

“I must be mad to watch this lot”;

**A qualitative study examining the effect that
supporting a small, local football club
has on the mental health of supporters**

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for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

This study examines the effect that supporting a football team and attending their matches can have on the mental health of the supporters. The examination of the interplay between supporting a team and developing and maintaining some of the conditions needed to maintain good mental health is developed along three main themes.

Firstly ideas around a sense of belonging, inclusion, group membership and the impact that such issues have on a person's mental health are investigated. Although supporters, in general, are not prioritised in research about sport, literature from sociology, psychology, sports and mental health areas all suggest that the inclusive nature of the supporting experience can impact positively on the supporters involved. Most of the work done in this field, however, has focused on North American sports such as basketball, baseball and ice hockey. This study explored whether the same impact was actually found in the supporters of English lower league association football. Part of this area of the study addressed the importance that ritual behaviour played in the development of a sense of identity and belonging in the group setting.

The second area for exploration, specifically linked to mental health, focuses on the importance of developing and sustaining good relationships and the impact this has on a person's mental health. In a time where much is made of the apparent decrease in the amount of time, and, more importantly, the quality of time spent, between family members (especially parents and children) the study looks at the role of supporting a team in the development of parent child relationships and how the football supporting experience offers

opportunities for family members to spend time together. The most prominent of these relationships is the relationship between fathers and sons and the study looks at how football supporting may offer opportunities to develop relationships with specific "ring fenced" time together in an activity that both may be involved with throughout a whole lifetime.

The final major theme to develop is around the question of catharsis. Although a disputed concept academically, the idea of cathartic externalisation of emotion is a prominent feature in the data collected. Ventilation of emotion through cathartic behaviours is seen as important by fans in terms of their mental health. Many fans described a conscious system of coping wherein the stresses they accumulated from their day to day lives at home, and at work, are "carried" until the match then vented in the safe environment of the stadium. Fans suggest that the live element of the experience heightens the intensity of the experience as opposed to an experience, such as theatre or cinema, where the outcome of an event is predetermined.

Participants in this study are all supporters of Mansfield Town FC and self selected for the study in response to an article on the Mansfield Town FC website and to Radio and TV coverage of the project. The study uses a grounded theory method for collecting and analysing data. In a two stage process diaries were used to collect data from fans and these were analysed with the help of the Nvivo software package to identify recurring themes. These themes formed the foundation of the interview schedule used for data collection in the second phase of the process. The interviews were also analysed with the help of Nvivo and the Grounded Theory steps of open coding and axial coding described by Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Strauss and Corbin (1990) were used to develop a core theory. The main

findings reflected the themes outlined above of belonging, relationships and catharsis.

Analysis of the data suggests that the identification of the fan with the club, and the identity of the club as part of a local community, helps fans feel part of something bigger than themselves and this generates a sense of belonging, security and warmth.

Exploration of the role of relationships in supporters' behaviour suggests that most of the fan' early experiences of being taken to a match were with their fathers and were resonant with a feeling of being old enough to enjoy and appreciate the game and of having some clearly defined time with their fathers which was sacrosanct and expected. This was time which was set aside with a definite purpose and involved a shared experience which was guaranteed to generate interaction and conversation between parent and child on a subject about which each could have a view and exchange an idea. The development of lifelong friendships that cut across age, social background and culture also feature in this area of the research.

The text discusses the findings and suggests ways in which the experiences described by the fans, and the resulting impact on them, might be used in a mental health context to help promote better mental health. It makes recommendations about the use of football in general, and football clubs specifically, for this purpose.

The study concludes that if the behaviours, thoughts and feelings associated with supporting do offer the benefits outlined in the diaries and interviews used for data collection then it may well be that football clubs, from large superclubs like Manchester United to small local clubs like Mansfield Town, can have a part to play in the maintaining of and promotion of mental health within communi

Introduction

1.0 Introduction

The presentation by various areas of the media and entertainment industry of football fans as violent thugs is commonplace. Journalistic and novelistic accounts about football fans as hooligans (see King 1998, King & Knight 1999 Brimson 1996), TV representations in programmes such as BBC 2's *Hooligans* series of documentaries in 2004 and in cinema in films such as 2005's *The Football Factory* remain common place. This is despite the fact that the number of hooligans as a proportion of the numbers attending is very small indeed. For example, in the 2001 season, out of a total of 27,761,187 fans attending league matches, only 3,214 (less than 0.01 per cent) were arrested for football-related offences inside and outside grounds. By the 2004 season the attendance had risen to 29,197,510 and number of arrests had fallen to 3,010 (Home Office, 2004). This stigma promoted against fans can have a powerful impact on how they are treated by society as a whole.

Similarly, throughout a career in mental health nursing I have frequently witnessed at first hand the stigma that is carried by those with mental health problems. The tendency of the media to present people with mental health problems in stereotypical ways, as violent, unpredictable or a danger to themselves and others has caused concern to mental health professionals. (Lauber et al 2006, Francis et al 2004, Clinton 1999) Stigma and labels abound in mental health care and the effect this has on the people on the receiving end of this stigma is often very profound (Crawford and Brown 2002, Corrigan 2000)

So whilst it may be true that football hooligans exist, in the same way that dangerous people with schizophrenia exist, the focus on

hooligans is disproportionate and skews the picture of what supporting a football team may be about. This hooligan element has, however, captured the majority of research interest, academic publishing, academic funding and media column inches about supporting behaviours. Brimson (2000 p181) suggests that this will continue to be the case as long as the public perception of the football supporter is shaped by a media eager to sell newspapers by stating that “(Football) hooliganism provides everything a good story should have: drama, tension, fear and villains. Throw in a bit of shame and the odd pinch of xenophobia and you have a lot”.

This study explores the phenomenon of football supporters from a new perspective, namely examination of the experience of the more positive aspects of the supporting experience and an exploration of whether the experience can, or does, impact on the mental health of those who support a small, local football club.

1.1 Catalyst for the study

The pessimistic view of football supporters remaining branded and stigmatised by a hostile press is raised by Poulton (2001) who states that “Hysterical headlines, emotive language, evocative imagery (usually borrowed from the battlefield) and graphic photographs, all help to frame the football fan-cum-hooligan”. Poulton goes on to suggest that the real tragedy of this process is that “all distinctions between the violent, xenophobic minority and the non-violent majority is lost in the media coverage that emphasises the behaviour of the former. Consequently, the majority loses all sense of identity, voice and presence”(2001).

An alternative picture of football supporters, however, emerges in the behaviour of such groups as Scotland’s Tartan Army and Denmark’s Roligans (rolig means peaceful in Danish). These fans,

although often associated with excessive alcohol consumption, are mostly identified with a non violent carnival atmosphere. The same carnival attitude is also visible in fans from Brazil and Jamaica.

Elements of this more celebratory attitude were found when I and another member of the University of Nottingham School of Nursing staff were involved with a 'phone-in programme on Radio Mansfield taking calls from fans of Mansfield Town FC. The programme asked people to phone in and talk about why they supported the club. The fans talked at some length about feeling part of a community of fans, about having something in their lives to look forward to and about having a place where they could jettison some of the stress they felt they carried around throughout the week. In many ways the things that supporters were describing were resonant with some of the things that are seen as being important in the development and maintaining of good mental health. This suggested a line of enquiry that could pursue whether, rather than being a forum for aggression and violence, football supporting might provide fans with forum for some very different experiences.

1.2 Context of the study

The National Service Framework for Mental Health (1999) has as its first standard, the promotion of good mental health. The concept that prevention is better than cure has been the cornerstone of health promotion from its earliest times and continues to be the driving force behind the idea (Tudor 1996, Downie, Fyfe and Tannahill 1990, Bayer and Sanson 2004). The response from the phone-in described above hinted at the possibility that the experience of actively supporting a team may help provide some of the ingredients that promote a sense of good mental health and protect against the development of mental ill health.

According to the World Health Organisation (1999) mental health promotion should be multi-sectoral and involve churches, clubs and other community bodies. This appears especially important when considering those groups in our society that are most at risk of the consequences of poor mental health. One of these groups is young men. Although men, as a distinct group, have not always been identified as a definite sub-group in writings on mental health and illness that women have, the particular problems experienced by men are now starting to be acknowledged in psychology and sociology literature and are beginning to feature in mainstream mental health research (Pringle and Sayers 2004). One of the main reasons for this may be the fact that statistically men's mental health, especially young men's, is showing marked changes in presentation. There has been, for example, a rise in young men entering the psychiatric system for substance misuse problems and for personality disorder. There has also been an increase in the number of young men committing suicide (Bille-Brahe 1993, Kelleher 1998) with suicide now almost four times more common in young men than in women (Clare 2000, Davidson and Lloyd 2001, Pringle and Sayers 2006).

Good, Dell and Mintz (1989) reported that men's reluctance to access health services could be to do with men's need to feel in control and self sufficient and they suggest that this often stops men from asking for help. Prior (1999) proposes that men do not access mental health services because they are simply not good at help seeking behaviours. Against this backdrop any activities that can help address some of the reasons why men become mentally ill and that can help combat this should be considered and examined.

Some North American research has specifically explored fans behaviour at attending sports events and drawn conclusions about

the impact on health (Branscombe and Wann 1991, Hirt et al 1992, Akkerhuys 2000, Wann et al 2003) but this has focused on college students with participants being given credits toward their courses for involvement in the process. None of the American studies looked at supporters of football. This study explored whether the same types of connections between supporting behaviours and health, especially mental health, could be found with football supporters in England.

1.3 The choice of Mansfield Town for the study

Although the larger clubs in the country, notably those in the Premier League, attract most supporters per game, almost as many football supporters in this country actually attend lower league club fixtures. For example in the 2004 season the number of fans who watched Premier League football averaged 765 387 each week whereas the average number who watched lower league football (The Football League Divisions) for the same time period was 681 490 (Felton 2006).

Mansfield Town, (nicknamed the Stags), is a typical lower league club. It averages attendances of between 2000 and 4000 per match, attracts the majority of its fans from the local community and has very few, if any, players who are, or will go on to become, household names. It is the local club for a town with a population of 103,000 people and attracts fans from the surrounding area with few people travelling any distance to see the team play home matches (Curren and Redmond 1996). The majority of these fans are young men. As a football club Mansfield Town has had limited success on the field. In its 109 year history it has won a lower league championship once in 1975 and The Freight Rover Trophy (a competition for lower league clubs) once in 1987. The club plays in the lowest division of the English football league. This means that

Mansfield Town as a club can be said to be typical of many clubs in many towns and cities throughout the country. Whereas not every town has a successful large club like Liverpool, Arsenal or Manchester United, most cities and towns have a smaller less successful club.

1.4 Football, men and mental health

Football, and football clubs have been used successfully in the past as areas for delivering both children's and adult education, for addressing problems like racism and for some physical health promotional activities. The Alive and Kicking project in Coventry, for example, encouraged multi-disciplinary working with young men to help develop more healthy lifestyles. Although the Alive and Kicking project focused mostly on physical aspects of health such as diet, fitness, smoking, sexual behaviour and cancer awareness it showed that work that was associated closely with a recognised team, in this case Coventry City, could help engage men in health promotional activities. Nursing staff worked with local league football clubs in Coventry and Leamington carrying out health check-ups mostly on training nights.

The "It's a Goal!" project at Macclesfield Town has also had some success in the area of mental health promotion (Pringle and Sayers 2004) and has expanded to also run at Old Trafford, the home of Manchester United, Stockport County, Walsall and Plymouth Argyle.

"It's a Goal!" was launched in 2004 at Moss Rose Stadium, the home of Macclesfield Town Football Club, a side who play in Division 2 of the English football league. The project was made possible with the backing and sponsorship of the Laureus Sport for Good Foundation and involves a Community Psychiatric Nurse (CPN) working within the club and using the stadium as a base for the service which

utilises a group work approach to focus on mental health awareness and mental health promotion activities. It was envisaged that by basing the project within the local club, and using the popularity and attraction of football, the programme would help engage men who had previously been reluctant to seek help for mental health problems, to use the project to actively promote strategies for developing good mental health.

The sessions (or matches as they are known), are run in the football stadium by a Community Psychiatric Nurse and focus on areas such as low self esteem and motivation, poor confidence, communication and social skills as these are recognised as pre-cursors for depression in young men (Dorling and Gunnel 2003, Gair and Camillieri 2003, Taylor 2003). Pringle and Sayers (2004) describe how the process uses group working techniques, football metaphor is used to explore issues around personality, confidence and developing social networks. The idea to run the whole programme using a football metaphor was adopted because the *language* of engagement was acknowledged as an important aspect of the interventions.

Unlike "It's a Goal ! " which uses the facilities of a recognised club for health promotion and mental health interventions the Derwent Valley Rovers project uses involvement in *playing* football as the method of impacting on the mental health of participants. The initial aim was to offer circuit training to improve physical fitness and health, as well as ball-skills training and match playing to fulfil the team role to people suffering from mental health problems. The club, led by Anne Edwards, a Senior Lecturer in Behavioural Sciences at the University of Derby, is affiliated to Derby County FC and plays regularly against Notts County and Lincoln City football clubs. A support worker is on hand on match days to help players

who are feeling anxious because of their condition, and the coaches have received mental health awareness training.

Manchester's Grassroots Initiatives has proven to be one of the most sustained and successful projects to use football as a way of engaging with people who experience mental health problems. Grassroots Initiatives is a small, user led, voluntary organisation that aims to advance the quality of life of people who are socially excluded particularly those who experience mental health/learning related difficulties living in Manchester and the surrounding area. It provides facilities and opportunities for engaging in a wide variety of Arts, Social and Sports activities with the aim of stimulating, promoting and encouraging the physical, social and emotional development of people in the local community and beyond.

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At the heart of the football programme is the CSIP League. This football league is supported by the Care Standards Improvement Programme (North West) and currently comprises 19 teams from throughout the North West with guest teams from all over Britain. This league uses a 7-a-side version of the game with matches lasting for 30 minutes each. The league was established in 1999 and has continued to grow and develop ever since. Every 5 weeks, during the football season, the league brings together over 200 service users to the JJB Soccer Dome in Trafford Park, where they and their teams play 4 matches each visit.

The season comprises nine meeting days so this means that, with each team playing four matches a day over nine days, each team plays 36 matches in a season. Added together this results in a total of 342 matches taking place in the league over a season. Although the matches only take place every five weeks teams train on a weekly basis throughout the year.

An evaluation of the process with 131 of the players showed 90% felt that their mental health had improved significantly since becoming involved with playing on a regular basis whilst 86% went so far as to suggest that the process had been a major factor in actually preventing admission to hospital (Evans, McIlroy and Pringle 2008)

In an attempt to bring together the various strands of football and mental health work The National Institute for Mental Health in England (NIMHE) has launched the Shift initiative. Shift is the NIMHE anti-stigma programme and it has stated that over the next five years it will work, in partnership with football agencies, to pilot and promote positive work to de-stigmatise mental health issues with men. Some practical examples of how football is beginning to work in collaboration with mental health teams are found in such clubs as Tottenham Hotspur, where the football club has been working in partnership with mental health services in the East 9 Acute Day Hospital, participating in regular friendly matches and competitions, and training once a week. In Scotland, Motherwell FC became the first football club to join the "See Me" campaign which tackles stigma in mental health in Scotland, whilst Bristol City have used a £79,000 grant from the Football Foundation to develop football activities for people with mental health problems in partnership with Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust.

1.4 Future Development for Football and Mental Health

A review of the themes found in the data suggests that there are areas that resonate strongly between what is proposed as being good for developing mental wellbeing and what is experienced by supporters who attend matches. Because mental health promotion, in general, takes a broad view of mental health and is as concerned

with the social and emotional determinants of health as it is with the physical, the importance of activities and experiences which can promote positive mental and emotional wellbeing are held to be of value. This means, of course, that mental health is influenced both positively and negatively by a wide range of factors, both external and internal, including social and economic factors, self-esteem, feelings of belonging and the construction of the ability to cope. In this complicated jigsaw it is not being suggested that football, alone, offers a solution to mental health problems but it is being suggested that it can be an important component in the promotion of mental health.

Rather than focusing primarily on the idea of using football as a vehicle to engage people with mental health services this study explored whether some of the elements necessary for the development or maintenance of good mental health are already embedded in the experience of supporting behaviours.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

Throughout the literature review a range of texts from medical, nursing and allied healthcare were included along with texts from sociology, psychology, fan literature and popular fiction.

A problem identified early in the literature review process was that literature directly related to football supporters and mental health was limited in academic writing. There was a wealth of anecdotal writing in magazines, newspapers and websites but most of the scholarly work on the subject was limited to North American sports such as basketball and American football. Much of this literature featured college teams and studies often engaged participants as part of their course work. The literature search focuses on academic texts but in some areas non-research material is used. This is identified in the text as such and this material is used mostly to offer context to the work rather than to advance specific ideas.

Although the literature on football fans and mental health may initially appear to be very different there are some key ways in which the two groups share distinct features. The importance of a sense of belonging, feelings of inclusion, and a sense of purpose, for example, feature in the literature of both as does the experience of being labelled, stereotyped and treated in a sensationalist manner by some sections of the media. The literature review examines some material that has a stronger focus on football and some with a stronger focus on mental health but the interplay between these subjects is developed as the review progresses. Issues around such subjects as catharsis, identity, ritual and engagement may be explored primarily from one group's viewpoint but have a relevance

to both. Both groups are not, of course, mutually exclusive and many people with active mental health problems support football teams so the overlap with and interplay between the two areas is seen not only in the literature but in life in general. The review attempts to draw together these lines of inquiry and explore how a range of subjects in the literature relate to both football supporting and mental health.

Some hand searches of the literature were done by the author looking for work from acknowledged experts in the field of football research. Eric Dunning, John Williams and Peter Murphy for example are acknowledged experts in the field of football research with the University of Leicester and the Football Association as is Richard Giulianotti at the University of Aberdeen. Another example was the use of Mikhail Bakhtin as the starting point for readings around the concept of the carnivalesque. Some searches for books were also done by subject covering areas such as football, mental health and inclusion, crowd dynamics, social norms, carnival, the carnivalesque and family dynamics.

Journal sources were found from catalogues at libraries and through using academic search engines and on line catalogues. Medline, Cinahl, Blackwell-Synergy, Bandolier, BMJOnline and Sage all proved to be fruitful sources of information. A search of the archives of specific departments specialising in football was also conducted. The most fruitful of these was Leicester University's "Sir Norman Chester Centre for Football Research". Internet searches using Google, Dogpile and Ask Jeeves search engines proved useful in finding such things as copies of conference presentations from football related conferences and information that was relevant but not necessarily academic, for example attendance statistics or articles on Mansfield

Town's club history. Throughout the literature review the terms fans and supporters can be viewed as interchangeable.

2.1 Academic study of football supporters

Much of the academic study around football supporters has focused on hooliganism and antisocial behaviour as a phenomenon. Peter Marsh and his colleagues at Oxford Polytechnic studied hooligan behaviour and developed the idea that hooliganism in football was a normal relatively harmless ritual, and a way of releasing natural, aggressive impulses within a young, male social context (Marsh et al 1978). In the 1980's Ian Taylor also studied hooligans and put forward the idea that football supporting was a mostly working class phenomenon and that attempts to change this by making clubs primarily business projects caused a backlash by young, working class fans, who were showing resistance to the forces of modernization in football (Taylor 1982, 1987).

Another school of thought around hooliganism, and racism, emerged in the early 1980s, and has tended to be rather dominant since. This perspective came from a group of sociologists based at the University of Leicester. The "Leicester School" perception provides an understanding of football crowd violence in the context of analysis of certain types of people who attend football matches. They suggest that, traditional working class male values of "roughness", often manifested in physical violence are created through particular forms of socialization. (Dunning 1981, Dunning and Murphy 1984 Dunning , Murphy and Williams 1988, Williams, Dunning, and Murphy 1989, Murphy, Williams and Dunning 1990)

Where the line is drawn between what is perceived as hooliganistic or anti-social behaviour and what is not isn't clear cut. Turner (1991) acknowledges this when he states that the insider's perception of a loud crowd situation and the outsider's perception of exactly the same situation may differ dramatically. Outsiders may not understand behaviours unless they take the viewpoint of the group. What the insider may see as a bit of high spirited fun, onlookers might interpret as deviant, loutish or childish and stupid.

Although often referred to as the "English Disease" reports of violence, racism and hooliganism associated with football matches are not an exclusively English phenomenon. A minority culture of hooliganism and racism is in evidence in pockets throughout the world. Roversi (1994) and Podaliri and Balesstri (1998) describe the rise of the "ultras" in Italy, small groups of hooligan supporters of Italian Serie A and Serie B sides, notably Inter and AC Milan, Bologna and Fiorentina and describe these groups as racist, xenophobic and violent. Kozanoglu (1999) offers observations of the same types of groups in Turkey and Vrcan and Lalic (1999) outline the existence of hooliganism in the former Yugoslavia. Vamplew (1994) echoes these descriptions of hooligan behaviours in Australia as do Alabarces et al (1999) in Argentina.

This focus on the negative aspects of football supporting behaviour, especially hooliganism and racism predominated in academic study until an alternative came with the work of a group of sociologists in Scotland headed by Richard Gulianotti.

2.2 Football as carnival

Giulianotti's work, initially in Aberdeen in the late '80s and '90s focused on a wide range of fans rather than focusing on those labelled as hooligans and his research explored the concept of supporting behaviours within the context of the "carnavalesque". Giulianotti particularly focused on the period during which he felt Scotland's "Tartan Army" of football fans reinvented itself and moved from what was perceived to be a hooligan group to be more like Denmark's famous "Roligans". The Roligans drink to excess, but the carnival atmosphere which surrounds them means that this does not impact negatively on the conviviality of their gatherings. Bale (1998) draws a picture of the antics of Denmark's fans as "a form of carnival" with fans celebrating but in an atmosphere that is non-threatening. Andersson and Redman (1998) attribute much of this to the fact that the Roligans have received positive reinforcement and praise from every quarter, especially the tabloid press. The Danish media, they claim, pay extensive attention to "the Roligans' values of anti-violence and carnival atmosphere" (Andersson and Redman p150). They go on to describe how in the Norwegian cup final of 1995 the arch rivals Rosenborg and Brønnøysund met in a match which resulted in two sets of fans who vied with each other in songs, dress, beer drinking and parties with no arrests and absolutely no trouble.

Giulianotti (1999) suggests that Scottish football fans faced a choice between two distinct discourses: violent machismo or instrumentally ambassadorial conduct or as he puts it "hooliganism" or "carnavalesque". In his opinion the fans actively chose the carnivalesque. Finn and Giulianotti (1999) outline the positive consequences for this choice in terms of media coverage. They describe how Scotland's carnival fans are presented by the Scottish media and the football authorities as "ambassadors" for the game

and how their persona of gregariousness and friendliness is seen in a positive light. In the 1998 World Cup competition Stott (2001) observed that Scottish fans were generally non-violent and involved in positive relationships with other groups in the proximal social context.

2.3 Bakhtin and the carnivalesque

The concept of the carnivalesque was examined by Mikhail Bakhtin in his seminal work *Rabelais and His World*. This text studied the writings of François Rabelais which Bakhtin describes as "an encyclopedia of folk culture" (Bakhtin 1984 p58).

Bakhtin's goal in the analysis of Rabelais was to uncover the peculiar language and practices of the carnival environment and explore how the carnival challenged existing hierarchies whilst temporarily liberating people from the drudgery of their day to day lives. Holquist (1990) agrees with Bakhtin's perspective and acknowledges that the role of the carnival is to disrupt the normal routine of daily toil, time and space, and to provide an outlet to escape the mundane life and the normal roles that all people are forced to play in society.

Whilst Bakhtin acknowledges that the present day carnivals are pale imitations of the unbridled lust, binge drinking of alcohol, and even physical mutilation that characteristically occurred in the carnival environment of the Renaissance, he argues that there remain, in the echoes found in more contemporary forms of carnival, some strong common themes that link them with these earlier forms. The idea of modern sports echoing the ideals of the carnival is put forward by Canter, Comber & Uzzell (1989) who suggest that in the shouts and jeers of a football crowd, the terraces, pie stalls,

team heroes and mascots, scarves and banners all provide distinct echoes of the traditional carnival.

Bakhtin felt that carnival offered entry into a world that worked as an antithesis to everyday life. As he puts it, "it could be said (with certain reservations, of course) that a person of the Middle Ages lived, as it were, *two lives*: one that was the *official* life, monolithically serious and gloomy, subjugated to a strict hierarchical order, full of terror, dogmatism, reverence and piety; the other was the *life of the carnival square*, free and unrestricted, full of ambivalent laughter, blasphemy, the profanation of everything sacred, full of debasing and obscenities, familiar contact with everyone and everything. Both these lives were legitimate but separated by strict temporal boundaries" (Bakhtin 1983 p.129-30). Carnival and its accompanying components represented a theory of freedom from domination and was "the place for working out a new mode of interrelationship between individuals" (Bakhtin 1984 p.123). In this way carnival helps to create a form of human social configuration that "lies beyond existing social forms" (Bakhtin 1984 p.280). This extends the idea put forward in Bakhtin's earlier work where he writes: "Carnival brings together, unifies, weds, and combines the sacred with the profane, the lofty with the low, the great with the insignificant" (1973 p 123) or, as Stam (1989 p.86) suggests "the carnivalesque principle abolishes hierarchies, levels social classes, and creates another life free from conventional rules and restrictions".

Peters (2000) attempts to explain carnival by identifying four distinct categories within Bakhtin's construct. Firstly the carnivalesque is characterised by the institutionalisation of "free and familiar contact between people" who would not in normal circumstances come into contact with one another. Secondly there is a collapsing of

hierarchical distinctions that would normally exist between these groups. Thirdly there is the legitimizing of "carnivalistic blasphemies," including obscenities and parodies of conventional, formal or sacred texts. These were categorised by Bakhtin as *genres of Billingsgate*. These included such things as such as curses, oaths and verbal abuse. Fourthly the carnivalesque conveys on the participant the privileging of eccentricity seen in the display of costume, the exaggeration of gesture, the language of parody and the performance of elaborate ritual.

All of these ideas are evident in the writings around medieval carnival and all are also evident, albeit in a somewhat diluted form, on the terraces of every football club in the country. These environments are stages from which chants, songs, shouts and comments, rich with Bakhtin's language of the Billingsgate, can be heard and the eccentricity of costume seen in the scarves, hats, clothing and flags that are worn and brought by fans is testament to the fact that they echo the components that made up carnival.

It is not, however, only in the world of football that the echoes of carnival can be found. When reviewing the literature, various analyses of aspects of popular culture using Bakhtin's notion of the carnivalesque as a framework are found. Bennett's (1988) analysis of the culture of pleasure in Blackpool suggested that people who were away from home in an environment that sanctioned "misbehaviour" in forms of excess of alcohol or sexual liaisons would often behave in a carnivalesque way and indulge in behaviours that they would not indulge in at home. Sobchack's (1996) Bakhtinian observations of popular 50's British comedy suggested that there was genuine pleasure to be found in parody and mocking of those from a distinctly different social strata and that this brought pleasure because of its being subversive. Jones' (2003) critique of punk rock

and Halnon's (2004) analysis of the work of rock icons Marilyn Manson, Limp Bizkit and Slipknot outline the inclusive nature of fandom for fans of these bands and describe how a sense of belonging and escape from day to day reality is formed through fanship. These texts are positive in their view of the role of the carnivalesque in modern culture and agree with Bakhtin that the carnivalesque offers everyday people the opportunity to escape from the drudgery of their everyday lives.

One key element here is that the carnivalesque experiences offer escape *from* the everyday world of the individual not alternative *to* it. Davis (1996) feels that this is an important characteristic suggesting that a carnivalesque experience "may explicitly challenge respectable values but cannot foster an alternative community" (Davis 1996 p21).

There are, however, criticisms of the carnival culture. Morson and Emerson (1990), although generally admirers of Bakhtin's work, feel that rather than a liberating and empowering experience, carnival is, in fact, obscene and vulgar in comparison with the quiet, "responsible" language of Renaissance humanism. In a similar vein, Koller (1988) points out that the carnivalesque use of language and humour might be acceptable within the context of carnival but appear hostile or aggressive to others who do not share the experience. Free and Houghton (2003) suggest that excusing the use of the language of the Billingsgate at football matches by describing them as an example of carnivalesque can obscure the darker side of this behaviour.

Zappen (1996), feels that essentially in carnivalesque behaviours it is a question of balance. That it can be of real value to a group as it appears to genuinely offer temporary suspension, both ideal and

real, of hierarchical rank and promotes a special type of communion that would be impossible in everyday life is evident. However in Zappen's view it is only if the benefits outweigh the potential offence that may be caused by people hearing the language and being offended by it that it should be encouraged.

The rationale for exploration of the carnivalesque in this study is to discover fans' understanding of whether the experiences that are found in their football supporting world do support Bakhtin's descriptions of the carnivalesque and to explore the impact that these experiences may have on their sense of health and well being. These questions are posed against the backdrop of allowing, and in some cases even encouraging, people to shout, swear, make offensive gestures and make obscene remarks.

Some commentators step back from the polarisation of carnival as essentially good or bad forms of behaviour and see the carnivalesque in a somewhat more sinister way, not as a method of offering participants freedom but of, in fact, creating systems of social control.

2.4 An alternative to the carnivalesque ; football as implied religion and football as drama

Bakhtin's carnivalesque view of football supporting behaviours offers one perspective on the phenomena. Another could be the examination of football supporting through the lens of supporting as an implicit religion. What is meant by the phrase implicit religion lacks clear definition but is thought by Bailey (1983) to encompass the set of personal beliefs and normative practices that sustain an individual and provide guidance, a sense of direction, and/or a sense of belonging in postmodern times (Bailey 1990; Chalfant

1992).

Secular institutions may give rise to a level of attachment on the part of individuals and groups that is implicitly religious and implicit religion is concerned with a person's integrating foci and its effects whether they take a religious or secular form. Bailey (1997), in his text *Implicit Religion in Contemporary Society*, suggests that contemporary secular society and culture express a form of religion which can be understood when seen in the context of its acceptance of and commitment to a way of life or value system. This makes such ideas a "commitment to the human" rather than an "encounter with the holy" and, as such, Bailey feels that Implicit Religion combines "intensive concerns with extensive effects" and "longlasting influential passions." (Bailey, 1997 p.9). Bailey feels that this helps develop Durkheim's view that religions are potent forces for binding people into communities because both religions and implicit religions are focused around common values, stories and symbols and that this generates a sense of getting caught up with something greater than oneself.

In *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, Durkheim (1912) set out to do two things. Firstly he aimed to establish the fact that religion was **not** divinely or supernaturally inspired and was in fact a product of society and secondly he sought to identify the common areas of thought, belief and behaviour that religion placed an emphasis upon and the impact this had on the lives of members of a society. In the text Durkhiem suggests that

"Since religious force is nothing other than the collective and anonymous force of the clan, and since this can be represented in the mind only in the form of the totem, the totemic emblem is like the visible body the god."

Durkheim argued that religious phenomena emerge in any society when a separation is made between the sphere of what he called the profane (the realm of everyday utilitarian activities) and the sacred (the realm of the transcendental). An object is intrinsically neither sacred nor profane. It becomes the one or the other depending on whether the person chooses to consider it in a given light. A signature is just a signature but the autograph of a favourite player is invested with extreme importance for a fan of that player.

Whether Durkheim is right to define religion in this way, without a divine component and devoid of a creation myth, is open to debate, but it is easy enough to see how football could be counted as a religion in Durkheim's terms with a system of totems and associated chants, songs and rituals. The way in which fans show a commitment to their club by becoming familiar with their history and triumphs through stories and the attachment to symbols (eg the football shirt or the team colours) of their club all echo religious behaviours. Devotion to a club shown through the collective experience of attending the church by watching matches also helps maintain this system.

Unlike other forms of religion in which (in Durkheim's view) people mistakenly think they are connecting with some God or divine force, at least with football people realise that the source and focus of their devotion is not supernatural or able to change their lives by some form of divine intervention. However, in a modern world in which people's sense of identity and belonging are often uncertain, it is possible to see why the sense of community offered by football fandom can exert such a strong appeal. As people are less disposed to use traditional forms of religion for a sense of identity and belonging, so alternative secular sources have become more prominent. This is evident in such things as an increasing

importance being placed on national or ethnic groups, on social friendship networks and on leisure-based communities such as the music scenes that form around particular music and fashion styles. Football fandom forms part of this phenomenon, offering its participants the opportunity to know in one area of their lives who they are, what they are committed to and where they belong.

This point of view is echoed by contemporary writers such as McCloud (2003) and Jindra (1999) with Miller-McLemore (2001) similarly arguing that watching sports can be **felt** as being religious because it “moves them (fans) outside all routines of ordinary life to an imaginary world and at the same time creates a world that feels more real than all other ordinary moments” (Miller-McLemore 2001 p123).

The echoes of religion in the **behaviours** of football fans are easily observed and it is not difficult to draw parallels between the outward presentation of religion and football, but the parallels can be problematic. Firstly the fact that the experience of being in a crowd and watching football may in some ways (physiologically and narratively) parallel behaviours seen during participation in some religious rituals should not cloud the fact that one is clearly recognised as religious by the participant while the other is usually not. Comments about football as religion from football fans, commentators and players are usually delivered with an obvious tongue in cheek. Religion offers a moral code that should drive behaviours, morals and beliefs in everyday life. Football supporting has behaviours and morals and beliefs that are for most pertinent to the activity of supporting with many fans stating that they behave very differently at a match to when away from the ground. This is at odds with most religious observance that sets out a set of rules and behaviours to be seen at all times for the individual follower of the religion.

In the end the concept of the carnivalesque is perhaps a more accurate reflection of football supporting than the concept of football as an implicit religion. This is supported by the fans' descriptions of both the motivational reasons for the behaviour (more expressive and cathartic than spiritual) and because the elements of standing against authority (like the referee and the club owners and chairmen) appeared to resonate with the carnivalesque more than with the idea of implicit religion.

Another perspective that could be used in explaining the behaviours and experiences of football supporters is to analyse data against the backdrop of football as drama.

Like drama football has narrative, shape and discipline with rules, regulations and a clearly defined beginning, middle and end. Yet football, unlike scripted drama, allows for an infinite variety of outcome and a sense of true surprise, such as the wonderfully unexpected victory of a lower league team over a big club in a cup competition. So like **improvised** drama the outcome is hidden. It is known that the game will end but not how it will end so fans find themselves for the duration of the game suspended in a state of heightened arousal. This is, of course, the very essence of drama. Aristotle (1987) observed that the sense of heightened arousal and catharsis can be seen as a purification that an audience go through when watching a tragedy and is characterised by feelings such as terror, fear or pity and suggests that the crowd comes out of the theatre feeling like they have been emptied of such emotions.

When discussing drama Jameson (1979) suggests "we suspend our real life" when we engage in watching theatre or cinema and engage emotionally with the situations unfolding before us. This

means we become part of the experience because of our emotional engagement with the process. The same process occurs when fans enter the arena in which the match will take place. The drama that surrounds sport can be seen as a cure for boring lives. It is complete with the classic dramatic notions of conflict and victory and hero and a villain (even one dressed in black) and provides for the fans what Duffort (2001) calls an alternative to unsuccessful lives through the "escape and wish-fulfilment of victory".

Part of the appeal of drawing parallels between drama and football is the sociological connection that can be forged between large numbers of the audience and the "actors" on the football "stage" because despite the enormous wages earned by some high profile stars football players mostly come from, and belong to, the working class.

Unlike drama, however, where the connection is primarily a passive one in which the viewer connects emotionally with what is unfolding on the stage and observes, the participatory nature of watching football is more aligned with carnivalesque than drama. It may be suggested that forms of drama where audience participation is welcome, such as pantomime or the Rocky Horror Show, offer engagement but this participation is learned and reproduced in response to a deliberate, timed prompt from the stage. In football it is the unscripted unexpected aspect of the match that creates the bond between crowd and performers.

As with implied religion the concept of drama offers a conceptual framework for some of the observed responses fans have but is not as all-encompassing of the physical, emotional and inclusive aspects of the experience as the carnivalesque for offering a backdrop against which to analyse the data.

2.5 Hegemony and the Carnival as control

An alternative view of carnivalesque in football comes from Eagleton (1987 p149) who suggested that the carnival can be "a licensed enclave", a sanctioned ritual which functions as a safety-valve for popular discontent and a subtle form of social control. Stallybrass and White (1986 p14) similarly argue that what the carnivalesque actually does is to maintain social control by diverting passion and emotion away from political activity and they argue that "for long periods carnival may be a stable and cyclic ritual with no noticeable politically transformative effects." In this view carnival is seen as a way of distracting the poor and keeping their emotion and anger in check. Morson and Emerson (1990) are also critical of Bakhtin's reading of carnival when they suggest that Bakhtin probably did not seriously consider the political implications of the carnival process or the relationship of carnival to control.

The notion of social control through popular culture was developed by the Italian political theorist Antonio Gramsci in the 1920's. Gramsci described this process using the word hegemony (Strinati 1995). Gramsci was heavily influenced by Marx and accepted his analysis that the struggle between the ruling class and the subordinate working class was the driving force that moved society forward. What he found unacceptable however was the traditional Marxist view of *how* the ruling class maintained its power.

Unlike Marxist theories where ownership of the means of production formed the power behind the supremacy of the ruling class, Gramsci brings to the fore the role of popular culture in the forces of domination and the maintenance of the status quo. Control of the areas of information available to the public, combined with the ability to create heroes and villains, helps produce a society characterised by consensual control whereby individuals "voluntarily"

assimilate the world-view or hegemony of the dominant group (Ransome, 1992 p150). The fact that sport, television and cinema are central to popular culture is crucial here because Gramsci is adamant that particular attention should be given to everyday routine structures and "common sense" values when attempting to create mechanisms of domination (Gitlin, 1994 p517).

Aldous Huxley, author of the classic novel of social control, "Brave New World" (Huxley 1998), explained that the most efficient totalitarian system would be one in which the rulers would control a population of slaves who do not have to be coerced, because they love their servitude. In Huxley's model of the total state, the population was controlled through the use of sex, drugs, entertainment, government-generated slogans, and manufactured social fads. It could be argued that the current use prescription drugs such as Prozac, Seroxat and Ritalin, entertainment such as reality TV shows, Government spin and the constantly changing world of fads, fashion and consumerism show a world uncomfortably like Huxley's vision. In this vision the rivalry between specific teams and between countries are stoked up and exploited as a way of ensuring that the population focus aggression and anger where, from a ruling elite's point of view, it is safe and away from the political arena. It is of note that a review of tabloid newspapers I undertook over three days showed that the tabloids devoted six times as much space to football stories as to political stories.

The view of sport as having a role in social control and an alternative to political activity is also taken up by Bourdieu (1993 p125) who observes that the cultivation of aggression within the confines of sport means that "pupils on the sports field vent anger on each other rather than destroying buildings or shouting down teachers".

The idea of sport as a form of hegemonic influence is one with a long historical background. From Greek and Roman times the creation of games and spectacles have offered an outlet for aggression and the ability of the ruling class to provide ready made heroes and villains for consumption by the masses. From the rousing support screamed at gladiators in the Coliseum to the emotive encouragement screamed at wrestlers such as Big Daddy and Giant Haystacks in the less imposing arena of small town Leisure Centres the creation of this process has directed emotion and anger towards larger than life characters. English football has, of course, had its share of heroes and villains and this juxtaposition of "good guys and bad guys, us and them" is played out every week of every season.

It could be argued that giving the masses football to worry about, and be passionate about, means that the ruling class can effectively neuter opposition and divert their passions and energy into what is effectively a meaningless struggle devoid of any threat, power of challenge to control. This may mean that the well known and often quoted Bill Shankly comment "some people believe football is a matter of life and death. I'm very disappointed with that attitude. I can assure you it is much, much more important than that" (Doheren 2006) may in fact be a sinister and oppressive observation rather than a light hearted quip.

Irrelevant of what perspective is taken as to the meaning of involvement with the game and with a specific club one thing that is clearly evident is the extent to which individuals do identify with, and genuinely care about, their club.

2.6 The perception of football supporters as folk devils

As noted in the introduction to this work, in the 1994 season in England and Wales there were 5,006 football related arrests yet in the same time framework there were almost 22 million attendances at matches. By the 2001 season the number of attendances had risen to 27,761,187 with only 3,214 (0.01 per cent) being arrested for offences both inside and outside grounds, confirming the majority of domestic games are trouble free. Despite these figures much of the media coverage outside of the sports pages in England has focused on negative aspects of football supporting behaviour.

This negative labelling of a group can have serious consequences for the members of this group and this is especially important with a label which has "strong negative associations in the public" says Barker, (1998) who adds "the consequences of one definition rather than another can be very real" (Barker 1998 p13). This negative stereotyping has ensured that the football supporter remains stereotyped as one of society's "folk devils", to use the phrase coined by Stanley Cohen in his influential study *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The Creation of the Mods and Rockers*. (Cohen 1980)

Cohen argued that images of youth and of social disturbance were reported in such a way as to exaggerate the nature of the threat to established social norms and create what he called moral panic. He went on to claim that a moral panic is created through sensational headlines in the mass media, the use of a melodramatic vocabulary to describe events and a focus on behaviour that is considered a threat to social values. This, of course, is not a new phenomenon. Groups of people, and especially young people, have often been the inspiration for moral panics. These include Cohen's contemporaries

the teddy boys and mods and rockers, and more recently Hells Angels, hippies, skinheads, punks and hoodies. Further, even more sinister examples of this, it could be suggested, are groups such as asylum seekers and the mentally ill. As a society it appears we continue to create the same devils in different forms.

In his 30th anniversary edition of "Folk Devils and Moral Panics" Cohen identifies new situations where the moral panic idea has continued to flourish including the murder of James Bulger, the Stephen Lawrence murder, the shootings at the Columbine High School and the death of Leah Betts from taking Ecstasy (Cohen 2003).

It is of interest to note that when "football hooliganism" was at its perceived peak in the late 1970s, there were no figures reporting the number of acts of violence or public disorder were committed by these convenient "folk devils". The moral panic reaction to their activities was much more evident than simple, factual accounts of what fans actually did when they went to football games.

One empirical study seemed to indicate that football hooliganism did not actually exist as a phenomenon in its own right. This was a study conducted by the Strathclyde Police. The comprehensive audit covered all towns and neighbourhoods that contained senior level football grounds in Scotland. The researchers examined reports of crimes, arrest figures and disturbances for Saturday afternoons and Wednesday evenings when games were played and when they were not. They found no significant difference overall. In some cases, crime actually fell when football games were played. They concluded that there was about as much crime, violence and disorder associated with football as there was in society in general.

The report of the Strathclyde Police study appeared as an appendix of the McElhone Report (HMSO 1977), a report prepared for the Government which was to comment on the state of football related behaviour in Scotland. The appendix was largely ignored perhaps because it lay somewhat incongruously in complete opposition to the summaries and conclusions drawn both by the McElhone committee and by the other subsequent inquiries that something had to be done to tackle the "football hooligan problem".

McRobbie and Thornton (1995) introduce the idea, somewhat optimistically, that "folk devils" may be becoming less prominent in general now because the groups themselves have learned how to defend their own interests by their own strategic use of the media. The rise of the football fanzine and of glossy magazines dedicated to football offer a platform for football fans to counteract the folk devil label and begin to showcase the more positive elements of the supporting experience (see Pringle 2003, Giulianotti 1997). The rise of the internet has also offered the opportunity for supporters across the globe to focus on the positive elements that unite fans rather than the negative rudiments that divide them. Perhaps, as Furedi (1994) suggests, it may well be that "rather than focus on the next potential threat, panic, or "folk devil", we should instead strive to find an alternative vision of the world - one in which we seek out the best rather than the worst in human potential" (Furedi 1994 p6). Some research into sports appears to have started down this path and attempted to focus on the more positive elements of supporter's behaviours.

2.7 Inclusion, BIRGing and CORFing

Supporting a football club and watching the game live is essentially an experience in group participation. Crowds are not aggregates of individuals they are distinct social units because there exists an

affective bond between members (Cotterell 1996 p44). Argyle (1996) suggested that attending a football match is more than just watching the game and is closely linked to identification and inclusion within a group whilst Bourdieu (1987 p124) observes that although TV transmits sport to a mass audience those who actually attend may better be able to appreciate and decipher it. He suggests that identification with both the players as people and the club as an entity appear important. Zillman and Paulus (1993) echo this idea when they suggest that the defining characteristic which separates fans from mere spectators is the formation of alliances whereby fans "perceive themselves as members of a tacitly existing group to which the objects of their fandom belong" (p604). This view is also supported by Turner (1991 p160) who suggests that, in football crowds, conformity to group norms is achieved through "mutually perceived similarity between self and in-group others".

Cotterell (1996 p44) describes how supporter groups supply positive emotional experiences through acceptance and recognition for the individual as a contributor to what the group stands for and by providing in return the sense of belonging and solidarity with the group that confirms the group identity for each individual member. He uses a three stage model to describe how football fans achieve this status within a group. Cotterell uses Chelsea FC fans as an example but claims that the process applies to any club and its supporters.

In Stage 1 the person recognises that the social concept "Chelsea" applies to them, but views their belonging to this social group neutrally, and not as particularly important. By stage 2 the person loosely identifies with the social category "Chelsea" and adopts some of the norms and behaviours of Chelsea supporters and follows the fortunes of the club, knows the names of the players.

By Stage 3 the person is psychologically invested in the social category (e.g. goes to games, wears a scarf, sings the songs) and interjects so that it becomes a component of his/her definition of themselves, (I am a Chelsea fan) to the extent that successes or defeats of the team are experienced personally.

Although Cotterell (1996) is convinced of the positive attributes of this process others feel that this process, rather than actually producing positive effects, has negative consequences such as anti-social behaviour (Allen 1989, Burford 1991) and violence (Dunning, Murphy and Williams 1988, King 1995).

Branscombe and Wann (1991) offer the observation that viewing sports in a live setting provides individuals with "something grander than themselves" that they can feel part of without requiring any special skills, knowledge or specific values. In effect they say viewing sports allows the individual to momentarily escape from the trials and tribulations of the real world.

One reason for the appeal of supporting a team in a sporting contest as opposed to other leisure pursuits is put forward by Madrigal (1995) who surmises that, unlike predictable forms of leisure behaviour, sporting events represent a finite experience in which the outcomes are unknown prior to the commencement of the competition. In a football match, as was seen in the 2007 Carling Cup competition for example, a small league 2 team such as Wycome can play a large Premiership club like Chelsea and get a draw. This amazing outcome is the sort of thing that can happen in the world of football as opposed to, say, theatre where Romeo and Juliet always die in the final scene or the cinema where ET always goes home. This sense of the unknown can generate a feeling of anxiety

around the possible outcomes and can act as a stimulus for the marked ritualistic behaviours which fans display before a match to, in some way, attempt to influence the outcome that are explored later in the text.

Another suggestion for the behaviour of attending sporting events as a fan and allying oneself with a team is explored by Calдини et al (1976) who suggested the phenomenon of the BIRG (*Basking In Reflected Glory*) effect. Basking in reflected glory refers to an individual's inclination to share in the glory of a successful other with whom they feel in some way associated. The BIRG response can be seen as an ego-enhancement technique whereby individuals raise their esteem in the eyes of others by increasing their connection or association with successful others. Madrigal (1995) suggests that this BIRG effect can be observed in a behavioural manifestation such as wearing the team's logo on clothing or in a supporter extolling the virtue of the team to others.

The contrast to the BIRG effect, suggest Snyder, Lassengard and Ford, (1986) is the CORF (*Cutting Off Reflected Failure*) effect. The CORF response is an ego-protection technique in which there is a desire to distance oneself from an unattractive source. The BIRG / CORF phenomenon may give some explanation of the behaviour of so called "fair weather fans" that are more likely to attend matches when the team does well and less likely to attend when things are going badly. This idea that fans are quiet, withdrawn and less connected to the team when things are going badly may also help endorse the validity of the well known football chant "you only sing when you're winning!"

This phenomenon does not, however, appear to address the behaviour of fans who stay with a club consistently over a period of

time irrelevant of form and success or lack of success. Branscombe and Wann (1991) offer the explanation that for some fans the elements of *team identification* are of substantially more importance to some fans than the BIRG / CORF effect. They report that in their study the fan's identification with a team was not directly related to the team's professional record. Although the BIRG / CORF effect was visible it did not have the same level of importance as the identification with the team. Williamson et al (2003) and James and Ross (2002) also found this in their studies of basketball fans where identification with the team was one of the two most prominent factors that drew fans to the matches (the other being "fellowship").

Another way of attempting to understand the relationship fans have with their clubs was proposed by Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998) who suggest that supporting audiences become part of the performance because they become performer and audience at the same time. The type of involvement noted above clearly dovetails with Bakhtin's ideas of Carnival as being "not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people." (Bakhtin 1984 p7)

One area for exploration within this study around the subjects of BIRGing, CORFing and social inclusion focuses on whether fans feel that the supporting experience is actually one that is related to success or whether the identification and belonging elements of the experience are of greater value. It is perhaps of note that Mansfield Town are essentially *not* a successful club. They have very little history of success having won one championship (of the lowest division in the football league) and one minor national trophy (the Freight Rover Trophy), the most recent of these successes being nearly 20 years ago.

2.8 Issues of identification for a group of supporters

Issues of group inclusion, involvement and group support appear to be an integral part of the football supporters' world. J.B. Priestly captures this sense of involvement in "The Good Companions" when he writes;-

"All brothers together for an hour and a half....cheering together, thumping one another on the shoulders, swapping judgements like lords of the earth....to say that these men paid their shillings to watch 22 hirelings kick a ball is merely to say that a violin is wood and catgut, that Hamlet is so much paper and ink. For a shilling the Bruddersford United AFC offered you conflict and art".

This study examines the connection between being in a united and often cathartic group and the effect this can have on the mental health of supporters. When in a group, Button (1988) suggested that people's behaviour changes and that they can display behaviours and emotions, which can be either detrimental or constructive. The health benefits of a socially supportive group are outlined by Manthorpe (1994) and Pescosolido (1996) who suggested that broader social networks, which go beyond family support, are important for health of the individual but frequently ignored. Lawrence (2004) believes that the strength of a group is tied up with the fact that for the individual the experience of group membership implies legitimate participation in a social arena and guides both roles and actions.

Typical to any group is the development of territorial signals including badges, costumes, headquarters, banners and slogans. These help clearly define not only who is, but also who is not, a member of the group and as such who is able to access the

privileges and status that belonging to the group offers. King (1997) suggests that a key component of group membership, especially in the world of the football fan, is the importance of establishing a rivalry with another specific club and claiming ones own groups superiority over other groups.

Hirt et al (1992), however, suggested that close identification with a specific team presented some definite benefits **and** drawbacks for an individual. They argued that a strong allegiance with any team is risky because once a fan is committed openly, they are unable to easily disassociate themselves with their team and CORF (cut off reflected failure) if the groups performance begins to deteriorate. As a consequence the fan is unable to escape the negative associations when the team performs poorly. The Hirt et al (1992) study reported fans having increased mood and self esteem, and increased belief in personal competence as a direct result of team success and decreased mood and self esteem, and decreased belief in personal competence when the team failed. Branscombe and Wann (1991) corroborate this belief and in their study argue that strong identification by American college students with a college sports team provides a buffer from feelings of depression and alienation and, at the same time, fosters feelings of belonging and self worth.

This sense of belonging appears to be around the concept of a club rather than directly related to the people who make up the club. King (1997) suggests that fans generally have a sense of loyalty, not to the managers or owners of a club, or even to the players but to "the club" itself. This loyalty, he claims, is shown through such acts as regular attendance, wearing of club colours and singing (even when you are losing). In this way "the club", is the permanent concept, rather than a specific set of players or management team. There is not a single player or member of the coaching team still at

Mansfield Town FC that was there 15 years ago, but the concept, "the Stags", is a constant. Embodied in the yellow shirts and blue shorts (and some might argue poor results) is a consistency which is more than can be said for the local mining industry, the local textile industry, and for many fans, for marriage or wealth.

Summing up this sense of loyalty, inclusion and belonging Akkerhuys (2000) writes "There is a massive emotional risk involved in football matches. People become very passionately involved and when they go along to a football match they do not know if they will leave the ground completely ecstatic or with a sense of dejection". Going to a match is a very bonding experience.

2.9 Women and girls as supporters

Although, as Whannel (1992) suggests, the cultures of sport in Britain have traditionally been distinctively male, rooted in masculine values and are, as Archer and Macdonald (1990) observe, "traditionally a masculine preserve" around 15% of respondents in a 2001 FA Premier League National Fan Survey were female. The sample demonstrated that female spectators came from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds and that many female "new fans" were not exclusively young women, but women across a variety of ages.

Some of this increase may be down to deliberate policies developed, especially after the 1985 Heysel disaster where hooliganism indirectly cost the lives of 39 fans, when it was suggested in some quarters that football should be more "feminised". By encouraging a greater participation of women and families at football matches, it was believed that the atmosphere of games could become somewhat more "civilised" and that hooliganism might be less likely to occur in a family orientated environment. This, coupled with the need to raise more revenue through the turnstiles, encouraged a number of

clubs to introduce “female-positive” policies by reducing the price of admittance for women (e.g. at Sunderland), by having crèche facilities (e.g. at Millwall and at Leeds United), by holding Family Football Nights targeted at female fans and children (e.g. at Leicester City) and by encouraging more community links with females (e.g. through the national *Football in the Community* scheme).

In the new century the number of female football fans at top matches in England has increased substantially. In 1997 about 12% of FA Premier League fans were female and by 2001 this figure had risen to 15%. (Williams et al 2001). Although it can vary in proportion from club to club female supporters make up a percentage of supporters at any ground in the country but for the most part appear almost invisible in the public consciousness. Most people in England remember the 15th April 1989 when the worst tragedy in modern football history took place at Hillsborough, the home of Sheffield Wednesday Football Club. Ninety-five Liverpool fans were crushed to death during their FA Cup semi-final with Nottingham Forest. Most people do not remember, however, that nine of those who died were women and girls.

Although they are present at matches there is some discussion about how women are perceived and how welcome they are made in this environment. The National Survey of Female Football Fans in 1991 noted that “women in Britain continue to face cynical and hostile attitudes both from within the male game and from society in general”. Coddington (1999) suggests that is because football is often primarily about the bonding process between males and the introduction of women into the equation means that some men feel they cannot take part in this bonding.

It is not only men who can have some difficulty with women being football supporters. Other women can respond negatively to female fans. In her interview with Coddington (1997) Angela Fosdyke talks about her experiences at work stating "I feel alienated from the women in my office. When I explain I went to watch West Ham away that's the end of the discussion. Silence. They can't imagine a why woman in her right mind would want to go to a game".

In "Fever Pitch", his celebrated text on the triumphs, trials and tribulations of being an Arsenal fan, Nick Hornby (1992) perhaps typically defines the male response to the dilemma of female football fans when describing his relationship with his partner who is also an Arsenal fan. Hornby is quite happy that he has a partner who enjoys football. As their relationship develops however, a conversation takes place about future child-care arrangements on Saturday afternoons and his partner suggests alternate home games. Hornby is horrified when he realises that she meant they would take it in turns to go. He then decides that a football loving woman is fine as long as they don't get too involved. He complains that "Friends with partners who loathe football get to go every game; meanwhile I – who have an apparently ideal relationship with a woman who knows why Arsenal aren't the same without Smithy leading the line – I will be at home listening to Sport on Five, whilst she sat in *my seat*, watching *my team*". As much as Hornby thinks of himself as a modern man, he appears unable to accept that his partner may enjoy football to the extent that he does.

It may well be, however, that despite the differences suggested between male and female fans their experience of the actual game, and their response to it, may be very similar indeed. The comments of Cathy Long, a Liverpool fan interviewed by Coddington (1997) suggest that her experiences show a great similarity with the

experience that men describe at matches. She states "of course there is a great feeling of freedom; I found the atmosphere wonderful as a woman. Every inhibition would go, you could just be yourself. Nothing else mattered to me that afternoon. I would suggest that being part of a football crowd can be especially liberating and strengthening for a woman, who would normally have to be the sensible one, the bedrock of the family as a wife and mother." In the same text another female supporter Debbie Hartsfield takes up this theme stating "It's the reversal of my normal situation. I can leave behind my domestic ties, my busy life and adult responsibilities."

2.10 Previous research specific to supporters and health

Sports audiences do not get a large focus in research. Wan and Hamlet (1995) claim only around 4% of research in sport psychology and sport sociology research focuses on spectators. Although much of the research about football supporters has either focused on the negative sociological aspects such as racism or hooliganism, some research has attempted to link some changes in the frequency and intensity of physical conditions to the results of matches.

The Scottish Medical Journal made some connections between football supporting and admissions to an Accident and Emergency department when it published that the A&E department in Edinburgh Royal Infirmary treated 151 patients for football-related problems during the 1998 World Cup in France.

This rise in physical ill health was balanced by another Scottish study carried out by Master ton and Mender (1990) at the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary which showed reductions in emergency psychiatric presentations to hospital occurred during and after the finals of the World Cup, an effect evident in women as well as men.

This, they surmised, could arise from enhancement of national identity and from this the generation of a sense of belonging and social cohesion. This increase in feelings of inclusion they suggest has an impact on the mental health of some fans.

A Dutch study linking watching football to coronary disease by Witte et al. (2000) claimed to find evidence of a significant increase in mortality from coronary heart disease and stroke in a population of Dutch men aged 45 years or over on the day the Dutch team was eliminated by the French from the 1996 European football championship, compared to the five days before and the five days after the match.

This study was replicated by Tobin (1998) for a French world cup game. This match had an audience of 4.7 million television viewers in France, i.e. around 8 percent of the French population. Tobin found that on the day of the match, mortality from all causes did **not** increase among French men. He therefore questions the causal relationship found by Witte et al. (2000) between the football match and cardiovascular mortality.

An English dimension was added when Carroll et al (2002) examined the correlation in England following a match with Argentina and found that the risk of admission for acute myocardial infarction increased by 25% on 30 June 1998 (the day England lost to Argentina in a penalty shoot-out) and on the following two days. Jemez (2003) describes similar events in Denmark but feels that the problem may be that when fans are watching matches they delay seeking help or becoming anxious and it is this delay rather than the stress that increases the damage done. Most of the studies outlined above took as their starting point that changes were experienced in response to the cathartic nature of the fans experience.

2.11 The concept of catharsis

Fileenes (1974 p101) suggests that "the football field is a place where players can legitimately act out aggression and win measurable victories whilst the spectators achieve the same satisfaction in vicarious form" whilst Greenfield and Osborne (1998) suggest that part of the pleasure in football matches is actually being able, in a socially acceptable forum, to admonish, criticise, and shout in support of your own team whilst maintaining a degree of abuse and derision for the opposition throughout the game and the creation of a space for the fans to vent their emotions.

Armstrong acknowledges the importance of emotional release and feels that the opportunities and environments for this to take place in contemporary society are diminishing. Armstrong suggests that although emotions can, and sometimes do, run riot in the fans, the football stadium is one of the last spectacles in British life offering the chance of intense emotion and social relationships (Armstrong 1998 p9). Central to these ideas is the concept of catharsis.

Catharsis is not a new concept. In *Poetics* Aristotle claimed that viewing tragic plays gave people emotional release from negative feelings and that this emotional cleansing was believed to be beneficial to both the individual and society.

Catharsis was a key element of treatment during the early years of psychotherapy finding favor with Messer, Chariot and Brier. Bushman et al (1999) describe how the notion of catharsis was embraced by Freud who believed that repressed emotions could build up in an individual and cause psychological symptoms, such as hysteria or phobias. Freud's therapeutic ideas on emotional catharsis became part of what was known as the hydraulic model of anger.

This model suggests that frustrations lead to anger, and that anger, in turn, builds up inside an individual like hydraulic pressure inside a closed environment until it is released in some way. An abreaction or artificially created catharsis releases the pressure in a therapeutic environment.

Freud's subsequent rejection of this cathartic method within psychoanalysis and his reliance on free association as a sufficient form of abreaction, spread until dominating the field. By 1920, methods of emotive psychotherapy moved to the fringes of conventional psychological practice although some of Freud's colleagues continued to rely on methods of catharsis, notably Frenzy and Reich.

Reich had a model of working with emotion that is sometimes called the "conflict model" of catharsis. He thought there were two psychic forces at work in every individual. One is the force that wants to express emotion. The other is the force that seeks to prevent its expression, which he termed resistance. He thought the pressure of the two forces caused stasis, so his therapy techniques were designed to exhaust and weaken the resistance, to allow emotional expression to occur.

Clare (2000) explains how this idea of internalisation, and the need for cathartic release, was a central tenant in the work of Lorenz who, in 1955, published "On killing members of the same species" in which he states that present day civilised man suffers from an insufficient discharge of his aggressive drive and, as such, has "no adequate outlet for his aggressive drive in contemporary society" The suggestion here is that male aggression is inherent and needs no specific stimulus and that if no outlet is found it will explode.

Lorenz developed this “insufficient discharge of his aggressive drive theory” in his text “On Aggression” (Lorenz 1963).

This view was supported and developed by writers such as Desmond Morris (1967) and Anthony Storr (1966) throughout the sixties and seventies and formed a foundation for Peter Marsh’s view that football hooliganism was a normal expression of development in young men. All of these ideas trace back the cathartic experience to Aristotle’s suggested relationship between experience, expression and emotion.

Emotion regulation, or conversely the inability to control emotion, figures prominently in mental health and illness and the diagnosis of mental disorder (Gross and Munoz 1995). Gross and Levenson (1997) claim that over half of the nonsubstance related Axis I disorders, and all of the Axis II personality disorders, defined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association (American Psychiatric Association 1994) involve some form of emotion dysregulation.

Freud argued that emotional inhibition was an important cause of psychological illness and his talking therapy was designed to release “strangled affect” whose expression, for one reason or another, had been prevented. Despite the substantial changes from Freud's original theory in later years the idea that emotional inhibition may lead to psychological distress remains a central tenet of psychodynamic psychotherapy to this day. Accordingly, an important goal of expressive therapies continues to be the fuller expression of inhibited emotional responses (Levy 1990).

Other authors, however, cast emotional inhibition in a more positive light, arguing that emotion regulation represents an essential

developmental milestone (Saarni 1990, Thompson 1991). This view suggests that to be a fully functioning member of a society an individual *must* inhibit (to varying degrees) their ongoing emotion-expressive behaviour.

Contemporary Western society, according to Richards and Gross (2000) is decidedly ambivalent about emotions. On the one hand, emotions are seen as wanton marauders that taint good judgment with primitive, immature, and destructive thoughts and impulses. On the other hand, emotions are seen as indispensable guardians of our well-being that direct our responses to life's challenges.

Richards and Gross (2000) propose that rather than one extreme or the other it is the human capacity to self-regulate emotions and emotional responses that provides the cornerstone for adaptive success. This adaptational ability gives us the skill to control such emotions as frustration and anger and carry them internally from the point when they are ignited until an appropriate outlet for them can be found. Richards and Gross' (2000) idea, the "ventilation hypothesis", that internalisation of emotion equals bad and externalisation equals good is, however, a somewhat disputed concept.

In their book "Expressing Emotion" Eileen Kennedy-Moore and Jeanne Watson (1999) carefully review the research on this "ventilation hypothesis," the widely-accepted belief that expressing negative emotions, such as anger, sadness, or fear, is good for our mental health, our physical health, and our interpersonal relationships and they draw the conclusion that expressing negative emotions tends to increase rather than decrease the emotions, and does not necessarily improve our mental or physical health. Tavris (1988) sought to dispel what she described as a number of myths

about anger, such as the widespread but mistaken notion that venting for catharsis was a healthful thing to do. In her damning view of the whole notion of catharsis she concluded that "it is time to put a bullet, once and for all, through heart of the catharsis hypothesis". The belief that observing violence (or "ventilating it") gets rid of hostilities has, Tavris claims, virtually never been supported by credible research. Bushman (1999) is, if anything, almost contemptuous of the ventilation hypothesis and appears to mock those who suggest that displacing aggression away from its human targets and onto inanimate objects, for example, punching a pillow, walloping a punching bag, hitting a couch with a plastic baseball bat, or breaking glass helps to reduce pent-up anger.

One of the champions of the view that catharsis is a positive concept is John Heron who states in the 1998 revision of "The co-counselling manual" that catharsis is a complex set of psychosomatic processes by means of which the human being becomes purged of an overload of distress due to the cumulative frustration of basic human needs.

Heron suggests that it is not too extreme to characterise British society as non-cathartic. Child-raising practices are largely anti-cathartic: from the earliest years children are conditioned to deal with their distress emotions of grief, fear and anger, by controlling and containing them, by holding them in. Boys don't cry, girls don't get angry; and boys and girls soon learn that social acceptance is only won by the complete hiding away and burying of their personal hurts and concludes that roughly speaking, any child of 8 years old is expected to know how to hold it all in. Girls are given rather more permission to cry than boys, boys a little more permission to be angry than girls, but the common repressions are much more weighty than the minor differential permissions. Heron suggests that

catharsis is a natural "resetting device" for mind and body after negative emotional arousal. He argues that when this natural "resetting process" is prevented by the threat of disapproval from significant others then the upset does not just go away but remains locked up within.

Football is, of course, only one of many ways in which catharsis can be achieved. Rock concerts, theatre and political gatherings and many other ways all offer the opportunity for this process to take place but they all have the spectator/group elements in common. Bourdieu (1993 P125) believes almost all sports help participants "vent anger on each other rather than destroying buildings or shouting down" other people. Taylor (1978) suggests that an exciting aggressive game gives the spectator more scope for expressing feelings of excitement, aggression and general arousal. Even a major anti-catharsis writer like Tavis (1988) acknowledges Scheff (1979) who says, "ventilating anger directly can be cathartic, but only if it restores your sense of control, reducing both the rush of adrenaline...and reducing your belief that you are helpless or powerless."

The key area of exploration around catharsis in this study addresses the experience of catharsis for fans and the impact that this experience has on their health.

2.12 Ritual and anxiety

All over the world people perform rituals and, from the archaeological evidence, it appears as if they always have (Fisher 2003). Turner defines a ritual as "a stereotyped sequence of activities involving gestures, words, and objects, performed in a sequestered place, and designed to influence entities or forces on behalf of the actors' goals and interests" (Turner 1977 p183).

Lawrence (2004) notes the power of rituals to bind people together and states that "rituals with strong emotional conformity result in tightly bonded social units" (Lawrence 2004 p121)

Bell (1997) observes that in modern Western society, we tend to think of rituals as special activities inherently different from daily routine action and closely linked to the tradition and what Fisher (2003) calls the big rituals: church services, funeral processions, state occasions etc (Fisher 2003 p12). Marshall (2002) and Schachner (2001) state, however, that everyday rituals have an important part to play in the modern world because ritual behaviour not only brings people together in physical assembly but also tends to unite them emotionally. Collins (1994 p190) writes that a ritual heightens the contact between people and by going through common gestures, chants, and the like, it focuses attention on the same thing creating what Plutschow (1999) calls unity and harmony within diversity.

Ritual achieves this goal by creating a common culture that all members of a community share. The sociology of ritual is therefore primarily one of gatherings, of crowds, assemblies, congregations and audiences characterised by the formation of a collective consciousness. Components of ritualised behaviour are visible on the terraces of any football club during a match. Collective movements, gestures, chants and songs carried out in common help focus attention and make participants aware of each participant doing the same thing and in some ways thinking the same thing. Scholl (2001) suggests that ritual is a key element in defining group behaviours as it instructs both the initiated and the uninitiated in what words and gestures are expected from them and as such acts as an emblem of group identity as well as an expression of group ethos.

The active involvement with a ritual, according to Fisher (2003), leads to “the production of sentiment” and this, Rappaport (1999) proposes, forges commitments at a deep psychological level with the clearly outlined belief that even though the group involved states definite ideas by engaging in ritual speech and gesture they do not have to actually believe the postulates put forward. He claims that statements like “In God we trust” do not actually assume that the person vocalising the statement actually does trust in a God. The same observations may be suggested for football chants such as “We’re gonna win the cup” or “We’re on our way to Wembley” (or Cardiff as the case may be).

Rappaport (1999) suggests that much of the ritual we engage in has a role to play in the reduction of anxiety. In group behaviour this has less to do with the reduction of individual anxiety and more to do with group anxiety. The groups’ anxiety about defeat or humiliation leads to some, often complex, displays. These include verbal onslaughts, war paint, uniforms, chants and dances, and ritual salutes.

The key area for exploration in this study around ritual is the connection between performing a ritual behaviour and a reduction in anxiety. The fans ability to take control of anxiety by performing ritual will form a thread of the investigation into the effect that watching football may have on fans’ mental health. This, of course, presents the question of what “mental health” means.

2.13 Defining mental health

Taylor & Field (1993) suggest that we all think we know what health is but that actually health is very difficult to define. They suggest health can either be defined *negatively*, as the absence of disease,

or *functionally* as what a person is able to do. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has a functional underpinning in their view of what specifically mental health is, defining it as

“A state of well being in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, and is able to make a contribution to the community” (WHO 1999).

The WHO claims that all people should be healthy enough to actively participate in a social life and state that health should have importance given to aesthetic and social factors (WHO 2000). These aspects of health come together to support the state of health famously defined by the WHO in their 1948 charter, namely that health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

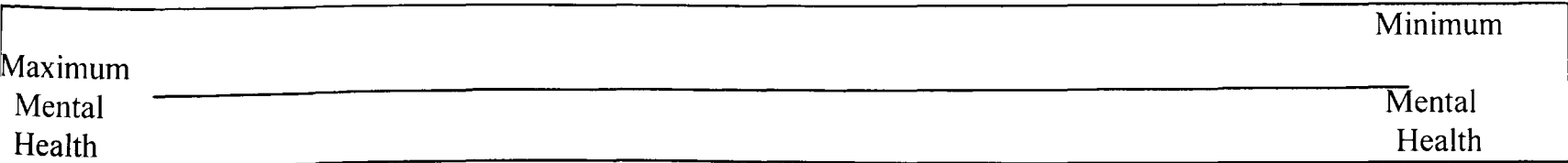
WHO definitions have been criticised, despite being admirable, for being utopian and unrealistic. Banyard (1996) goes so far as to suggest that if the WHO definition is correct, then he has never had a good day's health in his life!

Attempts to define mental health specifically suffer from similar difficulties as commentators wrestle with the presence/absence of features versus functionality debate. Prior (1999) observes that it is perhaps significant that although in their “Health of the Nation” document, published by the Department of Health in 1992, the Government set a target to “improve significantly the health and social functioning of mentally ill people” there was no attempt to define what mental illness actually was. Whilst some believe that mental health problems are primarily biological in nature and constitute a definite disease process, others such as Szasz (1960) dispute the existence of mental illness per se and claim that, as

there is no change in structure of function in any part of the body when mental illness is diagnosed, then the phenomena experienced is not a disease. Thorneycroft & Bebbington (1989 p77) highlight this problem by questioning the constancy of mental illness stating that since “all notions of what is considered mental disorder are tied to notions of what is considered normal, acceptable and tolerable within a society,” then as society changes, mental illness changes.

Yet if an illness is real *how can* it change just because a society says it has changed. The notion that lung cancer no longer exists because a group of eminent professionals decide to change the criteria for it’s inclusion in the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) would seem bizarre. Yet in mental health this happens with alarming frequency. In Edition 9 of the ICD, for example, disease number 302.0 existed. By the publication of ICD 10 it did not. The mental disease (homosexuality) disappeared completely from the medical vocabulary. Clare (1980) observes that the concept of defining what a state of mental health **actually is** can prove extremely problematic because defining mental health and mental illness “appears to permit a bewildering number of interpretations”. In attempting to conceptualise mental health and illness, Tudor (1996) suggested that rather than a fixed state mental health/illness can be understood as a continuum (Fig 1). In this simple model the person moves between the poles of being mentally ill and mentally well.

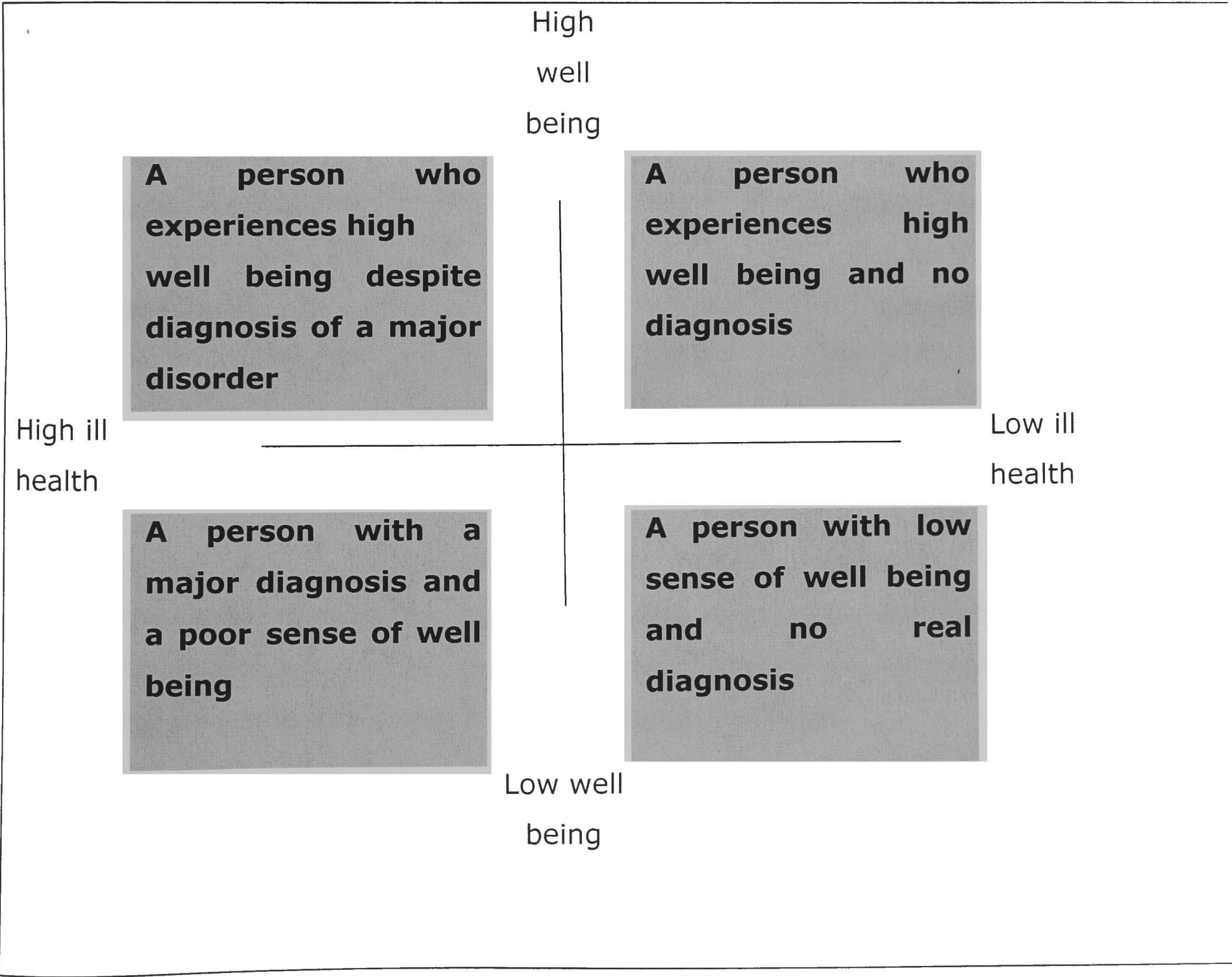
Figure 1 Health and illness as a continuum (Tudor 1996)



The major difficulty with this conceptual model, is that it is

impossible to be in two places at the same time and a person using this framework must then be either well or ill. This can prove problematic in understanding some mental health problems. For example, a person experiencing a bi-polar illness may be felt to be ill yet be experiencing a great sense of well-being and contentedness. Other people may have a diagnosis that suggests that they are very ill yet they may *feel* very well indeed. Downie, Fyfe and Tannahill (1990) addressed this by proposing a model (Fig 2) with two axes, one representing health and the other representing well being

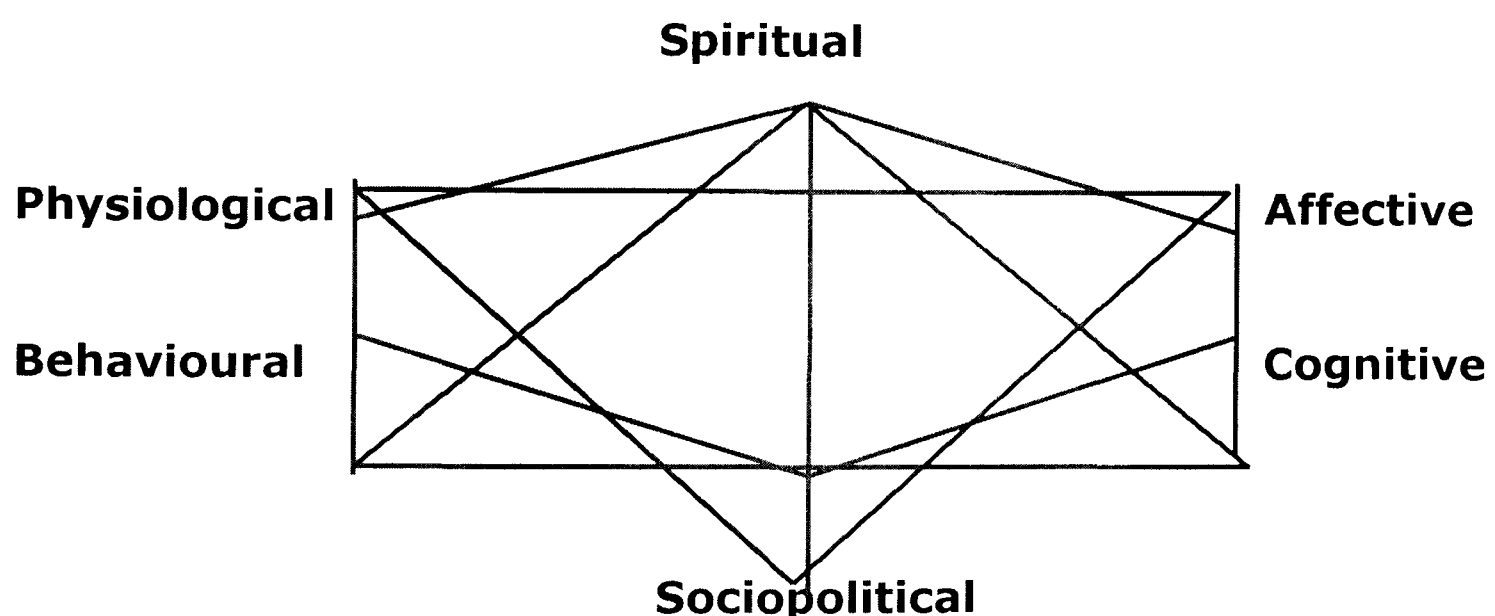
Figure 2 Mental health as a two axis model (Downie, Fyfe and Tannahill 1990)



In this framework it is possible to “be” very unwell and yet to “feel” very well.

Groder (1977) takes a more holistic view of mental health by suggesting a conceptual model (Fig 3) where good mental health is defined as a sense of balance between integrated systems and ill health as an imbalance between systems.

Figure 3 A model of Mental health / illness as a series of interconnected aspects which need to remain in balance from Groder 1977



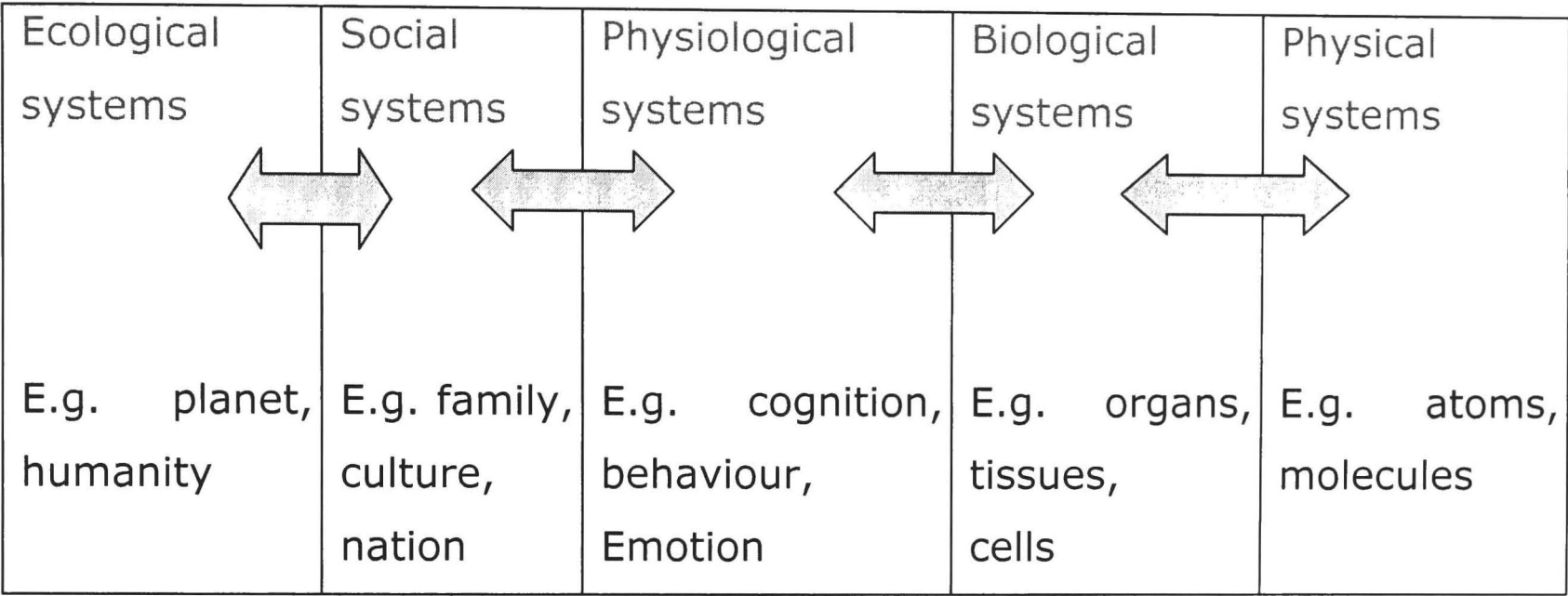
This ability to balance internal factors, however, lacks acknowledgement of the fact that we live in a society wherein , for most individuals, our internal ideas and thoughts are influenced by those we come into contact with directly or indirectly.

Banyard (1996) suggested therefore that it is not only the person’s ability to juggle the components of their own life but also to show the ability to integrate this with the person’s environment which constitute a state of mental health. He suggested a biopsychosocial

model (Fig 4) in which five layers or systems impact on the individual's mental health.

Figure 4 A biopsychosocial model of mental health / illness (Banyard 1996)

Each arena impacts on the one next to it in a reciprocal way

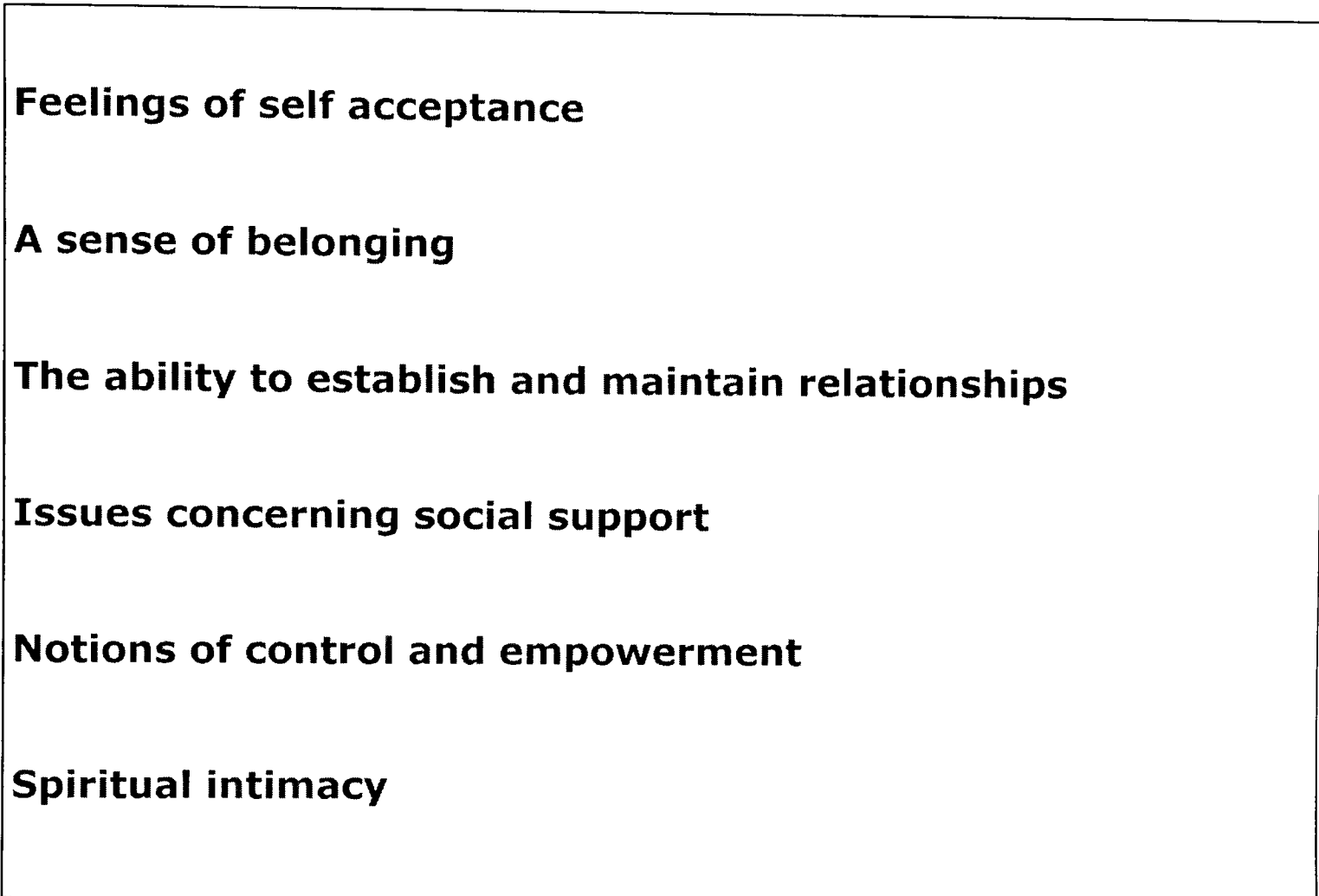


By taking these examples, it becomes clear that the question of whether or not an activity is good for a person's mental health is intimately bound up with the concepts of what actually constitutes mental health or mental illness in the first place. It is also clear that, in attempting to find a working definition of mental health, any enquiry will be caught in a web of semantics over a definition of what "mental health" actually is.

Herron and Mortimer (1999) attempted to define mental health from the point of view of lay perspectives rather than professional definitions. These observations of lay peoples perceptions of what mental health is, often refer to a state of mental health as having definite elements such as feelings of self acceptance, a sense of belonging, the ability to establish and maintain relationships, issues

concerning social support, notions of control and empowerment and spiritual intimacy.

Figure 5 (Herron and Mortimer 1999) -Lay perspectives of mental health



Using these themes as building blocks, mental health could be viewed as a state in which the individual has a sense of control and wellbeing in the areas of life involving relationships, self-awareness, self-expression, work and play. Evidence that someone has good mental health may be manifested in physical health, meaningful work (not necessarily paid employment), enjoyment of life, satisfying relationships with others and the ability to express feelings appropriately. Absence of these things may be related to the presentation of poor mental health. The choice of Heron and Mortimer’s framework for defining elements of good mental health as a foundation for this study was linked to the fact that their

definitions were devised by lay people and that this study explores lay peoples' views on how the experience of supporting impacts on their own mental health.

2.14 Mental Health Promotion

Despite the difficulties in defining what mental health actually is, promoting mental health has become a major area in the eyes of the Government. The major piece of legislation that put an emphasis mental health promotion as opposed to treatment was The National Service Framework for Mental Health. Published in 1999, this document outlined standards for mental health care focusing on the mental health needs of working age adults up to the age of 65.

The document detailed the seven standards that had to be achieved, describing them as realistic, challenging and measurable, and based on the best available evidence. On launching the standards the DoH (1999) claimed that they would help to reduce variations in practice and deliver improvements for patients, service users and their carers, and for local health and social care communities, health authorities, local authorities, NHS trusts, primary care groups and trusts, and the independent sector.

The seven standards addressed five distinct themes. These were Mental Health promotion (Standard one), primary care and access to services (Standards two and three), effective services for people with severe mental illness (Standards four and five), caring about carers (Standard six) and preventing suicide (Standard seven).

What was of interest to many observers of the strategy was the placing of mental health promotion prominently as the first standard. This appeared to show a commitment to the whole concept of mental health promotion because, for the first time, health and

social services have a clear remit to promote mental health for all and to reduce the discrimination experienced by people with mental health problems. Kirby et al (2004) suggest that this concern is in response to the sheer number of people who present with mental health difficulties and go on to report that the WHO are concerned with the state of mental health provision worldwide because, as the organisation acknowledge, that mental health problems account for almost 11% of health problems worldwide.

A guide to implementing actions to turn this rhetoric into reality was produced for the Department of Health by the mental health charity "Mentality". This guide was entitled "Making it Happen" (DoH 1999). This document suggested that mental health promotion works at three levels and at each level, is relevant to the whole population, to individuals at risk, vulnerable groups and people with mental health problems.

The first level identified was *strengthening individuals* by increasing emotional resilience through interventions designed to promote self-esteem, life and coping skills, e.g. communicating, negotiating, relationship and parenting skills. The second level involved *strengthening communities* by increasing social inclusion and participation, improving neighbourhood environments, developing health and social services which support mental health, anti-bullying strategies at school, workplace health, community safety, childcare and self-help networks. The final level at which health promotion works was the promotion of initiatives aimed at *reducing structural barriers to mental health* through processes to reduce discrimination and inequalities and to promote access to education, meaningful employment, housing, services and support for those who are felt to be vulnerable.

As can be seen in these observations the Government's idea of mental health promotion, in general, takes a broad view of mental health and moves away from an illness perspective to one which is based in a social model of health focusing on positive mental and emotional wellbeing. Within this idea is the acknowledgement that mental health is inextricably linked with the physical and social aspects of health and that each has an affect on the others. This view means, of course, that mental health is influenced both positively and negatively by a wide range of factors, both external and internal, including social and economic factors, self-esteem, feelings of belonging and the construction of the ability to cope.

McDonald and O'Hara (1996) suggest, therefore, that mental health promotion can be broadly defined as "any activity which actively fosters good mental health, either through increasing positive factors or reducing negative factors." They go on to suggest that the opportunities to influence positive mental health and engage in health promoting activities can be found in a variety settings including home, the workplace, school and social settings.

According to the Health Education Authority (1997) mental health promotion involves any action to enhance the mental well-being of individuals, families, organisations or communities. This wide view is further developed by Friedli (2000) who suggests that mental health promotion is essentially concerned with: how individuals, families, organisations and communities think and feel, the factors which influence how we think and feel, individually and collectively and the impact that this has on overall health and well-being

One key target of the National Service Framework for Mental Health is the use of health promotional activities to impact on the levels of

mental distress and suicide in men and in young men specifically. The number of suicides among the general population in England and Wales has fallen significantly since the 1980s with the exception of young men, who are an increasing cause for concern (Bille-Brahe 1993, Kelleher 1998). Suicide is the biggest single cause of death of men aged 25-34 (Clare 2000, Davidson and Lloyd 2001) and young men are four times more likely to take their life through suicide than young women (Pringle and Sayers 2006).

One distinct strategy to tackle this phenomenon using health promotional activities was developed by the National Institute for Mental Health in England (NIMHE) who, in 2004, launched the SHIFT initiative, a partnership with football agencies, and the backing of the Professional Footballers Association, to pilot and promote positive work on mental health issues with men. Another project using health promotional techniques and closely linked to football is the "It's a Goal!" project at Macclesfield Town FC and Manchester United. This project has based a Community Psychiatric Nursing service within the football league club and uses the stadium as a base for the service (see Pringle and Sayers 2004, 2006). Groups that focus on mental health awareness and mental health promotion run in the stadium and the project has become an integral part of the club itself. By basing the programme within the local club, and utilising the popularity and attraction of football, the project has engaged men who were reluctant to seek help for mental health problems to use the project to actively promote strategies for developing good mental health.

A key component in the development of good mental health is self-esteem. Self esteem refers to an abiding set of beliefs about one's own worth, competence, and abilities to relate to others and has been conceptualised as buffering the individual from adverse life

events (Vaughan & Oldham, 1997). Positive self-esteem is not only seen as a basic feature in the construction of mental health, but also as a protective factor that contributes to better health and positive social behaviour through its role as a buffer against the impact of negative influences (Harter 1999). It is seen to actively promote healthy functioning as reflected in life aspects such as achievements, success, satisfaction, and the ability to cope with diseases like cancer and heart disease (Stewart-Brown 1998, Bayer and Sanson 2004). Tudor (1996) supports this view in his text on mental health promotion, where he presents self-concept and self-esteem as two of the core elements of mental health, and therefore an important focus of mental health promotion.

2.15 Social support and mental health

Hupsey (1998) describes social support as a multi-faceted concept that has been difficult to conceptualize, define and measure. Callaghan and Morrissey (1993) suggest that despite the difficulties that exist when defining the idea concisely there is evidence that social support is important for people with a mental illness. They go on to point out that social support is something that is experienced by the recipient and, as such, it is the extent to which a person *feels* supported that is of crucial importance.

Stroebe and Stroebe (1996) suggest that there are two ways in which socially supportive and inclusive experiences can affect health. The buffering hypothesis argues that people benefit from social support only when they experience a stressful life event, whereas the direct effect hypothesis argues that social relationships promote health and well-being regardless of the individual's stress level. In either case, the relation between social support and health is felt to be a significant one (Faulkner and Davies 2005, Repper and Evans 2000).

Although the mechanisms through which health is affected by social support remain a matter of debate (Cohen & Wills 1985, Cohen 2001), claims that feeling genuinely connected to, and supported by, other people positively influence health have been made in various areas. These include adults in the general population (Wade & Kendler 2000), children coping with stressful events (Printz et al. 1999), people who have been victims of physical abuse (Varni & Katz 1997; Ezzel et al. 2000) and people displaying symptoms of depression and psychological distress (Beattie & Longabaugh 1997 Johnson et al 2003).

Hutchison (1999) feels that social support potentially embraces virtually all social relationships, even the most intermittent whilst Sayce (2000) reports the desire of people with mental health problems for more opportunities to be part of mainstream groups and communities, for more friends and for better relationships with family members. In the football supporting community the most frequent of the family relationships visible is that between fathers and sons.

2.16 Fathers, football and mental health

Lamb (1997) suggests that for many years, research on children's development and well-being has generally focused on the dynamics between mothers and their children but some recent research has begun to focus on the importance of quality time that takes place between fathers and children. Dunn (2004) suggests that this reflects an increasing interest in the significance of children's relationships with their fathers for their development, well-being and adjustment, a view shared by Dallas et al (2000). Researchers are in agreement that mothers and fathers interact differently with their children (Parke, 1996) and studies often find that fathers are more

likely to be involved with their sons than with their daughters (Marsiglio, 1991). Irrelevant of gender, Rice, Cunningham, and Young (1997) found, overall, that attachment to parents was a significant predictor of emotional well-being. A view echoed by Cooper, Shaver, and Collins (1998) who found that securely attached individuals reported superior functioning in a variety of areas such as emotion regulation and adjustment.

A study by Flouri and Buchanan (2002) was based on 17,000 children who were born in the UK in 1958 and who were followed up at ages 7, 11, 16, 23 and 33. This found that good father-child relationships are associated with an absence of emotional and behavioural difficulties in adolescence and greater academic motivation. It also found that boys who had involved fathers were less likely to be in trouble with the police as they grew older. This echoed McCann (2000) who found that in families where there was little or no involvement with a father there was a marked increase in behavioural disorders, psychiatric diagnosis and suicide.

Amato (1994) showed that the closer children were to their father, the happier, more satisfied and less distressed they reported being whilst Barnett, Marshall and Pleck (1992), showed that sons who reported a positive relationship with their parents had relatively low levels of psychological distress. Gould, Shaffer, Fisher & Garfinkel (1997) suggest that children with involved fathers tend to be more psychologically well adjusted.

Although, as Schmotkin (1999) points out there is some ambiguity in the literature around what exactly constitutes and defines affective bonds in adult-child-parent relations, it appears that the Government's 1998 consultation paper *Supporting Families* is correct

when it states that: "fathers have a crucial role to play in their children's upbringing."

Fortner et al (2004) suggest that this influence extends well beyond the childhood years and still important for adolescents. This view is supported by Flouri and Buchanan (2002) with their contention that promoting fathers' involvement, with children and teenagers, can be an effective way to promote well-adjusted family relationships in both adolescence and adult life. If, as the literature suggests, the relationship between fathers and sons can be a major component in the development of good mental health for young men the activity of attending matches may offer one of the most accessible ways of helping this relationship find some "ring fenced" planned time in which to develop.

2.17 Conclusion

The literature reviewed outlined a series of threads that it was felt might interweave to help explore and understand the relationship between football supporting and mental health. The sense of belonging identified in the North American sports literature and the sense of group cohesion detailed in Cohen's writings on folk devils both could be seen as uniting groups of people in different but similar ways.

The exploration of the work of Bakhtin around the carnival and of Giulianotti around the carnivalesque in football helped identify that certain social norms appear to be acceptable in these specific environments that are not in other aspects of daily life. The review of the literature around hooliganism in England, Europe and South America highlighted the fact that across the world some people use football as a vehicle for violence and aggression but the statistical review of incidents suggested that the numbers actually involved are

small.

The literature around interpersonal dynamics suggested that although women make up a proportion of fans the experience is predominantly male and that good interpersonal relationships between family members, notably between fathers and children, can have a considerable impact on personal development. The question of whether attending football matches together could impact on these family dynamics was an area that it was felt would be important to explore.

The review of the literature also helped to further develop ideas around the components that make up the foundation of good mental health, especially around the ideas of belonging, inclusion, expression of emotion and the importance of social support. This would be the key area of study, exploring any connection that appeared between the ability to develop these components and the experience of supporting a football club, in this case Mansfield Town FC

“Chapter 3” – SETTING THE CONTEXT

3.0 Setting the context

This study is an attempt to capture the experience of a group of people and make sense of events from the participants’ point of view. It becomes imperative in this search for understanding that the experiences described are viewed within the local context. With this in mind the following chapter aims to outline the background of Mansfield as a town and Mansfield Town as a football club. I am indebted to Paul Taylor and Martin Shaw for their encyclopaedic knowledge of the history of the club which was accessed through contact with the club and on the official Mansfield Town website.

Mansfield is a community of 103,000 people and many of the elements that contribute towards physical health problems, mental health problems and social exclusion are very clearly in evidence locally (Meldrum and Pringle 2006). Recent figures (Mansfield District Council 2005) show that between 1998-2002 the number of jobs in the Mansfield area declined by 17.2 per cent (compared to big increases nationally) and the employment rate in Mansfield (68.5 per cent in 2002/03) was well below that of Great Britain as a whole (74.2 per cent). The district is ranked 360th out of 408 districts nationally in terms of economic productivity.

The 2004 Index of Multiple Deprivation suggests that Mansfield is one of the most deprived areas of the country. Analysis of the sub-components which make up the index shows that in every area Mansfield is more deprived than the national average, particularly in respect of educational performance, crime levels, and health. Some 24.2 per cent of people suffer from a life limiting long-term illness, well above the national average of 18.4 per cent and doubtless a reflection of area’s industrial and coal-mining heritage.

The origins of the Mansfield Town Football Club can be traced back to 1897 and the Wesleyan church on Bridge Street. A team formed by Frederick Abraham and Thomas Cripwell and called Mansfield Wesleyans eventually became Mansfield Town in 1910 and moved to their present ground at Field Mill in 1919 adopting their familiar amber and blue colours. The club was accepted into the football league in 1931.

In the 1930's the Nottinghamshire Coalfield reached a capacity production with 30 Collieries in operation at one time. With relatively new pits, Nottinghamshire was in the forefront of technological advancement in mining. Following the nationalisation of the coal industry in 1947, Nottinghamshire led the way in the mechanisation of coal production, the introduction of underground transport systems for both men and coal, and the replacement of pit ponies.

At the club the 1940's and 50's saw mediocre performances generally as the club failed to be promoted out of Division 4 or win any silverware. Despite this Mansfield Town had a regular attendance of, on average 12,000 spectators. One of the first games in the country to be played under floodlights floodlights on 5th October 1961 attracted a huge crowd of 17,380 and in 1962/3 the club were promoted to the 3rd Division.

The 1960s and 1970s saw a mass migration of miners from closed coalfields in other parts of Britain, particularly the North-east and Scotland, to work in the expanding Nottinghamshire coalfield. To accommodate the northern immigrants, vast modern housing estates were built by the then National Coal Board at, Ollerton, Forest Town and Clipstone. These areas still provide a large number of fans who attend the matches at Field Mill on a regular basis.

The highlight of this period for Stags came on Wednesday 26 February 1968, on what turned out to be one of the greatest nights in the club's history. In front of 21,117 at Field Mill Stags were drawn at home to West Ham United, who were standing sixth in the First Division and who had three World Cup winners in their side: Bobby Moore, Martin Peters and Geoff Hurst along with youngsters Billy Bonds and Trevor Brooking. Mansfield comfortably won the match 3-0. The season 1974/5 was one of the finest in Stags' history and is remembered by many Stags fans as one of the most enjoyable ever. Mansfield Town were champions of Division 4 and scored over 100 goals in all competitions. In 1976/7, Mansfield were promoted from Division 3 to Division 2 for the first and only time in their history. They were however relegated back to Division 3 at the end of this season.

The highlight of the club's history came in 1987 when Stags won the Freight Rover trophy, a competition for lower league sides, at Wembley stadium in front of their largest ever crowd of fans.

The success on the pitch however was at odds with what was happening socially in the local area. At its peak, the Nottinghamshire coalfield had produced in excess of 25 million tons of coal in a year and more than half of the county's pits claimed a place in the industry's million-ton-a-year league. In the 1980's, however, the county of Nottinghamshire was at the heart of one of the darkest and most violent episodes of British industrial relations, when the coal industry came under the leadership of American coal owner Mr Ian MacGregor, who was appointed as chairman of British Coal in September, 1983.

Many of the county's miners refused to join a national strike called by the NUM (National Union of Mineworkers) in March 1984 claiming it was unconstitutional. Many families within the community found themselves split along "striker/scab" lines as some went to work whilst others stayed away. The strike, with its flying pickets, police interventions, violence and poverty brought untold hardship for many miners who attempted to persevere through the strike and intense anger and resentment towards those who continued to work. A legacy of the strike, which ended in March 1985, was the formation that year of the Nottinghamshire based breakaway union, the UDM (Union of Democratic Mineworkers). The following decade saw periodic closures of a few mines over the years but it was just prior to the privatisation of the coal industry in early 1994, that the end was signalled for all but a handful of the remaining collieries. By 1997, just six collieries were still operating in private hands.

Throughout the turmoil of the mid 90's the club continued to offer a sense of continuity for local people and their predictable fare of mediocre results and performances was reflected in an unspectacular decade characterised mostly by mid-table finishes in the bottom level of the Football league.

The legacy of the strike and subsequent colliery closures has been a hard core of unemployed men within the local area and the poverty which redundancy brings once the, often meagre, redundancy payments have been spent. Echoes of the strong split between the mining communities can still be heard in the chants of the opposing supporters when Nottinghamshire (UDM stronghold) clubs like Mansfield or Notts County play Yorkshire (NUM stronghold) clubs like Leeds or Bradford or Derbyshire clubs like their main rivals Chesterfield FC (for example the chant from Chesterfield fans of "I'd rather be a poofter than a scab!")

The 2001/2002 season saw the Stags promoted to Division 2 with an immediate return to Division 3 the following year and the 2003/2004 season saw them reach the play-off final at Cardiff's Millennium Stadium only to lose in a penalty shoot out to Huddersfield Town and remain in the lowest division of the Football League for another season.

With this as a history and with the current situation at the club, it is unlikely that Mansfield Town could be described as either a glamorous, or even a particularly successful, club. If success is defined as winning trophies, however, then very few clubs have success year on year and for the majority of clubs the realities of statistics speak for themselves. The four divisions of the major football league are made up of 92 teams. This means that there are 4 teams crowned champions every year, and 88 that are not. In the FA cup, which is open to non league sides, over a hundred teams face the disappointment of failure. Mansfield Town is one of those clubs for whom failure is the norm, yet every week thousands of people continue to go, and hope, and dream. This outlet for hopes and dreams has, perhaps, become more important as the town has changed since the demise of the coal industry, an industry which was, by far, the major employer in the town and in many ways, the lifeblood of the community.

"Chapter 4" - METHODOLOGY

4.0 Introduction

This chapter will address the methodology used to generate and analyse the data collected for the study. It will address the debate around the appropriate choice of methodology and outline why Grounded Theory was selected as the method of choice for this study. The chapter will also explain how this methodology was applied in terms of sample selection, data collection and data analysis.

4.1 The Qualitative Quantitative debate

Mental health nursing research has, according to Burnard and Hannigan (2002), been characterised by a distinct split down qualitative /quantitative lines with this divide being seen as two distinct, and apparently opposing, positions. This conflict of ideas has been visible in debates concerned with mental health nursing research, education and practice with each of the views having its champions, its "gurus", and its detractors. This is not significantly different to other professions where the qualitative / quantitative debate has raged with each camp making claim to the superiority of its methods (Snape and Spencer 2003, Mays and Pope 2000).

Quantitative research has historically been regarded as the more prestigious as its findings can potentially be generalised more easily. Greenhalgh and Taylor (1995) suggest that the strength of the quantitative approach lies in the reliability of the methods, in that the same measurements should yield the same results time after time. Writers such as Gourney claim to show that quantitative research is more credible than its qualitative counterpart by suggesting, for example, that "there is no dispute that the

randomized controlled trial remains the gold standard for determining the superiority of one treatment over another” (Gournay 1997, p. 223).

Quantitative researchers seek to achieve objectivity by eliminating bias (Barbour and Barbour 2003) and demonstrating statistically that any phenomenon reported is likely to be associated with a particular intervention or event rather than chance (Green and Thorogood 2004). Horsburgh (2003) suggests that this objectivity is seen by quantitative methodologists as being imperative to the research process and that good researchers are presented as quantitative observers of nature who follow strict methodological rules. Raphael (1997) supports this view and claims that the quantitative, empirical scientific method of investigation “aims at truth and has a fair chance of achieving it” (Raphael 1997 p13). This method is criticised, however, for ignoring what Bowling describes as the social reality of the person (Bowling 1999). Bowling’s criticism suggests that quantitative methods often fail to produce results that are contextually rich. This view that quantitative methods are inadequate for exploration of more abstract phenomena such as motivation, experience and emotions is echoed by Green and Thorogood (2004), Fossey et al (2002) and Silverman (2000). These views can be encapsulated by the phrase that famously adorned the wall of Albert Einstein’s office in Princeton University that “Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts”.

Qualitative research can be characterized as the attempt to obtain an in-depth understanding of the meanings and “definitions of the situation” presented by informants, rather than the production of a ‘measurement’ of their characteristics or behaviour (Wainwright, 1997) and usually operates from the premise that total detachment

on the part of the researcher is unattainable (even if deemed desirable) and that the individual who carries out research comprises an integral component of the entire process and product, as opposed to being a disembodied bystander (Popay et al 1998). It takes for granted the notion that truth is relative to individuals and communities and represents "local and specific constructed realities" (Lincoln and Guba 2002 p.167).

The method aims to address questions concerned with developing an understanding of the meaning and experience and the dimensions of humans' lives and social worlds (Fossey et al 2002) and to "illuminate the subjective meaning, actions and context of those being researched" (Popay et al 1998 p.345). In this sense, qualitative research is designed to be flexible and responsive to context (Tesch 1990) and to represent the real world of those studied and the world in which their lived experiences are embedded (Denzin and Lincoln 1994). The emergent, flexible nature of this qualitative research is seen by some as one of its main strengths. Rather than rigid adherence to a specific research design, Popay *et al.* (1998) argue that the hallmark of good qualitative methodology is its variability, rather than its standardization. This view is developed by Mason (2002 p134) who claims that qualitative methods are usually of greatest value "when the object of the process is to explain some form of social process or experience or meaning".

These positive views of qualitative methods are balanced by criticisms of the approach. Horsburgh (2003) writes that one criticism which has been levelled at qualitative approaches to research is that they allegedly lack the "scientific" rigour and credibility associated with traditionally accepted quantitative methods which rely on the measurement and analysis of causal

relationships between variables. Fade (2003) comments that this means that qualitative research does not offer generalisable proofs in the statistical sense, and that most studies are limited because of this. Another criticism of qualitative methods is that since the process is ultimately interpretive there can be no guarantee of coherence in the analysis (Madill, Jordan, & Shirley 2000) Gourney and Ritter (1997) go further in their criticism of qualitative research especially in mental health nursing by suggesting that much existing qualitative nursing research "amounts to no more than anecdotal accounts of nurses' and patients' experiences" (Gournay & Ritter 1997 p 441).

Qualitative methods are also criticised for the potential they have for bias in the researcher. The fact that the researcher interprets and analyses the data in an attempt to find meaning creates the potential for their own personal bias finding its way into the analysis. It is broadly accepted that to help counter this that qualitative researchers should expose their biases and personal perspectives and demonstrate that these have been taken into account during analysis (Hall & Callery 2001, Finlay 2002).

Authors such as Mays and Pope (2000), Anderson (2001) and Burnard and Hannigan (2002) claim that both qualitative and quantitative research have validity with neither being intrinsically superior to the other. Barbour and Barbour (2003) and Lewis (2003) propose that quantitative work seeks to measure and specify, whilst qualitative researchers are likely to find that their questions may broaden out and that these are developed and built upon as the research progresses. As such, both have a role to play in the generation of new knowledge (Snape and Spencer 2003, Green and Thorogood 2004).

Rolfe (1997) suggests that, in the end, the debate should not be about the primacy of one sort of research method over another and should be that we should choose our research and clinical methods according to the questions that we are addressing. Silverman (2000) concurs saying the choice of method should in the final analysis reflect what the researcher is actually trying to do. The choice of method, suggest Murphy et al (1998), should be made on purely pragmatic grounds, a view acknowledged by Anderson (2001 p96 p96) who proposes that “there is little mileage in putting one method over another it is really horses for courses”.

In this study although there are elements of quantitative data collection around such things as the number of games fans attend, or the age of fans and there are some quantitative measurements to help highlight some areas of interest such as the number of fans who chant or swear, the study is essentially qualitative in nature.

The main reason for this is that the study aimed to explore the *experiences* of a range of supporters and, as such, to ensure that it was *their* views that were captured. The use of diaries that allowed the fans to express ideas rather than a questionnaire where they responded to preset answers helped ensure that participants in the diary study were able to construct ideas in their own language that reflected the complex process of thinking, feeling and experiencing that is almost impossible to quantify. The qualitative approach helped ensure that answers to questions were not restricted to defined fields of response set by the researcher and helped participants expand ideas beyond the superficial.

The shaping of ideas that appeared in the diary study into the prompts that helped focus the interview section again helped develop ideas around the fans own experiences, thoughts and

feelings. This means that although the interviews might look on paper like a series of closed questions rather than prompts, the delivery of the prompts was done in a style that was facilitative and open and allowed the participants to express ideas within a loose focus.

For this study a quantitative methodology would have been appropriate if the study only wanted to explore what fans actually do at matches but because the study wanted to examine what fans experience and the impact they feel this has on them the method chosen was a qualitative one, in this instance grounded theory.

This method, of course, placed a greater emphasis on the analysis of data in what could be argued is a more subjective way. To reduce this potential problem a transparent system for data collection and analysis was used.

4.2 Grounded Theory

Grounded Theory is one of the major approaches used by health professionals in qualitative research. Chiovitti and Piran (2003) and Holloway and Wheeler (1996 P98) observe that "although this methodology has its origins in sociology it has been used successfully in psychology and health studies". Stern (1995 p98) proposes that "the strongest case for the use of grounded theory is in investigations of relatively uncharted water, or to gain a fresh perspective in a familiar situation."

Grounded theory was introduced by the sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in their text *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (Glaser and Strauss 1967) and was put forward as an alternative strategy to what they called the more traditional approaches that were prominent at this time. These relied heavily on hypothesis

testing, verificational techniques, and quantitative forms of analysis. Polit and Hungler (1997) observe that because Glaser and Strauss were the first to address grounded theory as a research method they are consequently credited with the development and refinement of this method.

What most differentiates grounded theory from other research methods is that it is a process that is characterised by being essentially emergent. As such it is a process that Martin and Turner describe as "an inductive, theory discovery methodology that allows the researcher to develop a theoretical account of the general features of a topic while simultaneously grounding the account in empirical observations or data" (Martin and Turner 1986 p141).

Grounded theory sets out to find what theory accounts for the phenomena being studied rather than attempt to match the phenomena to an existing theory. The aim of the Grounded Theory is to **understand** phenomena and to, as Glaser in particular states it in his later work (Glaser 1992), discover the theory that he states is **implicit** in the data. One does not begin, say Strauss and Corbin (1990), with a theory then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge through a process of constant comparison and coding of data. (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, Mellion and Tovin 2002).

The generation of theory using this methodology involves a process of the researcher becoming familiar with the collected data and then developing a sequence of coding. This coding process is the heart of grounded theory analysis. Holloway and Wheeler (1996 p104) state that "coding is the process in grounded theory by which concepts or themes are identified and named during analysis". Because of the

process of developing theory at the same time as collecting data codes tend to be provisional and are usually modified or transformed over a period of analysis. Glaser and Corbin (1990) suggest that using the Grounded Theory method involves a process of three types of coding; open coding, axial coding and selective coding.

Open Coding - Open coding refers to that part of analysis that deals with the labelling and categorising of phenomena. Holloway and Wheeler (1996) state that all of the data collected is coded and categorised and from this process major concepts and constructs are formed. Robson (2002) calls these sections of data the *initial* categories of information about the phenomena being studied.

Open coding works through comparing the collected data and attempting to create groups of similar data called codes. Open coding requires the asking of questions and the making of comparisons. Data is compared and similar incidents or experiences are grouped together and given the same conceptual label. If a new piece of data does not fit an existing definition of a phenomena then "either the definition needs to be changed or a new code created" (Gray 2004 p333). After collecting and interpreting data about a particular category, in time, a point of diminishing returns is reached at which point any new or reviewed data adds nothing to what is already known about a category and its properties. When this occurs "saturation" is said to have been reached and the process suggests that the researcher ceases coding for that category.

Axial Coding - Whereas open coding fractures the data into single concepts and categories, axial coding puts the data back together in new ways by making *connections* between a category and its sub-categories. Gray (2004) describes the key to axial coding as recognising the relationships between categories. In Grounded Theory it is felt that there are propositions which indicate generalised relationships between one category and its concepts and other discrete categories. This element was originally termed "hypotheses" by Glaser and Strauss (1967) but the term 'propositions' is more often used currently (Whetten 1989).

Selective Coding - Selective coding is the process of identifying one category as the "core category", and relating all other categories to that category. The essential idea is to develop this core category as a single storyline, This is the overarching theme which links all of the other categories. This is also known in some texts as the core variable around which everything else can be draped (Grey 2004). This core category generates the theory put forward at the end of the process and to be credible must offer explanations of the rationale for linking the categories through the data.

The emergence of the theory from the data must inevitably, according to some theorists, be influenced by the background and perception of the researcher analysing this data (Becker 1993, Anderson 2001). Chamberlain (1999) acknowledges this relationship between researcher and data by stating that one of the most significant areas for debate in discussions about grounded theory as a method is the debate around the researcher's interaction with their data.

Data collection, note-taking, coding and memoing occur simultaneously from the beginning whilst sorting occurs when all categories are saturated and writing occurs after sorting (Dick 2002) This means that rather than a distinct linear sequence the grounded theory process unfolds with areas of overlap in collection and coding stages and in the sorting and writing stages. Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest that this is a strength of Grounded Theory as the process allows for refinement in the text as the writing develops.

The fact that the process is driven by the researcher analysing data to code what they feel are the important components inevitably leads to claims that the theory is in danger of being subjective (Chamberlain 1999) but Keddy et al (1996) claim that grounded theorists accept this potential in the process and work hard to counter the possibility. Charmaz (1995) suggests that the best way of responding to this criticism is to display a high level of transparency about how the theory was built up.

4.3 Glaser or Strauss?

Having approached the methodology of Grounded Theory by starting with Glaser and Strauss' original 1967 text "The Discovery of Grounded Theory", subsequent reading outlined how the two researchers had disagreed about how the method should develop and how each had published ideas about how the method should be refined.

Babchuk (1996) describes how although many of the central components of grounded theory were outlined in the original Glaser and Strauss (1967) text subsequent publications by Glaser and Strauss writing alone or with others, began to reflect important differences in how these scholars envisioned grounded theory and its use. As a consequence of this process two somewhat distinct

methodologies have evolved based on the original work, each with its own underlying properties.

In Strauss and Corbin's (1990) "Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques" the authors suggest that axial coding is a process of putting "data back together in new ways by making connections between categories and subcategories" (Strauss and Corbin 1990p. 97). This is done, they argue, through conceptual elaboration of categories by means of a coding paradigm denoting causal conditions, context, action/interactional strategies, and consequences. This development of a tight coding paradigm means that the technique can be used to address many research problems including suggested or assigned (for example by a professor to a graduate student), technical literature. They believe that "the research question in a grounded theory study is a statement that identifies the phenomenon to be studied" (Strauss and Corbin 1990p. 38)

Glaser took great exception to this idea and responded that the research problem itself is discovered through *emergence* as a natural byproduct of open coding, theoretical sampling, and constant comparison. Ideally, the grounded theorist begins his or her study "with the abstract wonderment of what is going on that is an issue and how it is handled" (Glaser 1992, p. 22). In effect grounded theory is not used to test a hypothesis or verify an idea it is in fact the complete opposite, it is an open minded approach to research whose very existence is built on the foundation of not testing a previously held hypothesis but letting theory emerge from the data.

In this study the more structured approach outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1990) was used. Data was identified and was coded using the Nvivo software system and this data was analysed against the

components in the research question and the themes highlighted as important for maintaining good mental health identified by Heron and Mortimer (1999). This meant that the analysis had a distinct focus but not a hypothesis to test against.

4.4 The question of bias

As noted above, one of the criticisms levelled at Grounded Theory as a method is that it has a potential for subjectivity and bias. This is a criticism not only reserved for grounded theory but often levelled at qualitative methods in general. Findlay (2002) suggests, however, that qualitative research operates from the premise that total detachment on the part of the qualitative researcher is unattainable and that the individual who carries out research comprises an integral component of the entire process and product, as opposed to being a bystander with the capacity to provide an “uncontaminated” account. The acknowledgement by the researcher of this process is known as reflexivity. By means of reflexivity the researcher realises that they are an integral part of the world that they are studying and that absolute neutrality and detachment in relation to data collection, analysis and interpretation are impossible.

It is broadly accepted that qualitative researchers should be reflective and expose their biases and personal perspectives and be able to demonstrate that these have been taken into account during analysis (Hall and Callery 2001, Finlay 2002, Fade 2003). Sword claims, however, that it is not only qualitative research where this is the case by stating that, “no research is free of the biases, assumptions, and personality of the researcher as any researcher cannot separate self from those activities in which they are intimately involved” (Sword, 1999, p. 277). Popay et al (1998) agree stating that, “given the involvement of the researcher in the research process, the question is not whether the data are biased,

but to what extent has the researcher rendered transparent the processes by which data have been collected, analysed and presented" (Popay et al 1998 p348). Free and Houghton (2003) claim that in football supporters research the question of bias, if the researcher is a football supporter, is a specifically difficult one. This, they feel, is because the researcher is always at risk of over identification with the group and so becoming involved in what they term "a self-deceptive form of underdog sympathy".

In this study it was certainly true that there was a sense of identification with the participants and this presented both positive elements and areas for caution. In the positive domain the fact that the fans were being interviewed by someone who had a clear working knowledge of their team, stadium, management structure and players helped the interviewees relax and focus on the experience being recalled and explained rather than focusing on details about the club. It also helped fans feel less embarrassed when recounting some of their more negative behaviours as these moments of dialogue were often supported by comments such as "you know what I mean" or "I'm sure you know what that's like".

The caution was in the analysis of the data in ensuring that what was collected was not interpreted through the experience of the researcher. My experience of a phenomenon was in many cases quite different from that of the fans being interviewed. This was where the use of the Nvivo software was to prove invaluable with themes and codes being identified numerically and linguistically and without interpretation in the first instance.

After the methodology had been decided upon and before the study could commence there was a requirement for the granting of ethical clearance for the study.

4.5 Ethical Clearance

The ethics approval form was submitted to the University Ethics Committee for consideration. It outlined the aims and objectives of the study and detailed the two stages that were planned.

The section outlining the diary study had included a copy of the supporters' diary that was proposed and described the selection process for participants. With regards to confidentiality the application described how interviewees would be asked to sign a consent form after a discussion with the researcher about the diary process and after reading a participant information sheet outlining the research process (appendix 4). The application described how the researcher would provide a signed written statement to guarantee confidentiality both of any disclosed information about the interviewee or any examples they use. The information sheet also explained that interviewees could opt out of the process at any point and that any data pertaining to them would be destroyed.

The section of the ethics approval form that pertained to one-to-one interviews also had attached a copy of the information sheet, confidentiality guarantee and opt out process that related to this stage of the data collection.

It was felt by the researcher and supervisors that as the study was recruiting healthy volunteers and not directly asking for sensitive information the study would not produce many ethically difficult questions. After consideration the Ethics committee replied stating that without any modification of the process the study could proceed.

4.6 Grounded theory application

The choice of grounded theory as a method for data collection and analysis led to questions about the exact nature of the tools to be used to gather this data. Interviews appeared to offer the best way of offering supporters the opportunity to express themselves in their own language and expand and elaborate on the ideas that developed through their responses to interview questions. Semi-structured interviews would give enough structure to aid the exploration of data using axial coding using a tight coding paradigm.

Rather than base a series of interviews on a schedule that reflected what I assumed or imagined would be relevant issues, experiences and emotions for fans I decided to ask a group of supporters to keep diaries for a series of games. These diaries asked a series of open questions about what fans were doing before, during and after matches and these were analysed to look for themes. These themes would form the basis of the template used in the interview section of the study. This process was designed so that the potential for bias from the researcher in the construction of the interview schedule could be addressed and so that the interview schedule could be shown to have a clear relevance to the group being interviewed.

4.7 Stage 1 data collection – the choice of diaries

The choice of data collection method is of vital importance in any study. In this instance a two stage data collection method was utilised with a diary study forming the basis of stage one of the process. Streubert and Carpenter (1995) suggested that for a qualitative study using interviews to provide a commitment to the participant's point of view is often a very popular method of inquiry. In this case however, although interviews would be used later in the study, it was felt that following a number of fans through a number of matches would offer a chance to identify themes that were

relevant and significant to fans and so help construction of an interview process that asked the right questions. It was decided therefore that diaries would be used during phase one of the research process and the themes which developed from the analysis of these, combined with the results of the literature search, would underpin the structure of interviews during phase two of the data collection. Stage one involved supporters keeping diaries recording their experiences before, during and after matches. Stage two involved supporters undertaking a semi-structured interview and completing an accompanying questionnaire.

Although not used nearly as often as interviews, the use of diaries can offer a useful method for collecting ideas and information. The use of diaries for the study of individuals and groups is, of course, not a new concept. Holloway and Wheeler (1996) remark that data collection throughout history has included the study of autobiographies, histories and diaries. Some of the benefits of diaries over other forms of information collection are highlighted by Burns and Grove (1993). They state that diaries offer the opportunity for diarists to record thoughts shortly after the event, which they suggest is "more accurate than the information through recall at an interview". They also state that although diaries are more expensive than some research methods they are in fact cheaper and less time consuming than repeated interviews.

Robson (2002 p258) observes that diaries are considered to be a kind of self administered questionnaire and suggests that they are tantalisingly attractive because they appear to offer a means of gaining substantial amounts of data for minimal effort. They do, however, place a great deal of responsibility on the respondent than with any other type of data analysis and as such Robson (2002)

feels that diaries do have their uses but are not recommended as the sole method of investigation into a phenomenon

Other benefits of diaries are seen by as being that people can complete them at a time convenient to themselves, that they offer the scope for more complete answers than most questionnaires and that they allow the diarist to use their own language to describe an experience (Hammersley and Aitkin 1995). Hammersley and Aitkin (1995) go on to claim that when used in cooperation with informants the diary can be used to record data that might not be forthcoming in face to face interviews or other data collection encounters. The structure of diaries is discussed by Polit and Hungler (1999) who conclude that although diaries may be completely unstructured, they are more likely to be successful if subjects are asked to make entries about "some specific aspect of their experience" (Polit and Hungler 1999 p337).

Some drawbacks in using diaries have been commented upon by Streubert and Carpenter (1999) and Burns and Grove (1995) amongst others and include the fact that it is very difficult to verify data presented in diaries, that the quantity and quality of data collected can vary considerably and that diaries can have high levels of incomplete or missing data. It is often difficult for the diarist to seek clarification about the questions asked in the diary or the information required as they complete the diary itself. In all areas of self reporting there exists the possibility of inaccurate data production. Some studies (Eccles et al 1999, Garrat et al 2002) have suggested that self reported behaviour is not necessarily a true reflection of actual behaviour. One of the limitations of this study, like all such undertakings, is that it represents results of self reported behaviours which cannot be confirmed through direct observation.

Despite these drawbacks diaries have been used in healthcare to good effect in gathering information from patients and relatives on a wide range of conditions such as autism (Hayashi 2000), continence (Quinn, Goka and Richardson 2003) Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (Kida et al 2001) alcohol misuse (Longford et al 2000) postsurgical recovery (Begg, Drummond and Tiplady 2003), angina (Miklaucich 1998), lower limb fractures (Griffiths and Jordan 1998) epilepsy (Bonanni et al 2002) and migraine (Metsahonkala et al 1997).

4.8 Diary transcription

Diaries were written by hand by the fans and returned to the researcher on their completion. Many qualitative researchers, according to Fade (2003), find it is better to do all the analysis by hand as this gives them a deeper understanding of the data but in this case the software system helped speed up the retrieval process and helped store and organise the data more effectively than a manual system. I found that personally transcribing the diaries was a useful process on two fronts. Firstly it meant that the data was in a format that would allow the use of a computer software system to help with the retrieval and organisation of the diary data. Secondly the transcription process gave me the opportunity to become familiar with the content of the diaries as they were transcribed. As they were returned during the course of a number of months this meant that the diaries were read and transcribed at a pace that allowed this process to happen. The software system used in this case was Nvivo.

4.9 The use of Nvivo software for diary analysis

Analytical computer software such as NUD *IST and NVivo have been developed specifically to help social scientists in their research,

especially in the management of large amounts of text. The capacity of computers to sort, store and retrieve information makes their use in qualitative data analysis appealing, but computer software cannot replace the conceptual processes required of the researcher. Computer software alone does not, and cannot, analyse qualitative data. If choosing computer methods of qualitative data analysis their impact on the research process and outcome needs to be considered carefully.

Computers can expand the possibilities for exploring data and enhancing depth of understanding, but may also unacceptably constrain or distort the analysis by restricting the information retrieved to tight linguistic fields. In the course of one study the words bad, wicked, brill, fab, top and cool may all actually have the same meaning but the ability of a software package to make sense of this is limited. Like all computer systems these packages are only as good as the operators using them.

The software package was, in this case, of great help in its ability to effectively sort, store and retrieve information. Searches of the text using key words and phrases highlighted themes and these were analysed and developed using the grounded theory process. Rather than using some more traditional methods for highlighting transcripts such as coloured marker pens the computer system was able to very quickly find and organise a range of similar key words and show the paragraph within which these appeared. This meant, for example, that a search around ideas such as fathers attending games with sons was able to collect together sections of diary and interview transcripts that used the words dad, daddy, father, da and old man in a faster and more thorough way than would have been possible manually.

The design of the study meant that once the data from the diaries had been analysed and themes had been developed from the data these themes would be developed in greater depth in stage 2 of the process.

4.10 Stage 2 data collection – the choice of interviews

Stage 2 of the data collection process used the data and themes from the diary study to develop an interview schedule to explore further the diarists comments and observations.

In the 1980s, there was a considerable growth in using interviewing as a method for research and now it is generally agreed that interviewing is a key method of data collection. According to Rice and Ezzy (1999) qualitative research interviews aim to explore research participants own views of their lives to gain access to their experiences, feelings and social worlds. Research interviews may be unstructured or semi-structured. With unstructured interviews almost appearing to be a simple conversation in which participants take the lead in telling their stories, rather than the researcher directing the interview.

Semi-structured interviews are used to facilitate more focused exploration of a specific topic, often utilising a specifically designed interview schedule or guide. Interview guides usually contain a list of questions and prompts designed to guide the interview in a focused, yet flexible and conversational, manner. Different theorists approach interviewing in different ways (Hitchcock and Hughes 1989) but Cohen & Manion (1994 p273), suggest that all interviews can be viewed as deliberate conversations with specific purposes and categorised not by their structure but by their purpose. Kadushin (1990) suggests that the purpose may be *informational* (selective gathering of life history material related to physical, social,

emotional, cognitive functioning), *diagnostic* (to assess mental or social status), or *therapeutic* (to bring about a desired change). In this study the purpose was informational and as such care was taken to keep the questioning as open as possible whilst still using enough structure to keep the conversations in focus.

Irrelevant of the structure or type of interview, the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee is the conduit through which information and its meaning is exchanged. Kadushin (1990) proposes that positive relationships are more likely to produce honest, detailed responses to inquiries and that the interviewee must believe that the interviewer has integrity and that his or her intentions are sincere.

The ideas discussed previously in this chapter about the interviewer having some clear knowledge about the backdrop to the supporters experience (e.g. a knowledge of the team, the stadium, the management structure etc) helped in the development of this relationship. Integral to trust is acceptance and suspension of judgment. Generally, individuals will lower their defences and disclose sensitive information to the extent they feel the interviewer's aim is not to judge or assign blame, but solely to understand. Qualitative research interviews aim to elicit participants' views of their lives, as portrayed in their stories (Rice and Ezzy 1999), and so to gain access to their experiences, feelings and social worlds. Semi-structured interviews are used to facilitate more focused exploration of a specific topic, using an interview guide. Interview guides usually contain a list of questions and prompts designed to guide the interview in a focused, yet flexible and conversational, manner (Fossey et al 2002). This approach to data collection is advantageous in ensuring sensitivity to participants'

language and have an important use, according to Davidson et al (2004) in following up on specific ideas or issues which emerged in previous phases of a research process.

Positive relationships are also created by *interest*, a genuine desire to get to the bottom of the issue, know the end of the story or simply learn more about the person and what they are discussing. Once again the fact that I was genuinely interested in hearing the experiences of the fans involved helped ensure that the verbal and non verbal responses displayed during the process remained very positive and the level of concentration I was able to sustain was also very high. This helped create the warmth that Kedushin (1990) suggests is characteristic of successful research interviews. This, he goes on to say, helps ensure that participants do not feel they are merely a dispenser of needed information but more a partner in the research process.

In this case the semi-structured informational interview was chosen as the method of enquiry to be used because, as Smith (1995) suggests, these types of interviews help the interviewer to gain information but, more importantly, also help to achieve understanding.

The interview followed a format with addressed the themes that were developed from the diaries and from the literature search. A copy of the interview schedule can be found in appendix 8. This interview was accompanied by a questionnaire which fans completed as the interview progressed. This gathered demographic data about the interviewees. Two sections of this form were also used as a focus for the interviewee on some of the themes the interviews aimed to pursue.

4.11 The choice of videotape for recording interviews

Lomax and Casey (1998) discuss how audio-visual material has been utilised most notably in anthropology with their use of photography, film and video and by psychologists working within experimental frameworks but how other disciplines are beginning to use the medium with greater frequency. In recent years, the cost and effort for developing video recordings have dropped to the point that it is now feasible to use video as a tool for gathering research data as easily and cost effectively as sound recording. Another potential advantage of using video is that it is relatively easy to use (Heath 1986)

A basic decision going into the interview process is how to record interview data. Whether one relies on written notes or a tape recorder appears to be largely a matter of personal preference. For instance, Patton says that a tape recorder is "indispensable" (Patton 1990, p. 348), while Lincoln and Guba "do not recommend recording except for unusual reasons" (Lincoln and Guba 1985, p. 241). Lincoln and Guba base their recommendation on the intrusiveness of recording devices and the possibility of technical failure despite the fact that recordings have the advantage of capturing data more faithfully than hurriedly written notes might, and can make it easier for the researcher to focus on the interview.

The question of the intrusiveness of recording equipment draws responses from both sides of the debate. This perspective that recording has a marked impact holds that the video camera has a uniquely distorting effect on the researched phenomenon (Hanson 1994). Edmund Carpenter provides an anthropological example in suggesting that the behaviour of the inhabitants of the Sepik area of New Guinea changed completely once they became camera-

conscious. Underpinning this position that the recording does not impact on the research process is the view that participants are so engrossed in what they are doing that, though they know they are being taped, they become unaware, ignore or forget the presence of the camera and researcher. For example, Starr (1987 p88) claims that 'participants knew they were being video-taped but did not appear uncomfortable' while Bergstrom states that all participants soon became used to the presence of the camera and usually ignored it (Bergstrom et al 1992 p11)

It could also be argued that audio-visual recordings of interactions provide a record which is more accurate, more detailed and more complete than that obtainable by unaided human observation (Hanson 1994).

Edwards and Westgate support the use of videotaping interviews because they feel that capturing data on video tape allows what they call "retrospective analysis" i.e. analysis done at leisure, and in much greater depth than would have been possible using techniques involving live coding. Data can be developed more fully after viewing the tapes and by adopting an "open-minded stance", allowing the data itself to influence the design of a category system that is derived from analysing it rather than being imposed on it' (Edwards and Westgate 1987).

Transcription of video interviews is extremely labour intensive, especially if notes of gesture and information other than speech are required, but in this case it was felt that the benefits of video recording outweighed the potential drawbacks. This was because, in this instance, the conversation was expected to contain much in the way of emotive responses and the interviewer wished to be able to capture both the verbal and non verbal components of these

exchanges. It was also felt that videotaping the interviews would leave the interviewer free to concentrate fully on both the interview process and the person being interviewed.

In these interviews as the video camera being used was compact, quiet and had a good microphone system it could be placed out of line of sight and at a distance of several feet away from the interviewee without compromising the quality of the recording. As such videotaping interviews was seen as a method of overcoming the intrusive nature of recording whilst doing away with the need to make field notes at the time of the interview. Another consideration in using this method was that I had used it in a previous undertaking that involved semi-structured interviewing (Meldrum and Pringle 2006) and as such I had a high level of confidence in the machine and the process.

Before the interviews commenced the interviewees were asked for permission to record the interview. All agreed and were given the choice of having the interview videotaped, audiotaped or transcribed as they went along. All interviewees chose the option of videotape.

4.12 Interview transcription

As with the diary study the choice of the researcher to personally transcribe meant that the researcher was exposed to the content of each interview repeatedly and, as such, became very familiar with the content of the interviews.

The researcher watched each taped interview on TV and transcribed word for word the conversation. This involved playing a short section of tape, pausing the machine, typing the dialogue, and then starting the machine again. Non verbal behaviours such as raised eyebrows or gestures and notes on intonation (e.g. if a comment was made

sarcastically or accompanied by a laugh) were recorded in brackets on the transcripts. Pauses and paralinguistic sounds such as eh or emm were represented by a line of dots in the transcripts.

Once the transcript was complete the interview was watched again with the transcript being read through simultaneously. Transcripts were made within days of the interview being completed and this helped as the discussion was still relatively fresh in my mind. Only twice in the process was I unable to make out a phrase in the dialogue and this was represented as a bracketed statement that this phrase was unclear.

4.13 Conclusion

This research chose grounded theory as a methodology. Grounded Theory sets out to find what theory accounts for the phenomena being studied rather than attempting to match the phenomena to an existing theory. In this respect the aim of the process is to **understand** the phenomena. As this study aimed to gather information from fans and examine this to look for some meaning rather than to test a definite hypothesis against collected specific data, Grounded Theory appeared to be a good choice of methodology. The process of open coding, axial coding and the construction of an overall theme helped the researcher become very familiar with the data and the use of the Nvivo software package helped the researcher retrieve and test data for inclusion into themes in a systematic way.

Chapter 5 Stage 1 – The Diary Study

5.0 Recruitment of participants for the study

Qualitative sampling requires identification of appropriate participants, that is those who can best inform the study (Morse and Field 1995). This may involve small numbers of participants, although the amount of data gathered can be large, with many hours of participant interviews, or multiple data sources related to one setting including interviews, observation-based field notes and written documents (MacDougal et al 2001). No fixed minimum number of participants is necessary to conduct sound qualitative research, however, sufficient depth of information needs to be gathered to fully describe the phenomena being studied. For example, detailed information-gathering with one person may be both appropriate and adequate to describe that person's life history, but one team member's account would be insufficient if the aim of a study were to attempt to understand and describe the practices of a clinical team. This means that in qualitative research, sampling continues until themes emerging from the research are fully developed to the point that no new patterns are recurring or no new information is emerging, a situation sometimes referred to as 'saturation' (Morse 1995).

Burgess (1984) suggested that informants for a qualitative study may be selected according to a number of criteria by the researcher if it is felt that the selected group endows them with specific knowledge or experience relative to the question being examined. In this instance it was felt that being a supporter of the club and attending matches was the only defining criteria and, as such, the invitation was made for supporters to volunteer to take part in the study.

In this study participants self selected through a process of volunteering. Streubert and Carpenter (1999) observe that volunteer samples are frequently used in qualitative research. This type of sampling is sometimes referred to as opportunistic or accidental sampling (Crookes and Davies 1998). Polit and Hungler (2001) are critical of self selected samples because this type of recruitment offers no external objective method of assessing the typicalness of the selected subjects. Polit and Beck (2004) suggest that, in general, self selection is open to bias and is the weakest form of sampling and they agree with Parahoo (1997) that results from studies using self selection are less generalisable for the population as a whole.

Polit and Beck (2004) do, however, accede that such studies are valid for focusing on a specific population and Crookes and Davies (1998) defend the method stating that although there are limitations in terms of generalisation it is sometimes the only feasible method for a specific study. The fact that the study aimed to examine the experience of football supporters and the effect that this had on their mental health suggested that the recruitment of a volunteer sample was justified in this case. The fans were recruited through an article placed on the club website which was also made available as a hard copy at the club (see appendix 1). This article had been drafted in conjunction with Alan Prince, the commercial director at the club. In a meeting with Mr. Prince the proposed project was outlined and he offered support by allowing access to the club's official website. The article explaining the project and asking for fans to volunteer was picked up by the BBC and carried in their BBC Nottingham sports webpage (see appendix 2). This drew attention from the Nottingham Evening Post (see appendix 3) and the Chad newspapers (see appendix 4). Articles in these publications also helped recruit supporters for the study.

The potential for bias in relation to the process of self selection for recruitment into this study is acknowledged but it is felt that in this study Streubert and Carpenter's (1999) observations that the intent and purpose of using these methods is to recruit an informant with a specific type of knowledge and Crookes and Davies'(1998) observations that although not statistically representative it is theoretically informed and relevant to the aim of the research helped shape the choice of recruitment method for both the interviews and the diary study.

All fans who responded to the website and media articles were met and had the project explained to them. Some were met in a one to one situation and some in groups. For example one fan asked to be met at lunchtime during his work lunch break and another at the stadium before a game whereas a father and son who both participated and three friends who all participated asked to be met together. After reading an information sheet (see appendix 5) and having time to ask questions about the process, each diarist completed a consent form in the front of the diary (see appendix 6). The diaries were constructed as a series of open questions which fans could respond to in their own words. They were to be easy to complete and left enough scope for fans to develop their ideas. An example of a completed diary entry for a match is found in appendix 7.

A pilot study using the diaries was carried out for the last match of the 2002 season. Four volunteers used a copy of the draft diary to report on one match. Following the pilot study and discussion with participants about their experience of completing the diary the first phase of the study began. 84 diaries were given out. Each was accompanied by a stamped, addressed envelope so that the diary

could easily be returned on completion. Throughout the 2002 season diaries were completed with a total of 29 completed diaries being returned, 27 being completed by men and 2 by women. This was a slightly disappointing response rate of 36%.

The diaries varied in both quantity of data each contained and the richness of data each contained. The language used to describe internal thoughts and to describe behaviours varied from diary to diary with some being written in perfect English whilst others appeared rich with colloquialisms and the colourful metaphors of the terraces.

It was decided that with the diversity of language and the relatively small number of respondents that the diaries be coded by hand with the diaries being read several times and themes being drawn from the understanding gained from repeated reading. This process was then repeated using the Nvivo software package to see if any of the themes identified by hand had missed important or relevant data which could add to, or contradict, the findings. No new themes or ideas were developed after using the Nvivo package.

5.1 Analysis of the data from the diaries

The methods used for analysing the data focused on coding the responses and then using the results of this coding to identify key themes and patterns, which emerged. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) claimed that all researchers need to be able to organize, manage and retrieve the most significant and important parts of their data if they are to most effectively use the data to draw valid conclusions. They went on to suggest that effective coding can help to bring fragments of data together to create distinct categories, which have some common element or attribute. Coding thus helps pull together small pieces into larger coherent constructs (Chiovitti and Piran

2003, Rennie 1998) Analysis of these categories or groupings of constructs helped identify how they linked together to form a larger picture. Although it is clear from this process that codes, categories and constructs are closely related to one another and can in some instances overlap; the important analytical work is in thinking about how these things link together rather than in the actual coding process. Dey (1993) emphasised this point by stating that thinking in a new way can only happen when we move beyond codes, categories and data bits to see what he described as the whole picture.

The coding process began with a search of the data using key words. The diaries were read through and then read in sequence i.e. question one was read from each diary in turn. Recurring words or phrases were highlighted and any that clearly linked were grouped together (e.g. "a sense of belonging", "a feeling of being with like minded people" "being with people the same as you" would be linked). An assessment was made of how frequently these ideas occurred and how similar they appeared to be whilst attempting to take into account variances in the language used (e.g. were the phrases "pissed off" and "really frustrated" relating to the same feeling?).

The diary entries that were strong in their level of recurrence were sorted into groups and read as a group of statements to identify what ideas bound them together. In some cases this was through processes (e.g. pessimism or hope) in some cases it was action (e.g. rituals or physical presentations of tension) and in some cases it was emotion (e.g. euphoria or anger). The diaries were then searched to look for opposing views to those expressed. If these were found the two views were then examined to come to a decision about which was more representative. So, for example, although the feeling of

belonging came through in nearly every diary returned one entry for one match stated that on this particular occasion the fan felt alone and disconnected at a match. The huge disparity in the occurrence could, with some credibility, be seen as suggesting that attending a match generated a sense of belonging but it was important to examine each theme for a counter theme to ensure that the themes identified held validity.

Because each diary had been transcribed using the Microsoft Word programme finding key words electronically was relatively easy using the Nvivo software package. This was done to check that the suspected frequency of ideas had been correct and that no key words or phrases had been missed. In the end the process showed a high level of consistency in what was suggested by fans across age and gender about what they felt before during and after matches and the impact they felt that some of this experience had on their lives.

5.2 The use of diary data to construct the interview schedule and themes for coding

The diary study made up stage one of the process and the analysis of the diaries and the subsequent development of themes meant that some clear areas of inquiry were created for stage two of the process. The interview schedule, around which the interviews that would form stage two of the data collection would be completed, was built on the foundation of the themes that the diaries brought forward.

The key themes that had emerged from the diary study were a sense of belonging, the use of the match to express emotion in an environment where it was seen as being socially acceptable and the importance of having something in life to look forward to. Themes

about continuity, about having something to look forward to as an antidote to work and about the excitement and unpredictability of live sporting events were found as were ideas about family and community. The diaries had also highlighted some ideas about football rituals. These themes are examined in depth in the results section but are used here to give an illustration of why the interviews were constructed in the way they were.

Chapter 6 Stage 2 – The Interview Study - Method

6.0 Introduction

Stage 2 of the data collection process involved the carrying out of, transcription of and analysis of interviews with fans from the club. Given the variance in such things as age, language use and education of the interviewees it was felt that the semi-structured method of interviewing offered the best system to proceed for this study. Smith (1995) suggests that in these type of interviews the interviewer uses a schedule to indicate the general area of interest and to provide cues when the participant has difficulties, but the respondent should be allowed a strong role in determining how the interview proceeds.

The interview followed a format that addressed the themes that were developed from the diaries and from the literature search. The diaries had suggested that a sense of belonging was important for fans and the interviews asked questions about how fans identified with the club and the importance identification and belonging had for them. It looked at the question of ritual and how fans engaged in rituals and what impact this had on them. The interviews explored the development of relationships through football including the development of relationships within families.

The diaries had suggested an impact on emotional state and mood in response to a match and the interviews developed this theme with prompts about the impact that the experience had for fans. The interviews asked used the prompts to facilitate a process that examined what impact the fans felt the experience had on their health.

Supporting the verbal interview was an accompanying questionnaire which asked interviewees to supply such demographic details as age, occupation and sex and such background information such as length of time a Stags fan and who the person went to matches with. Fans in the diary study had stressed the importance of the environment and suggested that some behaviours that were socially acceptable inside the stadium were not necessarily acceptable outside of it. The questionnaire also asked the fans to compare some behaviours they displayed inside and outside the stadium. This was done by listing some behaviours that diarists had identified in two identical grids. The behaviours included such things as shouting, swearing, taunting, hugging in public, singing, cheering and making offensive gestures. The interviewees filled in the grid firstly to identify which, if any, the behaviours they displayed away from the ground in their everyday lives. The fans then filled in the second copy of the grid indicating which of the behaviours they displayed in the ground at a match.

The supporting questionnaire also included a grid of emotions identified by supporters as being experienced at a game. Of interest here was the fact that some of these were diametrically opposite, for example, hope and pessimism both appeared, as did respect for, and contempt for, opposing fans, along with anticipation of success and expectation of failure. Fans were asked to indicate which, if any, of these emotions they had experienced when at a match with a recognition that even two opposite feelings could be experienced within the 90 minutes of a game. A copy of the interview schedule can be found in appendix 8.

It is accepted that the use of a grid or questionnaire can be seen as conflicting with the emergent nature of grounded theory as an approach but the content of the tools was built on the foundation of

what had emerged from the diaries. The documents completed by interviewees developed these themes but the interviews themselves were a series of prompts rather than a set of fixed questions and these allowed for more themes and ideas to emerge as the process continued.

6.1 Recruitment of participants for the study

As with the diary study, recruitment for the interview study was done through self selection in response to information disseminated about the process on the club website, in the club fanzine called "Déjà Vu", in the local newspaper the Nottingham Evening Post (see appendix 9) on the BBC TV's East Midlands Today and on the BBC Radio Nottingham breakfast show.

The dissemination had made known contact numbers for fans to use in the interview stage of the study and some of fans made contact by telephone, some by e-mail and some by personal contact. These were fans who popped into the University to ask for further information personally. 3 of the interviewees had completed diaries in stage 1 of the process. In tracing the source of the fans information the Chad, Déjà vu and an article in Mental Health Nursing (Pringle 2002) had been read by some and the radio programme had informed the others. Interestingly none of the participants had responded as a direct response to the TV coverage.

An information sheet was given to all participants to read before agreeing to the interviews and a consent form explaining consent issues, and that participants were free to withdraw from the process at any time and their contributions removed, was signed by all interviewees. All interviews were recorded on videotape using a small unobtrusive recorder placed out of the line of vision of the interviewee. The information sheet supplied by the researcher to the

interviewee before the interview process informed the interviewee of this and part of the consent form was concerned with explaining to the interviewee that they could decline to be taped. None of the interviewees declined to be videotaped. Interviewees were also made aware they would be anonymised within the data transcription.

Followed the recommendations of Riley (1990 p25) that transcription should reproduce "the actual words spoken, however repetitive, slangy or ungrammatical", transcriptions were made word for word. This was done by playing the videotaped interview on a TV whilst sitting in front of the screen with a laptop computer. Through listening and watching carefully (and by extensive use of the pause screen facility) the transcriptions were written. All subjects were given a number for identification purposes.

Of the 30 interviews arranged 29 were actually carried out. One participant changed their mind and decided not to be interviewed but gave no explanation for this. The information sheet given to interviewees prior to interviews taking place had clearly stated that any potential interviewee could withdraw at any time without feeling obliged to explain why. The actual number of interviews was not pre-set and in line with the process of grounded theory the number reflected the point at which "saturation" was felt to have been evident in the data for the themes identified.

6.2 The use of Nvivo software

There has been considerable progress in the analysis of qualitative data using a variety of specially written computer programs. There are at present around a dozen programs on the market or under development, each with different characteristics and facilities (Lee and Fielding, 1991). The principal advantage of using a program is

that it simplifies and speeds the mechanical aspects of data analysis without sacrificing flexibility thereby freeing the researcher to concentrate to a greater extent on the more creative aspects of theory building:

The capacity of the Nvivo software package to effectively sort, store and retrieve information proved to be an important aid in the analysis process of the interview data. Because I had carried out and transcribed each of the interviews personally I had become familiar with the content of each one. This meant that some potential themes suggested themselves as the data increased and the data base built up. Once the interviews had been transcribed and were saved in one large data file, searches of the text using key words and phrases began. Some of these searches involved searching for the same ideas in various ways. For example the question of fans' attitudes towards the big superclubs was found by searching using parameters such as "big clubs", "bigger clubs" and "superclubs" as well as by searching by actual names I could remember from the interviews and the subsequent transcription such as "Man United", "Man U", "Chelsea" and "Arsenal". The software package was able to identify these phrases in the text and extract them along with the surrounding paragraph. These searches highlighted themes and these were analysed and developed using the grounded theory process described by Glaser and Strauss (1967).

6.3 The development of themes using grounded theory

The responses found in the interviews were be analysed and grouped in accordance with the recommendations of the grounded theory approach and these were be matched against current literature around the key components identified as contributing to a sense of mental health or well-being. Part of the interview process

asked interviewees directly about the effect they feel that supporting the club has on the mental health of the fans.

The supporting questionnaire provided data on the supporters which helped clarify some of the concepts and themes that appeared in the diaries and helped with information on demographic elements for the study.

As stated above the analysis followed the four main principles of grounded theory as set out by Anderson (2001) based on the original work by Glaser and Strauss (1967).

Stage one; open coding

The data was read and categorized into concepts that were, as Agar (1980) suggested, developed from reading the data rather than imposed from outside. Corbin and Strauss (1990) outline the process of open coding in the following way:-

"Incidents, events, happenings are taken as, or analysed as, potential indicators of phenomena, which are thereby given conceptual labels. If a respondent says to the researcher, "Each day I spread my activities over the morning, resting between shaving and bathing," then the researcher might label this phenomenon as "pacing." As the researcher encounters other incidents, and when after comparison to the first, they appear to resemble the same phenomena, then these, too, can be labelled as "pacing." Only by comparing incidents and naming like phenomena with the same term can the theorist accumulate the basic units for theory."
(Corbin and Strauss 1990)

The coding process was ongoing so that codes that were identified early in the process within a small number of interviews were checked against all new data to see if the codes continued their validity or were discredited by subsequent data collected in later interviews. As all interviews were transcribed by the researcher shortly after the interview had taken place, this helped the researcher become more familiar with the content of each interview and helped identify sections of data that corresponded with the codes identified.

Stage two; axial coding

Each video interview was watched twice and the transcript read several times to increase familiarity with the content, a technique recommended by Ely (1991 p8). Each transcript was reviewed by the researcher and simple codes were allocated to the data and stored using the Nvivo software.

After the first ten transcripts had been completed these were merged into a single document and codes were grouped and reconstructed to form categories. As each five new interviews were completed and transcribed they were analysed in the same way with first codes being allocated to them. Sometimes the same recurring codes were identified and sometimes new ones were identified. The new transcripts were then assimilated into the large single transcript document. At each enlargement of the document the old and new codes were again developed using the Nvivo software package. As more literature was reviewed this was reflected in the creation of new codes and each new vein of literature explored was considered in the context of the data collected. The single themes were then grouped into categories.

Categories are the "cornerstones" of developing theory. They provide the means by which the theory can be integrated. We can show how the grouping of concepts forms categories by continuing with the example presented above. In addition to the concept of "pacing," the analyst might generate the concepts of "self-medicating," "resting," and "watching one's diet." While coding, the analyst may note that, although these concepts are different in form, they seem to represent activities directed toward a similar process: keeping an illness under control. They could be grouped under a more abstract heading, the category: "Self Strategies for Controlling Illness." (Corbin and Strauss 1990)

In the study examples of how this process was seen was the way in which themes such as "watching Stags with friends", "feeling part of a community of Stags supporters" and "being part of something bigger than yourself" developed from single themes into a category of "a sense of belonging"

Stage three; saturation point

Saturation is described by Streubert and Carpenter (1995 p254) as the point at which no new information is found in the data and for the researcher no new knowledge of the subject is gained. Saturation point is reached when

... no additional data are being found whereby the (researcher) can develop properties of the category. As he sees similar instances over and over again, the researcher becomes empirically confident that a category is saturated ... when one category is saturated, nothing remains but to go on to new groups

for data on other categories, and attempt to saturate these categories also (Glaser and Strauss 1967).

In the study by the time 29 interviews had been completed no distinctly new ideas were being developed that were strong enough to be developed into new categories. By the time of the final transcribed interview it was felt that there were enough ideas that were recurrent to feel confident about the categories that had emerged.

Stage four; main theory

As I began to refine the commentary on the codes I started to build up the theory which would become the main theory. Grounded theory is described by Anderson (2001) as a lengthy and time consuming method of research but one which enables the researcher to explore the important aspects of the phenomenon being studied (in Anderson's case the perceptions and attitudes of doctors and nurses towards young people who self harm). In this case the process also proved to be lengthy and time consuming but, as suggested by Strauss and Corbin (1967), the themes did begin to emerge with some clarity from the data and, through linking and theme development, to move towards the creation of an overarching theme that was grounded firmly in the data.

As will be seen in the following pages, the axial codes were brought together and developed into a core theory and, as such, the method of using Grounded Theory for this study appears to have been appropriate.

Chapter 7 Results

7.0 Introduction

The themes explored in this chapter emerged initially from the diary study and were further developed in the second phase of the research via the interview schedule and the questionnaire that accompanied the interview. Data from both the interviews and the supporting questionnaires that fans filled in at the interview will be used to outline how these themes were identified and developed. In a numerical quirk the response from diaries and the fact that one interviewee pulled out from the interviews meant that there were, in the end, 29 diaries completed and also 29 interviews completed.

7.1 Sample analysis from the diaries

The number of diaries given out was 84 and the number returned 29

Figure 6 diary responses

Number of diaries given out	84
Number returned	29
Response rate	34.5 %

The response rate was felt to be somewhat disappointing. The amount of effort and time spent explaining the process felt disproportionate to the return rate especially as each diarist had been given a stamped addressed envelope with their diary. In reviewing the literature, however, it was found that a response rate of around one third was found to be the normal for diaries. Butz and Alexander (1991) described a high completion rate of 88% when they used diaries in their study but this appears exceptional in the literature reviewed

Diary Response by Gender

Figure 7 Diary responses by gender

Male	27	Female	2
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Although, according to Williams et al (2001), the number of women attending games has risen in recent years attendance at football matches continues to be a predominantly male activity. Within some clubs women can make up a proportion of the of the fan base ranging up to 15% the more usual number is around 5% - 10%. The fact that women are present however was reflected in the study with women making up 9% of the diary sample and 4% of the subsequent interview sample.

It was clear, however, that although numerically women’s presence was relatively small, it was valuable to have women in the diary study as they helped emphasise the point that different fans can see the same match but respond to it in different ways. An example that may appear flippant at first, but actually shows this fact well, is the fact that no men in their diaries commented on the facilities available at grounds yet in both women’s diaries the observations appeared. In one diary written after an away match at Carlisle United, it was commented upon that the facilities generally were good with special mention on how nice the toilets were.

Diary Response by Age

Figure 8 Diary responses by age

16-25	26-35	36-45	46-55	55-65	65-75
	16	10	3		

The range of ages of supporters completing the diaries helped show that as the literature suggests football supporters are drawn from all age groups. The majority of the diarists were aged between 16 and 45 and this corresponds with the age group for the majority of fans in general. Diaries covered home matches predominantly but a couple of away matches were written about (Carlisle United and Huddersfield Town).

7.2 Sample analysis from the interviews

The sample for the interview component of the study was made up of 29 self selecting interviewees

Figure 9 Interview sample

Number of interviews arranged	30
Number interviews completed	29

Figure 10 Interview response by gender

Male	27
Female	2

The self selection process had resulted in 2 diarists being female the same was true of the interviews. Two women approached to be interviewed in the second stage of the study.

Figure 11 Interview sample by age

15 –20	21 – 30	31 – 40	41 – 50	51 - 60	60 +
1	7	10	8	2	1

The age of respondent ran from 19 to over 60. This helped endorse the idea put forward earlier that there is no real “typical” picture of what a football fan actually is. An interesting feature of the respondents however was that the language used by fans was not as diverse as might have been expected with such a large age range. This was perhaps because most of the fans were well established with the cliché ridden language of football with one supporter actually using the phrase “over the moon”.

Figure 12 the number of games fans attended during a season

0-5 games	6-10 games	11-15 games	16-20 games	More than 20
2	7	6	10	4

The number of games attended by fans varied within those who self selected for interview. Most were season ticket holders and attended almost every home game. Some were occasional supporters and one had only attended one match in the season. Interestingly enough he felt that this did not lessen his claim to be a Mansfield Town supporter.

Figure 13 - fans attendance at home and away matches

Attended only home games	Attended both home and away games
10	19

19 of the fans also attended away matches and felt that it was important for the team to have support at away matches.

Figure 14 fans who supported only Mansfield Town and those who also supported other clubs

Number of fans only supporting Mansfield	The number supporting other clubs as well as well as Mansfield
23	6

The question of supporting other clubs as well as Mansfield Town raised some interesting responses.

There was a definite difference of opinion about the idea of supporting other clubs. Some fans had grown up in other parts of the country and maintained their original allegiances as well as Mansfield. These fans felt that had they geographically been closer to their original club their original allegiances would have been maintained. Examples of this were fans whose "other" clubs were Sunderland, Arsenal and Chelsea.

Figure 15 length of time a Stags fan

0-5 years	6-10 years	11-15years	15-20years	Over20 years
1	1	2	6	20

The length of time fans had supported the club was something many fans paraded with genuine pride. Much like a blood donor recounting the number of pints donated, or a London Marathon runner recounting the number of runs completed, fans felt that the dedication to attending Field Mill was one where the attendee had to overcome pain or adversity and keep on going even when the desire to stop was prominent! Although often delivered in flippant language

the sense of commitment, for better or for worse, in sickness and in health, was evident.

7.3 Presenting the themes

In the research the sequence of events ran in such a way that the diaries were completed and analysed and the interviews were built on the themes developed. This means that there are recurring themes being presented in both data sets. This led to a series of discussions during supervision with my supervisors about whether data should be presented thematically for each stage or as a single integrated piece. In the end the decision to merge the data when presenting the themes was taken as the ideas used to develop codes and categories were evident in both data sets.

The results will be presented in a way that reflects the Grounded Theory process. The initial themes presented below reflect the original coding process and show how the data was found to contain specific ideas that recurred in diaries and interviews.

7.4 Theme 1 - Local town, local team

In this study most the people who attended matches at Mansfield Town's ground, Field Mill, were local to the surrounding area. The historical interplay between local club and local community is observed by Canter, Comber & Uzzell (1989) who point out that most British clubs are named after the local community in which they grew up and for a long time players were actually drawn from that local community. For smaller clubs this appears to still be the case to some extent. Six of the current Mansfield Town squad, for example, grew up locally, played for local schools and live in the local community. The attachment to the team because it is part of Mansfield's fabric and Mansfield's history was evident in such comments from the fans interviewed as:-

No 1- because it's local, you go along and support the club that plays in your town. It sounds like a big cliché this but a football club is put there because it is a resource for the community. By the very nature of it being a professional club it means that they need the support of the community. You are duty bound to turn up.

No 9- The main reason I do support Stags is 'cause I'm from Mansfield. I just say I belong to Mansfield and me saying I belong to the local team is saying I come from round here. It would be easier to support someone like Forest, they don't lose a lot, but I'm from Mansfield and you have a sense of belonging about where you're from.

One interesting thread that appeared through this idea of local team local town was the sense of disapproval shown by Mansfield fans towards other people in the town, and elsewhere, who did not support a local team but, instead, followed one of the larger, more glamorous clubs. This was shown for fans of the superclubs such as Arsenal, Liverpool and, especially, Manchester United. Interestingly two fans used the phrase "moral superiority" when describing the idea that supporting a local club had a greater credibility than a larger one.

No 7- It's what I am it's where I'm from. It's my home town it's something I was brought up with, and it gives me moral superiority over these armchair fans so I take great affront at these people living in Mansfield who support Liverpool and Arsenal because I'm a Mansfield Town fan and I've been stood at Bolton when there were 30 odd fans there.

No 8- It's a local thing and I do find it a bit annoying when people support a big team when they don't even come from there, Man Utd for example, even though they live in Surrey. If someone offered me free tickets for Man U I might take them as it's somewhere I've never been but I wouldn't get excited and I'd probably hope they got a hammering

It was of note in these areas on discussion that the quality of football did not enter into the conversation. One fan commented that he wished he had been born somewhere else, (he used Stoke as an example) so that he could see better football. The fact that clubs like Manchester United or Chelsea have some of the world's best players and the level of skill on display is far superior to that on display at the lower levels of the league did not become an issue for the fans interviewed. The locality of birth and belonging to the town carried paramount importance. Grace was given, however, to fans of superclubs if those fans were actually local to that club.

No 9- In terms of Man U or Liverpool if they're from there I can see their rationale

No 24- if I had been born in Liverpool, say, I would probably have supported Liverpool but I'm born here.

If contempt was reserved for people who supported large glamorous clubs then conversely supporting a rival, small local club was seen as carrying respect, as other small clubs appeared to offer their fans the same hardships that Mansfield Town offer the Field Mill faithful.

No 19- I think, in the overall picture, opposing fans of lower division clubs, you've got to respect them, just for following their own town team. Travelling ridiculous miles and spending stupid money on crap

basically.If you lose and they're chanting and taunting they become the enemy, the target, but after a game when they're on the bus back down to Torquay or somewhere you really respect them

Curren and Redmond's (1996) study found that nearly 60% of fans of lower Division sides lived within a 5-mile radius of their team. This local pull for smaller clubs was confirmed by the 2001 FA Premier League National Fan Survey in which Williams, (2001) suggests that smaller clubs have a stronger local fan base. Fans of Manchester United, Chelsea, Tottenham and Liverpool were more likely to live more than 50 miles away than were fans at other clubs. In contrast to this 84% of second division Bradford City's fans lived within 10 miles of the club's ground (only 31% of Chelsea fans did the same). When asking whether local town pride was an influence in their attachment to a club the figure for fans of First Division clubs was 39%. For fans of the lower two divisions, however, the figures were 67% of those in what is now League 1 and 68% for fans in what is now League 2. For small local clubs, local pride in both the club and the town do appear, as the literature suggests, to promote a strong level of allegiance.

The question is not just of local connection, but also of local pride in Mansfield as a town became evident in the observations of fans. This loyalty could be seen in such observations as:-

No 3- I think I've always been proud to support them, that's as far as it goes just proud to support Mansfield and that's to do with both the team and the town.

No 14- I think it's a proud thing to say that you support your local club and not be ashamed of it. I'm proud to come from Mansfield. I

think it's nice to be proud to support your local team.

When this idea of team and town loyalty was challenged by the idea that fans could change allegiance and still feel the same passion, fans were adamant that this was simply not the case. Most fans stated that they could never imagine ever supporting another team instead of Stags. Some fans had a "second team" in which they took an interest but there was a very definite hierarchical loyalty to Mansfield. This loyalty was very much presented as an emotive connection in that, even though fans acknowledged that the standard of football may be better at other clubs, the emotive connection was simply not generated. This was seen in such comments as:-

No 23- (laughs) I've come to the realisation over the years that Mansfield Town are my team and always will be. I'll give you an example I went once to see Forest play Chelsea and it was a cracking game but I got absolutely no emotion, there was no passion.

No 14- I think it's a proud thing to say that you support your local club and not be ashamed of it. I'm a football fan so I'll go to any game so throughout the season I might visit County or Forest but I can't get the same passion, I can't get excited,

This hierarchy of loyalty came into the spotlight during the study by the fact that two fans in the study actually had Mansfield Town as their "second team" and what was of interest was the idea that they had "adopted" Stags as a surrogate team because their teams (Arsenal and Chelsea) were inaccessible. As might be expected, in their hierarchy Mansfield was definitely second.

No 4- it's the accessibility I suppose. My first love is Arsenal but Stags is on the door step and when you look at the prices ...well.

For the fan that had Chelsea as their first team the question of loyalty was clear cut; Chelsea first Stags second. This was clearly emphasised when the question of wearing colours to identify with the team was explored and was met with the response of:-

No 15- I love Stags but Stags are my second club and to wear a shirt would be a betrayal of Chelsea

In the end the exploration of the theme of local town, local team left the clear picture that the loyalty expressed for, and the commitment shown to the club, and through the club to the town, created for the fans a genuine sense of identity. This identity of being a Stags fan was one that allowed a fierce sense of loyalty to be openly displayed and either enjoyed or suffered depending on results and performances.

7.5 Theme 2 -A sense of belonging

No 1- Field Mill is where I belong. It's as simple as that.

The sense of belonging that was generated by being a supporter of Mansfield Town came through in the stage 1 diaries and was developed further in the subsequent interviews with supporters. The club, the stadium, and the people created, for fans, an environment that was special for them.

Diary 5 - ...a sense of being back amongst it all. It's only been a few weeks since I was last there but it felt good to be back. I liked hearing the songs and the noise and atmosphere generally was really good.

Diary 21 - sometimes, like today, I get a real sense of belonging

The club was seen as a place to go to be part of, something away from every day routines and for being with family, friends and other people who had common views and a shared sense of togetherness. The range of people that fans attended matches with ran from friends, fathers, sons, daughters, and mothers to workmates and others. The diaries highlighted this diversity with such observations as:-

No 16- he's retired now we'll go so it's like three generations. me, me eldest brother, his son and me dad. Me nephew's seven, I'm twenty seven and me dad's 72.

No 10- I love it, just the banter and some of the language and I think being with your mates is brill 'cause you can talk about football and a pile of crap that you can't really talk about with your girlfriend

Not every fan, however, experienced this sense of belonging on every occasion they went to Field Mill. One diarist went to a game alone and interestingly she described some of the difficulties that, for her, were attached to this solitary experience.

Diary 15 - watched the game. Nobody in the seat beside my - aisle on the other side so the game had my full attention but felt quite isolated. The crowd were quite noisy but felt that I cannot shout being on my own, feel more self conscious than if someone is with me

Where the sense of belonging was experienced most keenly was of interest. For some fans this sense of togetherness actually became stronger when at away matches where the smaller number of fans

felt obliged to make more noise than usual and where the closeness was enhanced by the effort of the journey. Fans described the importance, especially at away matches of the symbols of belonging, the shirt and the songs for example, being openly displayed

No 4- I tend to wear it (the shirt) more to away games because when you go somewhere different you want to identify yourself as a Stags fan. I suppose it's the siege mentality, you're much smaller in number so you try to make more noise and have a more pronounced presence to accommodate for that. I proudly wear my tribal badge!

No 13- more at away games I think because you're away from your home territory and you're on foreign ground and because there's less of you you have to make more eh noise. I went to the Golsten Ground in '75 I went with my friends went down on the train. Tuesday night we thought there'd be nobody there, six and a half thousand turned up.

This sense of belonging created an environment that offered fans as an antidote to what some fans called their "real" lives. The whole experience of meeting friends and family before the game, behaving in cathartic ways during the match and the post match analysis was seen by many as an important activity because of the alternative it offered to the daily grind of life. For a large number of fans the world of the small mining community that Mansfield was until relatively recently has changed dramatically and Field Mill is seen as a place almost of sanctuary from the outside world. This was seen in diary entries such as:-

Diary 1- It gets you back to your roots really when life was a lot simpler and football was the most important thing in the world. I know it isn't any more but for 90 odd minutes it feels that way.

Diary 3 - A place where you can go and just enjoy it all with no worries and where, today, everything went right for a change

Diary 25 - Free. Free from hassle at work, free from ex wife problems and free from demands. Enjoyed the game and liked the amount of skill displayed. I like being in a crowd

Cotterell (1996 p44) describes how groups supply positive emotional experiences through acceptance and recognition for the individual as a contributor to what the group stands for and by providing in return the sense of belonging and solidarity with the group which confirms the group identity for each individual member. A high level of responses suggested that the identity of the club as part of a local community helped fans feel part of something bigger than themselves and that this generated the sense of belonging, security and warmth.

One interesting idea found in the data was the size of the club in relation to the sense of belonging. The very fact that Mansfield is a small club with gates of between 2000 and 4000 was felt by fans to be a positive factor in creating a genuine sense of belonging. Examples grounded in the data included:-

No 1- Not long after that, maybe 60, 61 my dad took me and I can feel now his hand on my shoulder and he said "and this is where you belong" That's why I belong here. Field Mill is where I belong. It's as simple as that. I think part of the importance is to do with friendships and supporting a community club. I think in a small club the friendships are much deeper and there is a stronger sense of belonging in a smaller club because if you're one of 100,000 you're a

small component, if you're one of 3000 you're a much bigger component obviously and the sense of belonging is stronger I think

No.2- certainly for me it's because you can feel part of the club and have a closer affinity to the players if you're one of 3000 or 4000 it feels a lot more personal than being one of 25000.

Creating and maintaining that sense of belonging, however, is not always easy for the football fan of a team that is not particularly successful. Several of the fans commented on how hard it was to support a relatively unsuccessful team like Mansfield but suggested that there was, in some ways, an almost character building aspect to following a small mostly unsuccessful team. This idea, that some fans jocularly claimed was reminiscent of the "blitz" mentality, that adversity generated the sense of togetherness came through strongly when fans discussed how much easier it would be to support a successful club and conversely how much more strength was needed to follow a team like Mansfield.

No 12- Well I suppose I mean it's easy to support a good team, or a big team, you know one that wins a lot (laughs) but it takes a little something special to support a team that loses as much as Stags but most supporters I know seem to take something from that. There is I suppose a sort of kudos from supporting a team that doesn't win that often.

No 18- It's very easy to jump on bandwagons. They all do it Derby County, Forest, Man United. Man United most of their fans don't live anywhere near Manchester. I'm sure there are genuine Manchester fans but it's easy to support a big club and a more successful club but I think there's a sneaking admiration for supporters of small clubs by genuine big club fans. There's a respect for that and it is

harder to support a small club like Mansfield when it's peeing it down with rain and there's 2000 on the terraces and it's dire football it's hard to stay.

In the study fans suggested that the sense of belonging was strengthened by the wearing of items of clothing, such as shirts and scarves, that clearly show others that the fans belong to a specific group. The wearing of shirts and club colours as a means of identifying the allegiance to the club was addressed in the questionnaire that accompanied the interviews. One section asked fans if they wore colours or had any behaviours that clearly identified them as Mansfield fans. The following table shows how the fans responded to this set of questions

Figure 16 Behaviours that show a sense of allegiance

Behaviour	No.of fans	Behaviour	No. of fans
Wearing a shirt	20	Joining in chants	24
Wearing a hat	7	Joining in group gestures	18
Wearing a scarf	12	Others (badges, car stickers)	3
Singing songs	18	None of the above	0

The visible signs of belonging appeared to offer a strengthened sense of kinship especially at away matches and helped fans develop and maintain positive feelings brought about by being part of a supporting community. The sense of belonging for many fans was grounded in their personal history of supporting. For many in the

study their relationship with each other and with the club was characterised by a sense of continuity.

7.6 Theme 3 – Continuity

In an ever changing world, for some Mansfield Town fans, the responses in the transcripts suggest that the continuity of Mansfield Town as a concept has become important. There is not a single player or member of the coaching team still at Mansfield that was there 20 years ago, but the concept of the club, Stags, is a constant. Embodied in those amber shirts and blue shorts (and some might argue poor results) is a consistency and this is more than can be said for the local mining industry, the local textiles industry, individual health, marriage or wealth. In this case it is the concept, Stags, that is specific to generating the sense of continuity. The continuity here is closely tied up with loyalty. The fans show their loyalty to the club by attending through thick and thin and the club provides a place of continuity for them to continue to commune year after year.

The importance of this continuity was described by fans in such observations as:-

No 13- your true fans will stick with the club through thick and thin. I know they'll curse the players week in week out but they will always be there

No.3- because whether they did well or badly I used to keep going. I'm not a fanatic now but when I was younger, I was in them days, in the sixties, I used to go to London, Crystal Palace, on me motorbike and I thought nothing of it. We used to come back frozen, two of us, me and my mate. But I still need to go.

To continue to be loyal to a small, relatively unsuccessful, definitely unfashionable, team over a number of years creates and promotes a sense of honour for supporters. The key component here is the sense of loyalty. Even faced with season after season of mediocrity and more poor results than good ones the loyal fan will still turn up for more. This was found in such comments as:-

No 12 - Well I suppose I mean it's easy to support a good team, or a big team, you know one that wins a lot (laughs) but it takes a little something special to support a team that loses as much as Stags but most supporters I know seem to take something from that. There is I suppose a sort camaraderie, of kudos from supporting a team that doesn't win that often.

No 9- (fans) they're very loyal aren't they, they could support a club in the Premiership but it shows how they feel about supporting a club that they know won't win and that's why I value supporters from the lower leagues a lot more 'cause they're much harder to support. It's like someone living in Mansfield and supporting Man U, that's easy isn't it but supporting Stags that's really a hard thing to do

In mental health care the concept of continuity is interlinked closely with the concept of comfort. The comfort of the well worn and repeated phrases that mark our rights of passage at birth, marriage and death, the importance of national songs as markers of identity and the comfort of repetition in hearing the same stories told again and again help ensure that, rather than breeding contempt, familiarity in fact often breeds comfort. This sense of continuity and loyalty finds its roots, for most fans, in childhood or early adolescence. It is something born of familiarity and a behaviour acquired for most fans with their family and friends from an early age. For the majority of the fans in the study this was acquired by

fans after an introduction to the experience from their fathers.

7.7 Theme 4 – Fathers and football

"it's something I like to do with my dad, and it's an escape back to old times and really what else would me and my dad do together?"

In the responses to questions about their early experiences of being a fan many supporters clearly showed how important, to them, the protected father son time generated by attending the game with their parent was. This was evident by the clarity with which the memories of these times had remained.

No 6- (my first game).....1946 I remember because I went with me dad and I was six years old

No 19- it was 1979, Queens Park Rangers, in the League Cup. The QPR team that had Stan Bowles and Rodney Marsh, obviously my dad took me to that one thinking this will be a good start. Night time, come out, pitch and it hits you, and once that happens I think you're just fixed for life.

For some fans, however, dad wasn't always the first person to take them to a match

No 24- before that my parents wouldn't let me go to the first team games as it was too busy so I used to go with my grandfather to reserve games, my father had TB so couldn't go.

No. 11- me cousin first of all, then with me mam and later my dad got into it then I used to meet up with me school mates.

The overwhelming number of response suggested that the experience of attending Field Mill for the first time was a positive, memorable one but this was not always the case in the interviews. One supporter recalled a very different experience when his dad took him to his first game.

No 14- me dad took me and I were frightened to death. The it was all standing and there were a mass of people and then there were quite a lot of trouble then. Not like bad trouble but a lot of pushing and shoving and it was packed and intimidating

In the transcripts one idea that came through strongly is the affection with which many fans hold the memories of going to early games with their fathers. These fans described the experience of going with their father to their first game as almost a rite of passage.

The key feature that emerged from this line of research was that the fans early experiences of being taken to a match were resonant with a feeling of being old enough to enjoy and appreciate the game and of having some clearly defined time with their fathers which was sacrosanct and expected. This was time that was set aside with a definite purpose and a marked shared experience that was guaranteed to generate interaction and conversation between parent and child on a subject which each could have a view on and exchange an idea on. It is this exchange of ideas between father and child with a shared interest and shared experience that is the hallmark of "quality time". Football can cut across age, class and wealth in a way few other subjects can. As one fan put it

No 19- I think people can relate to their dads and granddads with increased ties, even people who support different clubs

One question to arise from the discussions with fans about the taking of children to matches was the fact that this frequently exposes them to language and behaviours that can be classed as antisocial. These behaviours are often ones that would not be displayed by fans outside of the stadium, but form part of the culture inside, where such displays could be seen to have been given cultural permission. The question of exposing young people to this type of language and behaviour was explored within the context of the behaviour and language of the carnivalesque. Although exposure to language and behaviour that could be seen as offensive was acknowledged by some fans:-

No 18 - the kids go and the language is a bit ripe, I am conscious of that

However, the view that the behaviour was “normal” in this arena was reinforced by such comments as:-

No.8- if there are young children nearby you'll turn it down a bit but at the end of the day people who take their kids to a match know that they're going to hear that they have to be realistic and I think you make that decision before you go through the turnstile

Implicit in this observation is the awareness of fans that attending matches opens up the strong probability of being exposed to Bakhtin's behaviour of the carnivalesque and “language of the Billingsgate”

7.8 Theme 5 – “Some behaviours at matches are sanctioned”

The carnivalesque idea of breaking down barriers and being able to come into contact with people you may never come across in “ordinary life” was presented as a reality of supporting by some fans. Although in other walks of life the distinctions drawn between people in splits such as employer / employee or management / shop floor worker may hold, it was of note that fans commented on how, at a match, such distinctions were not really seen or felt.

No 24- the main thing's that I get are a feeling of belonging no matter what. You get a real mix of people that you wouldn't normally meet day to day and there is camaraderie and a positive friendship and it's a good experience.

Another carnivalesque concept, that of belonging to a crowd and being able, or even encouraged, in this crowd, to behave in ways that are out of the norm was evident in transcripts. Fans talked about being free to use language and gestures and to display attitudes that would not be part of their everyday mode of expression.

No.3- because, now then let me think about this, because you all get carried away cause you're all in a crowd, the atmosphere, I think that gets to you all the emotion and that, having said that I don't swear in a crowd, sometimes I do, I swear to my mates and say "that were fucking crap that were"

This idea that the environment of carnival sanctions behaviours and makes them acceptable found a clear resonance in the experience of fans in the football stadium. The fans did not appear to see these behaviours as bad within the confines of the stadium although it was

accepted in general that they were not behaviours that would be acceptable in society in general. This was seen through such comments as:-

No 2- There are certain things which are associated with football which are not acceptable in general behaviour but they are acceptable there, like if you stand up and swear at the referee you're probably one of hundreds whereas if you stand up and swear at somebody in the street well it's just you. Some behaviours at matches are sanctioned

No 12- when you're at a game you're there and the whole fans share a common goal and within certain boundaries which I suppose are difficult to define, anything goes. When you're out of that setting it's not acceptable to be like that with the general public because they are made up of all sections of society who may not affiliate with football and may not understand and I think it goes against social norms as well

Bakhtin claims carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people. While carnival lasts, there is no other life outside it. During carnival time life is subject only to its laws, that is, the laws of its own freedom and Bakhtin goes on to say that in carnival the individual body ceases to a certain extent to be itself and that it is possible to be renewed through change of costume and mask.

The belonging to a group that comes together for a temporary moment of time, and behaves in ways that are removed from the normal behaviours of the group members is, for Bakhtin, one of the essential defining characteristics of what carnival is all about.. A key feature of carnivalesque environments is that they clearly sanction

behaviours that are not indulged in outside of carnival time and space and, importantly, that are left in the carnival setting when the carnival is over (Bakhtin 1984). Part of the questionnaire that accompanied the interview schedule for fans highlighted some of the carnivalesque behaviours fans indulge in and asked fans to indicate if they carried out the bahviours when at a match and also if the carried them out away from games. The results are found in the following table:-

Figure 17 Behaviours inside and outside the ground

<i>Behaviour</i>	<i>At the match</i>	<i>Away from the match</i>
Shouting	28	20
Verbally abusing	25	9
Taunting	23	8
Singing	22	6
Swearing	26	23
Crying	5	8
Cheering	29	6
Stamping	2	0
Offensive gestures	24	13
Laughing	23	21
Hugging in public	20	1
Threatening	12	0

Of interest was the fact that the only behaviour reported as being more often displayed outside of the ground rather than inside was crying. For other behaviours it was generally around four times more common to indulge in what could be construed as offensive behaviours in the crowd setting. In the more positive gestures of hugging another man in public the difference was 20 to 1.The

behaviours that were seen as being similar in frequency both inside and outside the stadium were swearing, laughing and shouting which were seen as being quite "ordinary manly" behaviours.

As can clearly be seen the behaviours displayed in the socially accepting stadium environment were certainly of a more carnivalesque nature than those displayed outside of the football ground. The behaviour was seen by supporters as acceptable within the confines and time framework of the match **but was left there** at the final whistle. Perhaps the most obvious and frequent examples of the carnivalesque behaviours outlined are the chants, songs and comments that reflect Bakhtin's "language of the Billingsgate"

7.9 Theme 6 - The language of the terraces

In the world of Bakhtin's carnival, language, and especially what he termed the language of the Billingsgate, was an important feature. In *Rabelais and his Work* (Bakhtin 1984) he suggests that students of carnival are especially interested in the language which mocks and insults those in authority. The use of abusive, derogatory comments and language is an integral part for the experience of supporting for many fans. All clubs have chants specific to their own players and many chants, often the most offensive, are kept for the club's specific rivals.

Fans were open in discussion about their use of language but felt that it was closely linked to the release of stress. Examples included:-

No 7- At football though I think that it's accepted that that is what is going to happen, you're doing it to the opposition they're doing it to you and you don't take it personally. I've got a colleague who's a Notts County fan I'm sure he was shouting as much abuse at us as I

was at them, but afterwards you just have a laugh and a joke and that's it.

No 8- I think if you're verbally abusing the opposition and they're a fair distance away I don't think they give a monkey's because they're doing exactly the same. If you put two fingers up at them I don't think they'd take offence. And yes you abuse the referee and he can probably hear this but he hears it every single day of the week but it's all part and parcel of the routine looking at the referee and making reference to the solo activities that men do. Its part of the routine you're letting steam off that's built up through the week and it's an opportunity to do that

So although fans agree that swearing, shouting and using foul and abusive language is not a good thing, and some say they rarely engage in it at home or work, the link between the existence of the carnivalesque and the use of abusive language appears to hold on the terraces of Field Mill. Not everybody, however, engages in the Language of the Billingsgate

No 3- Shouting yes , I used to a lot, my mate Arthur used to go off his head at the referee he used to go white and I had to say calm down calm down but we was never abusive

No 16- yeah, ... outside of the football ground you try and control things whereas it wouldn't be right to be stood in a street swearing or even in a pub. I don't do it if there's kids around. I know little kids can go to football and they can now go into pubs but it still wouldn't be right

In a liberal society teaching and tacitly encouraging young people and children to behave in this foul mouthed and abusive way

presents a real challenge. The overall feeling from fans, however, was that when a person goes to a match, even with children accompanying, they are aware of what the atmosphere will be like.

No 24- shouting, verbally abusing because sometimes you lose it, even when there are kids around you have to accept it happens,

One fan responded to this line of inquiry by looking at me as if I were hopelessly naïve and stated, with a chuckle,

*No 12- I hate to break this to you mate but you hear much worse in **any** school playground*

This language of the Billingsgate, so loved by Bakhtin, is clearly found in the chants exchanged by rival fans on all match days but special vehemence is reserved for opposing fans in the local derby matches through out the country. This is found in such games the Celtic vs Rangers contest in Glasgow, the Liverpool vs Everton derby match and the south coast's Portsmouth vs Southampton fixture.

Mansfield Town's great rivalry is with nearby Chesterfield (nicknamed the Spirites after Chesterfield's famous twisted spire) and some of the abusive terrace songs sung by Mansfield fans are specifically aimed at their great rivals. The scathing chants reserved for Chesterfield fans echo the carnival obscenities Bakhtin describes. Fans in the study described the relish with which they sang and chanted in a way directly aimed at their great rivals. Following Bakhtin's idea of subversion of the normal, these songs are often pastiches of common popular songs that are found in everyday life. Examples fans had indulged in include a song sung to the tune of "You are my sunshine, my only sunshine" with the lyrics :-

*You're just a spirerite
An ugly spirerite
You're only happy on giro day
your mam is stealing
Your dad is dealing
So please don't take my hubcaps away.*

In response to this provocation the Chesterfield fans, as might have been imagined, have a set of taunting songs that they reserve for the clashes with Mansfield Town including a parody of a song from Mary Poppins with the lyrics :-

*Chim Chimeneey, chim chimeneey chim chim churroo,
We hate the b*st*rds in yellow and blue!*

The question to follow from this observation of the carnivalesque was the question of why people behave in this way, and what benefit, if any, such overtly negative behaviours can bring? The answer could be found in the responses of fans that addressed concept of catharsis.

7.10 Theme 7 - "A massive vent"

Bushman (2001) describes the positive theory of catharsis as the view that venting one's anger will produce a positive improvement in one's psychological state. According to that view, anger and aggressive impulses exist inside the psyche and seek to get out by being expressed. If they are not expressed, they remain inside the person and can cause psychological damage. Expressing them, however, removes them from the psyche and frees it from their

harmful effects. It is thus considered healthy to express anger, even by venting aggressive feelings. Catharsis literally means to release or to purge, thereby capturing the idea that aggressive acts will help purge the hostile feelings from the psyche. Shapiro and Hunt (2003) describe how the ancient Greeks recognised that a gathering of a crowd of people to witness a spectacle, usually of live theatre, provided emotional catharsis and release not only for the individual, but for the community as well. Kettles (1994) view of emotional catharsis is that it enables an individual to release emotion, to feel better and to facilitate coping.

In a society that could, according to Heron (1998), be described as non-cathartic, attending the matches appeared to offer diarists an opportunity to behave in ways that allowed the open expression of emotions that are often seen as negative. Expressing emotions through shouting, within the confines of the stadium appeared to be socially acceptable for fans who, in the diary study, commented:-

Diary 17- Bizarre really, I work in a system in which the customer is always right and in which the correct use of language is important. I actually enjoy the shouting and the banter as much as the game.

Diary 20- it's a strange combination. The chance to shout and vent frustration but also to relax.

Responses from fans generated a theme directly related to the ventilation of emotion during matches. Most fans accepted the traditional ventilation hypothesis that emotion that stays inside is damaging and emotion that is released is healthy. As noted above, this release of emotion, through the vehicle of the carnivalesque and the language of the Billingsgate, was seen as valid within the

confines of the stadium, but the fans overwhelmingly suggested that this process was good for their mental health.

For some, the connection with mental health as directly related to the release of tension and venting of frustration. In a section of fans this was related specifically to work related stress and was found in such comments as:-

No 4- It helps me get rid of the pent up aggression from during the week. I mean you can imagine how stressful this job is and I do get quite emotional, understandably, and the match day definitely is the time to get rid of that.

No 14- Mentally and socially it is a great relief from what I consider to be a stressful job. My job has lots of responsibility there is no responsibility at a match.. I've never ever at any football match felt aggressive, I've felt anger towards referees and players but not aggressive.

For some other fans the use of shouting and swearing along with the gestures, chants and songs offered a more general sense of release from the generic stresses of everyday life rather than those of a specific work related environment.

Both views, however, were united in the belief that the behaviours were very positive and constructive ways of venting frustration and tension built over the week. Interestingly some fans talked about deliberately saving frustration and being able to absorb frustration because they knew that on match day they would be able to consciously and purposely vent this in the stadium environment.

No 10- if you've got a crappy job or your personal life's not great then it's something that can get rid of a lot of anger and frustration so I think it's a good way to vent frustration and anger,

No 16- The shouting, you get rid of all the stress inside that's been building up so I don't feel I'm stressed when I'm at a match. You're there to release the stress

No 18- I know swearing at a football match is illegal and you can get into trouble but you have to be going some so I go there and vent all the aggravation and frustration of the week and feel an awful lot better

All of this, of course, all sounds very nice and inclusive and cathartic and positive, but it has to be remembered what is actually being proposed here. In essence, it is being suggesting that 4,000 people shouting abuse at strangers, swearing, insulting and threatening can be a good thing.

This freedom to express emotion in the language which Bakhtin championed may be seen as positive but this has to be seen within the legal context of the Football (Offences) Act (1991). This act makes fans liable to prosecution when "in a designated football match, words or sounds, are chanted in concert with one or more others, abusive and threatening to a person". Although this is acknowledged as true for most fans it does not impact on their behaviours or language on the terraces where the cathartic language and behaviours are held as the norm.

No 4- yes I think I do nearly all of these but that's part and parcel of the game isn't it. It's like I've said to you before if you did these

things in Tesco's you'd be arrested but it's socially acceptable at the ground.

No 18- eh...largely, it's a massive vent for me , I do a lot of things that would de-stress and get rid of some of the aggression or frustration, clay pigeon shooting things like that they eh blast a piece of clay they feel good but I don't devote as much time to that as I do to Mansfield and it is a massive vent in terms of you can get rid of all that and the fact that I come away hoarse after most games is a sign of how much of a release that is for me

As discussed in the literature search, academics may argue and disagree about the finer points of catharsis but the response from fans was squarely behind John Heron's view of the behaviours and language of catharsis being a positive vent to internal frustration and a sense of release being generated following the experience. This behaviour was deemed to be acceptable inside a specific environment where such behaviour was accepted, expected and where the chance of sanction is very small.

No 15- For me it is the acceptability of the behaviours. It is acceptable to do these. In my occupation such a display would be unprofessional at the best and subject to disciplinary action.

It becomes apparent that the behaviours outlined above are ways in which emotion is vented and fans had an overwhelmingly positive view of the process. Their recurring descriptions of feeling that the process of catharsis actually took place on the terraces and was a method by which they constructively dealt with stress suggested that for many it was a conscious choice to use their "safe place" to express emotion and vent frustration and stress. The other mechanism, related to emotion that came into focus from the data

collected was the way in which fans controlled the levels of anxiety that the experience of supporting a team generates. One way that this anxiety was controlled by the fans was through the use of ritual.

7.11 Theme 8 - The comfort of ritual

Contemporary Western culture provides us with a whole repertoire of modern rituals. These include such things such as the singing of "Happy Birthday" and blowing out candles, the stag night arranged to mark the end of bachelorhood, sharing a Christmas dinner with family and friends, wearing caps and gowns at graduations and the complex ceremonies of weddings and funerals. Besides these standard community rituals, every family and every individual develops private rituals around things that are done in a certain way that helps reassures us that we are still in control of our lives.

Since any action is a ritual if it is done at least in part for its symbolic and emotional value, almost any human activity can be developed to have ritualistic properties. There is a degree of vagueness between what constitutes a "ritual," a "habit," and a "custom." For fans in this study it appears that an act becomes a ritual when it is performed with conscious awareness of its symbolic and emotional meaning. An act without symbolic or emotional meaning could be seen as merely a habit if it is unique to an individual, or a custom, if it is shared it with others.

With some supporters of Mansfield Town a range of rituals have been developed and are acted out around every match. Use of a ritual object, or talisman, was visible in the form of such things as lucky hats, lucky underpants and lucky socks. Some objects, notably shirts autographed by the players, were often regarded as having a greater value than non signed shirts. Interestingly this was still the

case even if the players who had signed the garment had moved on and were now playing for other teams.

For one supporter a ritual object is a teddy bear, affectionately called "Centrespot", that accompanies him to every match and has done for several seasons. This bear is small enough to fit in the fans pocket but has to face the pitch throughout the game. For another fan the ritual object is a brick from the old stadium was removed from the rubble and now mounted on a plinth near his front door at home. This brick has to be touched as he leaves for the game. Perhaps the most interesting ritual object used by one group of fans was "Woody". Woody turned out to be another fan! After a goal these fans have to "rub Woody's head" in order to ensure that more goals will be forthcoming.

For some fans the ritual behaviours to invoke the "charm" of good luck involve repeating specific actions. Much like throwing salt over a shoulder or not walking under ladders, these fans follow specific rules of action such as walking to the stadium by a fixed route or eating, or avoiding eating, specific foods on match day. A discussion on the idea of rituals on the message board of the official supporters' website produced a number of responses and examples of Mansfield Town supporters rituals included:-

"pre match I have the same route to the ground must have a pie first thing as soon as we enter the ground",

" I have to buy a programme from the same guy - strange what peeps do!"

"I always park in the same place for home games, not telling you where though !"

"If we've won then I wear the same clothes (including pants & socks!) to the next match"

"I never shave before a match and I always try and sit in the same spot on the edge of the pitch."

One fan described an unusual ritual involving collecting plastic spoons from Burger King before home matches. This stemmed from a game against Tranmere Rovers. Rovers were a better side and expected to beat Stags. The fan went to Burger King and inadvertently put the plastic spoon from his coffee into his jacket pocket. Stags won 6-1 and a ritual was born. The fan comments that by the end of the season he

"ended up with about 30 spoons and we still went down !".

The ritual, however, remains to this day. The importance of repeating a sequence exactly in the ritual was seen in such examples from transcripts such as :

No 11- I think it started when I was younger and I used to go with me mam and used to wear red socks. She used to work in a factory and every week brought home new red socks and I used to have new red socks for the game.. It's just superstition you know we did well and I thought I'll do that again

No 18- ...yeah, (laughs), when it was the old terracing my brother used to kick all the litter off and it wasn't just him we all used to do it so it spread into a communal litter kicking of the step thing rather than just my brother. We count the corners and that is disguised as a statistical sort of thing, a lucky sort of thing if we count to ten

corners from one of them we'd score a goal so we knew that would happen. The biggest thing that's stayed throughout was that we follow a particular route literally down to the last paving slab and we don't deviate from it. Anybody who does is..eh..scolded shall we say

It appears that the players too have rituals. In the transcripts one fan describes the behaviour of Reg Carter, a player he knew, stating that:-

No 1- "He got nervous and I remember him saying he has a bit of rye bread\ and some milk then he went upstairs and nobody was allowed near him. So that was his ritual and I'm sure other players have theirs".

This appears to be the case with another fan from the website commenting

"As for players Izzy (striker Iyseden Christie) walks backward and ties his shorts when he walks onto the pitch"

One fan, however, claimed to be the voice of reason and observed in a contribution to the club website:-

"Why have a ritual?, If the team is good enough they will win or draw, if not they will lose. Can you imagine if you was going to the game and you had to wear odd socks (at least you would have another pair at home identical) also on the way to the ground you had to touch your collar every time you saw a ambulance, if you did not see a sea gull we would win or lose, if you had radio Mansfield on and Steve Hartshorne did not say "certainly" we would win or lose, if the wife said hope its a good game we would win or lose, every time you saw a blue and amber scarf you had to hop three

times or we would win or lose

By the time you got to the game you would be knackered turning your head to see or not to see the ritual, hopping like mad as you got nearer the ground.

So this season just have one ritual and that is :-

NOT TO HAVE ANY BLOODY RITUALS AT ALL, THANKYOU VERY MUCH !

On football terraces ritual defines a role to play for participants in the experience and often the ritual behaviours of chants and gestures are easy to see, easy to understand and easy to replicate. This increases the ease of the integration process of joining the group and quickly fosters a sense of inclusion for the participants. Joining in the chants and songs helps consolidate the sense of belonging and acceptance and means that even if a fans attendance becomes limited there is always the familiarity on their return that the songs, chants and rituals offer. One fan commented on this by stating :-

No 10- ... me and my mate go every year on boxing day and uncles and cousins and there's quite a few of us go and we've done this since I was about 10 and he's gone to university like so I don't get to see him much and it's just part of Christmas know what I mean and it's just the friendship thing is really important

If the supporter performs the ritual they have done their part towards the victory. This, importantly, absolves them of any guilt

from the result of the game. Even if the “ritual magic” has not worked, the fan feels at ease.

No 21- Last season I wore certain clothes when they beat Huddersfield 3 1 away. Now the next game at home to Northampton I thought I'll wear those clothes again, they lost 3 0. but at least it wasn't my fault

An interesting thing about the ritual of clothing for fans is the fact that the clothing is often superfluous to practical need but steeped in the history of the game. The most obvious indicators of a supporter's allegiance are the hat and scarf, usually displaying the team colours. These began to be prominent in the 1930's when huge crowds of, mostly working class, men attended matches in stadiums that were open to the elements. As the football season runs through the autumn and winter this meant that fans were frequently watching games in the open subject to cold and rain. The development of completely covered, all seater stadia, with good facilities for hot food and drinks, has lessened the need for hats and scarves to be worn for practical reasons. Still, however, even on warm spring days fans can be seen steaming towards grounds wearing hats and scarves as badges of allegiance rather than for practical purposes. These items clearly can become ritual objects. As one supporter put it:-

No 3- I drink with a bloke who's very superstitious.. He never goes anywhere without his scarf. Bad luck that'd be.

In the transcripts the most common repeating behaviour was that of going for a drink before the match with friends. This, however, was seen as a custom rather than a ritual because it did not involve any kind of symbolic or emotional meaning.

The ritual behaviour binds the group and strengthens the sense of belonging and inclusiveness offered by being part of the group. The rituals also show the individual's commitment to the cause and helps the fan protect themselves from any sense of guilt. When fans were asked about how wearing specific pants, or touching bricks or removing rubbish could possibly influence the game they were unanimous in their response that it can't. However they are also adamant that if they have done their ritual and the team loses they feel an element of personal comfort because they have done their part and so cannot have any responsibility or guilt for the defeat. If, however, the team loses and they have **not** carried out their specific ritual the sense of guilt that is created is experienced as real. This feeling of having "done their bit" is important for fans as they prepare for the match, an experience several fans described as a "rollercoaster of hope and despair."

7.12 Theme 9 - The rollercoaster of hope and despair

Hope is an important part of the human condition and a major influence on both physical and mental health. Hope is the belief that things can be different in the future to helps us tolerate the difficulties of the present and enables individuals to endure those parts of their lives that they see as negative because of the belief that better things lie ahead.

Hope has been used as an index of well-being (Gibson 1999) and constitutes as an essential experience of the human condition. Moore (2005) suggests that although hope may be difficult to define, it is easy to see the effects of its absence, and, as such, hope has a very powerful influence on the lived experience of most individuals. Groupman (2004 p81) reinforces the importance of hope when he says that 'to hope under the most extreme circumstances is part of

the human spirit' and helps individuals to endure moments, and sometimes lives, of adversity.

Part of the study looked at the ideas of hope and of pessimism in relation to supporting behaviours. Both were evident in the responses but clear differences were visible in the concepts of hope and pessimism related to the actual performance on the pitch, and hope and pessimism in response to the experience of being a fan in general. A range of emotions, from positive to negative, were described by most fans as being an integral part of the supporters experience. The interviews developed ideas from the diaries about what one diarist termed this "roller coaster of emotions" (Diary 24) that supporting Mansfield generates. In the Diary text descriptions of emotions like "elation", "optimism" and "over the moon " (Diaries 7, 9 and 3) were balanced by others like "fed up", "frustrated" and "deflated" (Diaries 2, 11, 18).

There was evidence of the sense of pessimism about performance that appears to be the hallmark of supporting a lower league team as seen in the following extracts from diaries :-

Diary 5 - . Here they were again after a good start looking like they were going to throw it away. Counted the minutes as I thought they would blow it at the last few hurdles. I really should have more faith but you know what Stags are like.

Diary 10- (from a point when the Stags found themselves 3-0 up at half time) Conversation around the likelihood of Stags blowing the match. 80% of the conversation focused around "we would be lucky to get a draw" The second half started with a bang - Hull scored.....here we go

As the interview transcripts developed from the data in the diaries the question of optimism and pessimism was developed in the interview process. The sense of pessimism about performance was also evident in the transcripts of the interviews with Mansfield supporters

No 13- I think over the years you sadly realise that there is a resignation that the team is never going to be a high flying team

No 19 - I am the worlds biggest pessimist, altogether, not just football I always expect the ...eh....it's that saying isn't it the glass is half empty, that's me. Now whether that was brought on through the years of supporting Mansfield I don't know but I think it probably contributed.

This sense of pessimism was balanced, however, by clear moments of optimism and hope visible in both data from the diaries and data from the interviews. The diaries contained such optimistic entries as:-

Diary 2 - It's the cup. Minnows win matches, we've been playing well, you never know. Overall a feeling of excitement. This might be our big night. There was a genuine sense of optimism and it felt good to be part of it.

Similarly in the transcripts the sense of hope and optimism from fans interviewed in the second stage of the process was visible in such comments as:-

No 2- basically having supported Mansfield for a number of years you hope that they're going to do well and get promotion but so many times they've come close and not managed that it's always in

the back of your mind that you're waiting for them to fail. But when they do really well there's always that hope.

No 5- the sense of hope. You always think this is the game that things are going to go right. You always hope even though your head says no way, well you've got to hope haven't you or you wouldn't go

So, overall, most fans had evidence of both hope and optimism, as well and pessimism. Rather than these two elements fusing to create some form of balance however, the usual presentation of these cognitions and emotions was to swing dramatically from one extreme to the other, a journey frequently described using the metaphor of a rollercoaster. Data from the transcripts supporting this included:-

No 4- Emotional roller coaster my friend, absolute roller coaster. This stuff is straight from the heart.

No 7- it is the absolute essence of football that we are prone to this roller coaster of a ride I mean just look over the last few weeks I've gone from thinking we've not got a chance, then Keith Curle came along and won the first three games and I was actually looking at how far the playoffs are, I don't think I really believed it but you still think crazier things have happened, then it's back down again then the Chesterfield game which was unbelievable, the Notts County game then back down again

The key feature of the conversations with fans was that there was no synthesis of emotion it really was a dramatic oscillation from pole to pole but as the game can change dramatically with a single incident this should come as no surprise. The fact that a range of, sometimes diametrically opposite, emotions can be experienced

almost simultaneously was explored in the questionnaire that accompanied the interviews. The responses showed that even emotions and experiences that were at opposing ends of the emotional range could be experienced within a the course of watching a game. The responses to this section of the questionnaire are presented in the following table:-

Figure 18 emotions experienced when watching a game

Frustration	Calm	Respect for opposing fans	Contempt for opposing fans
29	7	24	18
Friendship	Loneliness	Serenity	Anger
28	1	12	18
Irrational Belief	Rational Analysis	Stress	A relief from Stress
15	9	27	21
Anticipation of Success	Expectation of Failure	Pessimism	Optimism
21	24	22	26
Hope	Despair	A sense of Isolation	A sense of Belonging
27	15	6	27

Fans were able to tick as many or as few boxes as they liked in this grid and a large number of fans ticked two boxes that were diametrically opposite, for example optimism and pessimism. They offered the observation that this was because the “rollercoaster of emotions” experienced in a game could mean that a supporter could go from one to the other and back to the first again in as little as a few minutes depending on how the game unfolded. What was

interesting when reviewing the results of this grid was how, when paired together, opposite emotions balanced out for fans.

As can be seen from the table above two of the most frequently reported emotions were stress and frustration. When developing these ideas the fans reported that these were elements of emotion that were directly related to the actual performance of the team on the pitch. Whether the team were winning or losing these emotions remained high. If the team were losing the stress and frustration reflected the disappointment of watching impending defeat, yet if the team were doing well the stress generated by the fear that it would all slip away and frustration of not being able to score a few more goals to "kill the game off" were reported. This inability to secure a win or as one fan put it "the ability to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory" was the major driver offered for fans anger.

More fans in the study reported anticipation of failure for the team than anticipation of success. For some this was based on a history of watching year on year with only limited success in terms of good results, promotion to a higher league or winning a trophy. Despite this cognitive realisation that success was not really very likely the elements of fans experiences around more emotive, rather than logical, elements such as hope or optimism showed the opposite result. For a large proportion of fans, despite that statistical evidence that suggested a season of mediocrity, there was a hope filled emotion that maybe this match, this season, with this team, it would all come right. This can perhaps be explained in some part by the fact that nearly twice as many people felt that football supporting was an experience based on irrational belief rather than rational analysis.

A large proportion of fans (27 out of 29) clearly stated that they approached the beginning of each season and each individual match with a sense of hope with a similar number (26 out of 29) claiming that they felt a sense of optimism when at Field Mill. This emotive response flies in the face of any logical analysis of the teams chances yet this was for many fans the key to understanding their return to the stadium year after year.

The idea of serenity was developed by fans in this section of the interviews. Their experience was that at the stadium everything else vanished for the time at the game. One fan described in terms of not worrying about his work, or his ex wife or any of the other stresses and others echoed this idea of the world outside vanishing for a short period of time. All fans agreed that the escape from the world that the supporting experience offered was temporary but felt that this did not diminish its value. For that time they were safe, serene and protected.

This experience, coupled with the cathartic behaviour previously described, resulted in a number of fans stating that this was their most effective way of releasing stress in their lives. This the fans suggested resulted in the experiencing of stress in short bursts in direct relation to events on the pitch but a larger picture of release of pent up stress carried from their lives in general, and from work in particular, by the whole supporting experience and the behaviours that accompany it.

The highest scoring area of this part of the study was the section that asked fans about friendship and a sense of belonging. 28 out of 29 fans interviewed stated that they experienced friendship at matches and the positive emotional feelings that this can bring.

Similarly the positive experience of feeling a sense of belonging was reported by 27 of 29 fans.

The understanding that supporters from other clubs experienced the same things was the main reason that a high proportion of fans said they had respect for opposing fans. Interestingly the diametric opposite worked here with fans saying that during the match, for 90 minutes, they could have contempt for opposing fans because they were the opposition and essentially "the enemy" but after the match was over and the "hostilities ceased".

This section of the research clearly showed some of the dichotomies that arise when emotionally engaged in supporting a football team. The contradictions appear to be pronounced but when viewed through the lens of empathy they appear less so. As a fan is able to understand his own sense of commitment to a club that results in his or her driving hundreds of miles to see a poor performance so his empathy for the opposing fan grows in much the same way as soldiers in an opposing army can see another soldier as "the enemy" but still respect and admire the person.

The apparent opposites of hope and despair can be held as their presence so often is a response to what actually happens on the pitch and the hope of victory can be replaced with the reality of defeat in literally a few minutes during a game. The similar apparent dichotomies of anticipation of success and expectation of failure and of pessimism and optimism can be understood when viewed from this perspective. Perhaps the most encouraging aspect of these dichotomies was the fact that for the majority of fans hope and optimism in the end were stronger than despair and pessimism because although the last match might have been a terrible defeat the next match offered a new beginning and a new hope tempered

with the fall back position of a concept described by Kwon (2000) as defensive pessimism.

This concept is a key feature when attempting to understand how fans are able to support a team, year after year, who achieve almost nothing in terms of trophies or promotions without feeling overwhelmed by defeat. Defensive pessimism involves individuals envisioning catastrophic failure with the knowledge that anything less than absolute failure can be seen as a type of success. A key factor that distinguishes defensive pessimism from maladaptive pessimism is the constructiveness of the response that the pessimism fosters. In this way of thinking means that a 2-0 defeat can be seen as success because at least it is better than a 4 – 0 defeat. For fans of less successful teams this is an important mental defence strategy.

Ey *et al* (2005) propose that there is some evidence to suggest that this type of defensive pessimism begins to play an important role in psychological well-being. Bruce (2003) agrees stating that although optimism is often portrayed as a more positive way of being it comes at a price because optimists are less accurate in their assessments and expectations than are pessimists and so, in the end, more likely to be disappointed.

If you expect nothing, but get something then it can be seen as a positive experience. This allows fans to return again and again even if the product is not enjoyable. As one fan, interviewed for a BBC programme about this project, put it:-

"if you went to a restaurant and were served slop, you'd never go again. Well I've been to Field Mill and been served slop nine times out of ten, but every now and again they throw in a little gourmet food and that's what keeps you coming back."

7.13 Theme 10 - Gender and supporting

Data collected from both the diary study and the interviews indicated that the fans that keep coming back were from both genders. As well as these main themes, the analysis of the diary entries highlighted some interesting observations by, and about, gender differences in supporters. One example of this is in the sense of compassion displayed by one of the female diarists during a match when she writes,

"Felt sorry for the keeper whose mistake gave us the goal"

or when talking about the opposing fans observes

"they appeared downhearted. I still felt sorry for them and recalled Michael Knightons words that they would be a Premiership side within 5 years of him taking over. - I think he's a joke"

A man's diary from the same match comments

they had a player sent off - GREAT - and Pembelton scored from the resulting free kick"

Another gender difference was that **none** of the men's diaries commented on the facilities at either Field Mill or any of the away grounds visited. One of the female diarists, on the other hand, observed that at Carlisle United:-

"Prematch drinking chocolate was great and the ladies loos were clean - much better than the ones at Field Mill"

The women interviewed were supporters who had followed football as a game and the club for several years but observed how men that

they came into contact with would quiz them about such things as the rules of the game. Interestingly they felt that this was not something they would do to other men.

Generally womens' views about the importance of the experience for the sense of belonging, the release of tension and the time spent with family members in a deliberate and meaningful way echoed strongly the comments of their male counterparts.

7.14 Theme 11 - Negative impacts on mental health

The final key theme that developed from the data analysis was constructed when examining changes in mood in response to the game and in response to the experience of supporting generally. Fans described openly how the experience of attending matches impacted on their mood and their sense of well being. It was clear that the experience did not always equate to an increase in the positive elements of mood with some diarists stating:-

Diary 2 - Watched them slowly run out of steam and end with a whimper. Talked a bit to Eddie about how the one decision can change a game completely. He's a die hard so he was really fed up.

Diary 12 - Felt cheated, Stags can play much better. What a waste of £12 should have stayed at home and watched TV

This theme was developed further in the interview phase of the study and again some of the fans highlighted that the experience can, on occasion, have a negative effect on their moods.

No 4- well I think it cuts both ways really. If we have lost I'm really down. I try not to think about it or take it personally but I know it

affects me. I'll tell you one game when we lost I was walking home and I noticed that all the way home I never said a single word to my daughter. I think at the chip shop I said "uh " and walked all the way home. That's really not on is it. And at home if we have lost I really notice how it effects what happens. (My wife) listens to the radio so that she knows what the score is so she can gauge the mood I'll be in.

Interestingly when this theme was pursued the fans talked about the transience of this feeling because of the impact of hope. Although a defeat may have been experienced the impact was short term as almost immediately the fans were able to look forward to the next game with a renewed sense of hope that in the following match things would somehow come right. The ability to overcome the short term effects of defeat and replace them with some hope and optimism for the next game was a recurring feature and this was reflected in the comments fans made about the positive impact on their health that they felt the experience of supporting offered.

7.15 Theme 12 - Positive impacts on mental health

Although the negative effect on mood was acknowledged by some fans in diaries most of the diary entries talked about the experience leading to positive feelings and an increase in feelings of wellbeing. For example:-

Diary 1- I really love coming to a match. The whole season is stretching out and it will be good. Pity I won't be able to come to a lot of games though.

Diary 3- The crowd were great, the team was great and everything just fell into place. Didn't even begrudge them a consolation goal.

Felt as good as I've felt for ages, you know when everything just goes right.

Diary 17 - A break from the midweek blues of working, kids and rubbish telly.

The most significant area of exploration in the study was that which offered the participants the opportunity to express exactly how they felt that the whole supporting experience impacts on their mental health.

Remembering the difficulties in defining mental health outlined above for clinicians and academics, it was deliberately decided to leave the questions about the impact the experience has on their mental health open and so allow fans to express their ideas, in both the interviews and written statements from the diaries, in a way that was comfortable for them rather than load the questions with clinical language.

To a certain extent this worked well and the diary question "What do you think you get out of going to see Stags ?" prompted responses that indicated the presence of some of the concepts outlined above as being positive and constructive for the development of good mental health. Responses from the diaries in this section included:-

Diary 3 - A place where you can go and just enjoy it all with no worries and where, today, everything went right for a change

Diary 9 - On an emotional level watching Mansfield Town fulfils a strong sense of optimism. A belief that they will one day succeed. The fact that this success is proving so difficult only adds to the sense of expectation and enjoyment (Holy Grail !!). I enjoy the

comradeship of going to matches and going to the pub before and after.

As can be seen from the responses above the sense of belonging described in words like pride, comradeship and a place to go back to your roots begins to form a picture of the positive aspects of belonging that the supporting experience can provide. This idea was developed in the interview study with the open question "So what effect do you think watching Stags actually has on your mental health?" The responses included:-

No 3- When they used to win and play well it was great but if they lost I used to say oh God what have I paid all this money for. When they played well I used to feel good and that would last throughout the day. You'd look forward to the game and you'd forget everything, forget work, you know the atmosphere takes over. But if they don't win it makes you feel a bit you know. It's still the same now even though I don't go every week to support them

.

No 7- It certainly effects your mood and gives you something to look forward to and even though it's a small activity it helps you get through the working week I'm really snowed under with work at the moment but I can still allow myself Mansfield town as an escape from that and not feel guilty.

No 8- It's a pity they don't play in Amber and Green because they'd be in the same colours as Prozac. I think after you've had a disappointing game you feel a bit down and when you've won you get a bit of a smile on your face to a certain degree it does have an effect on mood. Perhaps for a day or two if it's an important game. I

think it helps what the French call Esprit de Corps the sense of belonging

Similar ideas of belonging and comradeship could be found in the vast majority of the interviews and the quotes used to illustrate the point could be substituted by similar quotes from over 20 of the transcripts.

The following section will reflect on the range of themes outlined above and describe the development of the core theory developed from the analysis of the themes that emerged from the analysis of the data.

In mental health terms the foundations for analysis were laid on the strong representation in the transcripts and diaries of issues around belonging, developing and maintaining relationships over years, cathartic venting of emotion and feelings of anticipation of an experience that offered an antidote to the more negative, difficult, stressful aspects of daily life

Chapter 8 – the development of open codes into axial codes and a core theme

8.0 Introduction

This chapter describes the development of the codes identified into a core theme in line with the process set out when using grounded theory as a method for researching.

8.1 Developing the open codes into axial codes

Glaser emphatically stresses that the core theory that emerges with the grounded theory method is discovered as a natural by product of the coding and from constant comparison. It is imperative; he feels that the grounded theorist begins their study "with the abstract wonderment of what is going on that is an issue and how it is handled" (Glaser 1992, p. 22). Glaser also addresses the idea of theory generation versus theory verification in his text, criticizing Strauss and Corbin's (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, Corbin & Strauss, 1990) repeated emphasis on the use of grounded theory to produce verification and validation of theories. In Glaser's opinion, verification falls outside the parameters of grounded theory which instead should be directed solely at the discovery of hypotheses or theory. Hypothesis testing, Glaser adds was "exactly what we had tried to get away from" in the original 1967 study. In this case there was no theory originally to be tested as there was no literature that directly related to the impact of football supporting on mental health in a British context.

As can be seen above, the data collected using Glaser and Strauss's (1967) open coding system resulted in the development of 12 distinct themes

- Theme 1 - Local town, local team
- Theme 2 -A sense of belonging
- Theme 3 - Continuity
- Theme 4 – Fathers and football
- Theme 5 - “Some behaviors at matches are sanctioned”
- Theme 6 - The language of the terraces
- Theme 7 –“A massive vent”
- Theme 8 - The comfort of ritual
- Theme 9 - The rollercoaster of hope and despair
- Theme 10 – Gender and supporting
- Theme 11 – Negative elements of supporting behaviour
- Theme 12 – Positive impacts on mental health

Gray (2004) describes axial coding as recognising the relationships between categories. These relationships were initially termed “hypothesis” in the original Grounded theory text (Glaser and Strauss 1967) but are currently “more often referred to as propositions” (Whitten 1989, p. 492) because propositions involve conceptual relationships whereas hypotheses require measured relationships. This appears appropriate as the grounded approach produces conceptual and not measured relationships. The process of axially coding these themes to make *connections* between them and subsequently form main categories produced some interesting groupings.

Theme 1 - Local town, local team

Theme 2 -A sense of belonging

These themes fell together into a natural grouping because of the shared characteristics of generating a feeling of social inclusion based in geographical experience. Fans felt they belonged to the concept of Mansfield Town because it was part of the fabric of their

town and as such had significance in how they defined their local cultural identity. Female fans and male fans both appeared to be searching for something that helped define them both in culture and in character and the club appeared to offer them both.

Culturally the concept of Mansfield as a long suffering, hard working, no nonsense town was reflected in fans views of the club as an unglamorous club who would find success through hard work and passion rather than through highly paid prima-donna type players. This idea was also developed in the contempt fans showed for big superclubs who were able to buy success due to wealth of their owners or numbers in their fan base. It is, of course, interesting that the contempt shown to big clubs for their overpaid staff, overblown lifestyle and lack of hard work and passion are the same criticisms that are levelled at large metropolitan city dwellers by small mining town dwellers per se and the football clubs work as microcosms of the culture in general.

The pride, whether male or female, in belonging to a smaller, local, hard working, no nonsense town , and showing this by following a local, hard working no nonsense team, became a strong theme running the data. Interestingly the idea of gender and supporting produced the data that showed that the differences between male and female fans perceptions and experiences were minimal with a much greater sense of resonance and concord than of difference.

These three open codings can be linked then to become a single axial coding that suggests:-

“A sense of belonging for men and women can have strong geographical roots and generates such feelings as pride, respect and hope.” This statement became Axial Code 1

The next themes that grouped from simple coding to axial coding were:-

Theme 3 – Continuity

Theme 8 - The comfort of ritual

Theme 4 – Fathers and football

In a changing world, dominated by uncertainty about the future the themes of continuity, ritual and fathers, football and mental health interlinked strongly. Like all mining towns in England, the traumatic nature of the 1985 miners strike and subsequent rapid and complete collapse of the mining industry had a devastating effect on the town. This was visible not only in the physical terms of unemployment, closing businesses and urban decay but in the more subtle aspects of the town such as confidence, pride and self respect.

In a short space of time Mansfield had gone from one of the most productive areas in the country to one of the most deprived. Chronologically the collapse of mining coincided with a rapid decline in the biggest female employment industry in the town, textiles, and the closure of factories providing household name brands such as Pretty Polly, Etam and Cotes Vyella added to the decline in the town's fortunes.

Everywhere in the town it seemed that industries and employers that had been the backbone of the town for over a century were disappearing fast and the idea, common up until this point, of a man, his father, his grandfather and his son all working in the same industry, and sometimes in the same pit, became a thing of the past almost overnight.

Change provokes anxiety and massive change provokes massive anxiety. Throughout the town people looked for ideas and concepts that offered stability, continuity and the protection from massive change and the responses of the fans involved in this study suggest that one of the refuges they found was Mansfield Town FC.

The continuity is, of course, in the concept of Mansfield Town not in the reality. Mansfield opened the 2004/2005 season with a match against Bristol Rovers at Field Mill. At the first game of the 2005/2006 season against Southend 12 months later not one single player from the starting line up against Bristol, only 12 months previously, was in the team that took to the field. What was constant, however, was the yellow shirts and blue shorts, the faces on the terraces, the chants, the cuisine of pies and Bovril and the songs. Some fans have commented that this continuity was also visible in the disappointment for the fans as Stags failed, yet again, to conjure up an opening day victory.

In essence this is the important aspect that fans identified through the themes linked here. Although players and managers come and go the *experience* of supporting a lower league club is generally constant. It offers a safety that is not found in some of life's other experiences such as employment, relationships or health.

This continuity is strengthened by the involvement in rituals that have repeated season after season in forms such as songs, chants, gestures and actions. Irrelevant of what is happening outside of the ground in their real lives fans know that inside the stadium they will hear the same comforting, oft repeated, phrases that have evolved over the years, often from the exact same seats they have sat on for years watching the same mediocre level of football that they have watched for years.

The transmission of this sense of continuity and safety is assured in the development of the concept by one generation fostering and nurturing it in the next. The huge number of fans who were taken by fathers to matches when they were young and who, consequently, have taken their own children helps ensure this sense of continuity is maintained and new blood is introduced to ensure that the rituals are maintained through the next generation and that there will always be faithful followers to keep the faith.

These three open codings can be linked then to become a single axial coding that suggests:-

"Continuity provides comfort and a protection against the stress of change." This was recorded as axial code 2.

The next themes that could be linked to form a new axial code were:-

Theme 5 – Some behaviours at matches are sanctioned

Theme 6 - The language of the terraces

The use of the language of the Billingsgate and the social acceptability and sanctioning of carnivalesque behaviours, inside the stadium, formed a theme of acceptance of the carnivalesque in the context of watching football.

The data from the fans gave numerous examples of behaviours that were peculiar to the setting with fans from a variety of social, financial and educational backgrounds bound in agreement that their behaviour actively changed when they took on the role of the supporter at the match. For some the physical metamorphosis from a well dressed suited and tied professional to a football shirt wearing fan helped develop the carnivalesque persona and for others the

emersion in the language and customs of the crowd were key features of this transformation. The combination of changes in both language and behaviour were clear indicators of the way in which the social sanctioning of both was recognised by the participants.

In conversations about both the language and the behaviours fans allowed themselves to display openly at games it became increasingly clear that these changes were tightly bound to the experience of watching the match. It was clearly articulated that the social acceptability and social sanction extended towards these behaviours by the terrace environment was a key feature in fans feeling able to indulge in this behaviour and language with a sense of comfort and free from guilt.

These open codes linked to form another axial code that suggested:-
"There is a social acceptability of the carnivalesque in football terrace culture." This axial code was logged as axial code 3.

The next group of themes developed from simple codes that were constructed into an axial code were:-

Theme 9 - The rollercoaster of hope and despair

Theme 7 – A massive vent

The rollercoaster of hope and despair that fans relate as their normal experience of a season at Field Mill, or in some cases a single game at Field Mill, appears to be an important catalyst to the ability of fans to express raw emotion at matches. Exposure to events where the outcome is scripted, expected and never varies does not appear to offer the extreme unpredictability that sport in general and especially football does. In many sports genuine upsets are rare but in football, especially competitions like the F.A. cup, upsets are

not very unusual and in most seasons a smaller club manages a “giant killing” spree during the contest. The speed with which hope can turn to despair in football is legendary and Mansfield fans experienced their own special blend of this in the 2006/07 season when they found themselves 2-1 up against local rivals Notts County with only 7 minutes to go and stall managed to lose 3-2!

The response to events on the pitch is the catalyst to the ventilation of feelings, both positive and negative, that ignites and sustains the highly charged atmosphere at a football match. Without the rollercoaster the belief in a sudden dramatic change in fortune would not exist. It is this that drives the passion of the cathartic release of emotion that fans identified in the study and that they felt impacted, for the most part, in a positive way on their lives.

The sudden changes in fortune that often accompany a game drive both optimism and pessimism and both hope and despair for fans. When the question of the positive impact of pessimism and despair was pursued the concept of “defensive pessimism” became a clear method of attempting to control the emotional rollercoaster. Hope and pessimism are, of course, similar and related concepts in that both are concerned with future expectancies of success (Eronen, Nurmi, & Salmela-Aro, 1998), but the use of defensive pessimism appears to be a common coping mechanism for fans summed up in the observation “if I expect to lose then a draw can be seen as a very good result and a victory as a great one!”

For many men it appears that this combination of hope and despair, optimism and pessimism are the internal triggers that allow the external ventilation of emotion that is seen in the behaviour of fans at matches. In the data collected it appears that for fans this

behaviour does actually result in a release of emotion that has a cathartic effect.

This meant that the axial code formed from these open codes suggests that:-

"The experience of the fans is driven by internal constructs of hope, pessimism and defensive pessimism. This internal ideation is externalized through expressive behaviours that allow catharsis to be experienced as a consequence." This axial code was recorded as axial code 4 The final open codes that formed an axial coding were:-

Theme 10 - Negative impacts on mental health

Theme 11 – Positive impacts on mental health

The majority of comments and observations from fans that looked at mental health linked the rollercoaster of emotions experienced, and behaviours engaged in, to an internal sense of relaxation and content after the experience was over. This suggested interestingly that the experience impacted in a ripple effect on their lives for the next few days. It was perhaps surprising how fans felt that the glow of a good result lasted longer than the bitter taste of a defeat, but recurring in either scenario was the way in which for fans the next game was the really important one and how the sense of looking forward to the next game improved their sense of wellbeing.

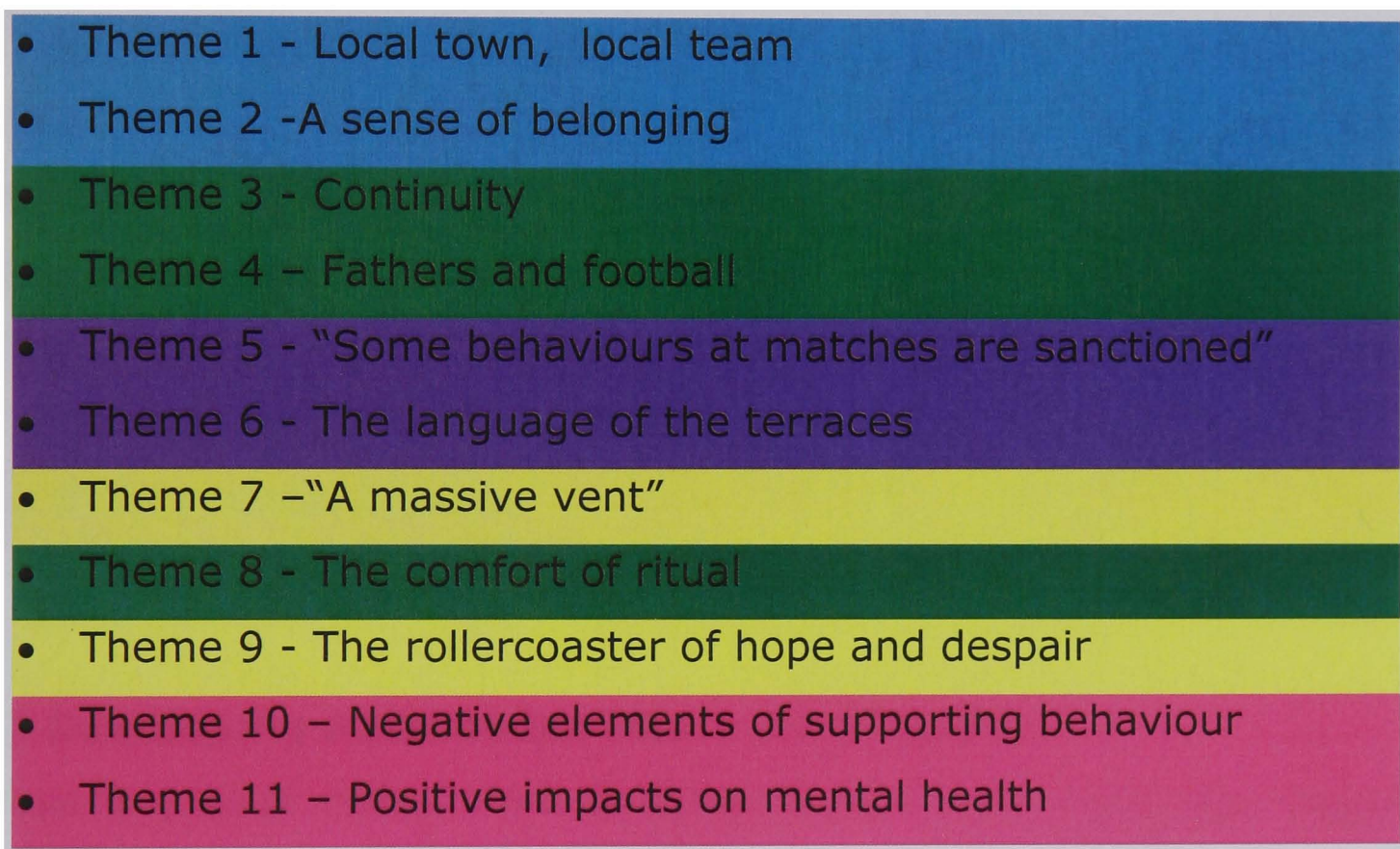
The links drawn to mental health, both positive and negative, link into a single theme about the effect that the behaviours have on mental health generally. The axial code formed from merging these open codes suggested that:-

"Experiencing emotions invokes internal and external responses in football fans and these responses can impact on the fans' mental health."

This final axial code was recorded as axial code 5

In summary this meant that the 12 open codes developed through the reading of the data could be developed into five distinct axial codes.

Figure 19 - the 11 open codes

- 
- Theme 1 - Local town, local team
 - Theme 2 -A sense of belonging
 - Theme 3 - Continuity
 - Theme 4 – Fathers and football
 - Theme 5 - "Some behaviours at matches are sanctioned"
 - Theme 6 - The language of the terraces
 - Theme 7 –"A massive vent"
 - Theme 8 - The comfort of ritual
 - Theme 9 - The rollercoaster of hope and despair
 - Theme 10 – Negative elements of supporting behaviour
 - Theme 11 – Positive impacts on mental health

These developed into the five axial codes:-

Figure 20 - the 5 axial codes

"A sense of belonging for men and women can have strong geographical roots and generates such feelings as pride, respect and hope."

"Continuity, and accompanying rituals that perpetuate continuity, provides comfort and a protection against the stress of change."

"There is a social acceptability of the carnivalesque in football terrace culture."

"The experience of the fans is driven by internal constructs of hope, pessimism and defensive pessimism. This internal ideation is externalized through expressive behaviours that allow catharsis to be experienced as a consequence."

"Experiencing emotions invokes internal and external responses in football fans and these responses can impact on the fans' mental health."

8.2 Developing Axial codes into a core theory

These five axial codes were analysed further and ideas that linked the axial codes further together began to emerge. Axial codes 1, 2 and 3 all linked to the central idea that the sense of belonging brought about by feeling free to indulge in carnivalesque behaviour at matches was intimately linked to being in the stadium environment. This environment gave the participant explicit permission to indulge in the carnivalesque behaviours that strengthened the bond between fans. This idea developed into axial code 6 where the three previous codes were felt to contain elements of a central idea, namely that:-

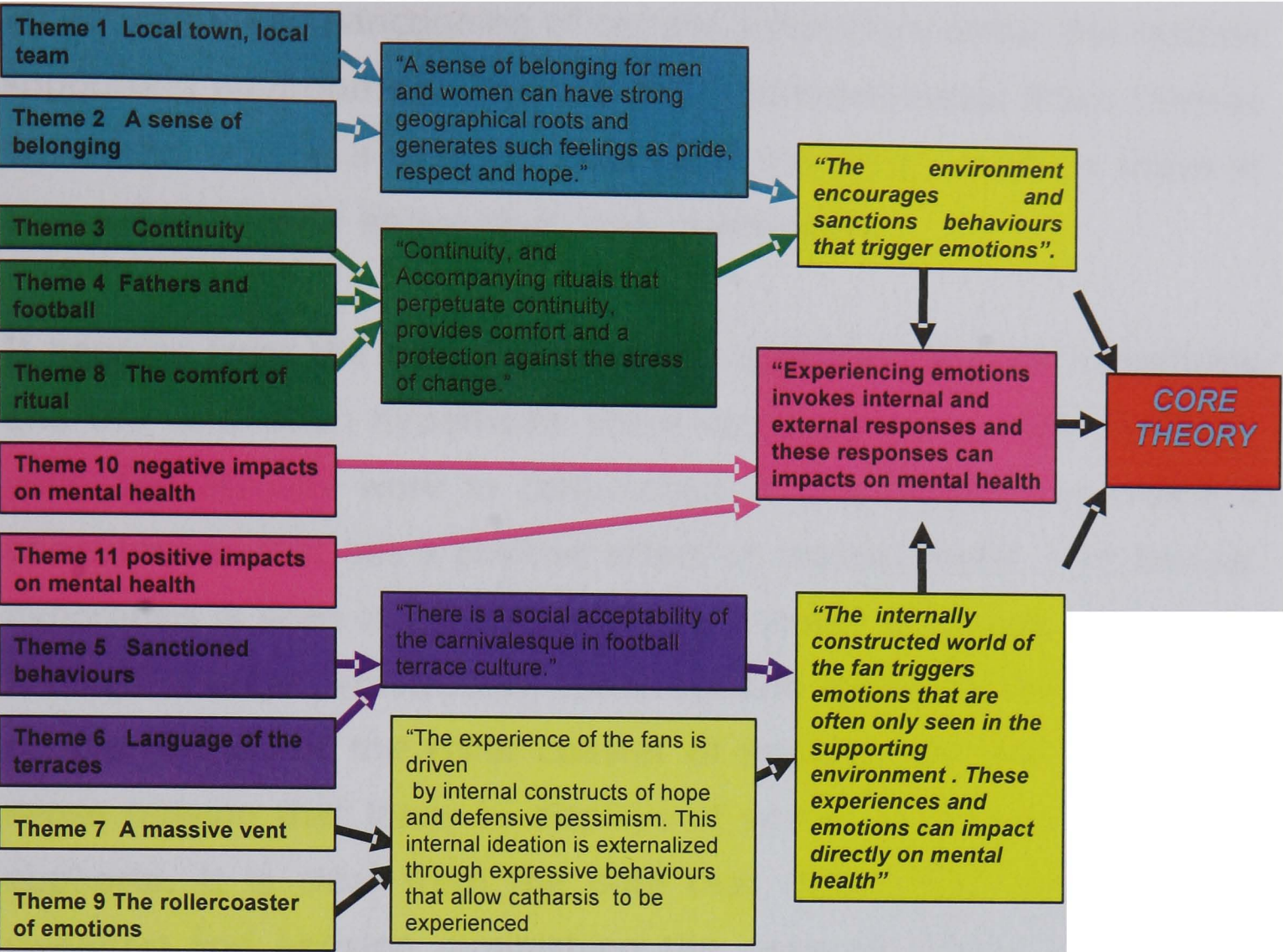
"The environment encourages and sanctions behaviours that trigger emotions".

If the first three themes were linked by mostly external ideas around showing belonging, developing identity and outward displays of socially sanctioned behaviours, then axial codes 4 and 5 focused more on the internal experience that drove some of these behaviours. Internal ideas and constructs like optimism and pessimism, or hope and despair, linked to the fans internal experience of mental health. So whereas the focus of axial code 6 was essentially about external factors the focus of the new code that linked codes 4 and 5 was essentially internal. This new code was logged as code 7 and suggested that:-

"the internally constructed world of the fan triggers emotions that are often only seen in the supporting environment . These experiences and emotions can impact directly on mental health"

This merging of simple open codes into axial codes can be seen diagrammatically in figure 21 below.

Figure 21 - the development of a core theory



Core theory

The "core category", or central category, is the linking of the axial codes in a way that creates what Strauss and Corbin (1990) describe as the story of the research. They go on to describe how a story line is either generated or made explicit. A *story* is simply a descriptive narrative about the central phenomenon of study and the *story line* is the conceptualisation of this story. When analysed, the story line becomes the core category:

In this study the core category was built up partially from the data reflecting the continued arousal hypothesis and the ventilation hypothesis about catharsis found in the data that was supported ideas in the literature. It also brought together themes from codes about how the carnivalesque nature of the football supporting

experience interacts with ideas about permission and the social acceptability and sanctioning of certain behaviours within the football supporting environment. These themes complemented those themes developed around a sense of belonging and social inclusion which in turn reflected data about ritual and involvement.

It appears from the data that both the continued arousal hypothesis and the ventilation hypothesis about catharsis are in their own way valid and actually work in conjunction in this situation to create a phenomenon that has a positive effect on mental health. The arousal hypothesis is seen in the data with the number of people who report feelings of anger, frustration, contempt and stress. In the transcripts people talk about the roller coaster of emotion and the heightened sense tension that leads to displays of verbal aggression as well as euphoria. It is clear from the data that rather than this shouting, swearing and abusing diminishing the sense of stress and tension the behavior actually maintains and strengthens it throughout the game only dissipating some time after the final whistle. It appears also true that the majority of fans described the process as being an important one in discharging the stress and frustration of everyday life which was generated in other places but discharged in the football environment. This internalisation and subsequent discharge supports the ventilation hypothesis.

Feelings of indignation, enragement, and fury are states of aroused emotion that are to be found, more and more, in common usage and on public display. The rise of the TV discussion show in the style of Oprah, Trisha, Kilroy and Jerry Springer have brought a level of acceptance of the public open display of anger, rage and abuse and this is becoming more and more accepted as mainstream behaviour. A key component here however is that the huge majority of those participating in and the audience attending, these shows are female

and the slots in the programming schedule these shows occupy are those targeting a female audience. So although the concept of open displays of emotion may be gaining popularity the opportunities for men to engage with this process in an acceptable way remain few and far between.

One of the problems with the ventilation hypothesis in English male culture is the choice of techniques that are often employed by services for discharge. In a culture where overt displays of emotion in males are still often shunned processes like punching pillows or shouting at "the empty chair" are not viewed as credible or engaging and it is only when in a state of heightened arousal that this group can effectively carry out cathartic behaviors effectively. Paradoxically this creates a situation whereby controlled release of emotion in an organized systematic way is compromised by the culture and in which it is only by creating an environment that heightens arousal in a more natural way that this emotion can be discharged.

In supporters it appears that, at a football match, this rage is ignited as a response to things going badly on the pitch, contained and even replaced with euphoria when things go well on the pitch and subsequently reverted to when things go badly again. This oscillation can happen literally dozens of times throughout a game and, as such, the arousal hypothesis is seen to be active and maintained right through to the final whistle. The ventilation hypothesis works in tandem through the behaviours associated with the oscillations in emotion. Interestingly, however, whether the behaviour is swearing and shouting abuse or cheering and singing victory songs the experience of jettisoning pure emotions remains consistent.

The carnivalesque nature of the football supporting experience brings together these two hypotheses in an arena where displays of

emotion are socially, and to a greater extent, legally, sanctioned, and where the sense of arousal is ignited and maintained long enough and with enough intensity for the catharsis to happen.

The overarching experience found in the data to support this core theory was the assertion by fans that after a game was over they felt drained, often tired and content. They felt that they had been part of an experience that was larger than they were and that the behaviours exhibited, that they often agreed they would not display outside of the ground, had linked them with the rest of the crowd in a way that was inclusive, accepting and almost rapturous.

This experience they felt, overwhelmingly, had a positive impact on their mental health. This led to the overarching core theme of:-

"Watching football at a match, as part of a crowd, creates an environment that is inclusive, expressive, safe and encouraging. In this environment some features identified as being important for developing and maintaining good mental health are given the opportunity to flourish"

Chapter 9 Discussion

9.0 Introduction

The data collected during the study, from both diaries and interviews, amassed a corpus that was collated into themes. The research focused on some key areas that recurred frequently in the data around the topics of the suggested sense of belonging, the question of continuity and change, the development of supportive relationships, especially between fathers and sons, the question of how the carnivalesque and its associated rituals might create a cathartic state and what impact all of this might have on the mental health of supporters.

9.1 A sense of belonging

A sense of belonging is an important idea that is central in the promotion of mental health. The feelings generated by the experience of being an outsider and from feeling socially excluded can breed ideas of resentment, isolation and ultimately of depression and despair. Atkinson et al (1990) describe how Maslow, in his much used hierarchy of needs, identified the need for belonging as being an integral part of the human condition and, as such, this idea occupied the third level of the hierarchy. Anything that helps this process can be seen as positive and a piece of the overall jigsaw of health promotion. The clear sense of belonging generated by the experience of watching the Stags did, for fans, appear to be an overwhelmingly positive one in terms of inclusion. If the club are doing well fans can be found on terraces, in bars and on local radio phone in programmes united in hope. If the club are doing badly the same people can be found in the same environments bemoaning the poor management, poor players and poor results. Ultimately the experience is the same. Whether celebrating or bemoaning the fact is these people are together, connected and engaging with one

another with a language, an experience and an exchange of opinion. In this way it is almost an irrelevance what the outcome on the pitch is as the fans will still be together and engaged.

The ability to access this opportunity for inclusion is, however, closely linked to the ability to afford to attend. Duffy (1995) suggests that people are seen to be included when they can effectively engage in economic, social, political and cultural life. It has been well noted that those who are most socially excluded are often those who are least financially buoyant (Dowling 1999, Sayce 2000, Sartorius 2000) with Evans and Repper (1996) suggesting that employment amongst the socially excluded mentally ill was running at a mere 15%. This conversely means of course that those who are most socially excluded and, as such, most in need of the socially including elements of supporting are often those with the least ability to pay for tickets.

It is encouraging, then, to note that some clubs have acknowledged this and some (like Fulham, Derby County and Mansfield Town) have talked with fans groups and mental health staff about lowering prices for those with mental health problems who are socially excluded. At a meeting of the Football Association's clinicians group I attended in late 2006 it was noted that The Football Association (FA) are also in discussion with some fan forums, like the Derby County Community Partnership, to look at whether the FA's definition of disability, and subsequent concessions on prices, can be extended to include those with mental health problems. The ability to access with greater ease an experience that offers a sense of belonging may be one way in which those with mental health problems could feel, and actually be, more included in one area of society.

The visual representation of the belonging to a specific group is seen in such things as the classic hairstyles favoured by groups such as punks or skinheads, in the specific clothing worn by groups such as Goths or bikers and by the display of specific symbols such as badges or coloured ribbons related to specific charities. What these open displays of allegiance do is to help individuals identify with a group, but more importantly show that they are not alone in the ideas and beliefs they hold about specific issues. Inclusion for those supporting a football club can be seen through the observable symbols displayed in such things as gestures, songs, clothing and other symbols. Football shirts, scarves and hats serve the same basic function and can offer people who feel excluded a simple way of showing their inclusion.

One interesting aspect to this is how football clubs often change their kit with a pressure produced in some areas to have "this year's shirt". As shirts can be between £30-£40 each this can be a difficulty for supporters. What has been of interest in recent years has been the growth in the number of people wearing older shirts at matches and the way that these older garments can create interest and conversation. This has become so prominent that there are now several retailers who only supply what are described as "vintage" or "classic" shirts and these have now begun to find their way on to the floors of mainstream retailers such as Burton's and Debenhams. The sale of second hand shirts through auction houses like Ebay has also blossomed in recent years so that if a supporter should want to show inclusion through wearing a shirt, for example, then this can be less expensive than previously was the case. Each week on Ebay, for example, there are hundreds of shirts on offer. On the site there are usually between 5 – 10 Mansfield Town shirts from around £3.

Within the confines of a community, whether it be spatially designated or not, lies the common human desire for attachment, a desire that Eyles (1995) suggests "is perhaps the most important and least recognised need" of the human condition (Eyles, 1995, p. 72). Hall (1990) claims that the main component that successfully brings about an attachment to a specific community, or organisation, is the sharing of common experiences and the understanding of, shared cultural codes. The development of understanding of these codes, for football fans, according to Brimson and Brimson, (1996) defines whether or not a person has actually become accepted into a specific position within this defined community. In many cases the understanding of these codes is formed by emersion in the local culture within which the codes were formed. This means that the cultivation of the next generation of fans has often got little to do with the club itself and more to do with local fan culture. The locality of a club inspires many to support that club and it would appear that, as Curren and Redmond (1991, p.8) suggest, "fans are attracted to clubs for more traditional reasons rather than the attempts by club marketing departments to recruit them".

The sense of having somewhere that was different to normal everyday places, and which was seen as special, appeared to be important for the fans in this study for creating this sense of belonging. Haggerty et al (1992) and Smith (2001) claim that this sense of belonging is important because there is a growing evidence base to suggest that community participation on various levels is a key element to an individual's sense of wellbeing and to the state of the health of the community generally and that connections or bonds to other people can have a positive impact on mental health. For Mansfield fans this sense of belonging was articulated as being not just the place but the people. Belonging to a group of fans appeared to offer supporters the comradeship that makes up an important

component of social support. The importance of social support, as opposed to specific therapeutic intervention, is highlighted by Bertram and Stickley (2005) when they observe that just being accepted by a community as part of the community as a whole is an important marker in creating a sense of belonging.

Social support derives from social networks, and although these networks do not guarantee the availability of support, this is balanced by the ease of access into them (Dickson et al 2002). Although some confusion can arise over precise descriptions of what social support actually is, there is evidence that social support is important for people with a mental illness despite the conceptual confusion (Callaghan & Morrissey 1993). For football supporters, especially at away matches, this was evident with fans approaching and conversing with complete strangers because they were wearing the colours and therefore obviously part of the group. This idea appeared to be present in the supporting process irrelevant of the score or the outcome of the game. The celebrating of success or the sadness of defeat both appeared to generate this sense of belonging.

In mental health terms this sense of unity is important as an ego enhancing technique. Often the sense of belonging generated by inclusion in a group is restricted by age. For example, most people wearing skater fashions and listening to skater music are under 30 and most of the audience for Manga TV shows are teenagers. Football, on the other hand, appears to offer a relatively unusual access for people in that supporting a club brings together people across age, class, wealth and gender barriers. This reflects Bakhtin's idea of the carnivalesque removing the normal barriers to contact. In a radio phone in I was involved with hosting, on Radio Mansfield, the range of people who phoned in was immense. One of the towns

leading businessmen, a 17 year old unemployed man, the local Church of England canon, a mother of three and an 85 year old great grandfather were amongst the fans who telephoned the programme. All commented on the comfort and support generated by being part of the Stags community and suggested that Field Mill, Stags home ground, was a place they belonged.

9.2 Change and continuity

Throughout our lives we seek the security of consistency. From the early days of hearing “and they all lived happily ever after”, the need for security, solidity and consistency is a feature of human society. We keep cultures alive not only through records and bureaucracy but through collective memory, folk tales, stories and songs. The markers, images and symbols for this idea remain constant even though the personnel may change. Kings and queens, presidents and dictators may come and go but, for most countries, the national flag stays constant. National plants like the thistle of Scotland or local plants such as the red and white roses of Lancashire and Yorkshire hold a constant for us even though Scotland, Lancashire and Yorkshire are very different places now to they were even only 50 years ago. The symbols encapsulate not just the place but the history of the place, the cultural norms of the place and importantly the character of the place. These act as a blueprint or a handbook for belonging and as such the wearing of the badge “Scottish” and the use of the symbols such as the thistle, the flag, the music and the language generate the sense of belonging that comes with commitment to any idea or concept.

For football fans this is also true and their commitment to the idea of their club, and as such the values it holds and represents, is a key feature in the development of belonging. The vast majority of clubs in the English league are over 100 years old and have the same

names and nicknames as when they were formed. This is of interest especially in areas where the nicknames reflected the main feature of the town. Northampton Town, for example are still being known as "the cobblers" even though there has not been a strong shoe making industry there for years. Similarly Macclesfield Town are still "the silkmen" and Luton Town are still "the hatters".

It comes as no surprise then that, in keeping with the continuity of historical tradition, the colours of the vast majority of football clubs have remained more or less constant from the time of their inception to the present day. Newcastle's black and white stripes, Celtic's green and white hoops and Liverpool's all red strip have, in reality, changed little in the last hundred years. The same can be said for lower league clubs and Mansfield Town is no exception with their yellow shirts and blue shorts (officially classed as amber and blue) remaining constant.

Interestingly the away kit that a team uses changes colour frequently but the strip that denotes a team playing at home remains easily recognisable and essentially the same, season after season after season. This helps the supporters clearly identify with the concept of a club rather than the actual players or managerial staff who come and go with great regularity. This concept of supporting and belonging to a club helps the fans develop a sense of group unity and consistency with many fans seeing the passing of literally hundreds of players and dozens of managers in their time as fans of the club. This means that although allegiance to a club is a very fickle thing for the players and staff of a club it remains the touchstone and foundation of the commitment for the fans.

This means that fans actually can achieve a sense of worth and belonging through having supported a team through thick and thin

and through the numerous personnel changes that are an inevitable part of the management of any football club. This sense of consistency is an important component of the comfort and shelter that attending matches can offer fans. Fans in the study suggested that no matter what changes are taking place in a person's life they can access a place where things stay the same in terms of values, beliefs and acceptance when they go through the turnstiles and enter the stadium.

Cross (2004 p97) suggests that "one of the reasons people break down is that they cannot cope with the stresses engendered by living in a constantly changing environment". Our lives and environment, however, must by their very nature change. Changes in employment, finances, social structures and support networks make it inevitable that stress will be encountered but it is the coping strategies that are developed in response to stress that often holds the key to why some people go on to develop mental health problems and others do not.

Mansfield as a town has seen massive changes in the structure of the community in recent years. As noted above Mansfield is in Nottinghamshire, a mining region that had prided itself in holding national production records for mining output. The stability of employment in the numerous coal mines that peppered the local community had been a constant for literally generations until the aftermath of the miner's strike in the 1980's. The other major employers in the community had been Metal Box, the container manufacturer and a series of textile factories including Etam and Pretty Polly, the tights and stockings manufacturer. Over the past 15 years the community has seen the collapse of mining, the closure of Metal Box, the disappearance of Etam and Pretty Polly and the marked decline in textiles manufacture generally as factories try to

compete with cheap imports. All of this has led to a marked change in the structure of the lives of not just individuals but whole families. According to Mansfield District Council (2005) Mansfield District is now the most deprived in North Nottinghamshire and is ranked as the 67th most deprived district out of the 366 in England.

The local workforce has had to adapt to these changes and the majority of miners have found alternative, but often much lower paid, employment. One recurring feeling for local people however, especially ex-miners, is the sense of betrayal that the industry, and by extension the local community, suffered at the hands of the Thatcher Government. Rather than respond in a desolate manner the community has, in many ways, been bound more closely by the adversity. As such the concept of loyalty, especially in times of adversity is a strong local characteristic. Whilst this may be true of many small, predominantly working class areas, it is seen specifically locally in the way Mansfield people defend the town when it is being criticised. Loyalty in the face of adversity links with the sense of continuity for fans. Loyal attendance, in the face of adversity, creates a sense of continuity. Fans describe having "been there" for the highs and the lows and supporting the team can almost be described as something that fans with their club do for better or worse, and in sickness and in health, until death them do part.

As seen in the data, the experience of attending matches offers fans a feeling of consistency and continuity that can act as a form of respite from the difficulties of an ever changing world. Even though the players and managerial staff change from season to season the concept of "Stags" remains a constant. As one fan quipped "It was Stags when I was single, and when I was married, and when I was divorced, and when I was married again, and when I was divorced

again! It's always been Stags. They're rubbish, but they're the one thing you can rely on."

9.3 – Fathers and football

In recent years much has been written bemoaning the passing of traditional family pastimes and values and longing for the rose coloured days when families ate meals together, watched TV together and shared so called "quality time". This quality time is the holy grail of many parents in the busy, stressful world of modern society because of the belief that not spending this time with children may have a profound detrimental effect on them. Far from being a myth however there appears to be a growing body of evidence that supports the belief that children who do have shared interests with, and spend time in activities, with parents do have beneficial effects from this (Flouri and Buchannan 2002, Gould et al 1997 , Rice, Cunningham, and Young 1997)

One interesting observation found in the data was that almost every fan interviewed in the study was taken to their first matches by their father. In a survey commissioned by the football magazine *When Saturday Comes* 50 % of fans replying to the questionnaire reported that they saw their first game with their father and a further 6.8 % said they went with an older, male relative (Redmond & Curren, 1996, p.1). Football terraces offer the rare opportunity for conversations which cut across class, race and importantly age barriers and offer a forum where a child's view about whether England could win the next European Championships or whether Scotland could even qualify can hold as much validity and can be treated with as much respect as that of another adult. It is not, of course, being suggested that children supporting a local football club with a parent or parental figure will guarantee the benefits all of the positive outcomes that the research identified above describes. It

may be true, however, that the much maligned and negatively stereotyped football supporter may, in fact, be providing an important, genuine and meaningful model for the much sought after parent and child quality time.

If, as the literature around fathers and mental health suggests, involvement by fathers in activities with their children has a positive effect on the childrens' development it may well be that the much sought after "quality time" for parents and their children may be found in unlikely places with names such as Mansfield Town, Doncaster Rovers, Rushden and Diamonds or even Accrington Stanley. In these strange sounding settings it appears that the elusive goal of parents and children being involved in meaningful dialogue and sharing quality time often starts and continues well after the children are grown up and often well into the time when they have children of their own.

9.4 The carnivalesque

The permission offered to fans to behave in ways governed by the rules of the carnivalesque is important because a key concept in constructive ideas of catharsis is that the behaviour is allowed, accepted or even encouraged. Some mental health commentators place great importance on the opportunity offered to a person to vent frustration and emotion because of the belief that the suppression of emotion is a catalyst to mental illness (Heron 1990, Pennebaker, 2003; Petrie *et al* 2004) with Forbes and Roger (1999) going so far as to state that it is generally acknowledged that being able to express emotion to other people can be a major factor in the reduction of distress. It has been suggested however that expressing emotion openly, for British males, is often not a very easy thing to do (Richards and Gross 2000, Pringle and Sayers 2004).

The observations made by participants in the study appear to confirm the ideas suggested above. Time and time again in the data fans referred to the acceptability of cathartic behaviours within the environment and context of the stadium and were clear that the behaviour was pertinent to that particular environment. This, I think, is an important piece of the equation when attempting to balance the more aggressive, hostile and provocative aspects of supporters' behaviours with a liberal view on what is acceptable behaviour in public. Although subject to legislation such as the Football Offences Act, which limits the expression of offensive language, football grounds remain the venue for songs, chants and individual comments full of derision aimed at players, opposing fans and, especially the referee. The idea proposed by many fans that this is a form of sublimation is of interest. One fan commented, for example, on how he often comes home from his "rubbish job" and does not want to shout at his wife or children. He suggests that what he does is to "store it up till Saturday" and then he indulges himself in "90 minutes of emotional discharge" commenting that after a match he always feels exhausted, but happy. This story was typical of those found in the data and of many collected anecdotally for Mansfield fans and fans of other clubs. Of interest here is what alternative, more therapeutic, options might be available to men to more appropriately manage their stress.

Stress management, either by medical and pharmaceutical means, or by psychological and behavioural means, runs the risk of medicalising the phenomenon of frustration and stress. For the fans involved in the study the process of the generation of frustration and stress was seen as a normal part of everyday life and the use of the ventilation hypothesis as a means to deal with it was seen likewise. For fans if the choices to reduce the stress and frustration of

everyday life were Valium and beta blockers, relaxation techniques and anger management techniques, excessive alcohol and drug consumption or screaming and shouting at football, football offered the healthiest option. What is fundamentally important about singing and chanting, according to Armstrong (1998), is that, despite the political incorrectness and undertones of aggression and violence, it is there for a purpose. The fact that experience of shouting and singing can become offensive is felt by fans to be acceptable in the stadium environment because the experience creates the opportunity for what Armstrong (1998 p9) calls "one of the last spectacles in British life offering the chance of intense emotion and social relationships".

For many fans in the study the carnivalesque was visible in not just the behaviours but also in the physical transformation that accompanies the experience. In the world of Rabelais (Bakhtin 1984) the transformation was characterised by the physical donning of masks and specific clothes that allowed the wearer a sense of anonymity as they blended with the crowd and indulged in behaviours that were different to their conventional codes of normality. Description by fans of this process taking place in contemporary society were found.

Two interviewees, both solicitors, talked about the freedom of leaving behind their suits and ties and donning a football shirt, and about how after a week of carefully considering every statement in a rational way the match allowed them to think and behave in a way that was the antithesis of their normal daily behaviours. Similar transformational experiences were reported from fans with such careers as pharmacy, the police force and nursing. Perhaps the most important aspect of this modern carnival was the assertion amongst fans that the carnivalesque was encapsulated completely by the time

and the place in which permission to behave in this way was granted. In much the same way as the removal of the mask and the domino outfit clearly signalled that Rabelais' revellers had returned to their normal lives, the removal of the clothing and the removal of the individuals from the proximity of the stadium signalled for these fans that the experience was over.

For many fans in the study, it was this ventilation model of emotional catharsis that was the most significant element in shaping their views of whether watching Mansfield Town was, or was not, good for their mental health.

9.5 - The question of catharsis

Aristotle's belief in catharsis being beneficial set the tone for the generalised belief in the ventilation hypothesis (Bushman 2002). In the Aristotilian context the suggestion was made that watching tragic plays allows an audience to connect emotionally and experience an emotive empathy. It has been claimed that this connection is also visible in audiences for sporting events. Filene (1974 p101) describes how, in his 1903 article on baseball for outlook magazine, A.H. Bruce described attending the ball game as " a momentary relief from the strains of intolerable burdens – a harmless outlet for pent up emotions"

Although, as discussed above the ventilation hypothesis has, in academic fields, both it's supporters and it's critics the belief in the Heron view of the ventilation hypothesis was found to be very strong for the supporters in this study with several fans claiming adamantly that the experience for them was one within which emotions that had been internalised were given the chance to be vented in an appropriate setting. The stress of their lives in general, and particularly the working part of their lives for those at work, were

cited as producing stress and tension and the supporting experience was seen as a very tangible way of discharging this. In some respects this raised the idea that belief in the ventilation hypothesis was, for some fans, a coping mechanism for stress. They **expected** to be stressed by their lives and by their jobs. They also believed that the match offered a place to relieve this and therefore they coped with high levels of stress specifically **because** they believed that the stress could be discharged within the confines of the match.

This construction of a stress coping mechanism by fans in which the carnivalesque behaviours provide the means of releasing the stress that has been specifically carried may offer an explanation of why the fans in this study were so steadfast in their belief that the ventilation hypothesis was not only credible but an integral part of the whole supporting experience.

The belief that levels of stress were inevitable in our lives was articulated clearly by fans in the study. Attempts at containment and reduction in stress related symptoms in our society can be seen in the increase in the prescription and consumption of medications with anxiolytic effects. It can also be seen in the rise in the marketing of non prescription products such as Bach Rescue Remedy and Nytol, and the development of an "anger management" industry. It may well also be that the increase in interest in the Eastern world's techniques such as yoga, tai chi and meditation reflect a desire in our society to exert control over perceived increases in, and high levels of, stress and tension. In this type of society ventilation of frustration and feelings of stress, following the principles of the ventilation hypothesis, may appear an attractive option for a group for whom socialization and emersion within a mostly traditional male culture has resulted in viewing alternative techniques with suspicion.

If, as has been suggested by fans, the ventilation hypothesis is believed then the creation of a system that allows this process to happen is an important part of the process. Much of this process is bound up for Mansfield Town fans in the rituals that the fans display.

9.6 The comfort of ritual

Ritual behaviours, make the performers feel less insecure and offer the individual some sense of power over an incident or event which is, or will soon be, unfolding around them. The fact that there is often no logical link between the act performed and the outcome hoped for does nothing to diminish the frequency or intensity of the behaviour. Often the acts are performed “just in case” and the concept is that even if nothing is made better by performing the act, not performing it would potentially make things worse.

In the rituals of language repeated familiar songs, chants and gestures are used and generate a collective response. On some occasions this is seen in chants and songs aimed at opposing fans and players who are taunted and at the referee and other officials who are subject to abuse and derision. Observable examples of this include fans shouting in unison at the referee “You don’t know what your doing!” or at the opposing goalkeeper “dodgy keeper!”. This behaviour, as mentioned above, is seen as completely acceptable within the confines of the stadium by fans in the study and viewed as being important in helping fans experience a sense of collectivism. Oft repeated chants and slogans of support such as “yellows, yellows” or “come on you Stags” carry the same elements of familiarity and create the same sense of togetherness for those in the ground. Of course this means that the familiar songs are not complicated or challenging but, like “happy birthday to you” or “for he’s a jolly good fellow” can quickly be learned, are easily

remembered and allow the participants to join in very quickly indeed. Some ritual chants are saved for individual players and only have a life as long as the player is with the club but again these songs and chants tend to be easily learned and remembered. For example Peter Crouch, the Liverpool and England striker is 6 feet 7 inches tall and Liverpool fans sing "he's big, he's red, his feet stick out the bed....Peter Crouch." This is not a difficult song to learn and sing!

In the rituals of influencing luck, the fans behaviour has a very definite anxiety reduction purpose and supporters were able to articulate this in the study. The belief was not that the, often bizarre, ritual behaviours could in any way influence the actual behaviours of the players or the referee but that it could influence luck and, as such, the fans felt they had made an active contribution to the game. When challenged about how wearing specific socks or touching bricks or collecting spoons could in any way influence the game fans were accepting of the fact that it could not. The key point was, however, that fans repeatedly promoted the idea that if they had done their ritual and the team lost then it could not possibly be their fault, *because they had done their bit*. The ritual absolved the fans from any negative influence they may have had on the outcome. Interestingly when the team won and the fans had performed their rituals they generally saw it as confirmation that the power of the ritual was evident and they determined to ensure that the ritual continued to be performed.

One of the most interesting ideas to come to light through the study in the area of ritual was one fans experience of what might be termed ritual by proxy. This fan had worn his "lucky sweater" to four consecutive matches and on each occasion the team had won. On an away match day this fan was unable to attend but in order to ensure the continuation of the good run his friend took the sweater, in a

plastic bag, to the away fixture. The team lost and the ritual evolved further into the idea that it was not just the sweater, but the individuals wearing of the sweater that was the talisman. In all cases with fans in the study the ritual behaviour had a definite anxiety reducing result and ensured that the fan was able to watch and enjoy the game. In discussion the fan appeared amused and even slightly embarrassed by his behaviour and that of his friends but the important thing was that the action had been taken, the attempts made to play their part and to appease the gods of luck or fate. Although there is a clear denial of any belief in the supernatural from those involved, the clear sense of reduced anxiety because the action had been carried out and consequently the absolution from any guilt around a bad result was fascinating to observe in this case. What the exchange did clearly demonstrate was the extent to which rituals ceremonies can be created, maintained and given meaning in modern environments yet still offer the comforts of the classic rituals of our cultural history.

Rituals are often linked to emotional experiences because intense emotions beg to be shared and it is often comforting to take part in a public demonstration of a grief, loss or triumph. The unity felt by communities in such collective expressions of emotion as Remembrance Day services underline the power of collective experiences. Ritual acts performed for their symbolic and emotional value will frequently have specific places and objects to help define their value and meaning. Ritual objects have value only to the extent that they have meaning for the person owning or using the object. A signed Stags shirt, for example, may have no value to a non football fan or a fan of another team, but in the right context either can be an object to be used to prove a powerful allegiance to a cause.

The importance of ritual in the experience of fans is generally fourfold. Firstly it allows for an open and easily identifiable method of expressing solidarity with the team, the town and, perhaps most importantly, with each other. Secondly it allows quick and easy methods of integration for new members of the group whilst offering the comfort of familiarity and solidarity for those who have been part of the group for some considerable time. Thirdly it creates a vehicle whereby emotions and feelings can be channelled into visible and inclusive methods of cathartic release. Finally it allows the fan to contribute towards the contest by allowing them to engage in some form of behaviour that might influence luck or fate. This is an anxiety reducing technique whereby if the contest goes the way of the club the fan can feel that they contributed towards the success and if the contest goes against the club the fan can be secure in the knowledge that they were not in any way to blame because they kept the faith and carried out their responsibility by performing their part in the rituals that surround the activity of supporting for many fans.

9.7 Hope and the emotional rollercoaster

The therapeutic value of hope in relation to health and well-being has been well documented (Cutcliffe 1995, Nekolaichuk *et al* 1999, Jevne and Miller 1999, Clarke 2002), and, as such, hope can be seen being related to the very essence of being human. Ruddick, (1999) suggests that one key concept about hope that should be remembered is that it often rests on beliefs about *possible* rather than *probable* outcomes. These thoughts echo those of concentration camp survivor Victor Frankl (1959) who, when describing experiences of prisoners living in a concentration camp noted that once people lost hope they died, and conversely that

people who had even a small amount of hope were able to live and survive even under extremely adverse conditions.

Pessimism, on the other hand, has been associated with greater risk for poor health and slower recovery from illness and medical procedures (Ey *et al* 2005), lower self-esteem, greater risk of depression, and peer problems. Clarke (2002) suggests that pessimism and hopelessness are often associated with negative distortions of reality to the point that hopelessness has been defined in the American Psychiatric Association's (APA) *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM IV-TR; American Psychiatric Association, 2000) as an illness and, as such, is characterised as a pervasive pessimism about the future

The interesting thing to emerge in the study about hope and despair was the ways in which the feeling oscillated wildly during a game rather than finding some middle ground. This, of course, was because the feelings were mostly generated in response to the action taking place on the field and, as such, a team's fortunes can change literally minute by minute. It was this that, for many fans, held the key to the whole supporting experience and the explanation for the ritualistic and cathartic behaviours that characterised a supporting occasion.

Because fortunes can change so quickly the fans needed to *feel involved* with the course of the game and attempt to actively influence the proceedings by shouting encouragement at the team and derision at the opposition and officials. The ritual chants and emotive cathartic outbursts were the ways in which the connection between the individual and the group, and between the fans and the players, was established, developed and maintained. The elation of taking the lead, disappointment of losing it, frustration of watching

the team play badly and euphoria of scoring again were all common triggers for fans to behave in a carnivalesque fashion. As the fortunes can change so quickly *every emotion experienced was transient* and fans commented on the amount of effort needed to ensure that everything went as well as was possible. Fans descriptions of the anxiety of being in front with only a few minutes to go and feeling sure that Mansfield would “blow it again” jostle for place with descriptions of elation at how well the team can play and the sweetness of success. Sport offers the supporter the great sense of the possible with the outcome often hinging on the action in literally the last few minutes of the game. It is this unpredictability that offers supporters not only pessimism but conversely hope right up until the last moment of a match. This hope is conveyed forward so that even after a poor performance and a bad result fans can still look forward to the next 90 minutes where it might all be so different and everything might just come right.

In the study one of the fans talked about being on the road to recovery after a serious mental health problem and clearly emphasised the importance of something to look forward to and to hope for as a component of his recovery. He suggested that attending Field Mill has offered this in some respects and the fact that he was accepted there and felt welcome there was, in his view, one of the major drivers that offered him hope for the future.

9.8 Is watching football good for your mental health?

Emotion regulation or, conversely, the inability to control emotion, figures prominently in mental health and illness the diagnosis of mental disorder (Gross and Munoz 1995) with Gross and Levenson (1997) claiming that over half of the nonsubstance related Axis I

disorders, and all of the Axis II personality disorders, defined in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of the American Psychiatric Association involve some form of emotion dysregulation. (American Psychiatric Association 1994). Examples include major depressive disorder being characterised by a deficit of positive emotion and/or a surplus of negative emotion; generalised anxiety disorder being characterised by heightened levels of anxiety or schizophrenia by inappropriate emotional responses.

Some authors, however, have cast emotional inhibition in a more positive light, arguing that emotion regulation represents an essential developmental milestone (Saarni 1990, Thompson 1991). This view suggests that to be a fully functioning member of a society and individual must inhibit (to varying degrees) their ongoing emotion-expressive behavior. In this view, emotional inhibition is not uniformly pathogenic and in many circumstances it may, in fact, be the failure of emotional inhibition that is problematic.

Football matches appear, in some ways, to offer an alternative to these polar views wherein emotion can be released but in a structured safe and socially acceptable way within a community and in a setting wherein it is tolerated and in some ways even encouraged. From a mental health perspective the acceptance of an individual into the community of fans is of vital importance as it offers a real and tangible, even if only transient, alternative to the social isolation that characterises much of the life experiences of those with mental health problems. In some ways it appears that some of the isolation, social exclusion and marked feelings of being different that are features of the risk assessment for depression and other mental health problems can be combated by the experience of supporting a team.

Smaller clubs do not have huge corporate facilities and it is not uncommon for people from very different social backgrounds to find themselves sitting together and engaging together in conversations at matches. During this study an experiment I carried out involved going along a line of supporters and asking about background. The result was four solicitors sitting next to two milkmen, sitting next to three students, sitting next to a security officer, sitting next to a secretary. Nine of the fans were male and two female. No doubt Bakhtin would have smiled.

The structure of football grounds lends itself to fans finding themselves in close proximity and events on the pitch inviting comment and conversation between people sitting in closely together. The game itself is so simple to follow, and easy to understand, that even a novice supporter can engage in a meaningful way with an experienced fan, and a child of 10 can converse with a man of 50.

Although I am not in any way suggesting that attending matches alone can balance the hours and days of social isolation often endured by those with mental health problems it is, I think, fair to say that it can be a step in the right direction and a springboard to other things. As one interviewee put it,

"I'm trying to put my life back in order after a nervous breakdown and it is important for me to look forward to things. Most of my Stags friends have a joint purpose like the club should have, it gives us something to look forward to and to be involved in...it's all tied in with what I've already said about being part of a community etc. it's a good thing you know because for the couple of hours you know really what you're going to get, which is you feel a bit better about yourself and you've certainly been accepted up there if you have

problems physically or mentally at least you can put that to one side a little bit(Interview No1)

The sense of inclusion and use of ventilation, characteristic of football matches, goes hand in hand in developing a sense of worth and camaraderie, or as one interviewee called it an “esprit de corps”, for supporters. Although it may be argued that much of this behaviour such as shouting, swearing, taunting and abusing has a very positive effect on the person engaging in it, the questions remains about how this behaviour effects those who are on the receiving end of it and whether there is actually a place for this type of behaviour in a civilised society. Contemporary society is faced with an increasing preoccupation with the decline of manners and the vanishing of respect and this has subsequently been accompanied by Government initiatives on increasing respect and the rise of the use of Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs). It would seem somewhat paradoxical and odd perhaps to suggest that behaviours that may well find themselves falling foul of Government directives on respect and actually subject to ASBOs if performed outside of the football environment, such as shouting swearing and being verbally abusive, could be seen as in some ways positive for mental health.

In the end fans see the stadium as ground that is sacrosanct and essentially as a safe haven attendance at which offers the supporter access to an environment characterised by Rogers (1951) core themes of warmth empathy and genuineness. The evidence from the data collected suggests that concepts such as warmth, empathy, genuineness and positive regard may just as well be found in non clinical environments such as football stadiums as in clinical settings. Although, as has been stated before, it is in no way being suggested that football supporting can act as any type of alternative to mental

health care it is worth considering the possibility that there is a role for football to play in the field of mental health within local communities . At present this is largely haphazard and coincidental, but it may well be that work to actively harness these phenomena for more active mental health promotion could provide those involved with mental health an important arena for development.

Although, as Hupcey (1998) suggests' social support is difficult to conceptualize, define and measure, close associates, such as family and friends, are frequently acknowledged to be social support providers in addition to neighbours, support, peers and acquaintances (Finfgeld-Connett, 2005). The concept of social support has received increasing attention in the nursing literature (Callaghan & Morrissey 1993) and is claimed to help improve the symptoms of some people with mental health problems (Beattie & Longabaugh 1997) and reduce the chance of relapse (Johnson et al 2003). Social support in the guise of a group of like minded people who offer acceptance as soon as a person is identified as being a supporter is certainly something that was acknowledged by fans in the study. This idea of supporters as being accepting and supportive is somewhat at odds with the popular conception of football fans as folk devils, but it may well be that the perception of fans as folk devils may be changing as the media highlights the existence of a new, more sinister, folk devil.

9.9 New folk devils

The tide may be turning on the perception of the football supporter as a hooligan. Greater numbers of women and families are being attracted to the game and the move towards a less hostile and more carnivalesque portrayal by the media is noticeable. In the Euro 2004 championship the first steps towards distancing hooligans from "real fans" was noticeable with comments in the English press such

as "just because they wear an England shirt doesn't make them a real England fan." At the 2004 competition, when England lost to the home nation Portugal, it is of note that despite taking over 40,000 fans to the game there was very little disruption and, in fact, more arrests were made at the that Day's Glastonbury Festival than in Lisbon. Karen Iley, of Reuters, observed the following day:-

"Viewed three weeks ago as an invading army of potential trouble-makers, England fans have flown out of Portugal with a new-found reputation as welcome guests. England lost on penalties to hosts Portugal on Thursday in the Euro 2004 quarter-final. While the home fans celebrated, English supporters drowned their sorrows peacefully in Lisbon. By far the largest group of visiting supporters in Portugal, England fans made a huge amount of noise wherever the team played but treated their visit as a football-related holiday rather than, as so often in the past, a military campaign." (Iley 2004)

Interestingly during the tournament there were some arrests of 11 English people for fighting and drunken behaviour in a beachside bar which initial press reports suggested was football hooligan behaviour even though the violence was in Albufeira, a town more than 100 miles from any of the England squad's first round venues. At the matches throughout the tournament England games remained trouble free. Writing in the Times newspaper Matt Dickinson concluded that at the matches trouble was conspicuous by its absence leading William Gaillard, UEFA's director of communications, to observe that before, during and after the match , "in total, there were 6,000 pints of beer drunk. There was not one single incident" (Dickinson 2004). At the end of the Euro 2004 tournament Geoff Thompson the F.A.'s chairman stated on the official F.A. website that he was delighted with the fans behaviour stating that a total of

50,000 English supporters had attended the series of matches and that there had been only one arrest. Domestically the picture was repeated at the League Cup Final in Cardiff from where Gordon Tynan reported :-

"At the Millennium Stadium there were no arrests of supporters and no ejections at the Carling Cup final between Middlesbrough and Bolton Wanderers on Sunday. Stadium officials were full of praise as the day passed peacefully, with Boro ending their 128-year wait for a major trophy by beating Wanderers 2-1."

The change in the media portrayal of England fans between the 2002 World Cup and the 2004 European Championships may signal a sea change in the way fans are portrayed in general but to facilitate this change it is necessary, in Cohen's Folk Devils Model, for the media and the establishment to find an alternative group to present as the new folk devils. The sociological folk devil mantle may now be being passed from football fans to the binge drinking, drug taking, anti-social, hoody wearing youths who, it is suggested, cause havoc in town centres and shopping malls throughout the country. In language reminiscent of that used to describe football fans in the recent past the Guardian's Patrick Barkham writes :-

Happy slapping, binge drinking, hoodie-wearing feral yobs have been swearing and spitting their way across the country this week.
(Barkham 2005)

Football has begun to work towards further rehabilitation of its image by the expansion of such concepts as football in the community initiatives through which clubs are involved in promoting education, especially literacy, and in working with schools on

programmes for fitness and exercise. If the public is beginning to change its attitude towards football supporters the time may be right to take advantage of this change in attitude and capture the positive elements of football and football supporting in both mental health promotion and the active treatment of mental health problems.

Chapter 10 Links to health promotion

10.0 Introduction

In the Western world, the health of men in general is poorer than that of women, mortality rates are higher and men use health services less often than women, even when reproductive services have been accounted for (Lee and Owens 2006). Despite this situation specific services aimed at men have been slow to develop. Well women clinics have mushroomed to cater for various needs but, perhaps with the exception of assessing cardiovascular disease risk, little has been done specifically for men (Baker 2004). Men remain a difficult group to engage in both mental health interventions and in mental health promotional work. Davis (2005), however, claims that times are beginning to change acknowledges some examples of successful initiatives for mens' health, including outreach health clinics and health promotion in unconventional venues.

Both the Government and local communities are beginning to understand that one of the one effective ways of tackling health problems in a community may be work closely with one of these unconventional venues and to harness the power of their local football club.

10.1 Health Promotion and Football

As seen above some football clubs have already been involved in health promotional activities with their local health authorities. The National Institute for Mental Health in England (NIMHE) has used the Shift initiative to begin working to promote positive work to de-stigmatise mental health issues with men.

The creation of the FA's forum for mental health and the funding by the Football Foundation, and local mental health trusts, of clubs for

service users all indicate a growing willingness on the part trusts, government and the FA to work together in developing a culture within which football can be used positively to impact on mental health issues.

A review of the themes found in the data suggests that there are areas that resonate strongly between what is proposed as being good for developing a state of mental health and what is experienced by supporters who attend matches. Because mental health promotion, in general, takes a broad view of mental health and is as concerned with the social and emotional determinants of health as it is with the physical, the importance of activities and experiences which can promote positive mental and emotional wellbeing are held to be of value. This means, of course, that mental health is influenced both positively and negatively by a wide range of factors, both external and internal, including social and economic factors, self-esteem, feelings of belonging and the construction of the ability to cope. In this complicated jigsaw it is not being suggested that football, alone, offers a solution to mental health problems but it is being suggested that it can have an important component part to play in the promotion of mental health as a concept and construction of a state mental health for an individual who likes the game.

According to McDonald and O'Hara (1996) mental health promotion can be broadly defined as "any activity which actively fosters good mental health, either through increasing positive factors or reducing negative factors" and the responses from participants suggests attending matches does both. As such, McDonald and O'Hara may be correct when they go on to suggest that the opportunities to influence positive mental health and engage in health promoting

activities can be found in a variety settings including home, the workplace, school and social settings.

A further area of concordance between writings on mental health promotion and data found in the responses from both diarists and interviewees is in the area of self esteem. Vaughan & Oldhams' (1997) view that self esteem is an indicator of an individual's set of beliefs about one's own worth, competence, and abilities to relate to others as well as their view that high levels of self esteem help buffer the individual from adverse life events also comes through in the responses. Fans views of having the ability to mix with other fans regardless of status, wealth or age suggest that what is valued and held as worthy is the allegiance to the team and the club. This means that any fan can be seen as being of value. There are very few other areas of life where this egalitarian way of being is clearly visible.

If, as Macdonald (1994) claims, "the most basic task for one's mental, emotional and social health is the construction of his/her positive self-esteem". Then it may well be that football can help those with only limited self esteem develop a better, more healthy, evaluation of themselves as they integrate with fellow fans. The knock on effects of individuals developing a sense of positive self esteem can be significant. It is seen to actively promote healthy functioning as reflected in life aspects such as achievements, success, satisfaction, and the ability to cope with diseases like cancer and heart disease. Conversely, an unstable self-concept and poor self-esteem can play a critical role in the development of an array of mental disorders and social problems, such as depression, anorexia nervosa, bulimia, anxiety, violence, substance abuse and high-risk behaviours. These conditions not only result in a high degree of

personal suffering, but also impose a considerable burden on society. Self-esteem is considered as an influential factor both in physical and mental health, and therefore should be an important focus in health promotion in general and in mental health promotion in particular.

All of the ideas around mental health promotion rely on the ability of the health promotional team to engage the target group in health promotional activities and the problem with young men and health promotion is extensively one of access. Young men, in general, do not access health promotion services and especially mental health promotion services (Prior 1999, Good, Dell and Mintz 1989). The inclusive nature of football and the footballing community offers a great opportunity for mental health promoters to harness the positive elements of this phenomenon and actively use them to effectively to help supporters extend the positive experience of the match environment into other areas of their lives.

Chapter 11 Recommendations

11.0 Introduction

This study has highlighted some of the positive components of supporting behaviours and suggested that there are potential strength in using football clubs as a setting in which health promotional activities can be fostered and developed. This process could be helped if the following recommendations were to be adopted.

11.1 More should be done by the media to highlight the positive elements of supporting and to report stories of good behaviour amongst fans

As has been seen by the experiences of Scottish and Danish fans, a concerted effort by the media to give a more balanced view of supporter's behaviours can result in the removal of some of the stigma that is endured by football supporters in general. Some movement in this area appears to have been made with the 2004 reports of the behaviour of England fans at the last European Championships in Portugal. A removal of the stigma fuelled by media stories of violence can help encourage more fans and, importantly, more families to attend. The literature reviewed in the study highlighted the importance of families spending time together and any move that encourages this can be seen to be a positive move.

11.2 Consideration should be given by clubs to highlighting what elements of the carnivalesque are perceived as being acceptable and what elements are perceived as being unacceptable by their fans and in their stadium

In many ways the potential conflict between what is acceptable behaviour inside the stadium in terms of the carnivalesque and the language of the Billingsgate and what is not can be subject to imposed limits. This is already in place in terms, for example, of racist chanting. Interestingly although the Government has a strong legal framework in place to deal with racism and racist chanting the changes over the last 10 years or so have been mostly due to self regulation amongst fans themselves. As outlined above most of the chanting that takes place at matches falls within the agreed informal codes set about by supporters themselves and are seen as part and parcel of the football supporting experience.

The official steps taken by clubs, however, in certain areas of acceptability of behaviour appear to have paid dividends. Two clear examples are the "Give racism the red card" initiative and the football clubs attitude to drunkenness. Every league club in the country took part in the F.A.'s "Give racism the red card" campaign and had a very high profile stance on the unacceptability of racism in football. Clubs used programmes, posters, public forums and the media to highlight this stance and showed a united front. The media joined this campaign and incidents like the high profile sacking of the football pundit Ron Atkinson for racist remarks showed they were serious in their support.

The move towards removing drunkenness from football has meant that over the last 15 years it clubs have refused to allow access to the match to any fan who is felt to be drunk when presenting at the turnstiles. This move was aided by the enactment of the Football Supporters Act in 1991 which made it an offence to attempt to gain access to a match in an intoxicated state or to attempt to bring alcohol into a ground. Fans are still able to drink inside the ground

but this is in designated areas where alcohol is sold at specific times during the game.

The two initiatives outlined above show how clubs can set boundaries on what is acceptable behaviour in the stadium and help enforce these ideas. This is balanced by the fact that more and more clubs are employing staff to whip up the atmosphere in grounds and increase the chanting, singing and shouting. The use of club mascots such as Notts County's Mr Magpie or Mansfield's Sammy the Stag face the crowd during games and orchestrate the cheering. This is accompanied by notes in the programme specifically asking the crowd to make more noise and chant loudly for the team.

In the end it is clear that the carnivalesque behaviours offer the outlet suggested by the fans but that they must fall within some level of regulation to ensure that sinister elements of abuse are contained and eradicated. At present great strides have been taken to reduce racism and this has been hugely successful. The next target may well be homophobia as many of the insults shouted at officials and opposing players can have a homophobic overtone. Interestingly chanting is almost never homophobic when aimed at a group and the homophobic insults tend to be impulsive and from individuals in response to an incident rather than orchestrated and engaged in by a group.

11.3 Football researchers should shift the focus of research away from exclusively looking at the negative aspects of supporting behaviours and have a more balanced approach to football research

As seen in the literature review most of the research produced, and most of the books published, in recent years about football supporters have focused on the negative elements of the fans

behaviours. Although this is important, valid and credible research it has coloured the picture of football fans in a negative way.

As the move away from football fans as the nations favourite folk devils proceeds it may well be time for more research to focus on the positive aspects of football supporting and for researchers to explore in more depth the types of positive benefits that being part of the supporting world can have for fans.

11.4 Mental health promotion teams should consider the use of football in it's various guises (clubs, supporters clubs, players) to promote mental health especially amongst the group who are both most at risk of suicide and most difficult to engage, namely young men

The success of projects like Derwent Valley Rovers and "It's a Goal !" suggest that football can offer a medium through which people in general, and young men in particular, can access health promotional material, activities and services. This becomes especially important in the field of mental health when we remember that young men, the group who makes up the biggest proportion of any football crowd, is also the group who are the highest risk for suicide and the group who appear most difficult to engage with mental health and health promotion services.

Years of young men not accessing services clearly tells us that taking the services to them should be considered. In some parts of the mental health services this is already becoming the mainstream and services like assertive outreach, home treatments and counselling services in G.P. clinics are all testament to how effective this approach can be. Now may well be the time for health promotion services to engage fully with national organisations like

the F.A., the Department of Health and NIMHE to move from isolated examples of success towards a national strategy for health promotion that works in partnership with the national and international bodies that govern football.

11.5 Football authorities and clubs should consider their definitions of illness and disability in an attempt to help those who are most disadvantaged financially and socially to access an experience that has the potential to impact positively on one aspect social exclusion.

Discussions between the F.A. and supporters groups such as the Derby County Community Partnership are currently focusing on whether the F.A.'s current definition of health and disability can be further developed to include mental health problems. Were the F.A. to include a range of mental health problems in its criteria for disability the chances of people with mental health problems being able to access matches could increase dramatically. This could open up the socially inclusive experiences outlined by fans in the study to people who currently may be unable to access them on grounds of finance. It is encouraging that in November 2005 the FA released a statement on their website stating that they have commissioned the development of a document surrounding mental health and the inclusion of people with mental health difficulties.

Chapter 12 Conclusion

12.0 Introduction

This study focused on the experiences of a group of football supporters in an attempt to determine what, if any, impact the experience of actively supporting a club and attending matches has on the mental health of the fans.

12.1 The study

The focus of this study has been on the effect that supporting a team and attending their matches might have on the mental health of the supporters. The supporters who participated in the study were fans of Mansfield Town a club in the lowest division of the English Football League.

The data was reviewed against a backdrop of literature that encompassed academic literature around supporters, the concept of the carnivalesque, the importance of families, the concept of catharsis, the importance of ritual and the links between football supporting and mental health.

A qualitative methodology utilising the grounded theory was chosen for the study. This choice of a qualitative methodology was made as the study aimed to gain an understanding of the meaning of the experience for fans and examine the importance fans themselves placed on the behaviours in relation to their mental health. Although open to criticism the self selection of participants ensured that no fan was excluded from participating and the process resulted in fans of various ages and from various social classes being able to make a contribution to the process. The use of diaries and semi structured interviews allowed the fans to explain their experiences in

their own words and this allowed for a greater autonomy in the construction of the fans views. The themes developed from the diaries formed the basis of the interview schedule and the Grounded Theory method was used to analyse and draw themes from the data. Initial open codes were identified from reviewing the data following transcription using the Nvivo software programme. These open codes were developed into axial codes as ideas linking some of the open codes were identified. Themes of a sense of belonging and local pride, misrepresentation in the media, the carnivalesque, family bonding, continuity and the impact of behaviours on mental health formed the main themes of the axial codes developed from the data.

These were developed into a single overarching selective code. This idea suggested that the key mechanism through which supporters improved their mental health through attending football matches was by using the carnivalesque behaviours and ritual behaviours as a coping strategy that facilitated their ability to deliberately absorb stress in one part of their lives, internalise it and then discharge it at the stadium throughout the match. The majority of participants from both diary study and interviews made very positive connections between watching football, engaging in these carnivalesque behaviours, becoming immersed in an inclusive experience and good mental health. The key feature of this experience was that the behaviours which could be seen as threatening or abusive in a different environment were kept within the confines of the stadium and, much like disrobing and demasking following a Renaissance carnival, were left there as people returned to the more conventional lives they live away from match days.

There are implications in this concept of football being used to increase social inclusion and deal with stress for mental health

promotion especially when dealing with young men, a group who are difficult to engage with mental health promotion and mental health services. It may well be that football and football clubs have something important to offer both in terms of teaching young men coping strategies and in creating environments that will be attractive for young men to access services and the expansion of the “It’s a Goal !” project into more football clubs is testament to this.

The perception of football fans by society in general and the portrayal of them by the media in particular is at a pivotal point. There is no doubt that football is a hugely emotive, engaging and unifying experience. As such it has the potential to be used very positively in the fields of mental health promotion and mental health care.

Many of the things that mental health promotion aims to help people develop, such as coping mechanisms, social support networks, strong family ties and high self esteem, are already integral parts of the football supporting experience. The development of close partnership working between mental health professionals, football clubs and football authorities has the potential to build on this foundation and help develop further systems that can use football as a gateway for people to access advice, support and services.

12.2 limitations of the study

This study has limitations and these should be considered when viewing the work.

The potential problems of a process of self selection are discussed earlier in the study. Although self selection ensured that no fan was denied access to the project the questions of representativeness and

typicality of respondents that this choice of recruitment strategy raise remain. As with any self-report method of inquiry, answers may be influenced by responses to a given set of experiences at a given point in time or reflect the folk theories that prevail in the individual or group's subculture. This could prove problematic in a subculture that is as strong as football supporting is in valuing stories and anecdotes as evidence of passion or commitment to a team

The study is also limited to the fans of one particular club and therefore it is difficult to clearly define if any of the responses relate specifically to that club and, as such, are able to be held as true for other clubs of a similar size. Although much anecdotal evidence suggests that fans of lower league clubs do have great similarities in their views and experiences this is difficult to generalise and capture without further research being completed in the field.

Despite definite attempts to the contrary the possibility of bias in how observations were made, recorded, analyzed, and interpreted are possible in the work. As a football fan the potential for my views to be influenced by my experiences remains a possibility.

Limitations of this study also include the relatively small sample size of 29 diaries and 29 interviews. Although this is an acceptable number to receive saturation of themes in qualitative research it remains true that as a proportion of an average crowd at Mansfield (between 2000 and 4000) it is a small sample. As in all qualitative research of a similar nature the question of what those who were not interviewed might have contributed remains unanswered.

Some of the limitations of the study reflect the limitations of

grounded theory as a method. The essentially exploratory nature of the process, the lack of generalisability of results, the non-standardisation of measurement and data collection that are characteristic of grounded theory all were evident in this study.

Every attempt was made to ensure that the potential bias was kept to a minimum and that the analysis was appropriately carried out .

Despite the limitations of the research process I feel that due to the exploratory nature of the subject, and the desire to facilitate fans being able to tell their own story about their experiences, that grounded theory was the most appropriate and productive approach to utilise for this study.

12.3 Is watching football good for your mental health ?

Whilst it is, in no way, being suggested that football supporting already offers all of the components identified as being pre-requisites for good mental health it does appear to offer many of them at a foundation level. As such it may mean that rather than, as fans quipped at the beginning of this study, "I must be mad to watch this lot" it may in fact be that the opposite that is true and that watching football actually is good for your mental health.

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Appendix 1

The website flyer that explained the project and asked for volunteers.

Posted on the official Mansfield Town FC website by Alan Prince, the commercial manager at the club, in 2001



Is Watching Mansfield Town Good For Your Mental Health

This might sound like the opening line of a joke...but I'm deadly serious!!!

My name is Alan Pringle and I'm a Health Lecturer with the University of Nottingham. I'm currently involved in research around the subject of football supporters and am interested in why people go to football matches and interested in what benefits they feel they get from going.

Much of the research done around football in recent years has been on the negative elements of football supporter's behaviour such as hooliganism and racism. This is despite the fact that for every fan arrested hundreds of thousands appear to derive pleasure and benefit from attending. An example of this is the fact that in the 1994 season in England and Wales there were 5,006 football related arrests, yet in the same time framework **almost 19 million people** attended matches.

In 1999 I was involved in two Radio Mansfield programmes looking for the most eccentric Stags fan. Comments, stories and observations from the people who took part in the radio programme phone-in consistently produced themes of a sense of belonging and inclusion, and a genuine love for the club.

What I am interested in looking at in more depth is whether the

sense of inclusion fans get from actually attending matches is good for their health. It appears that in other parts of life sharing an experience, whether it is good or bad, helps bring people together and helps them feel they are understood and supported. It also helps them develop strategies for dealing with some of the difficult things life throws at them.

I want to see if this is the case with Stags fans. Do you think that the shared experience of watching Stags, irrelevant of the result of the match, is good for you or does it make your mental health actually worse ?!!

To help in this I am looking for some Stags fans to help in the research. What I would like is for some volunteers to work with me and to keep a diary around attending matches at the beginning of next season.

The diary will have some questions with blank spaces for the answers It will ask you to write briefly about what you were doing in the run up to the match, during the match and after the match. It will also ask you to try to remember the sorts of things you were thinking and feeling during the game.

I am hoping that fans will keep a diary for three matches.

From analysing and drawing themes from the entries a picture can be built up of what Stags fans generally get from attending. The results of the study will be available for anyone who wants a copy.

I am very grateful to the club, and to Alan Prince in particular, for help in setting up this study. If you would like to know more about the study please contact me at

Mansfield Education Centre, Kings Mill Hospital, Mansfield Road, Sutton-in-Ashfield, NG17 4JT

or by telephone at the University of Nottingham on 01623 465600

or by e-mail at alan.pringle@nottingham.ac.uk

If you would be interested in being part of the study and keeping a diary please contact me direct or contact **Alan Prince at Field Mill**. Thanks for taking the time to read this and I hope you will become involved.

Yours,

Alan Pringle

Appendix 2

BBC East Midlands sports pages flyer helped recruit diarists

You are in: **Health**

Front Page Friday, 22 June, 2001, 13:41 GMT 14:41 UK

Football crazy, football mad

World
UK
UK Politics
Business
Sci/Tech
Health
Background
Briefings
Medical notes
Education
Entertainment
Talking Point
In Depth
AudioVideo



Stags fans will record their feelings during the match

Fans of Mansfield Town FC are being asked to take part in research into the effects of watching Third Division football.

The project is entitled "Is watching Mansfield Town F.C. good for your mental health?".

The study asks fans to keep short diaries, detailing their feelings, over three matches at the start of next season.

Interviews with the fans will then aim to establish what ordinary supporters feel they get in return from supporting a small club.

A recent study carried out at the University of Liverpool indicated that most of the fans of Third Division clubs live within a five-mile radius of their club.

Studying smaller local teams can help make some observations about local populations.

Alan Pringle, a health lecturer at the University of Nottingham, is in charge of this project.

It may well be that clubs like Mansfield Town have got a role to play in helping people stay mentally healthy

**Alan Pringle,
University of
Nottingham**

He said football was often a way of regaining a sense of community in towns where economic and social change had left certain people isolated.

"In a town where many people, especially men, have lost the traditional avenues they had for getting together and feeling a sense of

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Nottingham**

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22 Dec 00 | Health

Watching sport 'bad for
your health'

03 Oct 00 | Health

Injury toll of football and
rugby

09 Aug 99 | Health

TV football fans run injury
gauntlet

15 Apr 99 | Medical notes

Injury risks for young
footballers

Internet links:

Mansfield Town

University of Nottingham

The BBC is not responsible for
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internet sites

Top Health stories now:

Postcode lottery in GP
services

IVF mix-up heads for
court

Transplant first for cancer
patient

Costly wait with dementia
symptoms

Chicken checked for BSE

New hope for Aids
vaccine

Campaign to end stigma
of mental illness

Parents to sue over
epilepsy row

**Links to more Health
stories are at the foot of
the page.**

belonging or inclusion, it may well be that clubs like Mansfield Town have got a role to play in helping people stay mentally healthy," said Pringle.

Mr He said previous research involving football fans had focused on the negative elements of supporters, such as racism or hooliganism.

He said: "This is despite the fact that these are actually minority behaviours.



Mansfield Town FC is supporting the research

"An example of this is that in a recent season there were about 5,000 hooliganism-related offences in England for the year, but in the same time frame nearly 19 million people watched matches.

"Most of the fans who go to matches actually seem to get something positive from the experience - including Stags fans."

The Nottingham study wants at least 30 Mansfield Town supporters to take part.

Fans who want to take part should contact Alan Pringle at the university on 01623 465600.

Big match risks

A study published in the British Medical Journal looked at the effect of the 1996 European Championships on Dutch fans.

It found that the number of fatal heart attacks and strokes suffered by Dutchmen on the day that their side went out of the tournament on penalties was significantly higher than normal.

The researchers believed the reason could have been the increased stress associated with watching a big sporting event.

A previous study found that Edinburgh Royal Infirmary treated an incredible 151 patients for football-related problems during the 1998 World Cup in France.

✉ **E-mail this story to a friend**

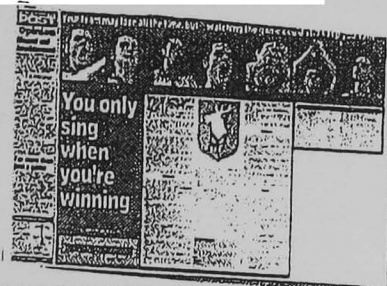
Appendix 3

Nottingham Evening Post article on the project by Mahri McFarlane in 2001 that helped recruit diarists

Ee-ay-addio, footie keeps us sane!

They'll be chanting in the streets, singing in the pubs and queued to their telly sets...yes the World Cup is here again. But what does it do to fans who can switch from sheer joy to abject despair in a jiffy? Read on with

MHAIRI McFARLANE



SERIOUS SUBJECT: The Post reports the research into Mansfield Town fans

Your Hospitals...



...how well do they serve you?

'One girl had to wear lucky earrings or she knew team would lose'

Alan Pringle

Looking for the move of your dreams?

Your essential guide to Distinction Homes for sale across the East Midlands.

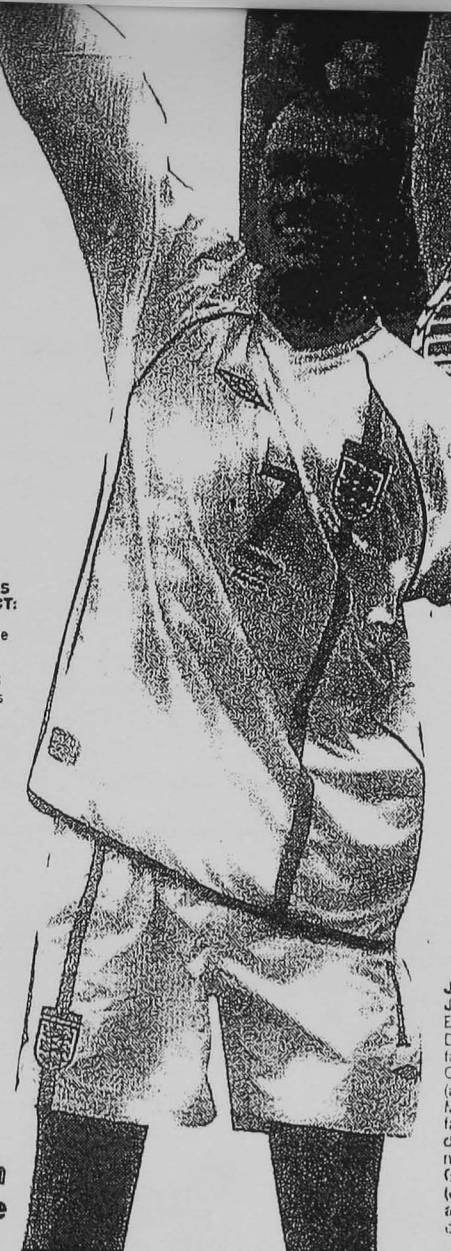


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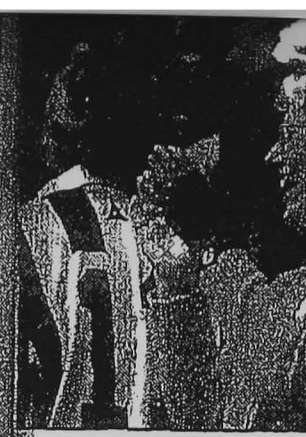
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PHOTOGRAPH BY G. G. G. G.



YEAH ... footie IS good for you! And that's just as well with the World Cup almost upon us and the nation already going barmy over Becks and dippy for Dyer.

It all started with a serious question about football posed by academics: Was following your soccer team good for your mental health?

With the first phase of the study concluded, the findings are "overwhelmingly positive" — and it seems the Saturday afternoon ritual is helping to keep many people sane.

The research was funded by the University of Nottingham and the Millbrook Mental Health Unit in Mansfield. Alan Pringle, a health lecturer at the university's school of nursing who also works at Millbrook, is running the project.

And he is certain the World Cup will have a good influence on people's mental health.

The last World Cup was a polarizing experience, he says, with psychiatric admission rates in Edinburgh dropping significantly.

The *Evening Post* reported last year how health experts asked football fans to keep diaries about their emotions and behaviour — and the effect certain matches had on them during the season.

Now 29 diaries have been returned, each recording up to three different games over the past four months.

The organisers found that some fans from Mansfield experienced a sense of belonging and hope, as well as happier moods, as their team fought its way out of the Third Division.

But there was pessimism and frustration when their side lost or did not play well.

Alan Pringle said three main themes emerged in the diaries which showed why football was beneficial — the chance to offload anger at the action on the pitch, the camaraderie among supporters, and the way people learned to "manage anxiety" through nerves about the outcome.

"It's definitely cathartic to shout at a football game," said Alan. "One man said he shouted and swore and took out all the week's frustrations in one afternoon."

"A lot of people are using games like this very constructively rather than shouting at their partner or kids."

"Another feeling which came through strongly was the sense that you are belonging...sharing a language."

"And it was really interesting to see the rituals that people developed — there were lots of lucky hats and pants and sequences, like having to walk a certain way to the ground."

"This helps you learn how to cope with anxiety in other areas of your life."

Alan will now conduct interviews with some of the fans to explore the psychological dimension in greater depth.

He adds: "One girl we spoke to said she had to wear her lucky earrings because when she forgot to put them she knew her team would lose."

"It's interesting how people know something doesn't work and yet they still feel they have to do it."

The research is expected to be completed by the end of September.

Alan became interested in the impact of football on the psyche while taking part in a light-hearted radio phone-in more than two years ago,

THE FUN AND THE FEARS

The emotions of Mansfield Town supporters as they followed the fortunes of their club have been recorded in their diaries.

Researcher Alan Pringle says: "The diaries showed how much the fans' mental health was affected by the football."

"It's like when you're at a great party, everybody wants to talk at once."

"Even though we lost it was good to catch up with my mates afterwards."

But there was angst and fear of defeat.

"You always think the bubble is going to burst soon."

"I really should have more faith but you know what Slugs are like. But within the study it seemed that he was a really good player."

People wanted to be together to band on the team's disasters as well as celebrate the triumphs.

Frustration was a key feature.

"Angry when Shrewsbury scored an easy goal which should have been saved."

But fans acknowledged it was a release.

One summed up: "Sometimes I got a game that provides excitement, skill and pride. When this happens I know that at the next opportunity I'll want to spend another £12 to see them again."

which was searching for the most eccentric fans.

Among the banter and anecdotes from the callers, he was struck by the way they bonded by sharing their team's highs and lows.

"People who feel socially isolated or excluded or have nothing to connect themselves to others are more likely to suffer from mental health problems," Alan says.

His research findings will be passed on to mental health practitioners, the Football Association and the Football League — Alan wants to see mental health advice in match programmes and nurses based at football grounds.

On the subject of soccer hooliganism, Alan said: "Just over 3,100 arrests were made in England and Wales last year connected with football, and yet 28 million people watched football live. A small minority misbehave but they get a phenomenal amount of coverage in the media."

Alan said the co-operation of Mansfield Town supporters had been invaluable.

He said: "I want to thank all the Slugs fans, and Alan Prince at the club, for helping me out with the diaries, they have been great."



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Appendix 4

Article in the local Mansfield newspaper the Chad (the two local newspapers the Chronicle and the Advertiser merged to form the Chad) helped recruit diarists

Is watching Mansfield Town good for your health

STAGS and other football fans could soon have a real excuse for getting out of the shopping or DIY to go to the match on a Saturday - it could be good for their health!

A researcher in the University of Nottingham's School of Nursing is asking a group of Stags supporters to keep diaries after matches and take part in interviews to judge the effect which cheering on their side has on their mental health.

Alan Pringle wants to find out whether getting together with other Stags supporters helps fans to feel a sense of inclusion or belonging and keep a healthy state of mind.

He said: "Is watching Mansfield Town good for your health may sound like the opening

line of a joke, but it is a genuine and serious question.

"My interest in the area centres around exploring whether the sense of inclusion and belonging that fans claim to get from actually attending matches has an effect on their mental health."

Alan's interest in the subject was sparked in 1999 when he was involved in two radio programmes on the search for Stags' most eccentric supporter.

They featured a phone-in section during which supporters talked about why they supported the club and how it impacted on their day to day lives.

Comments, stories and observations from

the die-hard fans who took part in the phone-ins revealed a theme of a sense of belonging and inclusion as well as a genuine affection for the sport and the club.

Mental health problems often arise from social isolation and exclusion with social factors such as poor housing, unemployment, low incomes and bad health playing an important part.

Recent figures, produced by Mansfield District Council revealed the town was the most deprived local authority in Nottinghamshire with a higher than national figure for unemployment and low wages and a higher than average mortality rate.

He added: Despite this picture of social and economic decline, anecdotal evidence from

the two radio programmes suggested attending matches at the club offered an opportunity for social inclusion.

"Another theme which came through was that attending the match offered an opportunity to express feelings in a loud and open way in an environment where open displays of anger, frustration or jubilation and affection were deemed to be socially acceptable."

The project has received great support from the club, especially marketing manager Alan Prince, and it recently posted information about the study on its website.

This has helped recruit around 30 of the 4,000 supporters who pour into Field Mill on

match days to take part in the research.

Alan will be conducting interviews with them on what they perceive to be the mental health benefits of being a supporter. They will be asked to keep a diary of some of the matches they attend, listing various emotions which they have through each of the games.

Once the diaries have been completed, Alan will compile the data and carry out a statistical analysis to look at how often certain themes and ideas arise.

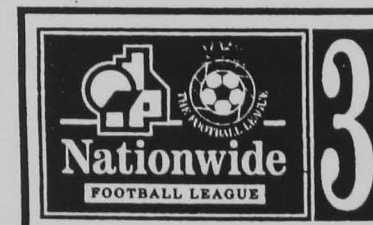
He is hoping the findings of the research may be taken on board by mental health practitioners and football's organisations the FA and Nationwide League.

Greenacre back with a bang to hit Hatters

DESPITE the flurry of red and yellow cards near the end that threatened to overshadow what had gone before, this was still an afternoon to remember for all the right reasons.

Wealthy Luton, the country's leading scorers and promotion favourites, arrived at Field Mill looking to put a significant gap between themselves and a Stags side that had lost their last two games.

Instead they were shot down by some fabulous finishing amid a fever-pitch



Mansfield Town 4 Luton Town 1 Report by John Lomas.

e-mail john.lomas@chad.co.uk

Picture by Dan Westwell, Images of Praise

clashes with Luton players did not appear worthy of red cards.

Apparently Bradley was shown a yellow card in the initial melee after Pemberton was sent off for a petulant flick of his leg at an opponent which didn't make contact and was only spotted by the referee, who didn't punish the initial tackle on Pemberton.

Then Bradley brought down an opponent and

Bobby Hassell in the box to halt Crowe after a neat one-two which would have levelled the game.

Instead, on 56 minutes a moment of magic from Corden opened up the Luton defence again.

He turned the defence inside out on the left and went past three opponents before drilling in a low shot that Greenacre turned over the



Appendix 5

Information sheet about the project given to participants before consent was asked for

Is watching Mansfield Town Good For your Mental Health?

INFORMATION SHEET

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve.

The study aims to talk to football supporters to explore the effects that *they feel* watching a club has on their mental health. This involves the researcher conducting an interview of around 20-30 minutes duration during which he will ask questions about why you attend football matches involving Mansfield Town and asking questions about the effects *you feel* watching a match has on your mental health.

You will be one of around 30 people interviewed. The responses will be analysed and compared to research findings around mental health promotion and around ideas about what sorts of things can help people maintain a sense of mental health.

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and asked to sign a consent form. All information given by you will be during the course of the research will be kept confidential. The interview will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings and transcriptions will be anonymised and will be kept in accordance with data protection policies for the University of Nottingham.

It is hoped that the findings of the study will be published and a

copy of the findings will be made available to you on request.

Should you chose to complete an interview and then change your mind about it being used you can contact me and your data will be removed and destroyed. I can be contacted at

University of Nottingham School of Nursing
Mansfield Education Centre
Kings Mill
Mansfield Road
Sutton-in-Ashfield
Notts NG17 4JL

Please keep this leaflet for future reference and thank you for your interest in this study

Alan Pringle
R.G.N., R.M.N., BSc (Hons) Nursing

Consumers for ethics in research (CERES) publish a leaflet called "Medical Research and You" which gives information about medical research and looks at questions you may want to ask. A copy may be obtained from CERES, P.O. Box 1365, London N16 0B

Appendix 6

Consent form given to diarists

Is Watching Mansfield Town Good For Your Mental Health ?

Consent Form

Part 1. (to be completed by the investigator)

Title of Project : Is watching Mansfield Town good for your mental health ?

Principle Investigator : Alan Pringle R.G.N., R.M.N., BSc (Hons) Nursing

Contact Address : University of Nottingham

Mansfield Education Centre

Kings Mill

Mansfield Road

Sutton-in-Ashfield

Notts

NG17 4JL

Part 2. (to be completed by the participant)

Do you understand that you have been asked to be part of a research study yes / no

Have you read a copy of the information sheet yes / no

Have you had the opportunity to ask questions about the study

Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from the study at any time and you do not have to give a reason

Has the issue of confidentiality been explained to you

The study was explained to me by _____

Name of participant_____

Signature of participant_____

Date_____

Appendix 7

An example of a diary entry for a match completed by a diarist from Stage 1 of the study

Mansfield Town v Halifax_____ Home/Away

Date _18.9.01____

What were you doing in the hour before kick off

Driving to the match - discovered we don't know where Halifax is (somewhere north of Leeds) or when exactly kick off was. A few minutes on the mobile confirmed that kick off was 19.45. Found Halifax and stopped at Burger King for coffee and burgers. Found the ground but nowhere to park.. A very friendly Halifax supporter directed us to the away supporters end. We arrived about five minutes after kick off.

What kind of things were you thinking and feeling

It was my first match for a couple of years. I was anxious because Stags had been playing so well. Conversation in the car suggested that I was a likely Jinx. I had looked at the respective league positions and Halifax were about 10 points below Stags. A bad omen as I believe that stags under achieve against poor opposition. Also Stags had yet to lose so their luck was running out.

To sum up a heady mixture of nervousness and dread tinged with the knowledge that my attendance could possibly be a jinx.

Optimistic or what !!!

Which part of the ground did you watch the game from

stand for away supporters

During the first half what did you do

Watched the match and the crowd. Surprised I recognised so many faces in the crowd. Listened to the crowd.

Conversations ranged from the state of the match, the current political situation, how crap "Planet of the Apes " is and "has Tim Burton ever made a good film

During the first half what were you thinking and feeling

FRUSTRATION ! Stags are the better side but are unable to make a difference. Halifax were preventing Stags from playing then Stags gave away a soft goal. Increasing frustration

At half time what did you do

Discussed the match, looked at the programme. Optimistic that Stags will mount a comeback

During the second half what did you do

Watched in amazement when the expected Stags fight back did not come Became increasingly frustrated and furious at Halifax timewasting. Frustrated at referee and linesman for decisions against Stags

During the second half what were you thinking and feeling

Ever increasing frustration and despair at the realisation that we

were going to get nothing from the game

Joy and elation when Stags scored only to turn to anger when it was disallowed. Excitement as we hit the bar in the final stages - final whistle

What did you do in the hour after the final whistle

Initial surprise at the reaction to the loss of the crowd. They didn't seem bothered. Met up with the Halifax supporter who had given us directions before the game and he agreed that they were lucky

Drove home, found a pub, made plans for the next game

What were you thinking and feeling during this time

Frustrated that we had lost, frustrated that we were prevented from playing, frustrated that Stags were unable to beat a team with little imagination who played so negatively

What do you think you get from supporting Mansfield Town F.C.

For various reasons my attendance at matches is very infrequent. That being said I listen to radio commentaries and make sure I know the result.

On an emotional level watching Mansfield Town fulfils a strong sense of optimism. A belief that they will one day succeed. The fact that this success is proving so difficult only adds to the sense of

expectation and enjoyment (Holy Grail !!)

I enjoy the comradeship of going to matches and going to the pub before and after.

Appendix 8

A copy of the interview schedule used to conduct the semi-structured interviews with supporters in Stage 2 of the study

Is watching Mansfield Town FC Good For Your Mental Health

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Name _____ Date _____

Section 1 . Background -

How long have you been a Stags fan

How often do you go

Do you go to home / away / both

Why Stags and not a bigger club

Section 2 : Identification

Which of the following do you use to help identify you with the club

Article of clothing / hat / scarf / chants / songs / gestures / other

Why is it important to you to display your association with the club in this way

What do you get from being associated with this club

what is the difference between a fair weather fan and a true fan

Section 3 : Catharsis below is a list of behaviours which fans reported in themselves during matches

which of the following behaviours do you display **at matches**

shouting	swearing	offensive gestures
verbally abusing	crying	laughing
taunting	cheering	hugging in public
singing	stamping	threatening

which of the following behaviours do you display **away from matches**

shouting	swearing	offensive gestures
verbally abusing	crying	laughing
taunting	cheering	hugging in public
singing	stamping	threatening

do you think these behaviours are good for you ? If so why, if not why not. Why are there differences in behaviours in different settings

Section 4 : Ritual

Do you have any rituals associated with attending matches

If yes are they sequence / counting / wearing of amulets / special words / special gestures / food / other

What would happen if these rituals were not performed.

If you have rituals why do you think you perform them

Section 5 : Birg / Corf Emotional grid

Some research suggests that we support teams to Bask In Reflected Glory. Have you seen this in your behaviour

There is also a suggestion of Cutting Off Reflected Failure. Have you seen this How does BIRG square with watching a team with limited success like Stags.

Diary entries suggest a large range of emotions are present before during and after Stags fans watch a match which of the following have you experienced

frustration	anger	a sense of isolation	contempt for opposing fans
Friendship	hope	Serenity	expectation of failure
irrational belief	pessimism	Calm	a relief from stress
anticipation of success	loneliness	respect for opposing fans	optimism
a sense of belonging	despair	Stress	rational analysis

Section 6 : Do you see any links between supporting Stags and your health on a day to day basis

How does this link to what happens when the season is over and there is no football

Appendix 9

A copy of the supporting questionnaire completed by the interviewee during or before the interview

Is watching Mansfield Town FC Good For Your Mental Health ?

INTERVIEW Questionnaire

No.

Male / female		Do you have a regular seat	
How long have you been a Stags fan		How many people do you normally go to a game with	
How often do you go		Age	15-20 20-30 30-40 40-50 50-60 60+
Do you go to home / away / both		occupation	
Where do you live		do you follow other clubs / sports	

Section 2 : Identification

Which of the following do you use to help identify you with the club

clothing / hat / scarf / chants / songs / gestures / other / none

Section 3 : Catharsis

which of the following behaviours do you display **at matches**

shouting	swearing	offensive gestures
verbally abusing	crying	laughing
taunting	cheering	hugging in public
singing	stamping	threatening

which of the following behaviours do you display **away from matches**

shouting	swearing	offensive gestures
verbally abusing	crying	laughing
taunting	cheering	hugging in public
singing	stamping	threatening

Section 4 : Ritual

Do you have any rituals associated with attending matches

If yes are they

sequence / counting / wearing of amulets / special words / special gestures / food / other

Section 5 :Emotional grid

Diary entries suggest a large range of emotions are present before during and after Stags fans watch a match which of the following have you experienced

frustration	anger	a sense of isolation	contempt for opposing fans
friendship	hope	serenity	expectation of failure
irrational belief	pessimism	calm	a relief from stress
anticipation of success	loneliness	respect for opposing fans	optimism
a sense of belonging	despair	stress	rational analysis

Do you talk to people that you only know from going to matches sometimes / often / never

Section 6 : Do you see any links between supporting Stags and your health on a day to day basis