



## Article

# The role of lateral surveillance in the construction of authentic football fandom practice

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### Abstract

The search for the 'authentic' football fan has a predominant place within the sociology of football literature. This relates specifically to the scholarly conceptualisation of 'different' fan types as researchers have attempted to explain the evolving nature of fandom practice in light of late-modern consumer culture and perceived authenticity claims. Such conceptual approaches to football fandom are useful enough to describe alternative modes of practice and yet they do not indicate how fans interpret and monitor authenticity at a cultural level. This paper aims to address this issue by drawing on the lived experiences of football fans to uncover the importance of lateral surveillance towards perceptions of authenticity. Findings indicate that authenticity is a site of internal contestation driven by codes of expected conduct and modes of surveillance.

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### Introduction

This paper draws on the experiences of English football (soccer) fans in order to emphasise the importance of lateral surveillance toward the study of fandom authenticity. Lateral surveillance, otherwise understood as peer to peer monitoring (Andrejevic 2005: 488), is particularly pertinent in this case given that it can help to explain 'the use of surveillance tools by individuals' (rather than institutions) as they attempt to monitor the behaviour of family and peers and consequently replicate or reject forms of observed practice as 'authentic' or 'inauthentic'. Hence, in the quest to document how authentic practice is perceived by football fans (i.e. in relation to surveillance processes) this paper questions existing scholarly writings that are primarily conceptual in nature. It suggests that current approaches to fandom that attempt to categorise 'fan types' are largely unhelpful in the sense that they tend to be abstract (based on scholar observations of practice type, rather than the lived experience of fans), driven by generalisations (that emphasise the importance of certain activities over others) and, furthermore, they tend to lack empirical support (Crawford 2004; Osborne and Coombs 2013). As such, it is argued that an investigation of lateral surveillance from the perspective of the fan can offer a greater insight to the study of fandom practice and to the theorisation of authenticity more specifically. These ideas borrow logic from the work of Foucault (1979) when he suggests that social agents subtly inspect one another and infer meaning through interpersonal communication and observation. Thus, as an extension of the panoptic means of thinking and behaving, the focus of the current work is to examine the manner through which football fans have internalised rules of practice via lateral surveillance to the point that they are known to the agent in question as authentic, and have become the means from which to judge others.

As a word of caution, however, it is worth raising the point that late-modern football fans can have eclectic backgrounds, tastes and sensibilities (Dixon 2011, 2012, 2013) that are likely to have implications for perceptions held relating to authenticity and for drawing boundaries towards the construction of 'otherness'. Both authenticity and otherness, I suggest, are interrelated, for it is only through appreciating

Dixon, K. 2014. The role of lateral surveillance in the construction of authentic football fandom practice. *Surveillance & Society* 11(4): 424-438. <http://www.surveillance-and-society.org> | ISSN: 1477-7487

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what one 'is not' that notions of authentic practice are understood and expressed. This is perhaps best explained through the anthropological work of Mary Douglas (1966) as she monitors the concepts of purity and impurity across time and space via an examination of cultural surveillance. She explains that human tendency dictates that one will attempt to fix or examine the behaviour of others in relation to one's own experiences, and accordingly, any behaviour that occurs outside of routine actions or internalised rules common to the agent in question will create disruption, ambiguity and can be transcribed negatively as a threat to one's ontological security. It is in those situations, Douglas argues, that boundaries of otherness are drawn and perceptions of 'dirt' are formed. She states:

Uncleanness or dirt is that which must not be included if a pattern is to be maintained.  
(1966: 40)

Whilst Douglas explains the process of creating otherness or forming perceptions of 'dirt', Bourdieu's (1984) work on 'distinction' examines the sociological motives for such behaviour and monitoring the behaviour of others. He does so via the articulation of his theoretical constructs 'habitus' and 'capital'. Habitus, for Bourdieu (1990), refers to a state of mind, a system of durable, transposable dispositions, sensibilities and structuring structures. That is to say, 'habitus' in the football fan embodies a set of principles that generate and organise perspectives and practices without consciously aiming for those ends. In short, habitus provides agents with a sense of 'who they are' and this is the result of both implicit and explicit teachings that are acquired through experiences of everyday life. In turn, it is one's habitus that provides knowledge of how to conduct and assess behaviour for various contexts, including football fandom.

Building on habitual understandings of practice, Bourdieu uses the term 'capital' to map relationships between social groups or agents on the basis of dominance and subordination relative to the amount of capital that each social group or agent possesses. Accordingly, accrued capital, in its multiple guises (e.g. economic or cultural) is dependent on the type and extent of resources available to be traded by an individual within any given culture or sub-culture. For instance, economic capital (e.g. accrued wealth) can be traded for an item of monetary value, whilst cultural capital (e.g. a high level of education) can be traded for a desired job or social position (Bourdieu 1977: 187). In any case, capital, for Bourdieu, becomes a marker of distinction for agents that operate in the same field. Concomitantly, this is maintained through the implicit understanding and monitoring of intricate sub-culturally based behaviours.

Such theoretical approaches towards the sociology of surveillance have much to offer the study of football fandom and yet, the concept of surveillance has been largely ignored in this context. To suggest that football fandom authenticity and conceptions of otherness are governed by lateral surveillance is a nuanced idea that may hold implications for the accurate theorisation of fandom practice. Before pursuing this argument through the experiences of a sample of football fans it is first appropriate to summarise the literature in relation to fandom types and to highlight the need for a new way of thinking about authenticity in this context.

### **Justifying the need for an alternative approach to understanding the concept of fandom authenticity**

Recent discussions of the literature relating to the quest for authenticity and the consequent categorisation of sport fans have been openly critical of those conceptual creations that are used to explain difference. Accused of creating unrealistic and untested notions of distinction within football fandom practice (Dixon 2011; Gibbons and Dixon 2010; Williams 2007), previous accounts that cast fans as either 'genuine' or 'inauthentic' (Clarke 1978), 'traditional' or 'modern' (Boyle and Haynes 2000), 'core' or 'corporate' (Nash 2000a), 'irrational' or 'rational' (Quick 2000) and 'passive' or 'active' (Redhead 1997) are thought

to be overly simplistic for the late-modern age. These fan groups are often perceived as distinct from one another based on the means, motives and underlying philosophies that they are presumed to hold. Inauthentic fans (otherwise termed: corporate, consumer, new, modern etc.) are commonly conceived as distant, rational and even obscure individuals in the sense that solidarity to the team and dedication to the cause are questioned. On the contrary, traditional fans (otherwise termed: core or irrational etc.) are described as those with strong emotional connections that are rooted together in-group loyalties.

When taken together, these views assume the presence of a dichotomy between two distinct fractions of proposed fandom types and yet such accounts are in danger of presuming rigid distinctions which mask the reality of authenticity as it is subsumed within the lived experience of the late-modern football fan (Crawford 2004). The same can be said for typologies of fandom, that, whilst more accommodating to the complexity of late-modern living, only really serve to acknowledge more categories that, theoretically speaking, reach the same fate of Wann *et al.* (2001), for instance, sub-dividing sports fans into two groups: 1. '*Direct*' where sports consumption involves personal attendance at a sporting event; and 2. '*Indirect*' where consumption involves watching sport through the mass media or consuming sport via the internet. Consequently, much analysis considers fans as either 'Highly' or 'Lowly' identified with their team/club due to 'types' of consumption activities that they engage with or perform. Some attending games in person, wearing team colours and actively yelling for a team were viewed by the researchers as more authentic and thus, those activities were interpreted by the authors to signify a greater affiliation with sports teams or clubs than other activities or performances might.

Giulianotti's (2002) taxonomy of spectator identities in football presents a more comprehensive theoretical model, but again, its practical application is questionable. As with previous models, the author attempts to categorise various types of fans into distinct areas depending on the manner via which fandom is performed and consumed. He claims that certain characteristics of fan types can be identified along a horizontal axis between the 'Traditional' to the 'Consumer'. He then adds to this familiar dichotomy by placing a vertical axis mid-way between these points, running between Hot to Cool forms of fandom. As such, he insists that there are four quadrants into which spectators may be classified from more to less authentic: 1. supporter; 2. fan; 3. follower; 4. flâneur. Those quadrants are based on the relationships with, and proximity to, football spaces (e.g. club stadia and the local community); the means of consuming football (e.g. 'in person' versus 'via the media'); interactions with other fans (e.g. 'face-to-face' versus using 'new media communications'); and other aspects that are thought to depict levels of solidarity and identity around a football club. This typology is insightful enough to point out the vast and varied means via which fans can engage with the practice of sport. However, ranking authenticity via the perceived importance of consumption type can cause practical problems for transference into real situations. For instance, Giulianotti (2002: 38) makes a general assumption about the ways in which football fans use the internet. Through classifying this mode of consumption with less interactive forms of media, like television, Giulianotti suggests that the internet is merely a virtual and passive form of communication that inauthentic flâneurs use to experience football in a detached manner—instead of engaging in more 'real' and 'authentic' forms of fandom (such as attending matches in person and interacting face-to-face with other fans). Indeed, Giulianotti (2002: 39) argues that: 'the cool/consumer seeks relatively thin forms of social solidarity with other fellow fans', thus ignoring the vast amount of what might be considered authentic football fans—who, as well as attending games in person, also contribute to online discussion forums, blogs, email loops and message boards and use the internet as just one form of communicating. In other words Giulianotti does not fully consider the eclectic nature of the late-modern football fan 'in practice', and consequently, rather than viewing authenticity as a phenomenon that is constantly in flux, this model holds onto dated assumptions of 'traditional' versus 'new' and champions a sophisticated yet similar deterministic view of fandom types.

To summarise, the main problem with these approaches is that they tend to speculate about the concept of authenticity but fail to identify how perceptions of authenticity are formed, maintained, managed, altered

and ultimately practiced by agents in the field. I suggest then, that it would be beneficial to bring authenticity to life through the words of those directly implicated (the fans) and as such, I take on the views of Nash (2000b) when he implies that the experiences of fans have been overlooked, leaving much theorising to depend on anecdotal evidence and the dominant theoretical positions of the field. He insists, as I do, that consequent gaps in knowledge and thinking will persist unless this issue is addressed. Thus, the research that follows places 'fan experiences' at the heart of the discussion of lateral surveillance and conceptions of authenticity.

## **Methods**

Through the use of qualitative interviews with fifty-six football fans, this paper serves to unveil participant understandings of authentic fandom practice. This approach allows the culture of the field to reveal itself to the reader via the discourse that football fans have themselves constructed and which has constructed them (Blackshaw 2003). Accordingly, the data presented is representative of common themes and ideas that have emerged through the analysis of the extended interviews. In line with Geertz (1973), those narrative extracts selected for inclusion within this paper offer a thorough and accurate description of the range of opinions, experiences and reactions that were expressed by all subjects.

### *Recruitment Strategy*

Participants within this study were geographically located within the North-East region of the UK. The North-East was chosen for two reasons: first, it is often referred to as 'the hotbed of football', a tag that was first used in the 1961 Arthur Appleton book of the same name. As the title implies, football culture is thought to be particularly strong in the North-East, thus providing a suitable background to study the concept of fandom authenticity. Second, the North-East was also chosen for logistical access to participants, given that the researcher is geographically situated in this area.

To obtain the sample, a university press release was launched in 2008 with a number of local media outlets responding. Media exposure afforded the researcher an opportunity to publicise the research and canvas for volunteers. With each exposure, contact details of the researcher were publicised and interested parties were encouraged to make contact. On acknowledgement of interest, volunteers were selected as participants for subsequent interview given Malcolm, Jones and Waddington (2000) point to the fact that season ticket holders are most frequently and disproportionately used within academic literature to represent all fans. Therefore, the inclusion of fandom narratives from a wider range of experiential profiles was a key criterion for selection. It also was deemed important not to privilege fans of top tier football teams (e.g. Manchester United, Chelsea, and Arsenal) over and above the majority of fans that support teams outside of this elite group. Finally, on the recommendations of Jones (2008), I agree that it is important to be inclusive of female fans and also to take into account a range of age groups.

### *Participants*

Fifty-six football fans (32 male and 24 female [aged 18 -56]) were interviewed during the course of this investigation. Of those participants, twenty-seven were current season ticket holders. The remaining twenty-nine were not current holders of season tickets at the time of interview, although they did watch or listen to live football multiple times per week via the media. Therefore, for the purposes of transparency within the transcript extracts and not for the purpose of systematic comparison, they are identified as Season Ticket Holders (STH) or Media Fans (MF) to reflect their primary mode of live football consumption at the time of the interview. It is worth noting that this was not an attempt to categorise fans into a fixed, simplistic dichotomy representative of fandom type. Rather, sharing the belief that fandom can be a fluid process across one's life cycle (Crawford 2004), such labels are used solely to provide further information for the reader regarding the current status of live match consumption in relation to participants.

In terms of supported teams, forty-seven participants were fans of one of the following 2008 English Premier League Clubs: Newcastle United FC (N=17); Middlesbrough FC (N=16); Sunderland AFC (N=11); Liverpool FC (N=2) and West Ham United FC (N=1). With the exception of Liverpool, those clubs represented here were not noted as top tier Premier League Clubs (at the time of research). In fact, in the 2008-09 season (the same season as data collection) both Newcastle United and Middlesbrough were relegated from The Premier League into The Championship. Of the remaining participants, nine were supporters of Hartlepool United (N=5) and Darlington (N=4). Key characteristics of this sample are shown in Table 1.

Key characteristics of the sample	Frequency	Percentage
Male	32	57
Female	24	43
Age		
< 29 years	30	54
>30 years	26	46
Premier League fans	47	84
Lower Division fans	09	16
Season Ticket Holders (STH)	27	48
Media Fans (MF)	29	52

**Table 1: Key Characteristics of the sample**

### Data Analysis

Verbatim transcripts of the interviews served as raw data to be analysed using a framework of thematic analysis as described by Miles and Huberman (1994). Each transcript was read a number of times to gain a thorough understanding of the participant accounts. Transcripts were then re-read in full and emergent patterns were recorded on each transcript. The emergent patterns, derived via a process of emergent coding, were then summarised and organised to establish any inter-relationships between them. For example, on further analysis, it was clear that some initial patterns shared certain characteristics with one another. Consequently, those patterns were merged to form a new ‘general category’. Accordingly, new thematic categories were tested against earlier transcripts in a cyclical fashion.

### Discussion

For many of the participants, defining football fandom was a relatively difficult task and consequently they felt more comfortable categorising what football fans ought not to be.

*KD: How would you define football fandom?*

Bill: Emm. That’s tricky. No one has ever asked me that before ... emm, I can tell you what football fans shouldn’t be if that’s any use? **[Sunderland, aged 34 (MF)]**

Self-perceptions / definitions of football fandom practice were based on fluid and variable understandings of authenticity. Moreover, perceptions of authenticity were diverse between fans of the same team in addition to expected distinctions between fans of different teams. So, in opposition to the findings of Jones (2000) who predicts a coherent account of football fandom within clear confines specifically relating to in and out groups, the current findings are characterised by internal fluidity (and therefore ‘disharmony’) which displays in composition the complex and eclectic nature of the late-modern fandom base. But, whilst discussions of authenticity were offered within an individual framework, techniques of lateral surveillance were commonplace across participants. In order not to mislead, however, it is important note that those techniques of lateral surveillance (illustrated in the following sections) were not overtly

recognised by participants as forms of surveillance at all. In the manner that Bourdieu (1984) describes, the practice of surveillance and the outcomes of its action were largely implicit in behaviour categorised by individual agents as ‘normal’, occurring, in part, without mind. To illustrate this process, in what follows I discuss the modes of lateral surveillance and the consequent characterisations of football fandom that were made by this sample of participants. I begin with an account of ‘fake fandom’.

### *Characterising Fake Fandom*

Fake fandom is the antithesis of authenticity and was one dominant idea of otherness pursued by most interviewees. This was expressed using an array of vernacular based on personal experiences. A lack of loyalty was constant and definitively present in the construction of a ‘fake’.

Sarah: The Boo Boys! They get on the players backs which I don’t think is a good thing to do. It doesn’t help the team so why do it? As a supporter it’s your role to support, so if you’re not supportive just don’t bother. That’s my attitude anyway.  
[Newcastle, aged 42 (MF)]

Sarah’s account of otherness adds support to suggestions that conceptions of the fandom base as traditionally loyal are unwise because some are (according to Sarah) more casual in their loyalties than others (Mahony, Madrigal and Howard 2000). Furthermore, as Hinch and Hingham (2005) have illustrated, authenticity is potentially more subjective and personal than some authors have previously thought. For example, Nats (below) concentrates attention on the conspicuous consumption of sport related goods to explain the fake fan. She suggests that buying the latest merchandise (if considered in isolation) is not enough to gain acceptance or to qualify as a ‘real fan’.

Nats: They say, oh, ‘I support the Boro me’ and come in all their kit. But when the team aren’t playing so well they are like, ‘we’ve had it, we’re not coming here anymore’. They do my head in. [Middlesbrough, aged 24 (STH)]

The facetious emphasis placed on the observation that fans of this description ‘come in full uniform’, is used here by Nats to illustrate the perception of the fake supporter. In this instance the fake is someone who may attempt to blend in or pass themselves off as ‘real’ by overtly consuming merchandise; and yet participants argue that their identity as fakes can be easily deciphered by more authentic, pure, non-polluted fans. Additionally, lack of consistency of support when combined with the purchasing of signifying merchandise was further acknowledged by Linda as a clear, but unsuccessful attempt by fake fans to lift their status or increase cultural capital amongst peers.

Linda: ... My boss for instance didn’t used to go to the match until he got given a corporate ticket. He didn’t even know if we had a game or not...Now he’s covered head to toe in red and white, got all the accessories and genuinely thinks that he’s the biggest supporter ever. Somehow he thinks he’s proven his status as a supporter... People like this aren’t what I consider real fans. You can tell them a mile off. [Sunderland, aged 30 (STH)]

Being able to ‘tell them a mile off’, as this participant explains, provides an assumption of authenticity based on the knowledge and lateral surveillance of the observer. Moreover, such illustrations coincide with Fiske (1992: 43) when he indicates that knowledge allows participants to see through that which is normally hidden to the uncultured eye, or in this instance, that which is inaccessible to the fake or non-fan. Take the following transcript extract as an additional example. Gary describes his disapproval of fans that are not able to reason out situations without depending on the simplified offerings sold by the mass media.

Gary: Some fans think that anything they read in the paper or anything that commentators say is true, but often its bullshit and that's how dumb some fans are. They don't know anything. They don't properly understand the game, or situations that emerge, so, kind of their opinion is the same as the media's. Proper fans have a real understanding ... You suspect just by looking at them but you can tell who fake fans are after two sentences of speaking with them. [**Sunderland, aged 28 (MF)**]

Findings such as these support the notion that fan cultures are not coherent but are in fact sites of internal contestation based on type, extent and perception of practice. Thornton (1995) writes similarly regarding the presence of differential statuses within and between sub-cultural groups. Through engagement with Bourdieu's (1984) work on distinction, Thornton coins the term 'sub-cultural capital' to discuss how dance club cultures are marked by a series of authenticity claims. Similar processes were noted here between football fans, although the route of achieving cultural capital was largely based on longevity and could not be bridged by economic resources alone.

Lee: ... Fandom is open to anyone but it's not something that people can just acquire or buy or whatever. You've got to treat it seriously ... It becomes part of your make up, like it lasts a lifetime. [**Middlesbrough, aged 24 (STH)**]

It is clear then, that participants draw heavily on pre-understanding experiences and inherited teachings to make sense of their current involvement in football culture. Judgements of authenticity via the lateral surveillance of others are possible, it seems, as a consequence of an internalised system of values and dispositions that are used to compare and contrast against observed behaviour. Hence, when Lee (above) suggests that fandom becomes 'part of your make up' and Gary (above) makes reference to 'real understanding', they are in fact, referring to what Bourdieu (1984) terms 'habitus'. To restate, habitus is a structure of the mind acquired through the shared activities and experiences of everyday life and is often framed in childhood teachings. So, within close kin and peer groups, ideas and ideals of fandom practice are implicitly understood and passed down in an active and reciprocal manner between generations. Tim captured one of the most reflexive instances of this when he explained:

Tim: Just like I have done for our Richard [son] he will probably impart his knowledge to his son or daughter in the same way. My Dad certainly taught me everything about football and my love of the Boro came from that... You learn it from your Dad but it feels natural, because by the time you're old enough, you're hooked and it's embedded within you. [**Middlesbrough, aged 54 (MF)**]

Moreover, while the subtle evolution of kin/peer group habitus is inevitable as football moves across time and space and agents socialise outside of childhood habitus boundaries, it is clear to see why conceptions of authenticity are vast, varied and emotionally tied. After all, fandom stretches far beyond the football stadium (i.e. season ticket holders) into households (and histories of households) associated with the represented town, district or city. In an era of globalisation, fandom of a domestic club can extend throughout the world. On this point Willis (2000: 58) reminds us when speaking of the majority of Manchester United fans who will never attend 'Old Trafford' that 'meanings' for football fans 'can carry from the far corners of the earth as easy as they can from around the corner'.

Consequently, fans, wherever they reside and however they practice, are likely to have different reference points from which to conduct lateral surveillance and judge authenticity. Childhood teachings, peer groups, philosophies, attitudes, lifestyles and, ultimately, one's 'habitus', have a bearing on how agents will conceive fandom orthodoxy and how they will judge other fans through lateral surveillance. It is reasonable to suggest, therefore, that the idea of authentic fandom is held by all but practiced with

variation and is largely imagined in the sense that it exists solely (i.e. as a specific conception) in the minds of those close kin or peer groups in question. Such groups may perceive this conception to be widespread or common practice. Likewise, borrowing the term from Anderson (1991), I suggest that ‘imagined communities’ of this type exist through the habitual teachings of kin groups and the influence of eclectic peer factions. Consequently perceptions of difference and sameness are extenuated through imagined communities and then expressed through sub-cultural systems of taste and associated capital acquisition that is subject to lateral surveillance. As described below, the imagined communion of authentic fans is an emotive one because it is a representation of identity, taste, an investment of self, a personal history, and, for some, it is a cultural history of one’s city of birth.

Alan: The majority of our fans are first class.

*KD:* *The majority?*

Alan: The ones that are like me, you know, have pride in the city, in the team and what it represents. It’s our heritage and it’s what we’ve been brought up to love, you know. It’s something that is part of your family, a tradition, an investment and a joy through the bad times as well as the good. The ones that hold this philosophy are alright with me. **[Newcastle, aged 29 (STH)]**

The emotive defence of authenticity claims like those above contribute to a situation where practice is constantly scrutinised, and accordingly, fans are judged not only on what they do (i.e. type and extent of practice), but on the perceived genuineness relating to their performance of fandom. For instance, participant Nicola<sup>1</sup> is adamant that she would never lower herself to support any other team than that of her home town. She explains: ‘I look at all of those glory supporters—like the ones born in East London that support Man United and I think—you need shooting you know; where’s your self-respect?’ Additionally, Matty makes comments regarding a sub-group of fans that he believes hold alternative motives for support.

Matty: I’ll tell you what though, I hate those fuckers, those wannabe celebrities from the fanzines who crave the limelight and act as an authority on football fans. They’re like fucking vultures just so as they can say ‘look, I was on the tele’. **[Middlesbrough, aged 32 (STH)]**

In those examples, the perceptions of otherness or dirt are controlled to an extent via a panoptic gaze (Foucault 1979). Football fans were the subjects of their own internal surveillance (based on the determinants of one’s habitus), and would constantly monitor the perceived value or capital associated with authentic behaviours and those behaviours thought not to count as authentic. However, due to the fluid and variable nature of the supporter base, those standards or rules of panoptic governance were, in the end, so diverse that no generic or coherent rules exist from which to judge authentic behaviour. As Wheaton (2007) suggests, studies of sport have illustrated that although sports sub-cultural groups have some shared values, the experiences of participants are not homogenous. Panoptic power, it seems, mainly exists in relation to tight kin or peer ‘learning groups’ and hence purity or authenticity of performance lies firmly in the eye of the beholder. As Carl explains: ‘to be honest, I don’t like any of the fans apart from the ones who do what I do’. Likewise Ruth indicates that she has an affiliation with only a small proportion of same group football fans.

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<sup>1</sup> Nicola: **[Newcastle, aged 27 (MF)]**



Ruth: Likeminded fans are like those people that you grew up with. Those are the type of fans that you identify with. There's many others who support Boro that I don't have time of day for. **[Middlesbrough, aged 42 (STH)]**

When combined with the notion offered by Gary that fakeness can be diagnosed by observing others it is possible to unveil potential sites from which fellow fans examine one another for purity of performance within the practice. First, and in line with Douglas (1966), this indicates a focus on the judgement of bodily dispositions which extends beyond the signifying appearance of clothing. Like Foucault (1975), Douglas explains that social structures are represented within the human body as social rules, and therefore self-perceptions of place effectively determine bodily actions. Bourdieu (1984) too refers to this eventuality as 'bodily hexis', in the sense that bodily movements are highly charged with social meaning and thus provide clues to an agent's place within the game, their underlying habitus and concomitant position within the field.

Similarly, participants also used bodily signs to gauge deserved status or authentic capital within the practice. For instance, when asked 'how can you tell if a fellow fan is a fake without knowing them personally', Darren offered the following explanation: 'First, I would say that they don't think that they're fake; no one is going to admit that'. In this sense Darren suggests that there are many deluded fans who truly believe themselves to be authentic, but he insists that (unlike him) they do not have those social reference points that would help them to make a truly accurate judgement. He explains that because of the existence of diverse perceptions of authenticity relating to specific peer groups, it is rare for any football fan to feel the negative gaze of others. Supporting this position, most fans in this sample considered themselves to be the authentic 'watchers' rather than the inauthentic 'watched' (Albrechtslund 2008). Darren continues: 'They're called fake by people who have been around the game since they were little and can recognise a true fan when they see one. It's hard to say how you know but ... it's their actions. Like they're trying too hard to fit in or something'. Gary provides support for this contention when he implies:

Gary: To be a fan is to act genuinely as any situation gets going, you know. Naturally is what I mean. You don't act over the top because you are comfortable in your own skin. You react to your feelings and the situation and not because a man with a microphone tells you to. **[Sunderland, aged 28 (MF)]**

For Gary, the performance of overt consumption via marketing or entertainment ploys that are present on any given match-day, such as reacting on cue to a MC or waving at the big screen for Sky Sports television, display un-admirable attributes that equate to trying too hard. Participants have also articulated this message in various other ways, including explanations about how to detect fake fandom when watching televised football. In the examples presented below, both participants were interviewed in public house venues in central locations of Newcastle upon Tyne. In both instances, the participants draw on live televised pictures of Sky Sports' 'Super Sunday' matches, (playing in the background of the interview), to animate and breathe life into their explanations.

Dave: *[Participant refers to televised fans that are pointing and waving at themselves on the big screen whilst the game is in process]*  
Now he's what I'd call a numpty [derogatory term], like what we are talking about; an example of fake. Loads of people like him are at the match watching the big screens, hoping to get on tele [television], rather than watching the football. Muppets aren't they? **[Newcastle, aged 40 (STH)]**

Rebecca: *[Participant points to the television screen in the pub as football player Cesc Fabregas takes a corner kick]*

See what I mean? If you watch a match like this and, say Fabregas goes to take a corner, like there, you can see all the flashes; all the blinding lights from cameras... They treat players like film stars. People seem to want to take away a souvenir of the day or something rather than watch the game. [**Newcastle, aged 24 (MF)**]

In both instances these respondents made reference to the manner that fandom is performed by fellow supporters. As well as documenting the changing nature of the live venue with the integration of consumer experiences such as the big screen and the noticeable presence of ‘tourist’ type behaviour amongst fans, it is clear that even when watching football via mass media, fans hold expectations about how others ought to behave at the live event. For instance, feeling the need to resist the man with the microphone (Gary), or the lure of the big screen (Dave) each participant draws on the values and dispositions manifest within one’s habitus (Bourdieu 1984) in relation to perceptions of authenticity and capital acquisition. In other words, agents surveill one another and immediately draw upon tacit modes of knowing how to behave or present themselves in order to satisfy notions of authenticity.

### *Characterising Gendered Fandom*

It is worthy to note that most female participants were comfortable expressing modes of otherness or behaviour that they consider as fake, but a significant proportion felt less secure and less comfortable about how they were perceived by others. As such, they were the only group categorised during this study that was aware of the scrutiny that others placed them under, and the potential negative connotations associated with this. Despite possessing levels of knowledgeability and competency that ought to bolster social capital, many females felt that they were under tighter surveillance and consequently had to prove their status or capital more consistently in order to avoid the label of fake and to demonstrate authenticity.

Wanda: People see me with a shirt on and think ‘oh yeah’! It’s only when they talk to you that they realise that you know what you are talking about, rather than just being a girl in a shirt. [**Darlington, aged 21 (STH)**]

Similarly, in his study of ice hockey fans, Crawford (2001) revealed that although half of the regular audiences at live matches were women, female supporters were often excluded from progressing into the highest echelons of this supporting community. Despite this sense of reflexivity, it seems that some traditional barriers to inclusion remain. As Giddens (1991: 6) suggests, one should not forget that late-modernity produces difference, exclusion and marginalisation. Likewise, Kelly (below) indicates that female fans can often find that they are not taken seriously and therefore have more to prove to others within the practice.

Kelly: I’m not saying all, but some male supporters treat us differently. Most are cool but you always get the occasional guy who says like ‘get your kit off for the lads’ or even the ones that are sensible patronise you a bit by dumbing down opinions and such. They presume that because I’m a girl I won’t quite follow what they are saying ... They don’t like it when I disagree with them and put my own valid points across. [**Newcastle, aged 25 (MF)**]

In addition, many more female fans were frustrated by the attitudes that were cast towards their overt behaviour during a match.

Clair: ... when I go to football games I get like really quite into it and things and I shout. Now, it’s alright if a man shouted it, but I just get like really dirty looks. I’m like ‘why should I get them looks when it’s just the same as when a lad shouts it?’ [**Middlesbrough, aged 23 (STH)**]

Kelly and Clair hold the view that female fans have to work harder to earn their place as authentic members of a fan group, often against a backlash of stereotypical masculine bravado which permeates down through all modes of fandom. For instance, in addition to negative experiences at the live venue, Tina emphasises similar concerns within the virtual fan environment.

Tina: I entered a Vodafone 'Full on Fan' competition. When I got selected to go on the radio a few of the guys I know told me to go on the forums (interactive internet websites) and ask for people to vote for me, which I did, but the further I got in the competition the more comments were made about women and football ... It seems my opinion isn't valid on that forum coz I'm a woman and they are knob heads... There's a woman on there who is accepted by them, but that's coz she has shagged half of them. **[Middlesbrough, aged 25 (MF)]**

Thus, a number of female fans have experienced what Muggleton (2000: 153) describes as the effects of core membership. This evokes a masculine criterion and privileges the views of the established group who tend always to be men. Additionally, given that the goal of many female fans was to fit into the practice as authentic supporters, one tactic used was to frequently apply knowledge of the game when in conversation with those suspected of doubting their credentials as authentic fans.

Suzi: When I was working with this guy he was calling me a plastic football fan and we ended up having a massive argument and he said for me to explain the offside rule and was surprised when I knew it. Then he just gives me a harder question and yeah I think people do frown upon you being a female football supporter but you've just got to show that you know your stuff. **[Middlesbrough, aged 23 (MF)]**

However, despite the presence of a siege mentality or a coherent response from female football fans as a reaction to heightened surveillance and posed questions of authenticity based on gender, it is worth noting that the same participants also displayed signs of in-gender disharmony more generally, with some surveilling and casting blame on others for their contribution to this negative stereotype.

Rachel: I do think that some female fans do us no favours. Some of them tend to go in groups to ogle at the blokes and others stand there in sexy clothes with their tits out. That's how we get a bad press. **[Sunderland, aged 28 (STH)]**

Here Rachel indicates that certain groups of female fans have ulterior motives for following football as a gendered tool for picking up boys or to worship attractive players. For Rachel, such behaviour will always fail to gain the acceptance of the 'male core' and thus she too turned her back against this 'inauthentic' form of female fan.

### *Characterising the Undesirables*

Surveillance of otherness and perceptions of dirt also exist beyond conceptions of fake, inadequate or inauthentic fandom. In addition, participants also made reference to wider ideas of social differentiation that were primarily based on type and extent of overt consumer behaviour. The surveillance of consumption activities was used in order to condemn certain fan types that were perceived to have pushed the boundaries of behaviour (that is perceived as normal by participants) both within and outside of football fandom practice. In the following extract I highlight one of many examples that demonstrate the unwanted presence of a particular type of undesirable group.

Jacko: Quite a large group of support, I guess, class themselves as ‘the Toon Army’, and the Toon Army is anyone who is probably uneducated ... So you are talking about people from about sixteen to twenty-one and even kids in their early thirties or forties. You see them every day; you know they haven’t moved on. They are the same old *dirty chavs* that they always will be. I call them ‘The Cartoon Army’.  
**[Newcastle, aged 28 (MF)]**

Jacko explains that the ‘Cartoon Army’ is representative of a relatively new but momentarily popular form of social categorisation of otherness, commonly coined ‘the chav’. To explain, Hayward and Yar (2006) have placed this into historical context and have illustrated the escalating rate of media use relating to the term ‘chav’. They report that there has been a rapid rise to public consciousness given that virtually zero references were to be found in national newspapers between 1995-2003 and yet 946 references were found during 2004-05 alone. Within participant responses, it is important to note that the concept of otherness associated with the ‘chav-fan’ ought not to be confused with the perceptions of fake fandom. In fact, unlike fakes, chav fans were praised for their dedication to the team via type and extent of monetary consumption. Indeed, Laura makes the following distinction:

*KD: What is the major difference between the fake and the chav fan?*

Laura: Chavs can’t be knocked for their dedication, I mean they probably attend more away games than me, probably spend more money than me but it’s just the way they go on. They’re bad mannered and intimidating and probably have a lot in common with old school hooligans. Getting back to the Fake fans they are less intimidating but equally annoying. They’re ‘all show’ and ‘no substance’... fur coat and no knickers as my granddad says ... He means that they lack the staying power of real fans. **[Hartlepool, aged 20 (STH)]**

Chavs are perceived to be ‘real fans’ in the sense that they demonstrate a certain dedication to invest in, consume and share with others a passion for the team. Yet, perhaps more than any other fan grouping, the chav-fan was most frequently mocked by the interviewees in this sample for a particular form of consumption practice that was considered vulgar. Moreover, whilst the reported vulgarity did not necessarily relate to football fandom per-se, this concept was used by the participants to attribute superior social capital to the critical onlooker. This coincides with the work of Tyler (2008: 18) and Miller (1997: 218) when they underline that the notion of disgust is often directed at the chav and depend on surveillance of the images of bad taste to articulate the judgements that it asserts. In the current sample, this was played out through discussions relating to the conspicuous consumption of sportswear.

Paula: They are the ones that wear their Boro shirts regardless of where they go. The blokes are Burberry-wearing, greasy scum, covered head to toe in sportswear; and the girls, if you can call them ‘girls’, are Vicky Pollard,<sup>2</sup> Kappa Slapper types.  
**[Sunderland, aged 32 (MF)]**

‘Chavness’ is evidenced here to cause feelings of repulsion. Paula (above) refers to a number of signifiers relating to excessive consumption that have become synonymous with perceptions of the chav. Moreover, as Tyler (2008: 21) suggests, those signifiers are often used to epitomise bad taste.

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<sup>2</sup> Vicky Pollard is a character from the popular satirist comedy series ‘Little Britain’ which aired on BBC. She is a teenaged mother and juvenile delinquent, played by the character actor Matt Lucas.

... perceptions of the chav are primarily identified by means of his or her 'bad', 'vulgar' and excessive consumer choices—cheap brands of cigarettes, cheap jewellery, branded sports tops, gold-hooped earrings, sovereign-rings, Burberry baseball caps.

Furthermore, Hayward and Yar (2006: 16) argue that the chav phenomenon recapitulates the discursive creation of the underclass, while simultaneously reconfiguring it within the space of commodity consumption. In other words, otherness becomes dependent on significations of 'taste', not in terms of what one can afford to buy, but rather the garish nature of what is perceived to be chav fashion and bad taste more generally. This was expressed by participants in a number of ways and with a surprising amount of scorn and denigration. For instance, the following participant recalled an incident that took place on September 12, 2008 at St. James' Park that is worth citing at length.

Martin: I sat in the same seat for in excess of ten years and there was good camaraderie between us but there was also a real type of rivalry with the nob head chavs that sat alongside us as well. We never kind of spoke to them coz we looked at them like 'you're a twat and you're an embarrassment to the club, and you're the type that will be outside of St. James' next time there is a Sky Sports camera'. So there is a divide that is probably never talked about. I mean I sit in front of a kid that is a total chavy bastard, about five years younger than me. Turns up with his black and white shirt on all the time, like an advert for 'Sport Direct' but then protests about Ashley.<sup>3</sup> He's fucking thick. To sum him up, on the day of the Hull game when all of the demonstrations were going on there was also a small demonstration at 3pm in line with kick off, for some reason down near the Central Station. So that fucker rolled in at about twenty past three. He sat in his seat and goes 'That was fucking class, we were all walking the streets shouting Ashley out', I just turned to him and goes 'I'll tell you what it is, I wouldn't of fucking let you in me like' he said 'what for?' I says 'the fucking team needed you at three o'clock, not at twenty past, I wouldn't of fucking showed me face. You want to fuck off and join the rest of your pasty eating chav mates in Eldon Square. By the way could you be wearing more Ashley products?' He just didn't fucking reply. [Newcastle, aged 42 (STH)]

Here, Martin draws attention to the disharmony that can be felt between fans of the same team and provides evidence to suggest that those fluid and varied positions are manifest through a particular way of seeing and evaluating overt consumption choices. Much like perceptions of fake or female fans, the 'chav' is a social construction based on the perceived normality of the surveilling agent and close observation of any practice considered as 'other'. The observation of estranged behaviour poses uncomfortable questions of a romanticised version of football culture that is internalised by the agent and that he /she would like to preserve. Any anxiety caused can be temporarily soothed by praising specific depictions of authenticity (the moral 'we') over otherness (the immoral 'them').

## Conclusion

Taking the perspective of football fans at its core, this work has set out to explore the role of lateral surveillance in the construction of football fandom authenticity. This nuanced approach indicates that, far beyond current conceptual writings that assume the presence of definitive scholarly categories of fan practice as authentic or inauthentic, football fandom cultures are in fact characterised by fluid and varied accounts of authenticity that exist outside of such deterministic categorisations. Using a personal framework, the participants in this study have explained what they consider authentic practice to be and

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<sup>3</sup> Mike Ashley was the owner of Newcastle United at the time of this interview.

have based this on perceptions of ‘otherness’ gathered from the lateral surveillance of distant peers. The concept of ‘otherness’, by its very nature, must rely on specific understandings of ‘how fandom ought to be practiced’. This was expressed in relation to one’s habitus in relation to close networks of kin and peer groups and associated judgements based on the surveillance of capital acquisition (Bourdieu 1977, 1984, 1990). Consequently, all participants had a clear idea of the values, dispositions, and appropriate actions that they associate with authenticity and were equally confident that they could instinctively recognise inauthentic behaviour. Concomitantly, despite the presence of fluid and varied notions of authenticity within this sample, all interviewed fans thought themselves to be ‘authentic’ or ‘genuine’ with an ability to distinguish between ‘real’ and ‘fake’ via the observation of one’s football related activities. Thus, whilst an assortment of judgements were made by the participants and different outcomes were reached, it was clear that in all instances various lateral surveillance techniques were used as standard to measure any deviation from the perceived normal criterion of any individual. As such, certain elements or rules for the evaluation of behaviour were consistent in design across participants, if not applied using universally accepted standards.

For instance, all interviewees stood in judgement of their fellow fans and some felt that they were the object of judgements. Take for example Kelly’s concern that she is treated differently to male supporters; Carl’s assertion that only those fans sharing similarities to him are worthy of admiration; or Ruth’s contention that there are only certain types of fans that she can identify with based on specific conceptions of authenticity. Such instances highlight the common effects of lateral surveillance as it exists for both the replication and reconstitution of one’s perceptions of authenticity. The implication derived from this is that the fans are undertaking lateral surveillance of both themselves and others simultaneously to reaffirm their own conceptions of authenticity as well as those that are deemed fake. Given that fans do not share homogenous experiences or ideas of genuineness in relation to perceptions of football fandom practice, it seems appropriate to suggest that conceptions of authenticity through various processes of lateral surveillance must therefore rest firmly in the eye of the beholder.

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