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Beyond Hooliganism: Unveiling Devotion and Rituals through Football Fandom - A Case Study of Ipswich Town FC Supporters

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Citation

Van der Veen, F. (2024). *Beyond Hooliganism: Unveiling Devotion and Rituals through Football Fandom - A Case Study of Ipswich Town FC Supporters*.

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

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Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).



Beyond Hooliganism:

Unveiling Devotion and Rituals through
Football Fandom – A Case Study of Ipswich
Town FC Supporters

University: Leiden University

Course: Cultural Anthropology and Development
Sociology: Visual Ethnography (MSc)

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Words: 9544

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Abstract

This thesis, "Beyond Hooliganism: Unveiling Devotion and Rituals through Football Fandom – A Case Study of Ipswich Town FC Supporters," explores the rich and diverse nature of football fandom, focusing on the experiences and practices of fans with an in-depth focus on a single interlocutor, Andrew, a lifelong Ipswich Town FC supporter. The primary research question for this study is: How do rituals contribute to the expression of fan devotion among Ipswich Town Football Club supporters?

This research aims to push the discussion about football fandom beyond the common tropes of hooliganism that often dominate narratives. Through delving into the material culture and ritualistic practices that define fan devotion. Andrew's meticulous collection of matchday programmes, tickets, and other memorabilia serves as a lens to understand the deeper layers of commitment and identity among football supporters.

Through incorporating various methodological approaches embedded within visual ethnography, incorporating participant observation, interviews, and artefact analysis, provided a detailed and immersive perspective on the material and symbolic extent of fandom. The decision to focus on a single interlocutor allows for a comprehensive exploration of his experiences, offering insights that a broader approach may have lacked given the two-month research period.

I aim to challenge the stereotypes of football fans as hooligans by highlighting the positive aspects of fandom, such as community building and cultural expression. The creation of a matchday programme as a multimodal output not only engages academic audiences but also aims to connect with the football community, demonstrating the potential of engaged scholarship to bridge the gap between research and public understanding.

The findings highlight the importance of rituals and material culture in creating and nurturing a sense of community and social cohesion among Ipswich Town FC supporters. By integrating theoretical discussions with detailed ethnographic data, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of football fandom and devotion, emphasising the role of material objects and everyday practices in constructing and maintaining fan identities.

Keywords: football fandom, rituals, devotion, material culture, Ipswich Town FC, visual ethnography, hooliganism narrative, engaged scholarship, community building, social cohesion

Introduction

Introduction to the Study

Football fandom is a deeply ingrained cultural phenomenon that goes beyond the sport itself, influencing the social identities and community relationships of its followers. Ipswich Town Football Club (ITFC) supporters demonstrate this dynamic through various rituals and material culture practices. This study aims to explore these practices to understand how rituals contribute to the expression of fan devotion among Ipswich Town Football Club supporters. This research seeks to provide a comprehensive view of football fandom that goes beyond the commonly held stereotypes of hooliganism, by looking into fan rituals and the significance of material culture.

The dominant narratives surrounding football fans often focus on the negative aspects, such as violence and disorder, thus overlooking the rich, positive experiences of community and identity formation. These tropes fail to capture the complexity and depth of fan devotion. Understanding football fandom requires moving beyond these negative images in order to appreciate the rituals and material culture that form the bedrock of fan identity and community cohesion.

Andrew, a lifelong supporter of Ipswich Town FC, serves as the primary interlocutor for this study. His journey as a fan, characterised by specific rituals and an archival collection of matchday programmes, offers a unique perspective on the devotion that defines true fandom. The decision to focus on a single participant allows for an in-depth exploration of his experiences and practices thus gaining an understanding of the meanings he attaches to them. This approach aims to uncover the nuanced layers of fan devotion that broader studies might overlook.

Thesis Statement: Exploring the material culture of football fandom through Andrew's experiences offers deeper insights into devotion and community among fans. This thesis seeks to illuminate how rituals and material culture contribute to the sense of belonging and identity among Ipswich Town FC supporters, challenging the prevailing stereotypes and highlighting the positive, community-oriented aspects of football fandom.

Retrospective: How the Output Came Together

Background of the Research Project

Initially, this research was geared towards football fan devotion through the lens of auditory rituals. The original plan involved using documentary film to capture the sounds and chants of fans in bars and stadiums, with the aim of illustrating how these auditory expressions

contributed to the sense of belonging and identity among supporters. This approach was inspired by auditory cultural studies, which emphasise the role of sound in creating social and cultural spaces (Feld, 2012).

However, I shifted my focus due to my experiences in the field. When I first had the documentary in mind, I wanted the sound to be the main focus and thus wanted to create an immersive experience. This would require footage from within the stands or bars with my interlocutors engaging in the auditory rituals. Within the first week of arrival and getting access to the stadium via ticket purchases I found that I would never be seated next to my interlocutors. This posed a dilemma as I didn't want to just film any fan or a large crowd as I felt it wouldn't be powerful enough and would easily fall into the generic stereotypical football documentary footage. As a result, I started to think of other ways I could gain insight into fan devotion. During my research, I stayed with a family, and the father was a lifelong Ipswich Town FC fan. His name was Andrew.

I encountered Andrew and his extensive collection of matchday programmes and other memorabilia. This discovery offered a new and compelling angle for the research. Instead of focusing solely on auditory rituals, the research shifted towards the material culture of football fandom. This shift allowed for a richer, more tangible exploration of fan devotion and its various expressions.

Selection of Visual Ethnography as a Methodology

Visual ethnography emerged as the most suitable methodology for this research. As defined by Pink (2013), visual ethnography involves using visual media to document and analyse cultural practices. This approach is particularly effective for studying material culture, as it allows for a detailed and immersive representation of the objects and rituals that define fan experiences. By capturing images of Andrew's collection and his ritualistic practices, the research could convey the depth and complexity of his devotion in a way that words alone could not.

Through photographs and videos, the tangible aspects of Andrew's fandom—such as his matchday programmes, tickets, and other memorabilia—could be documented and analysed. This approach facilitates a deeper understanding of how these objects function as symbols of identity and memory within the context of football fandom.

Focus on a Single Interlocutor

The decision to focus on a single interlocutor, Andrew, was not by choice initially, but ultimately, it allowed for an in-depth understanding of the concepts of the study. While I did conduct interviews with a wide range of participants, especially from Andrews 'football community,' he became the core focus and lens through which I aimed to understand fan

devotion. Focusing on one participant allows for a more comprehensive exploration of their experiences, rituals, and the meanings they attach to their fandom. Pink (2013) advocates for the depth and richness that comes from focusing on individual experiences, arguing that this approach can reveal insights that broader studies might miss. Through Andrew's detailed personal history and extensive collection, I could delve into the nuances of his fan identity and practices.

By concentrating on Andrew's experiences, from his pre-match routines to the symbolic meanings attached to his memorabilia, I could explore the intricate details of his devotion. This approach provided an understanding of the cultural practices and social dynamics that define football fandom.

Practicalities and Challenges

Conducting this research presented several practical challenges. Building trust with Andrew and other fans was crucial, as it allowed for more candid and insightful observations. Establishing this trust required spending significant time with Andrew, participating in his rituals, and showing genuine interest in his stories and collections. This immersion into his world facilitated a deeper connection, enabling the collection of more meaningful data.

Balancing the roles of researcher and participant was another challenge. While it was important to document and analyse Andrew's practices, it was equally important to respect his privacy and the personal significance of his memorabilia. This balance was maintained by being transparent about the research objectives and ensuring that Andrew felt comfortable sharing his experiences.

The largest challenge throughout the research period was the fact that I lived with my main interlocutors. On top of that there was an incident with the field that affected Andrew and his family which meant there was a period of time during the research period where being research felt insensitive. I often went for walks with Andrew and most of the time we would talk about our shared interests which was football. During this difficult period these walk felt like an escape almost therapeutic. In these instances, it felt unethical to be noting down or recording discussions.

The shift from focusing on auditory rituals to material culture required a significant adjustment in research methods. Instead of recording sounds and chants, the focus shifted to photographing and cataloguing Andrew's collection, conducting in-depth interviews, and participating in his matchday rituals. This change in focus ultimately enriched the research, providing a multifaceted view of football fandom that encompasses both auditory and material dimensions.

Chapter 1: Contextualizing Football Fandom and Devotion

Theoretical Framework

Understanding football fandom requires a deep dive into several interconnected concepts: fandom, devotion, rituals, and material culture. Each of these concepts plays a crucial role in shaping the identities and communities of football supporters.

Fandom

Fandom refers to the state of being a fan of someone or something. Jenkins (1992) defines fandom as a participatory culture characterised by shared interests, emotional investment, and active engagement in community activities. This engagement goes beyond mere consumption; fans produce their own cultural artefacts, participate in discussions, and form social connections. In the context of football, fandom involves attending matches, following team news, engaging in fan communities, and participating in various rituals.

Football fandom is a global phenomenon, but it also has local specificities that shape its expressions. Crawford (2004) emphasises that fandom is not just about individual preferences but also about collective identities and shared experiences. For football fans, this means that their identity is closely linked to their support for their team, their participation in fan rituals, and their interactions with other fans.

Devotion

Devotion in football fandom goes beyond mere enthusiasm. It implies a deep, often lifelong commitment to a club, characterised by emotional investment, loyalty, and consistent support. Giulianotti (2002) suggests that football can be seen as a "secular religion" where fans' devotion mirrors religious fervour, complete with rituals, sacred sites (stadiums), and a sense of belonging to a larger community.

The psychological aspects of devotion include the sense of belonging and identity that fans derive from their association with the team. Wann et al. (2001) found that identification with a sports team can enhance self-esteem and provide a sense of community. Devotion can be defined, created, and shown in different ways, including attending matches, wearing team colours, and participating in fan rituals. Crawford (2004) further elaborates that for many fans, devotion to their team is a key aspect of their identity, influencing their social interactions and personal values.

Rituals

Rituals are structured activities filled with symbolic meaning, often performed in repetitive and predictable ways. Victor Turner's concept of rituals as a process of *communitas* (1969) highlights how rituals create a sense of unity and solidarity among participants. In the context of football fandom, rituals might include pre-match routines, specific chants, and the collective behaviours of fans during a game. These rituals help reinforce group identity and solidarity among supporters.

Emile Durkheim's theory of collective effervescence (1912) offers valuable insights into the emotional and social dimensions of football rituals. According to Durkheim, collective rituals generate intense emotional energy, reinforcing group solidarity and shared identity. This theoretical lens allows for the analysis of how the rituals of Ipswich Town FC supporters contribute to their collective identity and sense of belonging.

Rituals also play a crucial role in maintaining traditions and passing down cultural knowledge. Jenkins (2004) points out that rituals are essential for the passing on of cultural values and practices from one generation to the next. Rituals such as pre-match gatherings, chanting, and post-match celebrations within football fandom create a continuity of tradition and reinforce the fans' connection to their club and each other.

Material Culture

Material culture in football fandom includes tangible objects such as matchday programmes, tickets, scarves, and memorabilia, to name a few. These items are not just souvenirs; they carry significant personal and collective meanings. They act as symbols of devotion and tools that create memories and help fans build their identity in line with the club. Miller (2010) argues that material culture is deeply intertwined with social life, acting as a medium through which individuals express their identities and relationships.

Matchday programmes, for example, serve as historical records of matches, documenting player statistics, game summaries, and advertisements. Some fans cherish them as they harbour their experiences and memories associated with attending matches. Pierre Nora's concept of *lieux de mémoire* (1989) describes how physical objects and places become repositories of collective memory, enabling the cultural heritage of a community to be preserved and transmitted.

The act of collecting and preserving football memorabilia can also be understood through the lens of Arjun Appadurai's (1986) theory of the social life of things. Appadurai suggests that the value and meaning of objects are not static but evolve as they move through different social contexts. In the case of football memorabilia, these items gain new meanings and significance as they are exchanged, displayed, and preserved within the fan community.

Review of Existing Literature on Football Fandom and Devotion

The study of football fandom has traditionally been framed within the context of hooliganism, a stereotype that associates football fans with violence and disorder. Giulianotti (2002) and Crawford (2004) critique this narrow view, arguing that it overlooks the positive aspects of fandom, such as community building and cultural expression. Redhead (1997) also emphasises the diversity within football fandom, highlighting how different groups engage with the sport in varied and meaningful ways.

Giulianotti (2002) categorises football fans into four types: supporters, followers, fans, and flaneurs, each reflecting different levels of engagement and commitment. These categories help to move beyond the one-dimensional view of football fans as hooligans, recognising the spectrum of fan identities and behaviours. Crawford (2004) explores how fandom is a way of life for many individuals, deeply embedded in their daily routines and social interactions. This is further argued by Sandvoss (2005), who states that fandom involves a deep emotional and psychological investment, shaping how fans perceive themselves and their place in the world.

Armstrong and Young (1999) and Pearson (2012) further challenge the hooliganism narrative by demonstrating that most football fans engage with the sport in positive and community-oriented ways. Armstrong, Young and Pearson's research shows that hooliganism is not representative of the majority of football fans, who often display high levels of social cohesion and collective identity through their support for their teams.

Methodological Approach

I used methodologies rooted within visual ethnography to explore these aspects of football fandom, particularly through the lens of Ipswich Town FC supporters. This approach, as defined by Pink (2013), involves using visual media to document and analyse cultural practices. It allows for a nuanced understanding of the material and symbolic dimensions of fandom that one would lack if one were to use words merely.

Participant Observation

Participant observation was a key method I used in this study. By attending matches and engaging in fan rituals alongside Andrew, I was able to gain an in-depth insight into the practices and meanings associated with football fandom. This immersive approach aligns with Halbwachs' (1992) concept of collective memory, where shared experiences and rituals help maintain and transmit cultural memory. Going to games and engaging with Andrew's rituals through participant observation further provided opportunities to observe spontaneous interactions and the embodied aspects of fan practices, allowing me to gain a deeper understanding of the social dynamics at play.

Interviews

Interviews provided additional depth to the research. Conducted with Andrew and other fans, these interviews explored their personal histories, the significance of their rituals, and their emotional connections to the club. This method helped to capture the subjective experiences and motivations behind their devotion. Semi-structured interviews allowed for flexibility, enabling respondents to share their stories in their own words while also providing the researcher with valuable insights into the fans' perspectives and experiences.

'Walk-with'

The "walk with" method, as described by Evans and Jones (2011), is a form of participatory and mobile ethnography that involves joining research participants on walks through their everyday environments. This method allowed me to gain deeper insights into the space and senses of participants' experiences, providing a more holistic understanding of their interactions with their surroundings. In the context of my research on Ipswich Town FC supporters, the walk-with method was crucial in capturing the embodied and place-based aspects of fan rituals. By walking with Andrew from his home to Portman Road Stadium, I was able to observe and document the landmarks, routes, and personal memories associated with his journey. Andrew would point out landmarks and memories associated with them, such as shops where his dad used to buy cigarettes before the game.

Furthermore, it helped highlight how much towns and cities have changed over the years, yet these rituals and traditions have helped maintain a constant. This approach highlighted not only the significance of physical spaces in the construction of fan identity and memory but also facilitated a more natural and interactive form of data collection, especially since it felt more relaxed for myself and my interlocutors to engage with the space rather than to be sat or stood somewhere static talking about the topic. It also allowed my interlocutors to guide me and show me what was important to them. The walk-with method truly enriched the ethnographic data by embedding it within the lived and experienced landscapes of the participant (Evans & Jones, 2011).

Artifact Analysis

Artifact analysis focused on the material culture of football fandom. By examining Andrew's extensive collection of matchday programmes, tickets, and memorabilia, I was able to understand how these objects function as symbols of identity and devotion. This approach is supported by Geismar's (2018) work on material culture, which emphasises the importance of objects in social life and cultural expression. The analysis of artefacts involved not only cataloguing and describing the items but also contextualising them within the broader cultural practices of fandom, considering their production, circulation, and personal significance to the fans.

Focus on a Single Interlocutor

The choice to focus on a single interlocutor, Andrew, was deliberate. This deep ethnographic immersion allowed for a detailed and comprehensive exploration of his fandom, providing insights that broader studies might miss. Such an approach is endorsed by Pink (2013), who advocates for the depth and richness that comes from focusing on individual experiences. By concentrating on Andrew's experiences, the research could delve into the nuances of his rituals, the meanings he attaches to his memorabilia, and the ways in which his devotion to Ipswich Town FC shapes his identity and social relationships.

Multimodal Output

The use of a matchday programme as a multimodal output serves as a creative and interactive way to present research findings. This format engages the academic community and reaches a broader audience, including football fans. Geismar (2018) highlights the potential of such multimodal outputs to make research more accessible and impactful, bridging the gap between academia and the public. The matchday programme includes text, images, and interactive elements like quizzes, capturing the lived experiences of fans in a way that traditional text-based outputs cannot. This approach enriches our understanding of football fandom and provides a more holistic view of the rituals and traditions that define the supporter experience.

Conclusion

This chapter has laid the theoretical and methodological foundation for understanding football fandom and devotion through the lens of material culture and rituals. By defining key concepts and reviewing existing literature, I have established a framework to analyse the rich and complex dimensions of football supporters' experiences. Through using various methods such as, participant observation, interviews, and artefact analysis as a justified means to capture the embodied practices of fans. The focus on a single interlocutor, Andrew, allows for a deep exploration of his rituals and material culture, providing insights that challenge the traditional hooliganism narrative. The use of a matchday programme as a multimodal output further enhances the accessibility and impact of the research findings.

Chapter 2: Andrew's Journey as a Case Study

Contextual Analysis of Key Concepts

Rituals and Traditions in Fan Culture

Rituals and traditions are central to the culture of football fandom. Victor Turner's (1969) seminal work on the process of *communitas* underscores the role of rituals in fostering a sense of unity and collective identity among participants. In the context of football, these rituals include pre-match routines, chanting, and other collective behaviours that fans engage in to express their devotion and solidarity. These rituals are not just repetitive actions but rather are actions infused with symbolic meaning, serving as a way to reinforce social bonds and shared identities.

Emile Durkheim's (1912) theory of collective effervescence provides valuable insights into the emotional and social dimensions of football rituals. Durkheim hypothesised that collective rituals generate intense emotional energy, which reinforces group solidarity and shared identity. This theoretical framework helps us understand how the rituals of football fans, such as pre-match gatherings and post-match celebrations, contribute to fans' sense of belonging and communal identity.

Rituals also play a crucial role in maintaining traditions and passing down cultural knowledge within fan communities. Jenkins (2004) highlights the importance of rituals when it comes to passing on of cultural values and practices. In football fandom, rituals like pre-match gatherings, chanting, and the preservation of memorabilia create continuity and reinforce fans' connections to their club and each other.

Material Culture in Fan Culture

Material culture refers to the physical objects that people use to define and express their identities and social relationships. In football fandom, material culture includes items such as matchday programmes, tickets, scarves, and other memorabilia. These objects are not merely souvenirs; they carry significant personal and collective meanings and serve as symbols of devotion and tools for memory and identity construction.

Daniel Miller (2010) argues that material culture is deeply intertwined with social life, acting as a medium through which individuals express their identities and relationships. In the context of football fandom, material objects like matchday programmes and tickets are tangible representations of fans' experiences and memories associated with attending matches. These items serve as a connection to past experiences and a way to relive memorable moments, reinforcing fans' identities and devotion to their club.

Pierre Nora's (1989) concept of *lieux de mémoire*, or sites of memory, describes how physical objects and places become repositories of collective memory, preserving and transmitting cultural heritage. For football fans, material culture items like matchday programmes and memorabilia serve as personal and collective archives that capture the history and tradition of their club and of themselves. These objects are a way of preserving and celebrating the club's heritage. Thus, this also helps in ensuring that these memories are passed down to future generations.

Arjun Appadurai's (1986) theory of the social life of things further elaborates on how the value and meaning of objects evolve as they move through different social contexts. In football fandom, memorabilia gain new meanings and significance as they are exchanged, displayed, and appreciated within the fan community. These objects serve as symbols of identity and belonging, reinforcing fans' connections to their club and each other.

Symbolism in Fan Culture

Symbolism is a critical aspect of fan culture, with objects, rituals, and traditions serving as symbols that convey meanings and reinforce identities. Clifford Geertz (1973) describes culture as a system of symbols and meanings, highlighting the importance of symbolic action in social life. In football fandom, symbols like team colours, logos, and memorabilia serve as markers of identity and belonging, reinforcing fans' connections to their club and each other.

Richard Belk's (1988) concept of the extended self posits that possessions can become integral to one's identity. In football fandom, fans' collections of memorabilia and other objects serve as extensions of their identities as dedicated supporters. These items are symbols filled with personal and collective meanings that reinforce fans' identities and devotion.

Material culture items like matchday programmes and tickets also serve as symbols of fans' experiences and memories. Each item represents a specific game, a tangible memory that captures the emotions and experiences of that day. These objects serve as connections to past experiences and a way to relive memorable moments, reinforcing fans' identities and devotion to their club.

Andrew's Journey as a Case Study

Having established the theoretical context of rituals, traditions, material culture, and symbolism in football fandom, we can now turn to the case study of Andrew, a lifelong supporter of Ipswich Town Football Club (ITFC). Andrew's experiences provide a vivid illustration of these concepts in action, offering insights into the emotional and symbolic dimensions of football fandom.

Biographical Overview of Andrew

Andrew's life story offers a rich tapestry of devotion, tradition, and ritual that is emblematic of football fandom. Born and raised in Ipswich, Andrew has been a dedicated supporter of ITFC since he attended his first game with his father in 1978. This game was not just a sporting event; it was a rite of passage that initiated Andrew into a community bound by shared loyalty and passion.

Growing up, Andrew's weekends were defined by Ipswich Town matches. Andrew and his father would wake early on match days, eat breakfast together, and discuss the game's prospects. These moments were filled with a sense of anticipation and excitement, marking the beginning of a tradition that Andrew would carry into adulthood. Over the years, Andrew started collecting matchday programmes, tickets, and other memorabilia. This activity became an expression of his shared devotion to ITFC and a way to preserve memories.

In his late twenties, Andrew was involved in a serious accident that left him in the hospital for about a month. As a result of injuries to his head, he has experienced long-lasting effects on his memory. His collection of memorabilia allows him to trigger memories from the past, adding another level of significance to his collection.

Over the years, Andrew's devotion evolved from these familial rituals to encompass a broader community of fans. His commitment to attending every home game, regardless of the weather or other obligations, illustrates a deep-seated loyalty. Andrew ensured that every other boxing day (December 26th), he would be in Ipswich to watch the team play at Portman Road, sometimes even missing family trips in order to watch the game. Andrew's rituals have become more elaborate over time, reflecting his growing devotion and the significance of these practices in his life. Today, he not only attends matches but also engages in various pre-match and post-match activities that reinforce his identity as a dedicated fan.

Rituals and Traditions

Rituals are a cornerstone of Andrew's fan experience. These rituals hold within them symbolic meaning and are crucial for maintaining his connection to the club and the broader community of supporters. Turner's (1969) concept of ritual as a process of *communitas* highlights how these activities create a sense of unity and solidarity among participants. For Andrew, rituals are not just personal habits but communal activities that reinforce his identity and belonging.

Pre-Match Routines

Andrew's pre-match routines are meticulously planned and deeply meaningful. Every home game day begins with a large bowl of porridge, a tradition passed down from his father. This ritual serves both a practical purpose—providing a slow release of energy for the day

ahead—and a symbolic one, connecting him to his past. As Andrew prepares his breakfast, he reflects on the history and tradition of the club, reinforcing his emotional bond.

Each programme represents a specific game, a tangible memory that he revisits as part of his pre-match ritual. The act of reviewing these programmes is both a nostalgic journey and a preparation for the upcoming game.

Ethnographic Vignettes

An ethnographic vignette can illustrate these rituals in action. On a typical match day, Andrew wakes up early and prepares his breakfast. He sits at his kitchen table and enjoys his breakfast, sometimes listening to a fan podcast on Ipswich Town FC. He then follows a specific route to Portman Road Stadium, a path he has walked countless times since his childhood. Along the way, he passes landmarks that evoke memories of past matches and experiences shared with his father and friends.

At the stadium, Andrew first goes to the fan store to pick up that day's matchday programme. He then meets up with fellow fans who share his dedication. They exchange greetings and discuss the day's game, engaging in a ritual of camaraderie and shared anticipation. This communal aspect of Andrew's ritual is crucial, as it reinforces his identity as part of a larger community of ITFC supporters.

Material Culture and Symbolism

Andrew's collection of matchday programmes, tickets, and other memorabilia is a tangible expression of his devotion. They are much more than just the objects themselves; they carry sentimental value and hold key memories. Belk's (1988) concept of the extended self posits that possessions can become integral to one's identity. For Andrew, his collection is an extension of his identity as a dedicated ITFC supporter.

Matchday Programmes

Each matchday programme in Andrew's collection represents a specific game, a tangible memory that captures the emotions and experiences of that day. These programmes are meticulously organised by season and carefully preserved in a cupboard. Miller (2010) argues that material culture is deeply intertwined with social life, acting as a medium through which individuals express their identities and relationships. For Andrew, each programme is a piece of his personal history, a marker of his journey as a fan.

The significance of these programmes goes beyond their physical form. They serve as a connection to past experiences and a way to relive memorable moments. Each programme tells a story, from the excitement of a major victory to the disappointment of a loss, encapsulating the highs and lows of his journey as a supporter.

Tickets and Memorabilia

In addition to matchday programmes, Andrew's collection includes tickets from games he has attended, as well as other memorabilia. Each item holds a specific memory and emotional significance. Tickets are preserved as mementoes of significant matches, each one representing a unique experience and adding to the narrative of his fandom.

The memorabilia also play a symbolic role. They serve as visible markers of identity and belonging. These items connect Andrew to other fans, creating a sense of solidarity and shared experience. Belk (1988) notes that possessions can serve as symbols of social identity, reinforcing group membership and collective identity.

Symbolic Meanings

The symbolic meanings attached to Andrew's collection are multifaceted. This is because Andrew remembers many of his life events in accordance with games. Thus, these items are very special to him. These items are also markers of tradition, connecting him to past generations of fans and ensuring the continuity of these traditions.

Nora's concept of *lieux de mémoire* (1989) describes how physical objects and places become repositories of collective memory, preserving and transmitting cultural heritage. For Andrew, his collection serves as a personal and collective archive, capturing the history and tradition of ITFC. This material culture is a way of preserving and celebrating the club's heritage, ensuring that these memories are passed down to future generations.

Conclusion

Andrew's journey as a case study provides a rich and detailed exploration of football fandom and devotion. His rituals and traditions, rooted in personal and collective memory, offer a window into the more nuanced aspects of fandom. The analysis of his material culture highlights the importance of possessions in constructing and expressing fan identity. By focusing on Andrew's experiences, this chapter challenges the traditional hooliganism narrative and emphasises the positive aspects of football fandom, such as community building and cultural expression.

Chapter 3: Broader Implications for Understanding Football Fandom

Community and Social Cohesion

Andrew's rituals and material culture play a crucial role in fostering a sense of community among Ipswich Town FC supporters. Through his consistent practices and the tangible items he cherishes, Andrew exemplifies how individual actions can contribute to the larger fabric of fan culture and communal identity.

Community and Identity in Football Fandom

Benedict Anderson's concept of "imagined communities" (1983) is particularly relevant in understanding how football fandom creates a shared sense of belonging among individuals who may never meet. Fans like Andrew engage in rituals that not only express their personal devotion but also align them with a broader community of supporters. This alignment is facilitated by shared symbols, practices, and material culture, all of which contribute to a collective identity.

Richard Jenkins (2004) further elaborates on the social processes that construct and maintain group identities. In the context of football fandom, rituals and material culture act as mechanisms of social cohesion. Jenkins argues that identity is both individual and collective, and it is through participation in shared practices that individuals negotiate their place within a community. For Andrew, his rituals—such as attending every home game, engaging in pre-match routines, maintaining his collection of matchday programmes, and going to the pub—are acts that reinforce his identity as a dedicated Ipswich Town FC supporter.

Rituals and Social Bonds

The rituals performed by fans serve not only as expressions of personal devotion but also as a mechanism that binds individuals together. Durkheim's (1912) theory of collective effervescence explains how shared rituals generate a collective emotional energy that strengthens group solidarity. This is evident in the way Andrew and his friends, as well as other supporters, engage in pre-match and post-match activities. These rituals create a sense of unity and mutual support, creating strong social bonds between fans.

Ethnographic observations and interviews reveal that Andrew's rituals, such as his pre-match breakfast routine and his meticulous review of matchday programmes, are shared with and recognised by other supporters. These shared practices create a network of relationships based on mutual recognition and shared experiences. For instance, when Andrew meets with

Darren at the stadium or with his other friends in the pub after the match, they engage in collective reminiscing and analysis of the game, further emphasising the idea of *communitas*.

Material Culture and Collective Memory

Material culture plays a significant role in the formation and maintenance of community among football fans. Nora's (1989) concept of *lieux de mémoire*, or sites of memory, highlights how physical objects and places become repositories of collective memory. Andrew's collection of matchday programmes and memorabilia serves as a personal archive of his experiences, but it also connects him to the collective history of Ipswich Town FC. Each item in his collection is a tangible link to past events and shared memories, reinforcing his sense of belonging to the community of supporters.

Maurice Halbwachs' (1992) theory of collective memory also emphasises the importance of shared memories in constructing group identities. Through his collection, Andrew participates in the collective memory of Ipswich Town FC, preserving and celebrating the club's history. This collective memory is not static; it is continuously reinterpreted and reinforced through rituals and the exchange of memorabilia among fans. By sharing stories and items from his collection with other supporters, Andrew contributes to the communal narrative and helps maintain the cultural heritage of the club.

Challenging the Hooliganism Narrative

The case of Andrew provides a powerful counter-narrative to the stereotype of football fans as hooligans. This stereotype, perpetuated by media and some academic discourse, portrays football fans as violent and unruly. However, Andrew's experiences and practices highlight the diverse forms of fandom and devotion that exist within football culture.

Deconstructing Stereotypes

Armstrong and Young (1999) and Pearson (2012) have documented how the hooliganism narrative is often exaggerated and not representative of the majority of football fans. These scholars argue that the focus on hooliganism overshadows the positive aspects of fandom, such as community building and cultural expression. Andrew's case exemplifies this argument. His devotion to Ipswich Town FC is expressed through peaceful and constructive activities, such as maintaining his collection of matchday programmes, participating in communal rituals, and fostering social bonds with other supporters.

Diverse Forms of Fandom

Football fandom is not monolithic; it encompasses a wide range of behaviours and expressions of devotion. Giulianotti (2002) categorises football fans into different types, such as supporters, followers, fans, and flaneurs, each reflecting varying degrees of engagement

and commitment. Andrew fits into the category of a supporter, characterised by his deep, enduring loyalty to the club and active participation in fan rituals. His practices demonstrate that football fandom can be a positive and enriching aspect of life, providing a sense of identity, community, and continuity.

By focusing on the everyday practices of a dedicated fan like Andrew, this research challenges the reductionist view of football fans as hooligans and highlights the positive dimensions of fandom. Considering the broader spectrum of fan experiences and recognising the cultural and social value of their practices helps deconstruct this view of football fans as hooligans.

Multimodal Outputs as Engaged Scholarship

The creation of the matchday programme as a research output represents an innovative approach to engaged scholarship. This format not only presents the research findings in an accessible and relatable way but also actively involves the community being studied.

Engaging Academic and Public Audiences

Lassiter (2005) advocates for collaborative and engaged forms of anthropology that involve the subjects of the research in the process of knowledge production. The matchday programme embodies this approach by incorporating the voices and perspectives of Ipswich Town FC supporters. It aims to serve as a medium for sharing their stories and experiences, bridging the gap between academic research and public engagement.

Low and Merry (2010) further emphasise the importance of public anthropology in addressing real-world issues and engaging broader audiences. The matchday programme, with its combination of text, images, and interactive elements, is designed to appeal not only to academics but also to football fans and the general public. By presenting the research in a familiar and engaging format, it fosters a deeper understanding of football fandom and the significance of rituals and material culture.

The Matchday Programme as a Multimodal Output

The use of a matchday programme as a multimodal output is particularly relevant to the study of football fandom. Matchday programmes are a familiar and cherished aspect of the football fan experience, making them ideal for presenting research findings. Geismar (2018) highlights the potential of multimodal outputs to convey complex cultural practices in a more dynamic and accessible way. The matchday programme captures the lived experiences of fans, providing a rich, immersive account of their rituals and material culture.

The matchday programme brings the research to life and engages the reader on multiple levels by including ethnographic vignettes, photographs, and interactive elements like quizzes. This approach aims to enhance the accessibility of the research but also respects and celebrates the cultural forms that are meaningful to the community being studied.

Conclusion

Andrew's case study offers valuable insights into the broader implications of football fandom. His rituals and material culture foster a sense of community and social cohesion among Ipswich Town FC supporters, challenging the stereotype of football fans as hooligans. The diverse forms of fandom and devotion highlighted in this research underscore the importance of recognising the positive dimensions of football culture.

The creation of the matchday programme as a multimodal output exemplifies engaged scholarship, bridging the gap between academic research and public engagement. This innovative approach not only enhances the accessibility of the research but also celebrates the cultural forms that are meaningful to the community being studied.

By focusing on the everyday practices and material culture of a dedicated fan like Andrew, this research contributes to a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of football fandom. It highlights the cultural and social value of fan practices and underscores the importance of considering the broader spectrum of fan experiences.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis: Insights from Andrew's Experience

Themes and Patterns

Through the detailed study of Andrew's rituals, traditions, and material culture, several key themes and patterns emerged that provide valuable insights into the nature of fan devotion and the role of rituals in football fandom.

The Role of Rituals in Fostering Identity and Community

One of the most significant themes that emerged from the research with Andrew is the role of rituals in fostering both personal identity and a sense of community. These items and rituals become an extension of him. Much like his friend, who was the quiz master at the pub, Andrew was known for his collection of matchday programmes. The symbolic meaning of these rituals helped reinforce his identity as a devoted Ipswich Town FC supporter.

Victor Turner's (1969) concept of ritual as a process of *communitas* highlights how these activities create a sense of unity and solidarity among participants. For Andrew, these rituals are not just personal habits but communal activities that reinforce his identity and belonging. The shared nature of these rituals, performed alongside fellow fans, helps to foster a strong sense of community and collective identity among Ipswich Town FC supporters.

Material Culture as a Medium of Memory and Identity

Andrew's collection of matchday programmes, tickets, and other memorabilia serves as a tangible expression of his devotion. These items are not merely souvenirs; they carry significant personal and collective meanings, acting as symbols of identity and tools for memory and identity construction. Daniel Miller's (2010) work on material culture underscores the importance of objects in social life, highlighting how possessions can become integral to one's identity.

The act of collecting and preserving these programmes is a ritualistic practice that reinforces his identity and devotion. Reviewing his collection is nostalgic, connecting him to past experiences and shared memories with other fans.

Pierre Nora's (1989) concept of *lieux de mémoire*, or sites of memory, further elucidates how physical objects and places become repositories of collective memory. Andrew's collection serves as a personal and collective archive, capturing the history and tradition of Ipswich Town FC. This material culture is a way of preserving and celebrating the club's heritage, ensuring that these memories are passed down to future generations.

Symbolism and the Extended Self

The symbolic meanings attached to Andrew's collection are multifaceted. They represent his personal journey as a fan, his connection to the club, and his place within the broader community of ITFC supporters. These items also connect him to past generations of fans and ensure the continuity of these traditions. Richard Belk's (1988) concept of extended self-posits is that possessions can become integral to one's identity. For Andrew, his collection is an extension of his identity as a dedicated ITFC supporter.

Material culture items like matchday programmes and tickets also serve as symbols of fans' experiences and memories. Each item represents a specific game, and thus, a specific and tangible memory is tied to the item. These objects serve as connections to past experiences and a way to relive memorable moments, reinforcing fans' identities and devotion to their club.

Comparative Analysis

Andrew's Experiences and Broader Trends in Football Fandom

Comparing Andrew's experiences with broader trends in football fandom reveals both unique aspects of his devotion and common patterns shared by many fans. His practices resonate with findings from other case studies and ethnographic works, highlighting universal themes in football fandom. Especially when looking at how emotions and memories are tied to specific rituals or material objects.

Shared Rituals and Community Building

Andrew's rituals and the sense of community they foster are mirrored in other studies of football fandom. Anthony King (2003) discusses how football rituals, such as chanting, wearing team colours, and pre-match gatherings, play a crucial role in creating a sense of belonging and community among fans. King's ethnographic work on football fandom emphasises the importance of these shared practices in maintaining group identity and solidarity.

Similarly, Marsh et al. (1996) explore how football rituals can facilitate a form of social cohesion, bringing together individuals from diverse backgrounds through a shared passion for the sport. Their research highlights the communal nature of football fandom, where rituals and traditions help to create and build strong social bonds as well as a collective identity.

Material Culture and Memory

The role of material culture in football fandom is also a common theme in broader ethnographic studies. Armstrong and Young (1999) illustrate how fans use objects like scarves, shirts, and programmes in their research on football memorabilia to express their identity and preserve their memories of significant matches. These items become symbols of their devotion and serve as tangible connections to their experiences as fans.

Andrew's collection of matchday programmes and other memorabilia demonstrate how material culture serves as a medium for memory and identity construction. Each item in his collection is filled with personal and shared meaning, thus connecting him to the club and the community of supporters.

Challenging the Hooliganism Narrative

Andrew's case also contributes to the broader discussion on challenging the stereotype of football fans as hooligans. Pearson (2012) and Armstrong and Young (1999) argue that the focus on hooliganism overshadows the positive aspects of football fandom, such as community building and cultural expression. Andrew's experiences further supported this argument, demonstrating how football fandom can be a positive aspect of life.

His devotion to Ipswich Town FC is expressed through peaceful activities, such as his collection of matchday programmes, participating in shared rituals such as quizzes with his friends at the pub, and fostering social bonds with other supporters. This positive aspect of football fandom is often overlooked in the media and academic discourse, which tends to focus, for the most part, on the negative aspects of fan behaviour.

Conclusion

The data analysis of Andrew's experiences reveals several key themes and patterns that contribute to our understanding of fan devotion and rituals. His rituals and material culture play a crucial role in fostering a sense of community and identity among Ipswich Town FC supporters. These findings align with broader trends in football fandom, highlighting the global nature of these practices and their significance in creating social cohesion and collective identity.

By focusing on everyday practices and material culture, my research challenges the traditional hooliganism narrative and emphasises the positive aspects of football fandom. It highlights fan practices' cultural and social value and argues the importance of recognising the broader spectrum of fan experiences.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Synthesis of Findings

Integration with Broader Theoretical Discussions

Andrew's case study offers rich insights that can be integrated into broader theoretical discussions on football fandom, devotion, and material culture. The findings highlight the ways in which rituals and material culture shape and express fan identities. The integration of these concepts validates the theories created by scholars such as Victor Turner (1969) and Emile Durkheim (1912), who emphasise the role of rituals in creating and sustaining communal bonds and collective identity. Andrew's pre-match routines, his precise care for matchday programmes, and his interactions with his friends and fans are all acts of devotion that agree with Turner's concept of *communitas* and Durkheim's collective effervescence.

Further, Richard Belk's (1988) notion of the extended self is supported by Andrew's experiences. His collection of memorabilia is not just a hobby; it is an expression of his identity and devotion to Ipswich Town FC. His archive of materials acts as a vessel harbouring memories and emotions tied to significant moments. This aligns with Pierre Nora's (1989) idea of *lieux de mémoire*, where physical objects serve as repositories of collective memory, preserving the cultural heritage of the fan community.

The shared rituals and material culture observed in Andrew's case also support Benedict Anderson's (1983) theory of imagined communities. Despite the physical separation among fans, shared practices and symbols create a strong sense of belonging and community. This communal identity is continually reinforced through rituals and the exchange of memorabilia, highlighting the social cohesion that characterises football fandom.

Implications for Understanding Football Fandom and Devotion

The insights gained from Andrew's case study extend our understanding of football fandom and devotion beyond the tropes of fans as hooligans. His experiences illustrate the positive dimensions of fandom, such as community building, cultural expression, and the preservation of tradition. Fostering a sense of belonging and identity among fans is crucial, but it is often an overlooked aspect in mainstream narratives.

By focusing on the material culture of football fandom, the significance of objects in expressing and sustaining fan devotion has been made clear. Matchday programmes, tickets, and other memorabilia are not just collectables; they hold personal and shared meanings. They serve as windows to the past, enabling fans to relive memorable moments, such as their first game, and reinforce their connection to the club and the community of supporters.

Contributions to Anthropology

Material Culture and Fandom

This study makes several important contributions to anthropology, particularly in the study of material culture and fandom. By examining the material culture of football fandom, it sheds light on the ways in which objects function as symbols of identity and memory. Daniel Miller's (2010) work on material culture emphasises the importance of objects in social life, and this study provides empirical support for his theoretical assertions.

Moreover, the focus on a single interlocutor, Andrew, allows for a deep understanding of the complexities of fandom and devotion. This approach aligns with Pink's (2013) advocacy for immersive and reflexive ethnographic practices. The study captures the lived experiences and personal meanings, through engaging closely with Andrew, that support his devotion to Ipswich Town FC. It would have been difficult to achieve this in-depth insight through another approach, given the timeframe of the research.

Methodological Insights

The methodological insights gained from this study also contribute to the field of anthropology. The use of visual ethnography, including participant observation and artefact analysis, provides a holistic view of Andrew's fandom. This approach captures the sensory and embodied aspects of his rituals, offering a richer understanding of his experiences. The decision to present the research findings through a matchday programme shows the potential of multimodal outputs to engage both academic and public audiences, as highlighted by Geismar (2018) and Lassiter (2005).

Practical Implications

Fostering Positive Fan Engagement

The practical implications of this study are significant for football clubs and fan communities. Understanding the positive dimensions of fandom and the importance of rituals and material culture can help clubs foster more inclusive and supportive environments for their supporters. Through celebrating diverse forms of fan devotion, clubs can strengthen their relationships with their fan base and enhance the overall fan experience.

Suggestions for Clubs and Communities

Football clubs can take several steps to foster positive fan engagement and community building:

1. Recognition of Fan Practices: Clubs should acknowledge and support the various rituals and traditions that are important to their fans. This could include providing spaces for pre-match gatherings, facilitating the exchange of memorabilia, and recognising the contributions of dedicated supporters like Andrew.

2. Engagement with Material Culture: Clubs can engage with fans' material culture by creating opportunities for fans to share their collections and stories. This could be through exhibitions, digital archives, or special matchday programmes that celebrate the club's and its supporters' history and heritage.

3. Community Building Initiatives: Clubs can foster a sense of community by organising events and activities that bring fans together. This could include fan forums, community outreach programs, and collaborative projects that involve fans in the club's activities and decision-making processes.

4. Promotion of Positive Fan Culture: By promoting the positive aspects of fandom and challenging negative stereotypes, clubs can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for all supporters. This could involve educational campaigns, partnerships with fan organisations, and initiatives that celebrate the diversity and passion of the fan community.

Conclusion

Andrew and the findings found through him provide valuable insights into the nature of football fandom and devotion. Especially by challenging the simplistic and negative portrayals of fans. His rituals, traditions, and material culture provide an example of the positive aspects of fandom, highlighting the importance of community, identity, and memory. The methodological approach and choice of focusing mainly on a single interlocutor allowed for a deep and nuanced understanding of these complex phenomena, contributing to the broader field of anthropology.

By recognising and supporting the diverse forms of fan devotion, football clubs can foster more inclusive and supportive environments for their supporters. This study highlights the cultural and social value of fan practices and shows the potential for engaged research outputs to bridge the gap between academia and the public. The matchday programme, as a multimodal output, offers a dynamic and accessible way to present research findings and celebrate the rich traditions of football fandom.

Conclusion

Summary of Key Points

This article has explored the intricate world of football fandom through the detailed case study of Andrew, a dedicated Ipswich Town FC supporter. By examining Andrew's rituals, traditions, and material culture, I provided a nuanced understanding of fan devotion that challenges the simplistic and often negative portrayals of football fans as hooligans. The key findings and arguments of this study are summarised as follows:

1. Rituals and Community Building: The research highlights rituals and how they enable the fostering of a sense of community and collective identity among football fans. Andrew's pre-match routines, such as his breakfast ritual and the meticulous review of his matchday programmes, are acts of devotion that connect him to the broader community of Ipswich Town FC supporters. These rituals, as discussed through the lens of Victor Turner's (1969) concept of *communitas*, create a sense of unity and solidarity among fans.

2. Material Culture and Memory: The study underscores the significance of material culture in expressing and sustaining fan devotion. Andrew's collection of matchday programmes, tickets, and other memorabilia serves as a tangible link to his experiences and memories as a fan. These items, analysed using Pierre Nora's (1989) concept of *lieux de mémoire* and Richard Belk's (1988) notion of the extended self, are not just objects but symbols imbued with personal and collective meanings.

3. Challenging the Hooliganism Narrative: By focusing on Andrew's positive and constructive activities as a fan, this research challenges the traditional hooliganism narrative that dominates media and academic discourse on football fandom. Andrew's devotion is expressed through peaceful and enriching practices that highlight the diversity and cultural value of football fandom.

4. Multimodal Outputs and Engaged Scholarship: The creation of a matchday programme as a research output exemplifies the potential of multimodal ethnographic methods to engage both academic and public audiences. This approach, supported by the works of Geismar (2018) and Lassiter (2005), provides a way to present research findings and celebrate the rich traditions of football fandom.

The study's emphasis on material culture and individual devotion offers deeper insights into the complex and multifaceted nature of football fandom. By exploring the lived experiences of a single, dedicated fan, this research provides a richer and more nuanced understanding of the emotional and symbolic dimensions of fan practices.

Future Research Directions

The findings of this research open several avenues for future research on football fandom and material culture. To further expand our understanding of these phenomena, the following research directions are suggested:

1. Broader Comparative Studies: Future research could explore the rituals, traditions, and material culture of football fans across different clubs and cultural contexts. Comparative studies would provide a broader understanding of how fan practices vary and what common themes emerge across different fan communities.

2. Longitudinal Studies: Conducting longitudinal studies that follow fans over extended periods would offer insights into how fan devotion and practices evolve over time. Such studies could examine how changes in the club's fortunes, personal life events, and broader societal shifts impact fan behaviours and identities.

3. Gender and Diversity in Fandom: Exploring the experiences of diverse fan groups, including women, LGBTQ+ fans, and fans from different ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds, would provide a more inclusive understanding of football fandom. Research in this area could highlight the unique challenges and contributions of these groups within the fan community.

4. Impact of Digital Media: With the increasing influence of digital media on football fandom, future research could examine how online platforms and social media shape fan practices and identities. This could include studies on digital fan communities, the role of fan-generated content, and the impact of virtual interactions on traditional fan rituals.

5. Multimodal Ethnography: Further exploration of multimodal outputs in ethnographic research could enhance our ability to capture and convey the sensory and embodied aspects of fan experiences. Researchers are encouraged to experiment with various forms of visual, auditory, and interactive media to present their findings in engaging and accessible ways.

6. Psychological and Social Impacts of Fandom: Investigating the psychological and social benefits of football fandom, such as its impact on mental health, social support networks, and community engagement, could provide valuable insights into the positive aspects of being a fan.

By pursuing these research directions, scholars can continue to deepen our understanding of football fandom and contribute to a more comprehensive and nuanced portrayal of this cultural phenomenon.

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