deep and will endure through thick and thin, like repeated failures at international tournaments. In this sense, clubs could perhaps take a lesson from international football. It might be time to pay greater attention to those that will sustain the club if the television money dries up. Steve Redhead (2007) in an article examining the changes that media technologies have brought to the football viewing experience chose a play on Paul Virilo in titling his article, "Those absent from the stadium are

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<sup>37</sup> This is not to say that international football has not been commodified. The World Cup and the European Championships have become marketers' dreams.

always right.” While this is certainly the vision the Premier League has and while international supporters have certainly made claims to devoted and deep forms of support, it may be time to think less about those that are absent from the stadium and more about those that are present.

## Chapter 6

### **Is the Party Over? A Few Thoughts on the Future of English Football**

It seems strange to put any sort of end point on this project for two reasons. The first is that the Premier League is a living, breathing and ever-changing phenomenon. It seems that rarely a day passes in which there is not a newspaper article detailing some proposal or critique about the Premier League's growth. The second reason is that so many of my own experiences intersect with the Premier League's development that it has been difficult not to reflect back on my own life in relation to the story I have tried to tell. My own experience of the Premier League has been entirely mediated and removed from England. I first came to the Premier League in 1996 as a twelve year old with a newly discovered love for Liverpool Football Club. In 1996, televised Premier League football still felt like an event as the Canadian sports broadcaster would only show one of the weekend's games. Given that with only one game a weekend there was no guarantee that your team would be chosen, the weeks where Liverpool were shown were special, a step outside the normal rhythms of life.

By the early 2000s, practically all of the Premier League games were being shown and the experience of watching a game every weekend became embedded within normal life. Now, in a short amount of time, it seems rare when a Liverpool game is not shown, and it is an absence of games that has become extraordinary. Having grown up in the Premier League era, it seems impossible for me to even imagine a time when the Premier League was not widely available to an international audience. Even my 'real' life experiences of Liverpool have been structured by the commercial changes that the Premier League has brought. I saw Liverpool play live for the first time in 2004 when

they toured North America, playing other European teams in major North American cities. I saw them play live in England for the first time in 2008, passing through London on my way back from working on my MA in Barcelona. I saw them play at Anfield in Liverpool for the first time while working on this project in the fall of 2011. Through each of these events, it felt like my fandom had been validated in some way. Seeing them play at home in England authenticated my support in a way that years of television could not and given the number of supporters from other parts of the world seated around me, it was clear that watching Liverpool *in* Liverpool still matters. My own experience of the Premier League has been made possible and shaped by this global push and while I am grateful, this does not mean that the strategy has been a success.

### **Supporters not customers**

A number of issues have arisen in the last few years which suggest that the Premier League's unfettered upward march may face new challenges that could bring massive changes to the ways in which broadcast deals are made. In particular, I want to focus on two ongoing developments that may force the Premier League to change its business model and which help to demonstrate the deep contradictions that continue to exist within the game. The first concerns the recent European Court of Justice decision, which ruled that the English Sky feed could no longer hold a monopoly over the broadcasting of English football within England. This decision, while again demonstrating the extent to which European law can intervene in unexpected ways, challenges the delicate deal struck between the Premier League and the Football League over the 3 p.m. kick-off. As such, the Premier League may lose its ability to control one aspect of the temporal and may begin to blend the domestic and international supporters'



experiences in unexpected ways (by exposing English supporters to the diasporic television experience). This may also serve to bring together the domestic and international supporter experience in new and interesting ways. The second is the recent and growing protests that have appeared this year at many football grounds concerning the ever-increasing cost of tickets (the protests have mainly focused on the cost of away tickets). This coupled with the 2011 publication of the DCMS select committee's scathing report on the state of both the FA and the Premier League and the follow-up report in February 2013 suggest that there is growing unrest amongst both supporters and the British government. Accompanying the publication of this report has been stern rhetoric implying that the government would provide a legislative solution if both the FA and the Premier League do not demonstrate clear progress on the issues raised in the reports. While both the fan protests and the DCMS have not yet produced tangible results, they point towards a potential rupture that may threaten the League's current strategy.

I would like to briefly examine a recent Grand Chamber of the Court of Justice (CJEU) for the EU ruling related to football broadcasting that has the potential to deeply impact the future of broadcasting, in particular the fragile deal between the Premier League and the Football League to protect the 3 p.m. kick-off. In 2009, the Premier League sued Portsmouth pub owner Karen Murphy because she had been using her satellite dish to show a Greek television feed of the 3 p.m. kick-off of Premier League matches, which violated the 3 p.m. British blackout of this match. In response, Karen Murphy took the case to the Grand Chamber Court of Justice and in early February 2011, they ruled in Murphy's favour, arguing:

National legislation which prohibits the import, sale or use of foreign decoder cards is contrary to the freedom to provide services and cannot be justified either in light of the objective of protecting intellectual property rights or by the objective of encouraging the public to attend football stadiums...Territorial exclusivity agreements relating to the transmission of football matches are contrary to European Union law". ("judgement in the cases" para. 8-9)

This ruling challenges the provisions put in place by the EPL/Football league regarding the sacred time of the 3 p.m. kick-off. By opening up the possibility of showing the 3 p.m. kick-off (whether by legal or illegal means), this decision is challenging not only the territorial exclusivity,<sup>38</sup> but also the temporal exclusivity that the League had been able to impose. The protection of the 3 p.m. kick-off was a compromise meant to protect some aspect of the game's cultural import and as a way to preserve the tradition of lower league football. Yet, as the CJEU decision makes clear, broadcasting decisions cannot be used to encourage attendance in the football stadium, which had been the basis for the agreement between the Premier League and the Football League regarding the 3 p.m. kick-off. With this ruling, the ability of the League to protect the 3 p.m. kick-off is under threat, and the unstable balance between the financial and cultural interests of the League may finally collapse. The Football Governance Report addressed the CJEU decision regarding broadcasting. In this area, the committee declined to challenge the status quo instead arguing the government should lobby the EU to ensure that the Premier League should retain the ability to sell the television rights ("Football Governance", 2013, p. 101). Yet it remains unclear whether this position is sustainable, and it may have been better for the

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<sup>38</sup> The CJEU decision did leave open the possibility that the Premier League might be able to impose some territorial exclusivity by ruling that they could continue to exert exclusivity through branding (White, D. 2011)

committee to consider ways beyond the 3 p.m. blackout to sustain and protect lower league football.

This decision has also given pub owners, in particular, more flexibility in deciding which broadcaster they would like to partner with. This may have serious financial implications, as the costs of the non-English feeds are substantially lower (in Karen Murphy's case it was the difference between paying £118 a month for the Greek version and £480 a month for the Sky footage) (White, D., 2011). While the Premier League has not begun to produce its own domestic version of the 3 p.m. kick-off, it is becoming increasingly common to see the broadcasting of the 3 p.m. game advertised outside pubs in England. While this ruling has yet to impact the price of broadcasting rights, it may in the future as domestic viewers choose to opt for cheaper foreign feeds. This decision has the potential to be another key moment in the development of the League's global expansion by bringing the international viewing experience into England, rather than promoting the League abroad. By threatening the sacredness of the 3 p.m. kick-off, this decision may promote the development of a new kind of time that threatens the League's efforts to manage both the global and domestic mediatisation of the game. It is inviting the diasporic fan experience into England by offering the broadcasting experience intended for global audiences. If this comes to pass, then the rituals of local and international supporters may intersect further as they experience the exact same television feed. This may also weaken the claims of expertise on the part of the English, who tend to dominate the production and presentation of football matches. In international broadcasts, we are starting to see more non-English voices commenting on the matches and if these

broadcasts start appearing on English screens, the English will now have to listen to non-English voices discuss “their” game.

The end of the blackout on the 3 p.m. kick-off presents a challenge to what had long been sacred in English football. To talk about the 3 p.m. game means discussing the history of football in England. Yet there is nothing to suggest that ritualised practices around the match will decline with the broadcast of this match. Even the promise that the 3 p.m. kick-off rule is a way to protect attendances at lower league football is not necessarily supported, with the 2012/2013 Football League season recording some of the highest numbers in years (“Football League statistics,” 2012/2013”). Rather than see a decline in the number of people attending lower league football, the problems in the Premier League may be pushing supporters back to more localised forms of support. Even with the broadcasting of the 3 p.m. kick-off, the Football League would remain connected to the Premier League through the system of promotion and relegation. As such, lower league football would always still hold the possibility of ascending to the top of the English football pyramid. The Premier League has long hidden behind the 3 p.m. kick-off as its gesture of solidarity with the Football League.

While the broadcasting experience may be about to change for domestic supporters, as detailed in chapter two, the experience of supporters in the stadium has also been in a state of flux since the publication of the Taylor Report in 1990. In addition to the redesign of stadiums, ticket prices in the Premier League have increased at a pace that has far exceeded inflation and is contributing to a Premier League audience that is increasingly older and middle-class as younger and working-class supporters are priced out of the game. In 1992 when the Premier League began the most expensive ticket in the

League was available at a cost of £3.50 (at Manchester United). Adjusted for inflation, the same ticket should cost around £6.20 (Conn, August 16, 2011). Yet the *cheapest* ticket available in 2011 at Manchester United was £28, an inflation rate of 700% (and Manchester United remains one of the cheaper tickets amongst the biggest clubs). For example, Arsenal has experienced an inflation rate of 920% since the release of the Taylor Report, including the Premier League's first £100 ticket (Conn, August 16, 2011). English ticket prices are also the most expensive tickets in all of the European leagues, a fact that supporters point to as an example of how English supporters are worse off than their European counterparts. The rising cost of tickets has also directly affected the demographics of the Premier League with the average age of a Premier League attendee rising to forty-one (Conn, August 16, 2011). While there was very little demographic information kept pre-Premier League, what little does exist demonstrates that the share of supporters in their teens and early twenties has decreased (Conn August 16<sup>th</sup>, 2011). While rising ticket prices may present a short-term advantage to the clubs, an aging supporter base presents long-term structural problems. As discussed in this project, football exists as a both a ritualised and communal pursuit. If the ritual and community of attending football matches does not become a part of everyday life in youth, there is no guarantee that these practices will develop later in life when people have greater financial means. Speaking about the increasing ticket prices and the danger of losing the 18-30 demographics, Football Supporters Federation chairman Malcolm Clarke, argued, "There is a danger of future generations being lost. If it doesn't maintain its attraction to all sections of the community, they are selling the national game short" (Gibson, O., 2013a). What becomes clear is that the debate over ticket prices, like so much of the tensions

around the Premier League, is centred on the short-term (financial) interests of the club versus the long-term interests of the community and the nation. While the Premier League has clearly been winning this debate so far, there are (perhaps) the tiniest shoots of hope that supporters may find a more assertive voice for themselves in this debate.

While supporter complaints about ticket prices did not only start to appear this season, the past few months have seen a move towards more organised and vocal protests. While it is not necessarily possible to point to one foundational moment in this movement, it began to attract media attention on January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2013 when Manchester City sent back almost a third of their away ticket allocation for Arsenal's £62 tickets (Gibson, O., 2013a). During the match, to which 912 Manchester City supporters still travelled, a number of signs were held up by the travelling City Supporters. Police removed a number of the protesting supporters, ostensibly because their banners were blocking other supporters' sight lines. After the match, and picked up by the television cameras which follow players after the game, one of the referee's assistants, John Brooks can audibly be heard telling a number of the City players to go over and acknowledge the City supporters who had travelled to London because they have paid £62 to be there (Kelso, 2013). John Brooks was suspended for the next weekend's game as a result of his intervention into this debate. Away ticket prices are set by the home club, and there is now a growing movement that wants to see away ticket prices set by the Premier League with a standard price across all teams. Away ticket allocations<sup>39</sup> are being returned at some of the most expensive clubs like Arsenal, and supporters' organisations are starting

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<sup>39</sup> Away ticket allocations are distributed to the travelling team on the basis of the home team's ground capacity. Given the variations in ground capacities that exist in the Premier League, the size of the allocation varies by club.

to organise more concretely around this issue. The Football Supporters Federation<sup>40</sup> has made it one of their explicit goals and the organisation now sits at over 200,000 members (“About us”). The Football Supporters Federation is lobbying to institute a standardised League-wide away ticket price of £20 as a way of recognising the important contributions that away supporters make to the game (“Twenty’s Plenty”).

In addition to the Football Supporters Federation, another important organisation is gaining prominence. Established in 1999 in recognition that sports clubs were losing their connection to their communities, Supporters Direct is a European-wide movement that seeks to help communities take over their local teams across a number of sports (“About Supporters Direct”). Supporters Direct provides support to communities seeking to establish supporters’ trusts to take ownership of their club (personal interview, December 14, 2011). While there are currently no Premier League clubs wholly owned by a supporters trust (Swansea City is partially owned by one), Supporters Direct has been successful in helping 29 supporters trusts take either full or partial ownership of their clubs, often after ownership failures or bankruptcies (personal interview, December 14, 2011). What the supporters’ trust movement demonstrates is the extent to which supporters are willing to invest in their local clubs even when they have proven to be financial “failures.” They also demonstrate, as I argue in chapter five, that there needs to be a return to emphasising the interests of local supporters. This may best be demonstrated through the experience of Portsmouth FC who on April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2013 became

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<sup>40</sup> In addition to their work on ticket prices, one of the Football Supporters Federation most successful campaigns has been “Watching Football is Not a Crime” which was started in 2006 to combat some of the more aggressive forms of policing that have become the norm (as discussed in chapter 2). The Federation has been successful in winning compensation for football supporters that were unfairly detained by police (“Watching Football is Not a Crime”). The existence of this campaign demonstrates the extent to which civil liberty issues raised in the post-hooligan era remain critical.

the biggest club to date that has become wholly owned by a supporters' trust. Portsmouth was promoted to the Premier League in 2003 and went on to win the 2008 FA Cup. Yet Portsmouth's successful and lucrative stay in the Premier League did not shield them from financial ruin as the owners spent beyond their means, lured by both the money in the Premier League and fearful of its loss if the team was relegated. These fears were realised at the end of the 2009/2010 when Portsmouth went into administration (the football version of bankruptcy) and was relegated to the Championship. Changing ownership a further two times, Portsmouth went into administration again when its Lithuanian owner was arrested and the club was relegated to League One for the 2011/2012 season. Relegated again during the current season to League Two, The Pompey Supporters Trust was finally allowed to purchase the club (Judd and Broom, 2013). Portsmouth is an important cautionary tale, but might also show a small way forward for supporters. Portsmouth fell for the lure of Premier League riches, but as I argued in chapter five, the promise of growth and international renown is not attainable for most Premier League team. Yet there may be potential in the ability of supporters to take control of the clubs that remain, despite financial ruin and relegation, at the centre of their communities and part of the everyday rhythms of their lives. The success of the Pompey's supporters trust illustrates what I argued in chapter five regarding a need to return to a focus on the local supporters. While it is fine for clubs to enjoy being seen by audiences around the world, it is critical that they understand that in times of crisis, it is those local supporters and community that have invested so much of themselves that will sustain the club in lean times. The balance has swung too far towards chasing these



mythical international audiences and it is imperative that the clubs find some kind of balance between the two.

### **Where do we go from here?**

There is growing consensus that there are serious problems afoot in the English game. As a result, in 2011, the Coalition government convened a Culture, Media and Sport select committee, which was tasked with investigating Football governance. The commission of this committee points towards the possibilities that might exist, if football, as I have argued, is taken more seriously as a matter of a cultural policy. By approaching the Premier League itself as a matter of public policy, space is opened up for considering the ways in which the intersections of media, labour and globalisation reverberate through wider society. The committee used the following questions to guide its inquiry:

- Should football clubs in the UK be treated differently from other commercial organisations?
- Are football governance rules in England and Wales, and the governing bodies which set and apply them, fit for purpose?
- Is there too much debt in the professional game?
- What are the pros and cons of the Supporter Trust share-holding model?
- Is Government intervention justified and, if so, what form should it take?
- Are there lessons to be learned from football governance models across the UK and abroad, and from governance models in other sports? ('Football Governance Follow-up contents', 2013, para. 2)

The Report was fairly scathing, seeing a distinct lack of governance from both the Premier League and the FA ("Football Governance" 2011). The Report was critical of the

lack of comprehensive plan that existed to address the long-term goals of the game. To address these critical issues, the Report argued for a restructuring of the FA to change it from an “association of interests” to an effective governing body (“Football Governance” 2013, p. 99) and the introduction of a club licensing scheme, which would prevent the kind of takeovers seen at clubs like Manchester United and Liverpool (“Football Governance”, 2011, p. 103). Reflecting the lack of progress being made, in January 2013, the committee released a follow-up Report, which criticised both the Premier League and the FA for failing to put in place any of the recommendations (‘Football Governance Follow-Up’, 2013). In response, the committee makes clear that if the football authorities fail to show further progress on these issues within twelve months, the Government will introduce legislation that will force through these changes (‘Football Governance Follow-Up’, 2013, p. 3). It is too soon to know whether the government will follow through on its threat to legislate change, but the both the Report itself and the follow-up represent the clearest indication to-date that the government may be willing to intervene forcefully within this debate.

UEFA has also introduced measures to address the growing financial problems surrounding European clubs. Agreed in 2009, the Financial Fair Play regulations are meant to address the amount of debt being amassed by football club by putting in place rules that do not allow clubs to spend more than the revenue that they take in (‘FFP Regulations’, 2012). This measure is meant to try and stop clubs with wealthy owners from spending with impunity and without a long-term business model. Clubs are allowed to include income from gate receipts, TV revenue, advertising, merchandising, and prize money in their revenue streams (‘FFP Regulations’, 2012). It is unclear yet whether the

Financial Fair Play Regulations will have their intended effect as the rules have not yet come into full effect.<sup>41</sup> There has been criticism that the regulations will calcify the top clubs and reduce competition, as teams that are currently in the UEFA Champions League will have an unfair revenue advantage (Champions League participation is worth up to £60m). There is also a concern that these regulations only target clubs with wealthy owners as opposed to clubs with high debt levels since having a high debt level does not necessarily preclude having high revenue as shown by teams like Manchester United. There is also a concern that targeting revenue rather than debt does nothing to address the dangerous trend of leverage buyouts and will instead allow the rich clubs to remain rich while making it more difficult for smaller clubs to compete (Bailey, 2013, sec. 1).

To this end, I would like to offer three possible solutions that I see as ways to address each of the problems and tensions that I have laid out over chapters three, four and five. The government's plan laid out in the Football Governance Report (2011) offers a number of useful and actionable suggestions. Most importantly, the Football Governance Report offers a comprehensive plan for reformation that takes into account the various stakeholders involved in the game. The Report goes to great pains to emphasise the important cultural and social role that football plays in England. While football has added to the English economy and has benefitted the broadcasting industry, it is time to break the hold of television money on the game. This is not to say that television does not have a role to play in the English Premier League, only that the

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<sup>41</sup> The rules ostensibly took effect during the 2011/2012 season, yet it remains too early to assess their effectiveness, in large part because full compliance has yet to be required. In addition, and despite claims from UEFA that cheating will not be tolerated, it is unclear how rigidly the rules will be enforced (Gibson, O., 2013b). In addition, a European court challenge was launched on May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2013 (by the same lawyer who won the Bosman ruling) on behalf of a player alleging that the rules will inhibit competition and reduce transfer activities, thus impeding the ability of players to seek work. The outcome of this challenge is not yet known.

influence of satellite television has become outsized. It is time to bring supporters and community organisations to the table as equal partners in assessing the future of English football.

It is with this principle in mind that I offer these suggestions with the following caveats. One, I recognise that there may be little to no chance these changes will ever be implemented. While I remain an optimist about the potential that football can have, I also fear that the FA and the Premier League find themselves so far down the path they are on that nothing short of financial collapse (or true and far-reaching government intervention) will convince them that any change needs to be made. Two, these suggestions are neither the only possibilities nor sweeping reforms of the current system. Rather than reach for a utopian dream, I have tried to offer possibilities that can work within the current system (recognising that my first choice would be a more far-reaching intervention). An overhaul of the entire League would meet with immediate push back from club owners and the television companies who have benefitted from the money flowing into the game. Yet the current model is clearly not working, and it might be time to consider what the game with less money in it might look like.

The first change would be for the government to strengthen the Listed Events list and include one Premier League game a week on terrestrial television (either on the BBC or ITV).<sup>42</sup> There would also need to be a mechanism put in place to ensure that the game chosen each week demonstrates regional, date/time and table variety (in terms of being a mix of games between top table, mid table and bottom table teams). While on the surface one game a week seems insufficient (and, indeed, if I was constructing my utopic vision I

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<sup>42</sup> BT, which recently won the rights to the Premier League along with BSkyB has recently announced that it will be showing the Premier League for free for BT broadband customers.

would have all games on terrestrial television), I believe it would be a, albeit small, start in trying to break the satellite television monopoly on the broadcasting of football matches. This action would also bolster the rhetorical claims made by both broadcasters and the government that football remains the national game and belongs to “the people.” By placing Premier League football back on terrestrial television, broadcasters could make a goodwill gesture towards living these claims.

The second would be a reformation of the current academy system, in a manner that will both strengthen the prospects of the young men involved and the England national team. In October 2012, the FA unveiled its new national training facility, the St. George Park national training facility, which is meant to provide a centralised space in which young English players can train and play together from an early age (BBC Sport, “St. George Park”, 2012). While it is too soon to make any predictions on the success of this endeavour (although similar models have been used successfully on the continent), the hope is that young English players will be developed from an early age *as England players*, not only club players. While this may be a successful model for developing young English players, club academies also need to make some critical changes. The first, and perhaps most critical, requires legislative intervention in order to close the legal loophole that allows young players in England to become professionals at the age of sixteen. By developing a European age standard for professionalization (it stands at eighteen Europe-wide with the exception of Britain), there may be a reduction in the number of young players moving around the continent.

It is too early to draw any conclusions from the recent implementation of the homegrown player rule, but the fear that this will lead to the recruitment of younger and

younger players, is certainly not without merit. As such, the educational requirements of the academy system need to be strengthened, both at home and in the academies throughout the global South that have started to become pipelines of non-European talent. There needs to be a greater recognition on the part of the football authorities that there is a high rate of failure amongst academy graduates and that there need to be clear non-football avenues open to them. This is particularly crucial for non-English players who displace their entire lives to chase their Premier League dreams. This is necessary to counter the growing concern that large numbers of young, mostly African players, are being abandoned away from home in European cities by agents if they fail to secure a place in a European academy (Darby, Akindes, and Kirwin, 2007). Premier League clubs, in partnership with other football governing authorities, need to take greater responsibility for the care and well-being of young players.

Lastly, the Premier League and the FA need to respond to the recent complaints of supporters regarding the high cost of tickets. As Malcolm Clarke, the Football Supporters Federation chairman, argued, “Football, by tradition, was always accessible to almost everybody, and in the current economic climate, with jobs and standards of living under threat, there is a great danger an increasing section of the community will be priced out” (quoted in Conn, August, 16<sup>th</sup>, 2011). Football authorities need to recognise that they do not exist in a vacuum and what is happening in the world outside the stadium impacts what happens within it. If the League does not curb its short-term greed, it is in danger of losing an entire generation of supporters that are necessary for the long-term health of the

game. If the Premier League does not take swift action to control ticket prices,<sup>43</sup> the protests that have started as a trickle this year may turn into a flood. Already this year, there has been a reduction in Premier League attendance across the League (Gibson, O., 2013a). Falling stadium attendances could present a complicated question for broadcasters who rely on the passion and presence of English supporters to enliven their coverage of the sport. What would it mean to have football matches on television that have no one in the stadium but the players? This seems to be a question that no one wants to answer, but may become a reality.<sup>44</sup>

The second action that the Premier League could take would be to make it easier for supporters' trusts to take control of their clubs. Currently, the Premier League and the FA discourage banks (who are often placed in control of clubs' assets once they go into administration) from accepting bids from supporters' trusts even if the offers are higher than those from private individuals or consortiums (personal interview, December 14 2011). This was also a recommendation in the Football Governance Report. Two Premier League clubs have now gone bankrupt<sup>45</sup> and as Portsmouth demonstrates, it is the supporters who will be there at the end to pick up the pieces. Rather than discourage the supporters from becoming actual stakeholders in their club, the Premier League should allow supporters' trusts to have an equal opportunity to present their bid to take over their clubs. This would help to give supporters a greater seat at the table and increase the

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<sup>43</sup> I would argue that the price of tickets should be tagged to inflation and the cost of living in the particular area. This would allow for a fairer ticket price distribution that recognises the economic inequality that exists regionally across England.

<sup>44</sup> There have been European Cup games broadcast without crowds before (having to play behind closed doors is often used by UEFA as punishment for bad crowd behaviour) and these games have not been well received.

<sup>45</sup> A third, Liverpool FC, was less than three hours away from going bankrupt in 2010 before being bought by FSG, the same consortium that owns the Boston Red Sox (personal interview, December 14, 2011). Liverpool is also the only Premier League team that almost succeeded with a supporter trust takeover before the Premier League objected to it (personal interview, December 14, 2011).

attention paid to the needs of the communities in which the clubs are located. As David Conn writes, “football’s glittering success since the Premier League was formed tells a contradictory story: the clubs operate well-respected community programmes aimed at “social inclusion” for young people in their neighbourhoods – while largely pricing them out of going to matches” (Conn, 2011). Clubs need to re-examine the roles that they play in their community and recognise the unique ties that exist between supporters and their clubs.

### **It was twenty years ago today**

Twenty years on, the Premier League has become a major global phenomenon. While the global broadcasting of the Premier League has brought major advantages to both the League itself (through the large TV contracts) and global supporters (amongst whom I am counted) who now have the ability to watch the Premier League week in and week out, things have not improved for everyone. It is also clear that football at the end of the 1980s needed to change. Too many supporters lost their lives simply going to a football match before a concerted effort was made to reform the structure of the game. Yet the decision to form the Premier League, now taken for granted as the only way things could be, did not happen by accident. It was a clear decision on the part of the top clubs to use the burgeoning satellite television market to line their pockets. Through their own lust for absolute power over the game’s governance, the FA miscalculated in their backing of the Premier League, having been sold a false promise of a better England national team. Instead, the FA has been left a fractured and largely ineffective organisation and the England team remains no better off (and arguably worse) than they were before the Premier League began.



The Premier League has become the top watched league in the world largely thanks to the talent and creativity of non-English players. A mix of playing styles and nationalities make for an exciting league, but what effect this has on the national team remains an open, and for many painful, question. The Premier League era has also been forced to reckon with many changes to European labour law, which while not the target of these changes, has created new migration patterns that have raised many questions about how we can and should think about the labour of athletes. Even with a large-scale reformation of the Premier League, labour will continue to pose an interesting challenge to the sovereignty of the League and English law. The Premier League and the British government find themselves in a complicated position in which decisions made at a national level may not be possible within the wider European Union framework.

Supporters have long been seen as the lifeblood of the game, but what it means to be a supporter may be shifting in these times. Television has changed the practices of supporters with live match attendance no longer at the centre of football rituals. As a result, we have seen the development of new modes of spectatorship that are animated by the mediated experience and exist both at home and abroad. New kick-off times are developing as a result of television broadcasts, but English time still determines when a match will be played. What follows is the development of new supporter rituals centred on the television experience that have the potential to bring together both domestic and global supporters. In addition to new opportunities for viewership, the Premier League has brought supporter uncertainty as ticket prices increase and domestic supporters feel increasingly left behind by the pursuit of new supporter markets. This process has been painful and may have serious long-term consequences for the long-term health of the

game. It may be time for the Premier League to take a moment away from celebrating twenty years of Premier League football and reflect on what that means for supporters. The future of the League depends on it. In the words of a banner that appeared during protests this winter, "Football without fans is nothing." The Premier League may learn that lesson the hard way if they do not listen to the voices from the (former) terraces.

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