

When the Beautiful Game Turns Ugly:  
A Study of Fan Experiences of Perceived Match Fixing in Soccer

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## Dedication

This research is dedicated to the footballers, officials, managers, and administrators alike who strive to maintain the beauty in the beautiful game. Furthermore, to anyone who has refused to be associated with the perils of sport corruption or who is involved in initiatives to protect the integrity of sport—thank you! A special dedication goes out to fanatics like Ricky, who surely summed up the feelings of many fans worldwide – including myself – with this quotation on purity:

*Fans are forgiving, you do that kind of thing [fix matches], you're going to make mistakes and nobody's perfect. I don't think we [football fans] want our game to be a perfect game in any case because you don't want it sanitized—so I think we're just asking for the game itself to remain pure.*

— Interviewee #3: Ricky, early-forties from Johannesburg, South Africa

### **Abstract**

Limited academic attention has been given to the nexus between corruption in soccer and its impact on fandom. Consequently, the purpose of this qualitative study was to better understand the lived experiences of highly identified soccer fanatics living through this era of match fixing in the sport. Social networking site Twitter was utilized to recruit participants from three continents – Africa, Europe, and North America – based on submissions to the site in response to a perceived fix from a high-profile March, 2013 match. A total of 12 semi-structured interviews were conducted with highly identified soccer fans in accordance with Funk and James' (2001) Psychological Continuum Model (PCM). Despite the majority of participants feeling skepticism about the purity of soccer today, half of the participants' fandom remained unchanged in the face of perceived match fixing. Directions for future research and recommendations are considered and discussed.

**Keywords:** Match Fixing, Soccer, Football, Fandom, Corruption

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## Nomenclature

AC — Associazione Calcio

BIRG — Basking in Reflected Glory

CF — Club de Fútbol

CORF — Cutting off Reflected Failure

EPL — English Premier League

FBI — Federal Bureau of Investigation

FC — Football Club

FIFA — Fédération Internationale de Football Association

IOC — International Olympic Committee

MLB — Major League Baseball

MLS — Major League Soccer

NBA — National Basketball Association

NFL — National Football League

NHL — National Hockey League

PCM — Psychological Continuum Model

SLOC — Salt Lake Organizing Committee for the Olympic and Paralympic Winter

Games of 2002

SFMS — Sport Fan Motivation Scale

SS — Società Sportivo

UEFA — Union of European Football Associations

VoIP — Voice over Internet Protocol

WADA — World Anti-Doping Agency

### **Notes About Language**

The author tried to remain as consistent as possible with the language in this thesis. In North America, the sport is almost exclusively referred to as soccer, however, in Europe, it is known as football. As well, the game is typically called a match played on a pitch (not a field) by clubs (not teams). The author used all these words interchangeably.

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## Chapter 1 — Introduction

### Background

On March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2013 a controversial decision in a prominent match brought an ugly issue to the forefront of soccer fans' collective consciousness. On that night, storied clubs Manchester United FC of England and Real Madrid CF of Spain were competing in the advanced stages of the prestigious Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) Champions League tournament. Just before the hour mark of the match, Turkish referee Cüneyt Çakir left an indelible mark on the game – and its worldwide audience – by dismissing a prominent Manchester player for what most would deem a marginal infraction. Adding fuel to the controversy was Çakir's alleged involvement in fixing matches in his native Republic of Turkey (Gold, 2011; Hurriyet Daily News, 2013).

The phenomenon at the core of the controversy is match fixing in sport, which is an occurrence that involves a match being played to a completely or partially pre-determined result for a host of motivations, typically financial gain (Forrest, 2012), and threatens to rob sport of its essence and spirit (Adcroft & Teckman, 2008; Smith, 2011). The particular case outlined above drew the ire of many around the globe, so much so that over 180 people *paid* to express their opinion in an online petition to hold referee Cüneyt Çakir accountable for his actions that night (iPetitions, 2013). In addition, social networking site Twitter was inundated with nearly 300 English messages from users expressing their displeasure in the hours after the suspicious call by the referee. The Manchester-Madrid match in question is just one of many known or speculated cases of match fixing that has plagued football around the globe (cf. Aquilina & Chetcuti, 2013; Bag & Saha, 2011; Hill, 2010b; Maennig, 2005; McNamee, 2013; Smith, 2011).

Match fixing in sport is a phenomenon that is beginning to draw worldwide attention from high-ranking delegates. In a March 2011 decree, then-IOC president Dr. Jacques Rogge weighed in on the issue. Dr. Rogge spoke to the loss of credibility sport and its leagues risk by being implicated in match rigging scandals (Boniface et al., 2011). Rogge stated “there are already countries where football competitions are no longer credible and where the public has very clearly lost interest in that sport” (Boniface et al., 2011, p. 4). It is this notion of diminished interest in the sport that this researcher aimed to explore in this study. As fans’ consumption of sport is a large financial contributor to leagues and their teams, their loss of interest and lessened consumption could be devastating to the global sport market. Additionally, any phenomenon that undermines the integrity of sport is a worthy topic of investigation in order to better understand prevention, detection, and image recovery methods. Before continuing with the present research, however, it is important to understand how this simple game became a worldwide fascination (Murray, 2010) notwithstanding the various concerns shrouding the sport.

### **History**

The history of world football, or soccer as it is known in North America, is a topic of much dispute. Some maintain China is the birthplace of the game in the third century BC (Murray & Murray, 1998; Yunxiang, 2008), while others believe the game was developed four centuries later by the Japanese (Chambers, 2006; Giossos, Sotiropoulos, Souglis, & Dafopoulou, 2011). Despite this early ambiguity, many people agree that Britain was the modern day originator in 1863 when the first rules were drafted for association football (Alegi, 2010; Giossos et al., 2011; Roversi & Balestri, 2000; Smith,

2001). The proliferation of international and intercontinental football tournaments meant “by the 1940s the game was universal even in remote areas” (Alegi, 2010, p. 35). In the 1950s, football was first colloquially dubbed *the beautiful game* for many reasons including its aesthetic attributes, the artistry of its players and the centrality of the game to its devout – and oftentimes obsessive – supporters (Flinders, 2009; Hughson & Inglis, 2002).

### **Popularity**

These supporters are in soccer paradise during major competitions when the best teams with the most prominent players compete against one another. Two such competitions are sanctioned by UEFA—the Champions League and the European Football Championship. The UEFA Champions League, organized annually since 1955 as a means of determining the top European-based club team “is the most prestigious club competition and one of the most popular annual sports tournaments all over the world” (Leitner, Zeileis, & Hornik, 2011, p. 184). UEFA is comprised of 54 full member nations each with their own domestic leagues that would not compete against each other if not for the Champions League. Thus the UEFA Champions League pits top teams from each domestic league – with stronger national leagues being granted more tournament entries – against one another in order to determine the greatest European-based club team for that particular season (Scarf, Yusof, & Bilbao, 2009).

Those same 54 nations are included in the UEFA European Football Championship, which crowns the best European country every four years in a tournament that “is one of the world’s most important sporting events—even beyond the borders of Europe” (Mittag & Legrand, 2010, p. 709). Both the Champions League and the

European Football Championship are highly profitable (Peeters, 2011) and spectated by millions worldwide (Leitner et al., 2011; Mittag & Legrand, 2010; Peeters, 2011) but even their prominence falls short in comparison to the quadrennial celebration of the game put on by the global football governing body.

When the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) stages its World Cup tournaments “traffic stops and the streets become full of flags and people” (Alp, 2006, p. 119). Since 1930 elite international football has been on display every four years (except for 1942 and 1946 due to World War II) for the most televised, popular and largest soccer tournament in the world (Florek, Breitbarth, & Conejo, 2008). The 2006 World Cup tournament had a cumulative television audience of 26.29 billion (Fédération Internationale de Football Association, 2007; Wieszka, 2011) while organizers of the 2010 edition claimed “almost half the world tuned in at home” (Fédération Internationale de Football Association, 2011, para. 1) and that the competition was “shown in every single country and territory on Earth” (Fédération Internationale de Football Association, 2011, para. 1).

These staggering facts and figures lend support to the notion that football is the world’s most popular sport (Alegi, 2010; Brahmana, 2011; Palacios-Huerta, 2004; Smith, 2001). Murray (2010) claimed there are no definitive answers as to why soccer is so popular, but does offer some suggestions – including its simplicity, accessibility, goal rarity and thus premium value, as well as teams belonging to the people and their towns – that may contribute to the games’ mass following. Despite – or possibly due to – its worldwide appeal, soccer is plagued by many issues that create an ugly side to the beautiful game.

### **Issues Facing Soccer**

In an unfortunate reality, soccer is far too often associated with the dark side of society. Racism has become rampant in world football (Alegi, 2010) to the point where it takes place “in the terraces, locker rooms and playing fields up to the boardrooms, soccer media and patterns of financial endorsement” (Müller, van Zoonen, & de Roode, 2007, p. 335). This racism plight shows no signs of relenting as recently targeted players have stormed off the playing pitch mid-match in protest (Coerts, 2013) forcing FIFA deputies to vote 99% in favour of stricter anti-racism rules. One of the stiffer sanctions included in the new anti-racism rules is relegation to lower leagues for teams that employ repeat offenders (The Guardian, 2013; Washington, 2010). It should be noted that in European football all leagues operate on a promotion-relegation model where typically the bottom three teams (numbers vary by league) are relegated one division lower and replaced by the top three teams from said league based on end of season standings (Jessop, 2006; Koenigstorfer, Groeppel-Klein, & Schmitt, 2010). As such, post-season playoffs do not exist, as is customary in most North American sports.

Other issues, past or present, plaguing world football include recent reports suggesting dictator Benito Mussolini influenced Italy’s 1934 World Cup triumph while the same could be argued for Argentina’s military junta and their country’s 1978 victory (Dunbar, 2013). Also, high-ranking FIFA dignitaries have been caught in bribery scandals, (Aquilina & Chetcuti, 2013; Jennings, 2011; Pielke Jr., 2013) as well as buying other delegates’ votes for the right to host the World Cup (Becker, 2013; Gibson, 2010; O’Donnell, 2014). Doping, as is the case in a number of sports, is becoming a concern in football as well (Ama, Betnga, Moor, & Kamga, 2003; Waddington, Malcolm, Roderick,



& Naik, 2005). The work of hooligans, whose show of support often turns violent, is another issue dogging world football (Alegi, 2010; Armstrong & Giulianotti, 2002; Cannon, 2000; Kerr & de Kock, 2002; Washington, 2010). Despite the gravity of these concerns, there is a prevalent negative force that is gaining worldwide momentum and threatens to violate the spirit of sport—match fixing.

### **Match Fixing**

A fixed match has occurred when a match is played to a completely or partially predetermined result, violating the rules of the game and, often, the law (Forrest, 2012). By that definition, the very core of sport is violated as, “the essence of sport is the unpredictability of outcome” (Adcroft & Teckman, 2008, p. 615). This element of outcome uncertainty is a sentiment shared by numerous scholars including Neale (1964), Chadwick (2009), and Smith (2011).

The match fixing phenomenon in soccer is receiving extensive attention in Europe and abroad. An Europol investigation of nearly 700 matches in 30 countries (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 2013) and a 124-page *European Affairs* report specifically on the topic (European Commission, 2012) are testaments to this statement. Soccer match fixing is also making its way to North America (Hill, 2010a) and the February 2013 news of Canadian Soccer League matches being fixed support Hill’s claim (Rycroft, 2013). Despite the ubiquity of match fixing in soccer, and the global multitude of fans who claim soccer as their primary sport of interest, there has been little work completed on the nexus between match fixing corruption and fandom (Buraimo, personal communication, March 22, 2013). The present study intended to explore and bridge this gap in the literature.

### **Overview of Present Research**

The objective of the current research was to better understand the lived experiences of highly identified soccer fans living through this era of match fixing in soccer. In order to examine this phenomenon in-depth, semi-structured interviews were employed under the interpretive paradigmatic tradition. Interpretivism is characterized by a belief in a socially-constructed, subjectively-based reality, one that is influenced by culture and history (Crotty, 1998; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The researcher aimed to have the following fundamental research questions answered by interviewees or study participants:

1. What has it been like to live through this era of match fixing in soccer?
2. How has perceived match fixing affected your fandom, if at all?
3. What changes must be undertaken for trust/belief to be restored in the sport?

These questions were addressed interpretively through semi-structured interviews as well as through conducting a content analysis. Social media website Twitter played an integral role in this investigation, as both parts – interviews and content analysis – of the study were driven by submissions to the website. Interview participants were recruited based on posts pertaining to match fixing submitted to the website and said posts comprised the content analysis component of this study. Data collection concentrated specifically on comments submitted during and soon after the prominent UEFA Champions League match that took place in March 2013.

**Value.** The value of this research study is twofold. One, it may contribute to European literature on the topic from an interpretive angle that has not yet been explored in-depth. Despite great focus on the topic in Europe, there remains scarce literature on the

experiences and feelings of consumers. Secondly, the researcher aspired to stimulate a dormant North American market on the subject matter as, to the researcher's knowledge, limited studies exist on match fixing in soccer in North American-based literature (Boeri and Severgnini, 2008; Buraimo, Migali, and Simmons, 2012; Forrest, 2012; Hill, 2010b; Preston and Szymanski, 2003; Smith, 2011).

Further justification for this study is that by understanding the lived experiences and possible fandom fluctuations associated with match fixing in football, one can better market the game to recover its image. In Europe, for example, how can soccer administrators save face for its millions of supporters? In North America how can the game prevent a potential hit to its burgeoning, yet fragile, popularity? These issues were addressed via interview questions to be discussed later in this document. Additionally, regardless of continental literature on the topic this subject is current and topical making any research on the subject at the forefront. Lastly, with 2014 being a World Cup year, there has been worldwide attention on the beautiful game. This increased attention, however, has brought with it more exposure to FIFA's corrupt ways (McCoy, 2014; O'Donnell, 2014) as well as greater scrutiny of an alleged fix in a World Cup warm up match between Nigeria and Scotland (Hill & Longman, 2014; McLaughlin, 2014). After Cameroon's exit from the 2014 World Cup, their football federation began investigating claimed that their 4-0 group stage loss to Croatia was fixed by "seven bad apples" on the Cameroon team (Barnwell, 2014, para. 1). With this increased attention on football – and corruption surrounding the sport – the researcher felt this study was indeed timely.

### **Study Breakdown**

This document contains a summary and review of the literature pertaining to this

research as well as the methodological framework underpinning the research. The review of literature, chapter two, will begin with a discussion on fandom literature followed by broadly defining and giving examples of corruption from multiple, non-sport perspectives. At this point, the prevalence and varied nature of studies investigating corrupt practices will be reviewed. Following this, the analysis will discuss works concerning corruption in the sport industry including corrupt international sport organizations. Continuing to narrow in on the topic at hand, literature as it pertains to match rigging in sport, with betting and non-betting examples, will then be outlined before match fixing in world football is examined.

Chapter three will focus on the methodological aspects of the current study beginning with data collection strategies. As interviews generated the crux of the data, much will be discussed about this strategy, including preparation and materials necessary for a successful interview and discussion points in the form of an interview guide. Also under the interviews heading will be dialogue on the concept of data saturation and an examination of studies that utilized semi-structured interviews. The second data collection strategy – content analysis – will be discussed in less detail, as this section will simply cover studies that utilized content analysis. An overview of data analysis techniques will be followed by a breakdown of the research sample, including case and participant selection criteria. Participant rankings, with examples for each of the four ranks, will also be written of in this section. Limitations will be briefly outlined before a discussion on rigour that will focus on authenticity, credibility, and reflexivity. Chapter four will consist of results and findings derived from the 12 interviews completed as part of this study. An analysis of categories and themes that aided in answering the three

research questions will be presented in this portion of the manuscript. Chapter five will include an overview of this research as well as directions for future research of this type. This chapter will conclude with an evaluation of implications, limitations, and conclusions.

## Chapter 2 — Review of Literature

A framework of soccer fandom will be presented and assessed as well as a discussion on soccer fanatics. Since match fixing is a specific form of corruption, this literature review will provide an analysis of previous studies relating to corruption in various forms and fields including economic, political, governmental, and more. From there, the analysis will focus on corruption in sport, with examples of studies and cases from various sports. The next topic to be covered will be that of match fixing in sport as literature and studies pertaining to the topic are considered. Following this analysis, a review of match fixing in soccer literature will be completed with a connection to the current study.

### **Fandom**

Seminal work in hopes of better understanding fans and fandom processes began, arguably, with Cialdini et al. (1976) outlining the idea of Basking In Reflected Glory (BIRG), with its counterpart being Cutting Off Reflected Failure (CORF) (Snyder, Lassegard, & Ford, 1986). BIRG is described as a vicarious sense of accomplishment – based on others’ success – that enhances self-identity (Cialdini et al., 1976) while Snyder et al. (1986) felt CORF occurred when individuals would dissociate themselves from the failure of another. To simplify and illustrate these two concepts, “We won!” would constitute BIRG while “They lost!” exemplifies CORF despite being the same team in question.

Interest in understanding fans’ thoughts, behaviours, feelings as well as the highly identified and deeply committed fanatic then became the zeitgeist of fandom literature (Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 1993; Smith, Patterson, Williams, & Hogg, 1981; Wann &

Branscombe, 1993). Wann and Branscombe (1993) took a psychological approach in determining affect and cognition of devout supporters. The psychological concept was built on by Wann (1995) in his Sport Fan Motivation Scale (SFMS) –used to measure variations in fan motivation levels over eight scales – and furthered into factors that influence fan identification (Wann, Tucker, & Schrader, 1996) and loyalty (James, 2001; Sutton, McDonald, & Milne, 1997; Wann et al., 1996).

Furthering literature on fan consumption levels was Mullin et al. (1993) who introduced the frequency escalator to the industry. The ultimate goal of the frequency escalator in sport promotion was to increase awareness and interest and subsequently consumption of products and/or services. Around this time, marketing was becoming influential and commonplace in sport management literature as the objective of sport managers evolved into getting more consumers (fans) to spend more money. This evolution coincided with a psychological thrust as well as an effort to distinguish fandom levels. Funk and James (2001) developed the Psychological Continuum Model (PCM; see Appendix A) consisting of four distinct levels – 1. Awareness, 2. Attraction, 3. Attachment, and 4. Allegiance – that are now commonly used in determining one's level of fanaticism (de Groot & Robinson, 2008; Spaaij & Anderson, 2010a; Lock & Filo, 2012; Lock, Taylor, Funk, & Darcy, 2012).

A mixture of sport fan literature, including behaviour and levels of consumption (Mullin et al., 1993) as well as identification and psychological bond with one's team (Funk & James, 2001) can be found in Giulianotti's (2002) framework. In this model, to be reviewed in the Soccer Fandom section, Giulianotti (2002) relies on psychological and

marketing stances to develop a two-axis, four-quadrant framework of contemporary spectator identities.

### **Soccer Fandom**

Legendary former Liverpool FC manager Bill Shankly once stated, “Some people believe football is a matter of life and death, I am very disappointed with that attitude. I can assure you it is much, much more important than that” (Adcroft & Teckman, 2008, p. 5). This quotation encapsulates the loyal, rabid, and worldwide fan base most elite soccer teams possess. Unlike popular North American sports, soccer fandom is typically traditionally rooted in deeper forces, such as social class (Nash, 2001; Williams, 2007), religion, (Bairner, 2004, Xifra, 2008), political beliefs (Bairner & Shirlow, 2000; Spaaij & Anderson, 2010b), and/or civic territoriality (Guschwan, 2011; Xifra, 2008). When all these motivating factors align, they oftentimes lead to issues such as hooliganism – violent, gang-related troublemakers also known as “ultras” in football circles – amongst allegiant supporters (Alegi, 2010; Armstrong & Giulianotti, 2002; Cannon, 2000; Kerr & de Kock, 2002).

Minimal literature exists in terms of researchers interested in potential fandom changes and classifications of football fans (Giulianotti, 2002; Koenigstorfer et al., 2010; Merkel, 2007; Williams, 2007). Williams’ (2007) work was a plea to examine European soccer fandom differently, as the new age of pervasive television and Internet has led to an overvaluing of in-person attendance. In short, Williams (2007) argues that most people too closely link soccer fan authenticity and identity to in-person match attendance; Williams (2007) felt passionate support can still be shown from afar.



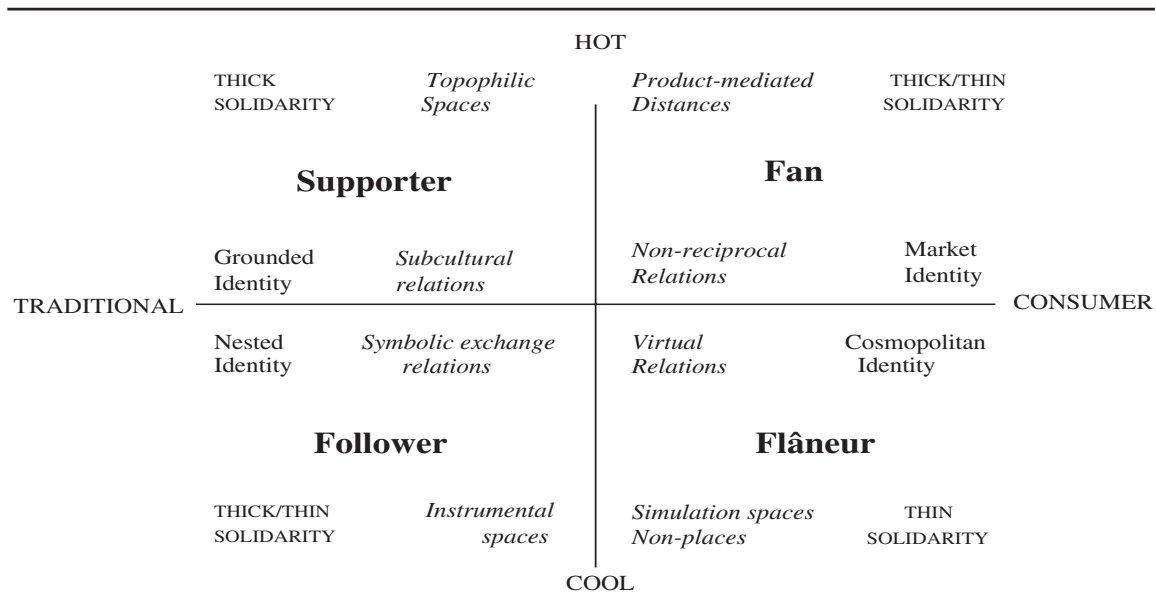
Merkel (2007) delves into German soccer fandom by discussing social and cultural changes that may have impacted fandom. Although this article did not focus on corruption specifically, it briefly presented puzzling facts about fan reaction in the wake of scandals. Merkel (2007) writes of German football supporters' attendance figures following the 1971 and 2005 corruption scandals in their top-flight soccer league, the Fußball-Bundesliga, commonly known as the Bundesliga. Not surprisingly, attendance figures dropped to a record low for the 1972 season, paradoxically however, "despite the very recent [2006] corruption scandal in German football watching soccer matches is more popular than ever before" (Merkel, 2007, p. 235).

Koenigstorfer et al. (2010) investigated potential for soccer fan variations in loyalty when their club is facing relegation to a lower league. In their quantitative analysis, the researchers found imminent or actual relegation is not an event that causes changes in fans' CORF (Snyder et al., 1986) or BIRG (Cialdini et al., 1976) levels. In other words, fans still associate with their clubs, even after relegation, which led them to conclude, "loyal fans often remain behaviorally loyal to their club throughout their life" (Koenigstorfer et al., 2010, p. 664).

In a similar vein to Funk and James' (2001) PCM framework to help explain levels of fandom, Giulianotti (2002) created a model from a soccer spectatorship viewpoint (Figure 1). As Figure 1 demonstrates, the four spectator categories are supported by two opposing spectrums: hot-cool and traditional-consumer. This creates four quadrants into which spectators may be classified: traditional-hot, traditional-cool, consumer-hot, consumer-cool. Giulianotti (2002) further explains the framework as such "the four quadrants represent ideal-type categories, through which we may map the

historical changes and cultural differences experienced by specific spectator communities in their relationships with identified clubs” (Giulianotti, 2002, p. 31). Further explanation of the model comes in the description of each axes as the traditional-consumer axis measures an individual’s investment (be it time, financial and/or emotional) in a specific club while the “the hot-cool vertical axis reflects the different degrees to which the club is central to the individual’s project of self-formation” (Giulianotti, 2002, p. 31). Hot forms of loyalty stress a deep kind of fan identification and solidarity with the team while cool forms represent the contrary. Giulianotti’s (2002) framework can be seen as a blend of the previous two fandom models discussed in this manuscript if, for example, one views the hot-cool axis as PCM-based and the traditional-consumer continuum as an alternative for the frequency escalator.

**Figure 1: Contemporary spectator identities**



Source: Giulianotti, R. (2002). Supporters, followers, fans and flâneurs: A taxonomy of spectator identities in football. *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, 26(1), page 31.

Soccer fandom and spectatorship is known for its ardent supporters and worldwide appeal. However, just as widespread as the game itself, so too is the corruption plague; corruption and its many forms will be analyzed in the following subsection.

### **Corruption**

Considering “corruption is an ancient problem” (Bardhan, 1997, p. 1320), it is unsurprising there are over 29,300 peer-reviewed articles with corruption as a keyword – over 1,580 of which contain “corruption” in the articles’ title – on ABI/Inform academic search engine. Defining corruption can be challenging as it is a sweeping term with many forms leading to inexactness in its meaning. As such, many variations exist when defining such a broad and all-encompassing term. On this topic, Gibbons (1985) as cited in Heidenheimer, Johnston, and Levine (1989) felt the term has “generated more than its fair share of definitional debate” (p. 165).

Corrupt practices have a long history in the political field so, naturally, political science is strewn with studies pertaining to corruption in politics. Logically, this is an understandable field of work to commence a non-sport-related corruption review. A framework to help in defining corruption comes in the form of a typology. Due to its ubiquity in politics, Heidenheimer et al. (1989) proposed a typology of political corruption that includes: public-office-centred, market-centred, public-interest-centred, and public opinion. However this is purely a model, concerned with politics, to help define a complicated and pervasive phenomenon.

Nye (1967) defines corruption as behaviour that deviates from the formal duties of a public role because of private (e.g., personal, close family, private clique) pressures.

Other definitions focus closer on the public interest component of corruption. One such definition is provided by Philp (1997) who believes corruption occurs whenever a public official is persuaded by monetary or other rewards to take actions in favour of whoever provided the reward, thus damaging public interest and trust. Furthermore, Stockemer, LaMontagne, and Scruggs (2013) define the concept as “all private misdeed, such as excessive patronage, nepotism, secret party funding and overtly close ties between politics and business interests” (p. 75). The above-mentioned definitions have slight definitional differences that create ambiguity, however a common theme between each of them is deceitful practices that demonstrate a disregard for integrity.

With the cumbersomeness and variety of the above definitions in mind – and for the sake of this study – the following definition was adopted, “corruption is operationally defined as the misuse of entrusted power for private gain” (Transparency International, n.d., para. 1). This definition was selected for its simplicity, terseness and applicability to the study.

The vast majority of corruption-related articles are studied from a judicial (Mauro, 1995; Raban, 2011; Taslitz, 2013; Wendel, 2011), governmental (Carr & Outhwaite, 2011; Gregory, 2006; Hansen, 1998; Shleifer & Vishny, 1993), political (Adams, 2008; Ashiku, 2011; Canache, 2005; Ionescu, 2013), economic (Goel & Ram, 2013; Lash & Batavia, 2013; Mo, 2001; Özkan & Erkan, 2011) or a political-economic (Agbibo, 2012; Boerner & Hainz, 2009; Heidenheimer et al., 1989; Rontos, Salvati, Sioussiouras, & Vavouras, 2013; Rose-Ackerman, 1978) viewpoint. A full review of corruption-related academic literature was beyond the scope of this manuscript. The intent of this review was to illustrate the pervasiveness of corruption-related texts in academia, so much so

that a separation could be made by geographic location just as easily as the type of corruption being investigated as most of the aforementioned studies pertain to corruption within a specific country. This researcher, however, was particularly interested in corruption as it relates to cases in sport.

### **Corruption in Sport**

According to Maennig (2005) “corruption in sport is nothing new” (p. 187) as the seeds of corrupted sport were sown ages ago. Maennig (2005) substantiates his statement by giving examples of sport corruption dating back to Ancient Olympic Games in 388 BC where boxer Eupolos of Thessalia successfully bribed three of his challengers. Another olden example includes cases of subornment as early as 12 BC when the father of a Greek wrestler attempted to bribe another wrestler to concede victory (Maennig, 2005). Since these incidents, corruption in sport has evolved to become more creative and pervasive in international sport today. This review of literature section will begin broadly with a framework to help describe corruption in sport, and then discuss general works on corruption in sport. Within this general analysis, corruption in sport will be examined from media, academic, integrity preservation, governance, interdisciplinary, and betting-related viewpoints.

Before progressing, a clearer understanding of types of corruption in sport is in order. To better illustrate types of sport corruption, the following outline provided by Maennig (2005, p. 189), is presented below:

Influence over competition results (competition corruption), whereby the provider and the recipient of the bribes can be:

- Athletes only;

- Sporting officials and other non-athletes, e.g., referees; and/or
- Athletes and officials.

As well as influence over non-competition-focused decisions by sporting bodies and sports officials (management corruption), and in particular regarding:

- Host venues for important competitions;
- Allocation of rights (for example for televised transmission);
- Nomination for positions (including honorary positions); and/or
- Commissioning construction works for sporting arenas and other venues.

Throughout this section of the literature review, examples of corrupt acts will be discussed that fit into one or more of the aforementioned categories and subcategories. Discussion on difficult to fathom notions including some athletes not playing to the best of their abilities, coaches not fielding their strongest squad, and referees who do not use their finest judgment when officiating games will also be conducted.

Over the years, corruption in sport has been covered academically from multiple perspectives. Kihl and Richardson's (2009) study was a probe into a specific case of academic dishonesty amongst college athletes and administrators. Kihl and Richardson (2009) investigated the trials and tribulations of the University of Minnesota men's basketball coaching staff hired to correct the mistakes made by a corrupted staff before them. Issues that needed to be addressed included "fixing the corruption's mess through effectively managing imposed sanctions" as well as, "restoring integrity to the program while simultaneously maintaining a competitive program" (Kihl & Richardson, 2009, p. 279). One aspect of the "mess" to which the authors allude is increased media scrutiny in the wake of a corruption scandal. This interplay between media, corruption, and sport

was analyzed in works by Numerato (2009, 2012), Mazanov and Connor (2010), as well as Hughes and Shank (2005). In this relationship, Numerato (2009) believed that the media acts as both a facilitator by sensationalizing corruption in sport but also as an enemy by breaking the important news and making the public more aware.

Another angle from which the nexus between corruption and sport has been examined in academia is from a combative position in an effort to protect the integrity of sport. On this topic, Boniface et al. (2011), Dowling (2007), Howman (2013), and McNamee (2013) discussed personal anecdotes of standing up to corrupt practices, approaches to combatting corruption, and the role sound governance has in saving the essence of sport. Common amongst these works is a desire to purify sport through systematic and thorough recommendations. An example of a recommendation comes from Howman (2013) who proposed, “perhaps a world sports integrity agency could be established with the same governance as WADA [World Anti-Doping Agency]. In other words, an equal sharing of governance between sport and governments” (p. 247). McNamee (2013) echoes the need for better governance in his editorial, claiming threats to sport’s integrity are due in part to a lack of proper governance.

Governance, governments, and corporations (Brady, 2009; Jennings, 2011; Mason, Thibault, & Misener, 2006; Snell & Tseng, 2001) are commonly called into question when discussing sport and corruption, as these next studies demonstrate. Brady (2009) as well as Snell and Tseng (2001) are critical of the Chinese government’s motives behind their sport-related initiatives. Brady (2009) dubbed the media build up before the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games a “campaign of mass distraction” (p. 11) in an attempt to use the Games to “distract the population from more troubling issues such as

political representation, inflation, unemployment, corruption and environmental degradation” (pp. 11-12). This may not be viewed as an example corruption *in* sport, it does, however, exemplify sport being used to advance a corrupt agenda, making it a case of corruption *and* sport.

Furthering Brady’s (2009) beliefs, the Olympic Games, and the International Olympic Committee (IOC), received criticism for corrupt practices as well (Jennings, 2011; Mason et al., 2006). Investigative journalist Andrew Jennings has been probing the IOC for over two decades. His most influential work was uncovering Salt Lake Olympic Committee (SLOC) organizers bribing IOC executive members to vote in Salt Lake City’s favour for the right to host the 2002 Olympic Winter Games (Jennings, 2011) in a classic example of bribery and misuse of entrusted power for personal profit.

From an interdisciplinary perspective corruption in sport has been examined through sociological (Kitchin & Howe, 2013; Numerato, 2009) and economic (Caruso, 2009; Maennig, 2002, 2005; Rodenberg & Kaburakis, 2013) lenses. Specifically, Maennig (2002) focuses on the economic impact of doping and corruption in international sports and offers recommendation from the world of economics. Maennig (2002) believes corruptibility could be lessened “by reducing the surpluses in the host cities, making the selection process more transparent, and increasing the incentive for corruption-free behaviour” (p. 82). With respect to the doping phenomenon, “an economic solution could increase the expected costs of doping by agreeing on financial penalties of a sufficiently high level” (Maennig, 2002, p. 79). The existence of sociological and economical literature suggests these two routes are worthy of further



exploration in terms of their place in corruption in sport. However, this study focused more specifically on gambling- and betting-related corruption in sport.

Forrest (2012), in writing of betting-related corruption, felt “some of the magic must surely be lost” (p. 99) when sport becomes shrouded by suspicions of gambling corruption. This unfortunate phenomenon has been gaining momentum in recent years, possibly due the proliferation of online gambling as it is now possible to bet from anywhere in the world (Gallagher, 2013; Hill, 2012). Recent literature on the matter has covered general sport and gambling troubles (Forrest, McHale, & McAuley, 2008; Forrest & Simmons, 2003), widespread gambling in and on collegiate athletics (Borghesi, 2008) as well as threats posed to association football (Forrest, 2012). The link between integrity, unregulated gambling, and sport was addressed in a treatise by McNamee (2013) while Rodenberg and Kaburakis (2013) assessed the legal issues associated with illegal gambling on sport. Lastly, Bag and Saha (2011) investigated betting-related corruption in international sports including cricket, horse racing, tennis, soccer, basketball, wrestling, and snooker. The prevalence and variety in works involving corruption in sport and betting suggest it is a topic that deserves more attention. In particular, and as it pertains to the current study, the notion that referees and/or players are not giving their best effort will garner consideration in the text to follow.

### **Match Fixing in Sport**

Consistent with the betting and gambling theme, a specific form of corruption yet to be reviewed is match fixing. As previously mentioned, a fixed match has occurred when a match is played to a completely or partially pre-determined result, violating the rules of the game and, often, the law (Forrest, 2012). To begin, non-betting-related

examples of match fixing will be reviewed followed by instances of betting-related match fixing. To differentiate, non-betting cases concern sport-motivated match fixing where the primary aim is to “achieve a sporting advantage directly from its result” (European Commission, 2012, p. 9). In contrast, the motivation behind betting-related match fixing is in securing an economic gain indirectly from a sport event through betting activity (European Commission, 2012).

**Non-betting match fixing.** Cases of non-betting-related match fixing are prominent in poorly designed tournaments. Such is the case in Japanese sumo wrestling competitions, as Duggan and Levitt (2002) bring to light. A form of reciprocity exists whereby sumo wrestlers who have already secured tournament advancement would lose intentionally, or “throw” the match, to assist another wrestler in advancing. From the same standard, non-betting-related match fixing occurred in the 1999 Cricket World Cup. In this competition, a contest between the West Indies and Australia was fixed “when Australia, confident of winning the match and guaranteed progression, slowed down their own scoring rate to a crawl so as to boost their opponents’ chances of qualifying” (Preston & Szymanski, 2003, p. 618).<sup>1</sup>

The “end-of-season-phenomenon” (European Commission, 2012, p. 10) paved the way for one of the first known cases of match manipulation in soccer in 1915 during a game between English outfits Manchester United and Liverpool. The fix was led by top players on both sides in an effort to keep Manchester United from being relegated to England’s second division. Secure in mid-standings, Liverpool agreed to lose to help Manchester stave off demotion (Caruso, 2009; European Commission, 2012; Hill,

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<sup>1</sup> For a detailed, and bizarre, football fix – one where Barbados was defending their opponents’ goal – please refer to Preston and Szymanski (2003, pp. 617-618)

2010a). North American sports have a similar issue as the “end-of-season-phenomenon” relegation-promotion battle common in European soccer leagues (Jessop, 2006). In North America, most leagues reward a lower finish with a higher draft pick and, hopefully, a better quality prospect (Jessop, 2006; Soebbing & Mason, 2009). This, unfortunately, induces “tanking” by poorer quality teams towards the end of season, thus hurting the credibility of the team and league (Balsdon, Fong, & Thayer, 2007; Forrest et al., 2008; Jessop, 2006; Soebbing & Mason, 2009).

**Betting-related match fixing.** Reported cases of betting-related match fixing have existed for centuries. Hill (2010a) writes about rowing’s popularity in 1869 before a memorable race between Harvard and Oxford and its sudden demise at the hands of match fixing gamblers whose fixes were so “prevalent that some would happen *during* the race” (p. 289, emphasis in original). Another classic and popular example of a gambling-related fix occurred in Major League Baseball (MLB) in 1919. Eight members of the Chicago White Sox were banned for life from baseball for intentionally losing games allowing the Cincinnati Reds to win the World Series (Bachin, 2003). Reportedly, the Chicago players decided to lose out of spite towards their stingy owner who refused to increase their wages or pay earned performance bonuses thus making the bribe monies that much more enticing (Bachin, 2003).

Presently, instances of betting-related match fixing have become more prevalent than its non-betting match fixing counterpart. Gorse and Chadwick (2011) analyzed known global cases of match fixing from 2000-2010 and determined 33 of 57 (57.89%) reported cases were betting-related (Appendix B). Included amongst these cases are British horse racers who were manipulating race results, with jockeys passing insider

information on to bookmakers (Maennig, 2005) and Pakistani cricketers bowling to less than their abilities at the behest of gamblers (Gorse, 2014; Gorse & Chadwick, 2011). Recently, Russian tennis player Andrey Kumantsov was banned for life by the International Tennis Federation for offences related to betting and match fixing (Sky Sports, 2014; Tennis Integrity Unit, 2014). In North America, former National Basketball Association (NBA) referee Tim Donaghy resigned from his position and pleaded guilty in 2007 after a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) examination into claims that he placed wagers on games he officiated and of which he could then control the outcome (Soebbing & Mason, 2009).

Academia is taking notice of the match fixing phenomenon as an increase in pertinent articles has occurred in recent years. Contributing to this rise in publications are economists who are particularly interested in the economic impact of match fixing. Of note – and previously mentioned due to the overlap between corruption and match fixing – are Bag and Saha (2011), Balsdon et al., (2007), Borghesi (2008), Caruso (2009), Duggan and Levitt (2002), Forrest and Simmons (2003), Maennig (2002, 2005), Preston and Szymanski (2003) as well as Rodenberg and Kaburakis (2013). The recent rise in articles is illustrated here as all literature presented has been published within, or around, the past decade.

This section highlighted the growing concern and ubiquity of match fixing in various sports. It also provided literature relating to non-betting and betting-related match fixing in sport. However, this researcher was interested in the nexus between match fixing in soccer and fandom experiences to better understand the lived experiences of highly identified soccer fans living through this era of match fixing in soccer. This is an

especially attractive topic to explore when one considers the prevalence of match fixing in the sport and the abundance of global supporters football claims.

### **Match Fixing in Soccer**

Match fixing in sport appears to be most common in football; the fact that nearly three-quarters (21/30 or 70%) of the reported cases of match fixing in Gorse and Chadwick's (2011) 2000-2010 European sample involved football matches substantiates this claim. The nine remaining instances were spread out over five sports with tennis, rugby, motor sports, basketball, and handball having one case each and horse racing having four instances (see Appendix C for this breakdown) (Gorse & Chadwick, 2011). It is also worth noting that these are *known* cases of match fixing, as there is little doubt more match fixing in soccer has taken place without being detected (European Commission, 2012; Smith, 2011). In terms of types of fixes, Boniface et al. (2011) state, "the most typical and common form of corruption in football involves a number of players who come onto the field with the aim of deliberately conceding goals" (p. 16). While purposely conceding goals is one way to fix a football match, it is not the only method as bribing referees is common as well (Gorse & Chadwick, 2011; Hill, 2010b; Maennig, 2005).

Despite the prevalence of match fixing (Gorse, 2014; Gorse & Chadwick, 2011) in the world's most popular sport (Alegi, 2010; Brahmana, 2011; Palacios-Huerta, 2004; Smith, 2001), a scant amount of literature exists pertaining specifically to match fixing and soccer, save for Boeri and Severgnini (2008), Buraimo et al. (2012), European Commission (2012), Forrest (2012), Hill (2010a, 2010b), Mazanov, Tenero, Connor, and Sharpe (2012), Preston and Szymanski (2003) as well as Smith (2011). As stated earlier,

Buraimo claimed what motivated his aforementioned research was the limited literature on the effects of corruption on fandom (personal communication, March 22, 2013). On that point, from the works mentioned above, minimal literature exists pertaining to being a soccer fanatic while living through this era of match fixing in their beloved sport.

Boeri and Severgnini (2008) wrote exclusively on match fixing in soccer in their examination of the significance of media perception in the wake of the Serie A *Calciopoli* scandal of 2006. This match rigging scandal involved five Italian clubs—ACF Fiorentina, Juventus FC, SS Lazio, AC Milan, and Reggina Calcio. The strictest sanctions were levied against Juventus as they were relegated to Serie B, deducted nine points in the standings, stripped of their 2005 and 2006 Serie A championships, banned from the 2006-07 UEFA Champions League as well as having to play three home games without spectators. As this article was prognostic and judicial in nature, there was minimal mention of fandom—merely a brief note on television viewership increasing when star players are in action. Similarly, Mazanov et al. (2012) investigated the impact of the same Italian scandal on investor valuation of sport by examining changes in share prices. The researchers concluded share prices increased suggesting that scandal *increased* perceived team values. While these findings were intriguing, not a single interview with fans or investors was conducted to explain these happenings so one is left to speculate as to why the changes occurred.

Meanwhile investigative journalist Hill (2010a) penned a book on an in-depth analysis of the inner workings of various high profile fixes, including FIFA World Cup matches, and the global impact of match fixing in soccer. Smith (2011), like Boeri and Severgnini (2008) and Hill (2010a) earlier, authored little in terms of match fixing

impacting consumerism or fandom. Rather, Smith (2011) focused on recent developments made in match fixing by reviewing cases as well as offering suggestions to combat corruption in the beautiful game.

Forrest (2012) speaks to the economic threat betting-related corruption may impose on world football, with limited hints to how fanatics may feel. Forrest (2012) is of the belief that betting-related corruption “is a potential threat to the football industry to the extent that it may deter fans, sponsors and broadcasters from purchasing the product” (p. 99). Outside of this quotation, no other discussion on fandom was mentioned. In contrast, Preston and Szymanski (2003) felt as though there is a negligible impact on fandom as “there certainly does not seem to be any clear evidence that scandals related to cheating have reduced interest” (p. 621). The authors believed highly identified fans – who may no longer be thinking logically in accordance with Funk and James’ (2001) PCM – can preserve belief in their own team by placing the blame of cheating, or match fixing, on their opponent (Preston & Szymanski, 2003).

Similar to Boeri and Severgnini (2008), Buraimo et al. (2012) investigated consumer, or fan, response in the wake of a corruption scandal. The authors examined consumer reactions to the 2006 Italian Serie A match rigging indignity by analyzing pre- and post-scandal attendance figures. Buraimo et al. (2012) uncovered a substantial drop in attendance numbers of punished teams, but could only speculate why the drop may have occurred as no fans were interviewed as part of their study.

Lastly, Hill’s (2010b) study was an exploration into the most corrupt soccer leagues in Europe. This study provided a closer focus on soccer supporters than his earlier mentioned work. Hill (2010b) interviews some 220 people, predominantly players,

referees, sport officials, journalists, law enforcement personnel, and corrupters. However, one fan interview gave a glimpse into the psyche of a supporter living through a match fixing scandal. In the interview, an Asian soccer fan claimed the Singaporean league has “too much bribery” (p. 233) deeming the games a “waste of money!” (p. 233). This Singaporean football fan identified himself as a Liverpool supporter, showing fan migration is possible when presented with a non-corrupt sport alternative (Hill, 2010b).

**Current study.** Despite a lack of comprehensive attention being given to the link between match fixing and fandom in academia, literature does exist that acknowledges the relationship. In addition, football’s global followers, the prevalence of match fixing in the sport as well as other authors flirting with the subject matter (namely Buraimo et al., 2012; Hill 2010b) are all factors that suggest this topic is a worthwhile pursuit.

Additionally, Smith’s (2011) claim that “the very essence of sport is that competition is fair; its attraction to spectators is the unpredictability of its outcome” (p. 2), is supported by Gorse and Chadwick (2011) who felt the uncertainty inherent in sport gives it its unpredictable joy. Forrest and Simmons (2003) build on these sentiments by suggesting fans may be disenchanted by the charade and refuse to attend live events because a “loss of confidence in the integrity of competition will lessen the attractiveness of the spectacle and, consequently, lower attendance” (p. 607).

The concepts of consumer reaction when faced with match fixing corruption (Buraimo et al., 2012) and spectator attraction dwindling (Forrest & Simmons, 2003; Gorse & Chadwick, 2011; Smith, 2011) are where this study is launched. The purpose of this qualitative, interpretive study was to better understand the lived experiences of



football supporters living through this era of match fixing. In the next section, this paper will shift focus to the methodological ways by which this study was researched.

### Chapter 3 — Methodology

#### Method

An interpretivist paradigm couched in qualitative research was agreed to be the best method to conduct this research. For the purpose of this study in-depth, semi-structured, interviews were the foundation of data collection. The objective of these lengthy interviews was to understand the lived experiences of devoted football supporters living through this era of match fixing in the sport. Semi-structured interviews are great in that they capture the participants' own words, which gives them power and control over the direction of the interview (Crotty, 1998; Liamputtong, 2009). As the researcher subscribes to an interpretive paradigm underpinning, one where there are no single objective truths (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), semi-structured interviews fit nicely with this research project. They afforded interviewees the opportunity to express their views on match fixing—views which were shaped by their personal life-world, history, and experiences (Crotty, 1998; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

As stated at the onset of this thesis, participant recruitment was completed via Twitter submissions. Social search and analytics website Topsy was utilized for convenience, efficiency, and ease of aggregating tweets. Those who were recruited expressed views on Twitter about match fixing on the day of, or day after, the important UEFA Champions League match, which included a controversial decision by the referee. Here, therefore, purposive sampling was utilized; this allowed the researcher to select participants who would ideally provide the most fruitful and rich information possible in relation to the issue being studied (Patton, 2002). These participants were selected based

on their perceived level of fandom and knowledge of the match fixing phenomenon being investigated herein.

### **Data Collection**

**Interviews.** Semi-structured interviews were the primary source of data. These life-world interviews are a planned, yet flexible, method of obtaining descriptions of interviewees' experiences and perceived meaning of the phenomenon being studied (Crotty, 1998; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The use of semi-structured, rather than structured, interviews were determined by the aims and objectives of the research. Although the structured interview allows for easier analysis through direct comparisons between groups, the objective of the interview phase was to determine cognitive and affective aspects of, and differences between, fan experiences (Jones, 1998). The semi-structured interview allows respondents to convey their own meanings and understandings, rather than responding to areas that have been predetermined by the interviewer. A semi-structured interview enables the respondent to outline and elaborate upon those experiences of importance to him or her (Jones, 1998; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Since understanding lived experiences and attitudes were vital to this investigation, semi-structured interviews were well suited for this study as they allow interviewees to tell stories in their own words (Denzin, 1989; Liamputtong, 2009) while promoting a flexible and conversational dynamic (Coombs & Osborne, 2012).

***Interview preparation and materials.*** A successful in-depth interview requires thorough preparation. An interview guide (Appendix D) was utilized and informed consent (Appendix E) obtained before commencing each interview. In this case, as interviews took place online, receiving consent posed a challenge (Mann & Stewart,

2000). To work around this challenge, the informed consent form was sent to participants beforehand, and then during the interview they were asked if they had read, understood and agreed to participate. In cases where there was minimal preparation time before the interview, the form was read aloud and together with the participant then verbal consent was granted. For the lone participant who was younger than 18 years of age, consent was received by his mother in the form of a signature on a scanned copy of the informed consent form. All participants were sent their personalized informed consent in portable document format (pdf) along with their thank you letter and member check (Appendix F).

The researcher also had to ensure all materials were functional and in working order to properly conduct and audio record each interview. QuickTime audio recording software was utilized as well as Skype or FaceTime. QuickTime is “next-generation media technology that powers the audio and video experience” (Apple, n.d., para 2) and comes standard on most Apple computers. Meanwhile, Skype is Internet software known as Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) that can be downloaded from the Skype website free of charge (Holtz, 2006; Molyneaux, O’Donnell, & Milliken, 2012). By using Skype, one can call any other Skype user in the world over their Internet Protocol, also free of charge, making the software both cost and time efficient (Holtz, 2006). People are increasingly turning to Skype to stay connected, especially with those abroad, as video call software has become more accessible (Molyneaux et al., 2012) as well as a feasible alternative to face-to-face interaction (Hanna, 2012). Furthermore, the combination of audio and video elements increases communication richness, to give a natural feel in a way that resembles in-person communication (Hanna, 2012; Molyneaux et al., 2012).

Skype also gives the researcher the ability to audio record the conversations for transcription, coding, and analysis.

An additional possibility was presented if the interviewee owned an Apple product equipped with FaceTime. FaceTime, like Skype, is a videoconferencing platform that is an affordable, convenient, and effective way to collaborate (Brandt & Hensley, 2012). Another advantage to using FaceTime is that audio recordings are digitally stored directly on the workstation being used to conduct the interview as FaceTime gives the researcher the ability to audio record the conversations for transcription, coding, and analysis. Both Skype and FaceTime afford the researcher the opportunity to be present and engaged in the conversation “rather than having their head down taking copious notes, which can be distracting to the interviewee” (Liamputtong, 2009, p. 55). To safeguard against any unforeseen human or technological issues, a second digital audio recorder was strategically placed to capture both parties’ voices clearly and accurately (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Liamputtong, 2009).

One digital audio recording remains on the password-protected computer used to conduct each interview while a duplicate of each interview has been transferred to a password-protected data storage device. Only the primary investigator knows these passwords. Participants in the study were informed of the recording of each interview both on the informed consent letter and immediately before commencement of their interview discussion recording.

***Interview discussion.*** The primary role of the investigator was to facilitate a conversation with the interviewees about the nexus between football, themselves, and the phenomenon of match fixing in their lives. To accomplish this, questions were crafted in

such a manner to get to the core of the interviewees' understanding and meaning of match fixing in their life (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Kvale (2007) suggested good questions be comprised of thematic and/or dramatic components. A thematically asked question produces knowledge by getting to the "what" of the matter, while a dramatic question enhances interpersonal relationship by grasping the "how" of the phenomenon (Kvale, 2007). The researcher remained mindful of these approaches when crafting the interview questions, as #4 and #5 delve into the "what" while #7 pertains to the "how" of match fixing (Appendix D).

There are many different types of questions a skilled interviewer should master. Amongst them are the opening, follow-up, probing, and open-ended questions. Typically an interview begins with an opening or introductory question used to afford the participant the opportunity to discuss at great lengths (Liamputtong, 2009). The opening question or statement is an opportunity for the interviewee to get comfortable with the researcher as well as their current situation of being interviewed. An example of an opening/introductory remark in relation to the current study can be found in question #1 of the interview guide, "Tell me about your first experience with the game of soccer/football." Kvale (2007) believes these types of questions result in spontaneous, rich descriptions where the participants provide what they experience in relation to the phenomenon being investigated. Furthermore, aligning with the interpretative paradigm, many interviews consisted of unscripted questions or prompts that came about naturally as the conversation unfolded. These spontaneous and unscripted statements helped enhance trustworthiness of the data as most were clarifying and/or rapport building in nature.

Another type of question is the follow-up, which usually arises organically depending on interviewees' replies and are designed to get the participant to divulge more about the answer they have just given (Roulston, deMarrais, & Lewis, 2003). On follow-up questions Liamputtong (2009) commented "through a curious, persistent and critical attitude in the researcher, the participants' answers can be further elaborated" (p. 47). Follow-up questions look similar to #8 (Appendix D), which was dependent upon the interviewees' response to question #7. By wording questions in an open manner the participant is afforded the opportunity to elaborate on their initial insight. Furthermore, follow up questions arose unscripted depending on the clarity or direction each individual took the interview discussion.

Probing questions are important to clarify what the interviewee is trying to convey so the researcher has a better understanding of what is being examined (Liamputtong, 2009). Common probes included, "can you give me an example of this issue?" much like question #5 of the interview guide (Appendix D) where their current level of match fixing knowledge was called into question in an attempt to truly delve into their understanding of the phenomenon. Open-ended questions are crucial for a successful in-depth interview. Leaving questions open-ended avoids directing an interviewee to an answer that may not have come about organically from their own life-world experiences (Crotty, 1998; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

As important as it is to know what to do, it is equally important to know what to avoid. A skilled interviewer is knowledgeable enough to know when to reel in a verbose interviewee who may be getting off-topic. The ability to focus a wayward conversation, known as structuring questions, ensures no superfluous information is expressed (Kvale,

2007; Liamputtong, 2009). Conversely, reticent participants may be hesitant to speak so it is imperative to avoid dichotomous questions that allow them the opportunity to give a simple “yes” or “no” answer. Questions with only two possible answers rarely elicit rich, in-depth answers rendering them of little use to the researcher’s later analysis.

***Saturation.*** A common query bandied about when discussing interviews is, “How many do I need?” To answer this, Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) reply simply with, “interview as many subjects as necessary to find out what you need to know” (p. 113). To quantify this more clearly, Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) suggested most interview studies typically involve 15 +/- 10 interviews due to a “combination of time and resources as well as a law of diminishing returns” (p. 113). This law of diminishing returns is also known as saturation.

The researcher remained mindful of theoretical saturation, a concept meaning that data should continue to be collected until nothing new is generated (Green & Thorogood, 2004). Stated differently, theoretical saturation (also known as data or thematic saturation) is the point at which there are fewer surprises and no more emergent patterns in the data (Gaskell, 2000). Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) claim, in a report with 60 open-ended and semi-structured interviews, saturation became evident after 12 (or just 20% of total) interviews with basic elements arising after a mere six (10%) interviews. Meanwhile Marshall (1996) deemed new themes stopped emerging after 15 (62.5%) interviews, although their study carried on for a total 24 until the point of theoretical saturation was achieved.

***Research utilizing semi-structured interviews.*** Many sport-related studies have featured semi-structured interviews as their source of data. These investigations range in



nature and include Stodolska and Alexandris' (2004) examination of Korean and Polish immigrants' sport participation in their adopted land of the United States, to understanding female Puerto Rican's feelings of their under-representation in intercollegiate sport leadership roles (Velez, 2009). Other recent sport-related studies that utilized semi-structured interviews include Anderson, Wozencroft, and Bedini (2008), Benijts, Lagae, and Vanclooster (2011), Böhlke and Robinson (2009), Choi (2010) as well as Parker and Grandy (2009). These works featured interview participants ranging from a total of nine (Parker & Grandy, 2009) to 50 (Böhlke & Robinson, 2009), with an average of 22.71 semi-structured interviews conducted for the seven studies mentioned above.

While the researchers of these seven studies were concerned with sport in some capacity, their studies were broad in nature as they covered an array of sport topics. In relation to the current study, sport fanship is an area of sport management that has also employed semi-structured interviews. Certain examples of research combining semi-structured interviews and fanatics include Coombs and Osborne (2012), Dóczy and Tóth (2009), Halverson and Halverson (2008), Foster and Hyatt (2007), Pope (2013), Proudfoot (2010) as well as Stott, Adang, Livingstone, and Schreiber (2007). As a comparison, these seven studies involved semi-structured interviews with sport fans and/or stakeholders (Coombs & Osborne, 2012) involving anywhere from three (Halverson & Halverson, 2008) to 85 (Pope, 2013) participants. Averaging these studies' participants, including Stott et al.'s (2007) approximation of 74 interviewees, yields an average of 39.43 interviews with various sport enthusiasts per study. With this range of figures, scope of investigation, and allotted time frame in mind, the researcher for the

current study aimed to conduct 15 semi-structured, in-depth interviews. As the study unfolded, however, a decision was made to cease at 12 interviews for a host of reasons. Included amongst these reasons were the facts that interviewees became increasingly difficult to procure, predictable trends and thus saturation began to develop, as well as time restraints. Ending the interview phase with 12 participants aligned with Kvale and Brinkman's (2009) ideal range of interviews (15 +/- 10) as well as their rationale behind laws of diminishing returns and time as a resource.

**Content analysis.** A second data collection method utilized in the study was a content analysis. Miles and Huberman (1994) state that although qualitative analysis does not work with numbers, in practice it makes use of some underlying counting elements. On that note, Silverman (2001) as cited by Liamputtong (2009, p. 282) outlines steps for conducting a content analysis which include:

1. Develop categories before looking for them in the data.
2. Choose the sample to be categorised.
3. Systematically record, or count, the number of times the categories occur.

In terms of this research project, content analysis was utilized to determine frequency of words used (outside of the already sought after "match fixing" term) in the tweets that pertained to the match in question. cursory modal findings and frequently used "buzz words" made up the content analysis, displayed visually in a word cloud format. This categorization will be explained in detail in the forthcoming participant selection section. Furthermore, in accordance with Silverman (2001), Twitter submissions were broken down categorically into a traffic light type system based on perceived level of knowledge of the match rigging phenomenon. Green, yellow, red, and grey categories were

populated by tweets, with high importance given to green and yellow while minimal consideration was given to red and grey. Further details on Twitter and how it was used in relation to this study will be discussed in the upcoming research sample section.

**Research utilizing content analysis.** It is becoming increasingly common for sport management research to utilize content analysis as part of their data collection process (Mallen, Stevens, & Adams, 2011; Peetz & Reams, 2011; St. James, 2010). Much like the aforementioned semi-structured interview analyses, studies using content analysis vary greatly despite all being sport-related.

Selected examples include St. James' (2010) investigation of female sports celebrities targeting female teenagers through a content analysis of magazine advertisements, to Schredl and Erlacher's (2008) exploration into the human psyche by conducting a dream versus waking life content analysis on sport participation. Other sport-related content analyses involved analyzing 76 issues of *Sport Marketing Quarterly* journal content (Peetz & Reams, 2011), the extent of environmental sustainability research within sport-related journals (Mallen et al., 2011) as well as Pharr and Lough's (2012) analysis of social- or cause-related marketing in professional sports in the United States.

### **Data Analysis**

A thematic analysis involves searching across a data set – in this case interviews and Twitter content – to find repeated patterns or meanings (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In accordance with Liamputtong (2009) as well as Miles and Huberman (1994), analysis of the in-depth, semi-structured interview data obtained was listened to, transcribed verbatim (with the assistance of InqScribe digital media transcription software), and

analyzed thematically, with stimulating wording garnering more attention. From this point, the researcher performed “initial and axial coding in order to deconstruct data, put them into codes, and find links between them” (Liamputtong, 2009, p. 285). Axial coding is a step in the process of connecting a category, derived from the initial coding phase, with a subcategory deciphered during the axial coding stage (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Crotty, 1998; Liamputtong, 2009). Stated in different terms, initial coding is the first pass through that opens the data to in-depth views and theoretical categorization (Charmaz, 2006) while axial coding takes it a step further by “examining the codes at a more conceptual level” (Liamputtong, 2009, p. 217). Axial coding attempts to answer “when, where, why, who, how and with what consequences?” in order to understand collected data more thoroughly (Charmaz, 2006; Liamputtong, 2009). In terms of the current study, three categories were developed which yielded 13 themes—three under the first theme, four in the second, and six themes under the final category.

As the purpose of this qualitative research was to uncover interviewees’ feelings of living through match fixing in football, this investigation was analyzed through an interpretive lens. Therefore, the previously outlined categorical meaning coding that reflects the lived experiences of the participants involved in the investigation was a suitable option (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Furthermore, as this study focused on the cognition, feelings, and experiences of the participants, this method of analysis was deemed appropriate.

### **Research Sample**

To secure an appropriate and fitting sample – of cases and participants alike – the researcher had to consider those who were knowledgeable of the phenomenon being

studied. In so doing, Twitter submissions that mentioned match fixing during a high profile European football match emerged as the foremost means of recruitment. In conversation with research advisors, it was determined that recruiting those who claim to be soccer fans may have led to undesirable interviews. If, in that case, someone claimed to be a soccer fan but possessed no to minimal knowledge of the match fixing phenomenon, the subsequent interview would render itself useless to the study and potentially “produce boring interview reports” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 269). Specific details of the selection criteria are outlined in the sections to follow.

**Case selection.** As previously mentioned, cases that exemplified knowledge of the match fixing phenomenon were sought for this study leading to Twitter comments being deemed the most appropriate cases to study. Purposive, criterion-based sampling was employed as a means of obtaining said cases. This method, ubiquitous in qualitative research, uses small-scale samples that are chosen because they meet prescribed criteria (Crotty, 1998; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Liamputtong, 2009). This selection approach is underpinned by a belief that some cases or people will provide richer information than others and consequently their inclusion will yield productive and fruitful information for the research being conducted (Marshall, 1996). Accordingly, “the characteristics of the population are used as the basis for their selection” (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 78). Therefore, purposefully selected participants were contacted for recruitment via digital social media site Twitter.

Twitter defines itself as “an information network made up of 140-character messages called ‘tweets’ that is an easy way to discover the latest news related to subjects you care about” (Twitter, n.d., para. 2). Their *getting started with Twitter* page continues

on by likening your Twitter feed to a “newspaper whose headlines you’ll always find interesting” (Twitter, n.d., para. 3). Users post (also known as a tweet) updates on their profile pages that in turn appear on their “followers” Twitter timeline (see Appendix G for a glossary of commonly used Twitter terms). With a 140-character maximum per tweet, users have to send short, terse bits of information that can also contain web links to stories, images, and videos (Wasike, 2013).

Twitter has become an increasingly popular social media micro-blogging (also known as a blog) site. Reports indicate Twitter grew exponentially from February 2008 through February 2009, increasing its user membership from 475,000 to over 7,000,000—nearly a 1,400% growth in just one year (Witkemper, Lim, & Waldburger, 2012). By 2010, Twitter users increased by 100 million and more recently, figures show Twitter has grown to 200 million users (Shiels, 2011). From a smattering of users in its 2006 inauguration to its current global membership, Twitter was the clear choice for recruiting worldwide fans of a global sport. In order to satisfy recruitment needs, however, participants must have met certain criteria.

**Participant selection.** In order to participate in this study, potential interviewees had to self-identify as a football supporter, not necessarily of Manchester or Madrid as this would have limited the recruitment pool further. A combination of researcher discretion and conversation substance was used to gauge an interviewee’s level of fandom in accordance to Funk and James’ (2001) PCM. Other factors taken into account were evidence of soccer allegiance on their Twitter profile as well as perceived knowledge, passion or vitriol in their tweet. The researcher confidently concluded that each of the 12 participants – who are discussed in greater detail in the sections to follow –

could be categorized in the upper two levels of connection in Funk and James' (2001) PCM framework. As a refresher, these top two levels are labelled as attachment with allegiance at the peak. Fandom on these levels could be characterized by personal importance and strengthened meaning on the attachment floor while guides to behaviour, durability or resistance to change are traits of those on the allegiance level (Funk & James, 2001).

All 12 participants were undoubtedly, in the researcher's estimation, at least on the third of four floors of the PCM as each conveyed anecdotes of what the sport meant to them and could express the centrality it harboured in their lives. According to Funk and James (2001), centrality becomes important to individuals who have developed an attachment to a sport and/or a team. Some participants went a step further by displaying levels of loyalty at the allegiance stage, characterized by attitudinal or psychological importance (Gladden & Funk, 2002), biased cognition (e.g., placing blame on referees, not their teams' players), resistance to change (e.g., fandom would *never* waver) as well as season ticket ownership (Funk & James, 2001). In relation to Giulianotti's (2002) taxonomy of contemporary spectator identities, the primary research assuredly concluded each participant was on the "hot" end of the spectrum, each displaying signs of thick solidarity to their team and/or the sport of football itself.

In addition to a high degree of fandom, participants must have submitted a tweet containing the term "match fixing," "match-fixing," "matchfixing," and/or "#matchfixing" (case insensitive) on March 5 and/or 6, 2013. These match fixing laden tweets were precipitated by a dubious decision in a high profile fixture that took place on March 5, 2013. The match official, Cüneyt Çakır, was responsible for making certain

“the game will be remembered for a controversial red card that changed the course of the game” (Robinson, 2013, para. 1). As a result of a 56<sup>th</sup> minute red card, prominent Manchester United player Luís Carlos Almeida da Cunha (who goes by the name Nani) was sent off thus required to leave the pitch immediately and took no further part in the match. According to association football rules set out by the FIFA, Nani could not be replaced during the match while his team had to complete the game with one less player than their opponent (Fédération Internationale de Football Association, n.d.).

The high profile contest alluded to earlier was a Round of 16 – the sixth round of a nine-round tournament – encounter between storied clubs Manchester United Football Club and Real Madrid Club de Fútbol (please refer to Union of European Football Associations reference for official match report). Both clubs were in pursuit of the prestigious and lucrative UEFA Champions League title and its trophy, the European Champion Clubs’ Cup. A second day was added to the Twitter content analysis to ensure international viewers and those who could not view the match live could be included in the investigation. Furthermore, in order to be eligible for the study, the tweet must have referred to the Manchester United versus Real Madrid game in some manner as, for example, some tweets during the time frame were in regards to match fixing in Pakistani cricket or South Korean basketball. The researcher also used his own discretion if the tweet did not outwardly mention the Manchester-Madrid match as, for example, a submission claiming, “This is match fixing!” while the match was still being played was deemed appropriate and added to the list of potential contacts. Any tweet containing one of the four sought after terms outlined earlier but not in reference to the Manchester-Madrid match, or those not submitted in English, were omitted from the pool of potential



contacts. Furthermore, as some users were passionate enough to submit multiple posts that qualified for this study, only their first tweet was counted towards the database of potential contacts.

In an effort to expand the recruitment pool, those who “retweeted” green ranked submissions (colour-coding system will be elaborated on in the subsection to come) were also recruited. A retweet is someone else’s message “you’ve found and love” (Twitter, n.d., para. 9) and would like to share with your followers. Stated differently, a retweet can be seen as an endorsement of a statement one believes to be true and would like to share with their followers, despite not being the originator. In discussion with thesis supervisors, it was determined that recruiting retweeters of green tweets was appropriate for pool expansion and endorsement reasons outlined earlier.

With the above-mentioned criteria in mind, the researcher compiled 283 English-language tweets with a variation of “match fixing” in relation to the contest in question from the desired time frame. These tweets were then organized into four categories (green, yellow, red, and grey) at the researcher’s discretion based on perceived level of knowledge of the match fixing phenomenon and thus desire to be contacted by the researcher for an interview. Green ranked tweets were those composed by users deemed highly knowledgeable, convinced a fix occurred, and/or posted mid-match. These users were contacted for interviews first. The tweets that populated the yellow category were posters who displayed some knowledge of match fixing but some uncertainty about the phenomenon actually occurring; they were contacted when the green category was exhausted. The red section was made up of those who dismissed any notion of match fixing while the grey category’s senders were either businesses, strictly mentioned

statistics or it was unclear which match or sport they were referencing. The last two colour groupings elicited minimal desire of being contacted by the researcher for an interview. Retweeters of green tweets were also contacted, but only after all four coloured categories were exhausted. A thorough explanation of each colour categorization, with examples, will be discussed next.

Initially, there were 179 green posts, 67 yellow submissions, 27 red tweets while 10 were placed in the grey category for a total of 283 potential contactees. However the pool of potential contacts was lessened by 20 as some accounts were inactivated or Twitter names changed in the months between the tweet and recruitment, as well as some users blocking contact with the study's account—Match Fixing Study or @MatchFixStudy. Of the 179 green posts, 166 were contacted as 10 accounts were inactive and three blocked contact by refusing a follow request from the researcher. The yellow category began with 67 submissions but ended with 63 as three accounts were inactive at the time of recruitment and one blocked contact. There were 27 red tweets who scoffed at the notion of match fixing having occurred in the Manchester-Madrid match, but 24 were contacted as two were no longer active and one declined a follow request. The grey and retweeted categories remained unchanged at time of recruitment with 10 and 109 totals, respectively.

Of the 263 users who were contactable, 166 (63.12% of database) were deemed top priority, or given green light status. An example of such a message was submitted by @EricDeamer who noted his displeasure when he stated, “After all the talk of match-fixing, it's impossible to look at a game like that non-cynically. #RealMadrid #ManU.” In this post, the user showed signs of waning interest in soccer, perhaps even de-escalation

of his fandom in relation to Funk and James' (2001) PCM or sliding to the "cool" end of the spectrum on Giulianotti's (2002) football spectator model. It is conceivable this user has become dispirited about football due to its association with match fixing.

The yellow category of tweets, of which 63 (23.95%) were yielded, was characterized by vague knowledge or an uncertainty if match rigging had actually taken place. One such message was posted by @Chopper\_Harris who inquired, "Never a red card. Anyone else think a bit of match fixing trying to be done here? Another match for Euro-Police to investigate? #ManU." The author of this post acknowledged the existence of match fixing, exemplified knowledge of European investigations, but seems to be more conversational in nature and not convinced a fix occurred in said match.

The third most represented type of submissions – the red grouping – were those who downplayed the notion of match fixing. Here is one of the 24 (9.13%) tweets comprised the red category, posted by @workev, "Jesus, #MUFC fans suggesting match-fixing because they lost. Are you people really that pathetic; get a grip!" Seemingly in response to Manchester United Football Club (#MUFC) fans insisting the game was fixed, the sender of this post refuted their claims by questioning their "grip with reality" and asserting they were searching for justifications after losing the match and thus being eliminated from that season's UEFA Champions League.

The final coloured group, grey, contained 10 (3.80%) messages that were either businesses or there was vagueness in regards to which match or sport they were referencing. An example of such a tweet was sent by @Ind3pendent7: "May tonight's game be free from any cheating, match fixing, dodgy refereeing decision & players not 100% passionate or confident #amen." As this post was sent on March 6, 2013 it was

unclear if the user was referring to match fixing that may have taken place a day prior in the Manchester-Madrid match and was praying for a different fate for that day's UEFA Champions League matches between Juventus and Celtic FC as well as Paris Saint-Germain FC and Valencia CF. It was also possible the user had not yet watched the Manchester-Madrid match from a day prior and was simply hoping for a pure match. In either case, it qualified for the pool of potential contacts, but the ambiguity of its intention put this submission in the uncertain, or grey, category.

Lastly, retweeters of green posts expanded the potential pool of contacts by 109. These 109 users retweeted 26 original posts from those deemed to be in the green category. Some were retweeted once while the most retweeted tweet of the sample was re-posted 25 times. The most often retweeted green submission was produced by @Garehh\_ who stated, "Where do they get these scrub referees from? Let's give a turkish ref[eree] this game cause he ref[eree]s in a league riddled with match fixing!"

In total, 372 (263 original tweets + 109 green retweets) recruitment messages were sent and received with 40 (10.75%) indicating some level of interest. Of those 40 interested in participating, 19 agreed on a date and time to meet for a discussion, with 12 (3.23%) truly participating. Therefore the sample size of this study was 12 which, as stated earlier, is in keeping with Kvale and Brinkmann's (2009) acceptable range for qualitative research studies. It is worth noting that all 12 participants submitted tweets that were considered to be in the green category. See Appendix H for a demographic breakdown of the current study's participants as well as Appendix I for participant contribution to each category and theme.

All individuals contacted for an interview – starting with the green, top priority category – received either a personal invitation via Twitter’s direct messaging feature or were messaged on their timeline. To clarify, direct messages can only be sent to users who follow your account. If the contactee followed the study’s account, this direct message was sent: “In March you expressed opinions on match fixing in a ManU-Madrid game. I’d like to interview you for my Masters thesis. Reply if interested.” If the research study account was not reciprocated with a follow back, a message was sent to the user via their timeline. As their “@” username was now included in the message, it cut into the 140 characters allotted per tweet. To clarify, if someone were to message the study account, 14 characters would be expended just to address “@MatchFixStudy” leaving the user with 126 characters to compose the rest of their message. With this in mind, a different message was crafted “Interested in a brief discussion on your football match fixing views? Reply if you are so we can set up a time. Thank you!” This message varied slightly depending on the length of the username, as a two character “@” handle would leave more characters remaining than a 16 (maximum Twitter allows) character “@” username would.

When a message was replied with interest in participating, a variety of conversations occurred depending on how many questions, comments and/or concerns a contactee expressed. If still keen on participating, arrangements were then made for the participant to receive an invitational email (Appendix J), which outlined the purpose of the study, as well as the informed consent (Appendix E) form. A date, time, and videoconference medium was agreed upon to conduct the interview at this time as well.

As the researcher had no control over the interviewee, concerted efforts were taken to ensure the participants attended the agreed upon interview appointment (Liamputtong, 2009). This included the use of an email script (Appendix K) to clearly communicate the time, date, and videoconference method of the interview (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Reminder notices (Appendix K) were sent 24 hours prior to the scheduled interview time to confirm attendance. However, reminder notices were unnecessary when the interview was agreed upon in real time, as was the case with three interviews. Just before commencing the interview, verbal consent was received as well as completing the demographic questionnaire (Appendix L). In conversation with advisors, it was determined that sending multiple forms – thus adding many steps before the interview began – to the interviewee may turn off potential informants from participating. For this reason it was decided the demographic questionnaire and verbal consent would be completed at the time of the interview as there was little risk of “losing” the participant once they had already committed and attended the discussion.

### **Limitations**

Considered any conditions or influences that cannot be controlled by the researcher (Patton, 2002), it is a virtual impossibility to conduct a research project without encountering limitations. With this in mind, and in the interest of enhancing the trustworthiness of this study, the following limitations were observed:

1. The primary researcher was a novice interviewer.
2. The sample was limited to those who:
  - a. Had a Twitter account; and

- b. Used said account to express their opinions on match fixing in English during a specific time frame.
3. Access to the Internet as well as videoconferencing software was required to participate.
4. Hesitance, or outright refusal, to participate may have existed as some contacted may have believed the study's account was "spam", a robot, or inauthentic.
5. The incident in question occurred during the 2012-2013 Champions League while interviews took place during the 2013-2014 tournament; the nature of immediacy inherent in Twitter may have been undermined by asking about posts/events 11-13 months after the fact.
6. A lack of rapport existed between the interviewer and each interviewee.
7. Manchester United was in the midst of an uncharacteristically poor season during the interview phase so there may have been misplaced anger during interviews.
8. Some interviews were disrupted by poor Internet connections.
9. Logistics in arranging interviews posed a challenge with time zone differences and communication breakdowns as seven potential interviewees did not attend their mutually agreed upon interview time.

## **Rigour**

**Authenticity and credibility.** Member checking, also known as informant feedback, was employed in this study in an effort to authenticate collected data. To clarify, member checking seeks to determine "whether the explanation fits the description and whether the description is credible" (Tobin & Begley, 2004, p. 391). Stated as a question, "can the findings be trusted?" In order to ensure trustworthiness – that what

interviewees stated matches what they intended it to mean – participants were given the opportunity to review their interview transcripts for accuracy before the researcher analyzed it (Appendix F). This informant feedback, or participant validation, phase allowed the participant to verify the accuracy of their interview thus enhancing authenticity, credibility, and trustworthiness of collected data (Crotty, 1998; Liamputtong, 2009). It should be noted at this point that seven of the dozen participants replied with clarification to their interview transcripts, while five did not respond to the researcher's member checking efforts.

**Reflexivity.** As mentioned earlier, the issue under investigation was one of great centrality to the researcher, as he possesses a passion for the topic. In fact, the research approach underpinning this study was born out of an internal conflict. A dissonance occurred whereby the researcher recognized an issue (corruption and match fixing) that is tainting something of value and importance (sport, in particular soccer); in other words, the beautiful game was turning ugly. With this issue as a framework for the study, a research investigation was determined that would be fitting to analyze such a phenomenon. When the events of the March 5, 2013 match took place, the researcher realized he was not alone in his displeasure towards match fixing in soccer as Twitter was buzzing with throngs of people expressing their disbelief and frustration. This worldwide reaction, coupled with the researcher's personal belief that referee Cüneyt Çakır is corrupt and that the play did not warrant a red card dismissal, only helped to fuel the enthusiasm for conducting such a study.

Mindful of the role the events being studied have played in the researcher's life, pre-judgments were suspended in an effort to see the phenomenon as the interviewee saw



it (Liamputtong, 2009). Since the researcher was also the interviewer, there existed a potential for the researcher's bias to seep into interviews and influence the participants. In an effort to limit the effects of bias, the researcher avoided dichotomous, close-ended questions as well as leading questions (Esterberg, 2002; Liamputtong, 2009). In addition, strengths and limitations will be explicitly stated to allow the reader to assess the veracity, relevance, and value of the research (Crotty, 1998; Malterud, 2001).

## Chapter 4 — Findings and Discussion

The intention of this research study was to interpretively understand highly identified fans' experiences and attitudes towards match fixing in their beloved sport. Stated differently, is this form of corruption shrouding their sport enough to lessen or cease support of their team and/or sport? A secondary motivation for completing such a study was to contribute to a relatively underdeveloped area of sport management literature. As stated earlier, there is a paucity in literature on the nexus between match fixing corruption and its impact on fandom (Buraimo, personal communication, March 22, 2013).

Additionally the researcher expected the study's findings to shed light on how administrators could preserve the integrity of soccer abroad as well as protecting its flourishing, but tenuous, popularity in North America. With this intention in mind, it was ideal the sample contained participants from three continents – Africa, Europe, and North America – which the researcher anticipated would help provide insight into feelings and attitudes on the issue from around the globe. The recommendations suggested by some interviewees carry significant credence when one considers their passionate fandom could potentially dwindle or end if no action is taken by administrators.

To get to the core of these matters, a concise content analysis as well as semi-structured interviews were conducted online via videoconferencing software in order to answer the three research questions which are listed below:

1. What has it been like to live through this era of match fixing in soccer?
2. How has perceived match fixing affected your fandom, if at all?
3. What changes must be undertaken for trust/belief to be restored in the sport?

The previous chapter outlined the methodology that was utilized in this study, with specific attention given to methods used to analyze collected data. This current chapter will present results uncovered in relation to the three above-mentioned research questions. Before proceeding, it is important to note frameworks that helped structure this research. Determining one's level of fandom is a subjective undertaking, therefore Funk and James' (2001) Psychological Continuum Model (PCM) as well as Giulianotti's (2002) taxonomy of contemporary spectator identities played integral roles in aiding with the classification of the interviewees. Both of these models minimized the subjectivity in determining whether the participants were highly identified fans or merely casual observers who just happened to tweet about the event.

Before delving into the interview data analysis – which is the crux of the data – the study's content analysis will be considered. Content analysis was completed via cursory counting of prominent or intriguing word usage. A word cloud was created using Tagxedo, which turns text into “a visually stunning word cloud, with words individually sized appropriately to highlight the frequencies of occurrence within the body of text” (Tagxedo, n.d., para. 1). Refer to Appendix M for this visual representation of the 283 tweets that made up the initial database. Additionally, a table is provided in Appendix N which displays frequency of word use in both the 283 tweets as well as spoken word from the 12 interview discussions. It should be noted that the interview word usage tally was derived only from informant usage, as interviewer spoken words were not counted towards the final total. Those 12 interviews were coded and analyzed further, which will be discussed in the paragraphs to follow.

Driven by Kvale and Brinkmann (2008) as well as Liamputtong (2009), data analysis in the form of coding occurred in two steps—initial and axial phases. The guidance of this analysis method allowed the researcher to uncover three major categories with themes attached to each category:

1. Fan Attitudes and Emotions During Match Fixing Era
2. Impacts on Fandom
3. Issues and Suggested Changes to Improve the Game's Perception

A breakdown of the themes for each category is presented below:

1. Fan Attitudes and Emotions During Match Fixing Era
  - a. Skepticism
  - b. Cover-ups
  - c. Favouritism
2. Impacts on Fandom
  - a. Unchanged
  - b. Minimal
  - c. Deescalating
  - d. Projected
3. Issues and Suggested Changes to Improve the Game's Perception
  - a. Transparency
  - b. Referees
  - c. Consequences
  - d. Technology
  - e. Gambling

f. Helplessness

The categories outlined above – and their themes – arose organically through interview discussion with participants. The data collected were interpreted by the primary researcher with a theme coming to fruition if two of the 12 informants made mention of a similar feeling, notion, or idea. The analysis of all collected and interpreted data, as well as their relevance and significance, will be presented throughout this chapter. For a detailed breakdown and a better understanding of the dozen participants, please refer to Appendix H which provides a description of each fan who took part in an interview as well as Appendix I for their contribution to each category.

**Fan Attitudes and Emotions During Match Fixing Era**

Attitudes and emotions of highly identified spectators, in relation to corruption in their much-loved sport, has received minimal attention in sport management literature. While the topic of match fixing in soccer has been studied (Boeri & Severgnini, 2008; Buraimo et al., 2012; European Commission, 2012; Forrest, 2012; Hill, 2010a, 2010b; Mazanov et al., 2012; Preston & Szymanski, 2003; Smith, 2011) the nexus between the phenomenon and fan reactions has – in the researcher’s opinion – been neglected. As such, this category and its themes were not revealed in the literature review. Including the feelings of those who consume a corrupted product will only serve to strengthen consumer behaviour knowledge and contribute to literature in said field. Adding to the importance of this contribution are conflicting post-scandal reports from Buraimo et al. (2012), who detailed attendance figures dropping, and Mazanov et al. (2012) who claimed scandal drove up stock prices of teams involved in scandal. Ideally some of the

confusion surrounding these findings will become clearer by interviewing fans in an effort to learn their views in their own words—similar to the current study’s objective.

The data collected from interviewees revealed three themes pertaining to lived experiences of being a devoted fan during this period of match fixing in a game they support. These topics will be examined in detail in the sections to follow.

**Skepticism.** A common sentiment amongst interviewees was that of skepticism, cynicism, or a nagging “back of my mind” belief that the sport is no longer pure due to the reputation it has developed. Eight participants communicated feelings of skepticism and/or reputational issues at some point in their recent football fandom. Included amongst these eight was the youngest contributor, teenager Jim from Almelo, Netherlands. Jim shared an anecdote which started to make him examine the sport peculiarly:

If [French club] Olympique Lyon won seven-one they would’ve continued into Champions League and they did win seven-one. And they were, in the first half it was zero-one to [Croatian club] Zagreb and in the second half it turned into seven-one, so that’s the . . . first time I really got experience [with match fixing].

In discussing his suspicions related to match rigging in soccer, Randy from suburban Cleveland, Ohio explained:

Well what I guess is interesting is in the short term, it [match fixing] affected me. It made me look at things more cynically, like if I saw, “wow, that was a crazy call that had a huge impact on the game!” Briefly, apparently, I was saying like, “oh! Well, God I wonder if that’s just match fixing?” Which definitely decreased my fandom in general, because, the minute something seems fixed, obviously, it’s harder to be an un-ironic fan.

This notion of second-guessing on-field decisions in football was echoed by the only Canadian in the sample, Julian, who claimed:

Since you've [fans] been exposed and they've [clubs] admitted that they've been caught [pauses] then you have to question whenever you watch a soccer match and I don't know if that will ever go away because you know it's [match fixing] involved with the game.

Later in his interview, the topic was revisited with Julian making mention of a sneaking suspicion he experiences during certain matches:

I do watch it for its purity, but whenever I see it kind of derailing your mind goes there. Intentional or not but just knowing that it's [match fixing] involved, but you always go into a match with pure hopes that this game is going to be pure and played the right way.

Along the same lines as Julian's second quotation, Manchester United season ticket holder Jamie argued match fixing has undoubtedly seeped into the English game in the past. After discussing former elite goalkeeper Bruce Grobbelaar – who was implicated in a match fixing scandal in 1994 – Jamie described the nagging feeling in the back of his mind that the English Premier League (EPL) is not free of illegal betting corruption:

They must try it. They must be! And you see it in different sports, you know? What are we—25 years of it, or 20 years of the [English] Premier League? You know, 20 years have gone by and you sort of think in the back of your mind, “there must've been a game that was fixed.” You know, there must've been! If it's happened in other countries, why not—what's so special about England? Why

has England not? It's just your own brain and it won't shut up! "But no, that's not match fixing, it just can't be."

Despite not believing a fix occurred in the Manchester-Madrid match in question, Trevor of Birmingham, UK admitted to a degree of skepticism. When discussing his heat of the moment Twitter submission Trevor stated, "Yeah, like, at the time the emotions—you say, 'the ref's clearly biased' or whatever and I know he wasn't [fixing the match] it was just a really bad decision. But that's what goes through your mind."

Whether or not these participants believed a fix occurred in the Manchester-Madrid match, the common thread between all of their comments is that of skepticism. The above-mentioned five fans are showing signs of doubting what they are witnessing, as the game they love appears to be shrouded by corruption. Stated differently, the match fixing plight is tainting the reputation of their cherished sport. When Dr. Rogge declared "there are already countries where football competitions are no longer credible and where the public has very clearly lost interest in that sport" (Boniface et al., 2011, p. 4), he was speaking to the reputation football has developed in certain countries around the world. This lack of credibility or trustworthiness has been brought on by years of controversial decisions, scandals, and confirmed cases of match fixing in football. The beautiful game's reputation of corruption has preceded it for those in this Skepticism theme, including Julian, whose discourse on football's reputation went as follows:

Because the sport has that reputation, the sport has given that reputation to itself that if you're an educated sports fan of soccer and you know that it's involved. If someone doesn't know that there's match fixing in soccer then they won't go directly to that but if you're a fan and you see deliberate calls like the Nani call



and you see a trend where one team is just getting every favourable call—you're going to think of, you know, "is this match fixing?"

Inadvertently Julian addressed fandom in his quotation when he discusses the educated or knowledgeable sport fan. At this point, it should be noted that all 12 participants had substantial knowledge of the match fixing phenomenon. Although not a defining characteristic, each participant's knowledge may lend support to the researcher's appraisal that all 12 were at, or above, the attachment stage of the PCM (Funk & James, 2001). To clarify, it would be difficult to claim being a fan of a sport without knowledge of such a prominent issue enveloping the sport. As a comparative example, one would surely question someone's cycling fandom if that supposed fan claimed to have no knowledge of blood doping in the sport.

While discussing the contentiousness surrounding the Nani red card early-forty-year-old Ricky from Johannesburg, South Africa added to soccer's skeptical reputation dialogue. Ricky mentioned there was a lot of controversy after the game which, as he put it, is to be expected with "soccer being soccer"—a subtle hint to the reputation the game has acquired of debatable refereeing decisions. He later continued discussing the game's character by stating:

He [the referee] gets a decision wrong, you know, we get a thousand replays of it but because of this kind of cloud that hangs over it at the moment, the ordinary fan will throw up his hands and say, "ahh, the ref[eree]'s being bought off!" or "it's match fixing!" or "somebody's being paid!" so it's a cloud.

One of two females interviewed was Sarah, a sport journalist from Cape Town, South Africa. She added to the conversation on reputation when she explained, "with so

much stuff happening you always kind of sort of expect the next bad news to be around the corner. So, you know, something dodgy happens and you go, “was that right?” Soon after she remarked, “I think it’s [her indifference to match fixing] more of a case of because it’s so common in soccer, you know? It’s frustrating.”

Mixed in with the reputation dialogue, Cory from suburban New York City discussed the issues of reputation and perception with soccer being so closely associated with gambling—a theme that will be discussed in greater detail later. He stated “the perception—it [soccer] does have an over lingering perception, I think, part of that has to do with . . . the legalized gambling and I don’t think there’s as much restrictions on people involved in the game being able to gamble [in Europe].”

Perhaps Trevor summed up the issue of a sullied reputation best with his harsh words for those involved in match fixing:

T: Okay I’m not a Juventus [Italian Serie A club severely penalized for their part in 2006 match fixing scandal] fan or one of their rivals like Torino. But you sort of just—you bring the whole game into disrepute. And you sort of think that is really wrong and they deserve to be punished for that heavily.

A: That’s a good word, “disrepute.”

T: Yeah.

A: Could you elaborate on that a bit? Because of all the interviews I’ve done, no one has used that term. They’ve danced around it, but you’ve mentioned, “it brings the whole game into disrepute.”

T: Yeah it does sort of make football seem, like, unprofessional, it’s meant to be every week, two teams, equally facing each other. And when you go to a game

that's been fixed, it just [pauses] the game's meaningless almost. It's completely meaningless.

Disrepute, or the state of being held in low esteem by the public, is a potential motivating factor for the leagues and media alike to cover-up such indignities. The interplay between media, football, its fans, and corruption will be examined next.

**Cover-ups.** Whether purposeful or due to absolute ignorance, cover-ups was a theme that emerged from the data. Five of those interviewed for this study mentioned the media's involvement in soccer match fixing in some capacity. Media – which can be responsible for overstating negative news while also educating the masses (Numerato, 2009) – played a critical role in the lived experiences of some who participated in this study.

Randy believes there may be intentional efforts to keep match fixing out of the news stream, as exemplified by this quotation:

They [the media] haven't continued to mention it. Now, I don't know if that's because . . . just generally because of the media itself is known for having a short attention span or if there really is a sort of more on high directive like, "don't keep talking about this because we need people to stay invested and not be cynical."

Meanwhile, professional footballer Bobby felt the American media's lack of coverage is contributing to his minimal knowledge of the phenomenon. Bobby remarked:

And you only get—the only information, you know, at least in the American media was putting out was just about [pauses] Juve [abbreviation for Italian club Juventus] is going down to Serie B. Milan is getting penalized these amount of

points, you know? These certain guys are getting suspended. But you don't know really know what happened or why it happened or who organized it and all that. There was no further discussion on whether Bobby felt this was purposeful on the American media's behalf – perhaps to protect the sport's burgeoning popularity in the USA – or if it is due to simple ignorance. Regardless of the motive, Bobby pointed to media as a factor in his lived experiences pertaining to match fixing in football.

Seemingly in a grey area between Randy's belief of a higher directive to cover-up and Bobby's idea that the American media is oblivious rests Phil's theory. When discussing the Italian Serie A scandal of 2006, Phil from London, UK retorted with, "but you see, that's just the thing. It's the way the media goes, they protect things, you know? They make it look—they made it seem like, you know, it's just in Italy." Later in the interview he expanded on that logic, "so then it made me wonder, 'this is this happening, you know? It must be happening everywhere!' Except maybe it's either one—a secret; or two—the media and press haven't found out about it yet."

Early twenty-year-old Sam from Leeds, UK contributed to the topic of media and cover-ups by adding a third aspect—money.

I reckon probably the media covers it up a bit as well. . . . it's not brought out into the clear public eye. Someone looking into it like yourself will probably—you all know all about it but if I went on the Internet—there's never much there for just me to bump or stumble across. There's nothing there to bring up or bring out match fixing or news stories. It's not very well covered.

In jest, Sam later quipped, "Or all the people at the top are then using the money to be able to cover it up with the media, so there's probably a circle of all the people at the

top.” Money being “thrown at” media outlets to cover-up a potential scandal is a theory shared by Sam and the eldest contributor, Lucy who is in her mid-fifties and hails from North Wales, UK. Lucy succinctly chimed in with, “Maybe the bigger leagues have the money to pay people off to keep them quiet.”

A degree of skepticism leading to a damaged reputation and the belief that media cover-ups may be occurring are potentially destructive forces that can negatively impact fandom. In addition to the above opinions, some interviewees also expressed perceptions of favouritism during this period of match fixing in football.

**Favouritism.** Another feeling elicited by match rigging being linked with the beautiful game is that of favouritism. Living through this current era of match fixing has brought on thoughts of favouritism – or discrimination depending on which team one supports – for a third of the study’s sample. Randy, Julian, Ricky, and Bobby all shared similar sentiments in regards to preferential treatment for certain “darling” teams which may or may not be linked to match fixing.

Randy suspected a February 2014 EPL match was fixed due to a dubious penalty kick given late in the game to prominent club Chelsea FC against a lesser outfit, West Bromwich Albion FC. Randy went on to share his thoughts as he was watching the match, ““Oh I wonder if that was—’ you know? Maybe they’re more favouring the bigger club which is why they gave, like, that soft penalty at the very end.”

Julian noted this in relation to perceived preferential treatment in soccer receiving more suspicious scrutiny than two major North American professional sports:

But knowing that it may be involved is always going—whenever a trend of referee has kind of favouring one team is this guy being bought off? If the NFL

[National Football League] ever had that and the NHL [National Hockey League] had that, but, we don't know that so we don't watch that kind of game. We would never watch a baseball game if one team got every favourable strike call, we're not going to say "the ump[ire] was bought!" but if we get that same trend in a soccer match, because of the reputation of match fixing, you know Italy and Portugal has it. It's very prominent.

Ricky and Bobby were on the same wavelength in terms of specific teams receiving favourable calls. First, Ricky shared his English discriminatory and Spanish favoured opinions:

So there always seems to be some sort of favouritism—or maybe it's just perceived favouritism for the non-English based, or should I say non-British based [teams] because the Scottish and Welsh teams don't get any favours either. . . . And just some of the decisions come up—seems to be favoured towards Spanish teams and I think the Italian teams also had a run at some stage as well. So, when the [Nani red card] decision happened it just seemed to be the wrong decision from a refereeing point of view.

He subsequently explained:

Until then, we've [Manchester United] gotten the advantage. We'd have taken the win gladly. But you always want to know that you've competed fairly. And the two darlings in Europe at the moment are probably Real Madrid and Barcelona and it just seems to me they get the run of the green more than anyone else. Whether you make your own luck—it kind of rolls for you that way.

Lastly, Bobby noted this in regards to the AC Milan squad he supports having to face FC Barcelona the following week in the same Champions League tournament. His quotation aligns closely with Ricky's opinion of favouritism towards Spanish clubs:

I mean I guess in that game Madrid and Man[chester] United are both [pauses] very popular teams worldwide, but at the time so was Barcelona – well, they still are – but Barcelona was probably the most loved team around the world, so I thought it would be funny to just write that tweet [regarding a desire for no match fixing to occur next week in the AC Milan-Barcelona match].

A favouritism topic was present in the data, which is understandable if one likens favouritism to a form of pre-determination, which aligns with Forrest's (2012) definition of match fixing as a match being played to a completely or partially pre-determined result. Lending support to the notion that a Real Madrid-Barcelona final would have been in UEFA's best interest is the fact that Lionel Messi (Barcelona) and Cristiano Ronaldo (Real Madrid) "are two of the most recognizable athletes in the world irrespective of sport" (Rishe, 2013, para. 6). A final between the two darlings of world football – both team and individually – would have undoubtedly increased TV viewership in the USA (Rishe, 2013, para. 2) and Canada; an exciting finale that reached two countries with large populations and untapped soccer spectators would certainly benefit UEFA greatly.

This theme was rife with negatively toned language and feelings of cynicism and contempt associated with being current fans of soccer; but has this dark cloud hanging over soccer, as Ricky termed it, altered their fandom? Possible fandom fluctuations during this period of match fixing corruption in soccer will be discussed in the subsequent section.

### **Impacts on Fandom**

Four themes – three current and one predictive – emerged under the Impacts on Fandom category. Some informants claimed their football fandom was unwavering, others showed there was potential for loss of interest with two exemplifying signs of deescalation due to disenchantment with the sport. As stated earlier, there is minimal literature on fan reactions to match fixing in football; with this in mind, the researcher felt drawing parallels between corruption (in the form of doping) and sport is acceptable in this instance. What will be discussed in this segment aligns closely with findings from Solberg, Hanstad, and Thøring's (2010) research on fan perceptions of doping in elite sport. Solberg et al. (2010) uncovered those fanatics who were strongly interested were more willing to accept doping in their sport while older respondents were more negative towards doping-related corruption. If one considers doping and match fixing as similar sport indignities, these findings could be inferred to the current study's participants as similar themes – highly identified fans' acceptance and older fans' negative views – were apparent in the present study, as discussed below.

**Unchanged.** Unsurprisingly – as most interviewees were allegiant fanatics of their club, country, and/or the sport in general – half of the participants definitively deemed their fandom was not affected negatively despite their knowledge of the match fixing phenomenon. In fact, Jim claimed his fanaticism might have actually increased since he became aware of match rigging. On this point, when asked about his unchanging fandom, Jim added “not really, not much impact on the game. I think I even started to watch more football so there's that point.” When prompted to elaborate, Jim explained:



Yeah, I'm watching a lot of football now, since that point [learning of match fixing] started. I'm watching a lot more but also because it doesn't happen that often and you don't notice that much from match fixing. I think it happens more in lower divisions and in the East Europe. Not really in the big competitions.

It should be noted that Jim was the youngest interviewee and, as such, is in a different stage in life or family cycle (to be discussed later in this section) than most of the other participants. It is quite possible Jim has not developed the faculties to engage in the complex process of consumer decision making alluded to by Mullin et al. (1993). This complex process of consumer decision making involves several environmental and individual factors (see Appendix O). Environmental influences include, but are not limited to, significant others, cultural norms and values, market behaviour of sport firms as well as class, race, and gender relations may be more central to an older, experienced person than a teenager. Meanwhile individual factors like self-concept, stage in life or family cycle, learning, motivation, and perception may be more age-sensitive influences (Mullin et al., 1993; refer to Appendix O). These notions will be elaborated upon in the Deescalating section to come.

The five other informants whose fandom remained unaffected were Randy, Julian, Jamie, Trevor, and Bobby. The researcher confidently slotted these participants categorically as allegiant fans in accordance with Funk and James' (2001) PCM framework. The section to follow will show various characteristics signifying someone is on the allegiant floor of the PCM, the most common of which being a durable, psychological bond with team and/or sport (Funk & James, 2001).

After Randy mentioned a brief, short term cynical affect towards soccer, he would later remark, “it’s been kind of surprisingly easy to just pick up and act as if, you know, [laughs] nothing had happened!” He would later supplement that statement with the following account:

It’s kind of interesting to me though that it occurred to me then but until you brought it up like I had completely forgotten about it [match fixing]. Like I said, whatever the media did a good job or the propaganda did a good job in making me forget about [pauses] this issue. It was on my mind, this report had come out and everything but now, in the long term, it made me—maybe this is the next question, I don’t know, it hasn’t changed the way that I watch [pauses] say the Champions League this season.

Julian, one of the more allegiant fans interviewed as part of this study who attended the 2014 FIFA World Cup Brazil to support Portugal, was clear and concise in his answer. When asked how – if at all – match fixing has impacted his fandom, he confidently and tersely replied, “It hasn’t impacted it.” Much like Julian, twenty-something Jamie was also abrupt and assured in his answer to the same question, stating “Very little, if not at all.” He would go on to elaborate by stating, “It might be in a football sense, it might be in a political sense, but in these games [pauses] it hasn’t affected, sorry, domestically in England it’s not affecting me yet, okay?”

Trevor, whose fandom has not wavered despite match fixing in the sport, introduced a new argument to the theme that may align with Preston and Szymanski’s (2003) notion of protecting belief in one’s team. While he felt strongly against match

rigging, it has yet to impact his fandom because it has not impacted his team. Below is a quotation from Trevor on the subject:

I don't think it has because there's been no direct match fixing regarding teams that I watch or I enjoy. The tweet last year about the Real Madrid game, it was off the collar, there clearly was no match fixing there. But, I'd say, it hasn't really affected me in any way. [But] I still feel strongly about it because the game as a whole, there should be no match fixing.

Julian and Bobby were arguably the two most devout supporters in the research sample, and quotations like the one presented below from Bobby substantiate that statement:

It hasn't. But I think that's because it's rooted pretty deep. It's going to take a lot, you know [laughs] to mess with it—to mess with my fandom to the sport or to my team [pauses] I honestly hate to hear it that it's [match fixing] happening and it probably dampens a lot of people, you know? A lot of people are like, "I don't want to follow this league or this team or maybe even the sport if this is going on" but for me, it's like—I'm not going to stop watching soccer after watching it passionately for 22 years just because of an incident. Because I don't believe that it happens regularly at all.

Bobby even went as far as to claim he would remain a fan if he knew all soccer games were fixed:

I love the game. I mean, even if every single game was match fixed I probably wouldn't enjoy it as much but I still want to watch soccer, you know? I still want to watch the skills of the players so I'd still be a fan.

Bobby and Julian possess a deep-rooted connection with soccer – with Bobby stating so himself – that is a typical characteristic of those at the allegiance stage of the PCM. Some characteristics personified include persistence (Bobby’s ardent fandom for over two decades), resistance to change (Julian sternly stating evidence of match fixing has not affected his fandom), biases in cognitive processing (Bobby believing fixing does not happen regularly despite evidence in the contrary, including a significant case involving the league [Serie A] and team [AC Milan] he supports), as well as guides to behaviour (Julian flying to Brazil to support Portugal). Furthermore, these two gentlemen could be plotted in the traditional-hot, or supporter quadrant, of Giulianotti’s (2002) contemporary spectator identities framework. The researcher believes this to be the case as they both display thick solidarity, passionate support for their football clubs as well as possessing “a long-term personal and emotional investment in the club” (Giulianotti, 2002, p. 33).

All six who contributed to this theme helped strengthen Preston and Szymanski’s (2003) assertion that, “It is not clear how much cheating has to occur before interest in the sport starts to suffer, but there certainly does not seem to be any clear evidence that scandals related to cheating have reduced interest” (p. 620). As a counterpoint, the topics to follow illustrate that a match fixing scandal has the ability to hinder fandom and tarnish the game.

**Minimal.** The three interviewees who populated this theme – Sarah, Cory, and Phil – are undoubtedly soccer fans who still support the beautiful game. In the researcher’s judgement, however, they showed signs of dithering in their answers compared to the definitive replies provided by those in the Unchanged theme.

Sarah expressed her opinion with some hesitation and a few pauses to contemplate her answers:

[Long pause] I don't think it has because [pauses] you know, with so much stuff happening you always kind of sort of expect the next bad news to be around the corner. [Pauses] So, you know, something dodgy happens and you go, "was that right?"—you stop sort of questioning things because you can't, you know, be paranoid [with] everything that happens and the decisions that happen and stuff. Especially because, you know, it is very common match fixing in all sports really. I don't think it's impacted me as a fan personally. When I think it does happen, you just sort of shrug and go, "oh well!"

Cory offered his thoughts, which are similar to Sarah's "I don't think it has had too much of a negative effect. You know, it's definitely frustrating, I think the confirmed ones are, you know?" To round out this theme, Phil opined:

Yeah, the way I consume the sport I mean I still play. I still love the sport. Yes, it comes . . . when I see something wrong in the game and I see the ref[eree] ruining the game obviously the ref[eree] can ruin it with just a red card but when it's something that doesn't seem right that really can dent my love for the game. What I'm saying is it's all down to greed, it's all money at the end of the day and you know, all these players are rich. They're well off and so it's just down to greed, really and that's spoiling it for those who love the game for the game.

A key differentiating factor between those in the Unchanged and the Minimal themes were the conviction with which each respondent answered the "how - if at all - has match fixing in football impacted your fandom?" question. As a reiteration, it should

be mentioned that Sarah, Cory, and Phil are all still attached to the sport of soccer. The differentiation is in the possibility of accepting change to their fandom. To clarify, those in the Unchanged theme conclusively stated their fandom had not changed, demonstrating a resistance to change that makes up part of the PCM's allegiance level (Funk & James, 2001). Sarah, Cory, and especially Phil, however, showed an acceptance to potential fandom change in using terms like *I don't think* whereas the Unchanged participants spoke in convincing language, such as *it hasn't*. In relation to Giulianotti's (2002) contemporary spectator identities model, Sarah, Cory, and Phil would be plotted lower on the hot axis than their unchanged counterparts as their solidarity could be seen as thick but with thinning potential. This is noteworthy for fandom literature as these once allegiant fanatics are showing potential for disengagement from their sport of interest (Giulianotti, 2002).

**Deescalating.** Both Ricky and Lucy communicated feelings of disappointment resulting from the realization that football is not as pure as they once believed it to be leading to a deescalation in their fandom. As Ricky eloquently worded it:

I think it kills the whole romanticism around it, you know? It's [pauses] when I spoke about finding a football in a park and kicking it around, that's probably as pure as it gets. There's no money involved, there's nothing else.

He would later add:

Because it's [match fixing] there and what that does long term is it kills the passion for watching the game and for following – I suppose – the bigger dealings around the game the bigger events like the World Cups and the championships, etcetera. I don't think it kills the passion on the ground, because those supporters

will still go out and kick the ball around. But it definitely kills the commercialization because it's—you know, would I pay to go see a match where there's a chance of match fixing? No!

Lucy – who “just feels the whole game is corrupt” – shared similar feelings of deescalating fandom and disillusionment as Ricky:

I think it's something, if you know something is fixed there's no point really in watching it because it's just cheating. I can't be bothered with these things like that, you know? So I don't really take much interest, anymore.

It is worth noting that both Ricky (early-forties) and Lucy (mid-fifties) were two of the three oldest interviewees, and are in the advanced stages of their family and life cycle in accordance with Mullin et al. (1993). In comparison to teenager Jim, for instance, there is a distinct change in perceived levels of fandom. Jim claimed his football consumption has increased, ironically, since learning about match fixing while Ricky and Lucy are showing signs of disengaging possibly due to their ability to navigate through the complex process of consumer decision making (Mullin et al., 1993; see Appendix O). For instance, Ricky and Lucy are married and have children, whereas Jim is a single teenager living with his parents. As such, Ricky and Lucy are in an advanced stage in their life and family cycles that may lead to different perceptions, motivations, and attitudes towards topics discussed in this study. Mullin et al. (1993) add to the life cycle discussion by mentioning life stage transitions which “may have a profound effect on our sport involvement and commitment” (p. 71) as our values and identities change over time.

It is also likely these two informants are turning away for reasons postulated by Forrest (2012) when he wrote “a competition that is perceived to be a charade may be shunned” (p. 99) which may help explain Ricky and Lucy’s feelings. They also appear to be moving downward – or deescalating – with reference to Funk and James’ (2001) PCM as they have both lost interest in the commercialized big-league spectacle and turning their love for the game to the grassroots—its purest form. While Ricky and Lucy have already begun the process of deescalating fandom, there were a few other informants who hypothesized scenarios in which they, too, would notice a decline in their football fanaticism. These seven participants will be discussed in the next subsection.

**Projected.** The final topic under the Impacts on Fandom category is predictive in nature. Seven respondents provided insight into how match fixing *may* negatively impact their fandom in the future. Their answers could be broken down into three rationales—if the plight intensifies, if their team were involved, and if a major scandal occurred.

Randy and Phil both prognosticated that their fandom would take a negative hit if this current trend of match fixing continues or intensifies. On this topic, Randy stated:

Well I could definitely see it change if more revelations came out. If more ref[eree]s or [laughs] people from the gambling syndicates or whatever came out or even the management of the teams and said this had happened in such and such match.

Phil echoed similar feelings as Randy when discussing the possibility of the current trend continuing when he proclaimed:

My love for it [football] would probably stop. I’ll play it, I’ll forever play football. One day I want to play football with my children so I’m always going to



make sure I'm playing it forever but my love for the game – you know, watching it, tweeting about it, discussing with my mates, all these wonderful games – no it [continued match fixing] would definitely hurt it.

Julian and Sarah's fandom would change if one of their favourite teams – Portuguese outfit Benfica and English club Arsenal, respectively – and/or players were involved in match fixing. On this subject, Julian uttered:

It would probably change if Benfica or Portugal were in the final of the World Cup or Champions League and you find out that game was fixed. And the team I was cheering for got robbed. Because even, let's say Portugal is now the World Cup champion because of the fixing, it's not the same because you don't get that glory of watching the victory and partying in the street when that happened.

Sarah had a comparable view on the matter:

Yeah, I guess if any South African player on the national team personally had ever been involved in the fixing. Or perhaps Arsenal themselves or the players were actually involved in fixing I'd be angry and dubious about believing things that happen and I'd question performances far more regularly, I guess. If it were, you know, the players specifically involved – I'm not talking about dodgy referees or anything like that – I'm talking specifically about players somehow being involved for some sort of financial gain and getting sent off or whatever it is on purpose, yeah, I would probably, I don't know, I wouldn't abandon the country I'm from or the team I support in England but I'd definitely be more dubious and question them.

If another match fixing scandal broke, it would have to be one of large magnitude to dissuade Sam and Cory's fandom. As Sam explained:

It would have to be something very drastic, because like I said football has been a part of—it would have to be something massive to stop me following football, or change how I feel about football in general. It could maybe change how I feel about a particular team or an individual or football in general. It would have to be something completely out of the ordinary, really, to change my vision.

Cory felt similarly:

If there's a major, major scandal. I think it would have to be something unbelievable like a World Cup Final, a Champions League Final or something of tremendous magnitude. Not even just tremendous magnitude but, like, showing that probably most of the top European teams were involved.

Lastly, a unique perspective was provided by Bobby, the lone professional footballer in the study's sample. Below, Bobby played out a scenario where he could foresee his interest in soccer dying:

I think if it was ever in the forefront to me, I'd have to turn my back on it. Just because it's not right, so if someone ever asked me to do it [fix a match], I'd say "no, alright I'm done with this sport if this is how it's going to be."

It should be noted at this point that the above scenarios were hypothetical, where the interviewees envisioned an occurrence whereby their fandom could potentially lessen.

### **Issues and Suggested Changes to Improve the Game's Perception**

All participants in this study were knowledgeable and self-identified fans of the beautiful game. As well-informed fans, however, they were also aware their sport is in

need of repair in certain areas. The themes that populate this category are a combination of issues plaguing the game and suggestions to counter issues that arose in conversation with the dozen interviewees.

**Transparency.** Greater administrative transparency was a common response that arose throughout discussions. Nearly half of the participants – Ricky, Sarah, Cory, Trevor, and Phil – alluded to governmental and/or administrative transparency in some capacity. Ricky felt what global football governing body “FIFA needs to do at an international level [and] at a continental level is they need to be above all the kind of politics and the funny decisions, etcetera” which, unfortunately according to Pielke Jr. (2013), is a difficult ask for such a corrupt association. Sarah expanded on Ricky’s notion with harsh words for governing bodies at both the global and continental level. When discussing an investigation of fixed matches in her native South Africa during the lead up to the 2010 FIFA World Cup, Sarah noted:

Well the frustrating thing is with the Bafana [South Africa’s national football team] games, at the moment, is the government was meant to launch an inquiry—sort of their own commission of inquiry beyond FIFA’s investigation. And the government had just said, “no, sorry, we’re not going to do that!” And that’s worse for me than the actual fixing, because it’s the government’s responsibility in part to ensure that the game’s clean and the fans can confidently feel that their game is clean. So, from the people in charge I feel more frustration and anger, I guess, compared to the officials involved when it actually happens because it’s the people in charge who should be taking responsibility for things like that instead of, you know, what can the players do? Because they weren’t involved in

that, it was the referees who were being dodgy. So, yeah, I think from the perspective of getting angry and frustrated it's definitely towards those who should be the custodians of the game for sports' innocence in their country.

McNamee (2013) would undoubtedly agree with Sarah and the need for better governance. In his editorial, McNamee (2013) claimed threats to sport's integrity are due in part to a lack of proper governance. Speaking in generalities – not “calling out” a specific level of government or organization – Cory explained the following in regards to the link between illegal gambling and transparency:

It's strange, you know? You don't know who's betting [on] this, not really any [pauses] disclosure or any transparency whether or not who's betting on this game or if this person is involved. And it's a shame that the only time you do find out about that is when a scandal breaks.

Cory later added a statement that is unquestionably shared by millions of soccer supporters around the globe, “I think a lot more transparency would be good for the sport. I think it would also ease a lot of fans', like myself, concerns.”

With his comments, Trevor introduced a cultural angle to the governmental transparency theme when he argued “you look at Turkey, where the referee was from—it's clear[ly] not a transparent and open country. There's corruption in the government, there's probably going to be corruption in football there.” He carried on with his diatribe on Turkish sport and government by claiming “it's clear in Turkey it's not going to be as open and transparent as, say, the [English] Premier League or [Spanish] La Liga.”

Phil believes if corruption is happening at the highest level it must surely trickle down. On that note, he stated “the reason why I do believe there's a lot of match fixing as

well, especially in terms of the UEFA and [FIFA President] Sepp Blatter, he's corrupt himself . . . And I believe the whole FIFA board is corrupted." He furthered his point with "we hear about how votes are swayed and all that stuff. If it's happening up there it's definitely happening [pauses] through the ranks of football. And it's upsetting because it's ruining the game for those who really love it."

Despite Blatter's claim that "there is no systematic corruption in FIFA. . . . We are financially clean and clear" (Gibson, 2010, para. 9), transparency or lack thereof, remains a pressing concern for these ardent supporters. So, too, is the refereeing system currently in place.

**Referees.** Five participants referred to referees in some manner during their interview discussion. Randy and Julian spoke of issues they have with officials while Ricky, Cory, and Trevor offered some insight on how to improve refereeing in football. Both Randy and Julian were in agreement that soccer referees have far too much power – in comparison to other sports – which often leads to "misuse of entrusted power for private gain" (Transparency International, n.d., para. 1) in the form of accepting bribes from match fixers. Randy made comparisons to basketball in this statement:

It seems like, maybe I'm wrong, but it seems to me that maybe it would be much easier to fix the outcome of a soccer game than almost any [other] sport. And that the referee has really outside influence. Like I said I'm a basketball fan and people complain when the referee [pauses] makes a foul call in a basketball game, which is, as you know, nothing but a free throw of a game where you could score over 100 points. I mean, it's like, the [soccer] referees giving away a red card which actually removes a player and not allowing him to be replaced, which I

think is unique in sport. Or awarding a penalty kick, which is about as close as you can come to just simply giving a goal.

Julian has a similar opinion on the amount of authority football referees possess:

The ref[eree] has the power of, you know, a team's out of substitutions and all of the sudden the goalie is in a challenge and all of a sudden you take the goalie off!

Now you have to put in a player, the ref[eree] has that power to make that happen.

He would go on to explain:

Whenever the power of one player or sorry the ref[eree] [who] can take a player off the field [pauses] now all of the sudden Man United is down a man and to a team like Real Madrid, well that's pretty much like having a five-on-three power play in [ice] hockey.

Cory, Trevor, and Ricky offer some suggestions to help remedy the perceived issues currently surrounding soccer refereeing. Cory is of the mind that referees would make better decisions if they were held accountable. As Cory explained, "seeing that [Nani red card] just—everything just didn't sit well with me at the time and there was never, maybe you can get more accountability if they [referees] had to face the media after the match." As a continuation of his feelings on Turkey and sport integrity, Trevor added, "A Turkish ref[eree]? It's just—the referees in the Champions League should be of the highest integrity and you can't guarantee that from Turkey." He would continue on the link between integrity and officiating with:

Once I saw that tweet and I retweeted it was half of me saying, "I agree!" Turkish ref[eree] in the Champions League it just shouldn't happen because you can't

guarantee his integrity. You can't even guarantee his integrity in the domestic league so how can you guarantee it in the Champions League?

Perhaps as a way of combatting questionable morality or integrity of referees, Ricky suggested a ranking system to remove the guesswork in officiating crew assignments:

So I think there are a few lessons you can take from other sports. But I think FIFA's really got to step it up, they've got to say—they've got to reach a decision and say "we don't accept this at all, and we're going to show that we're above it" do whatever they need to do. So, if it means the top ref[eree] is an English ref[eree] and he's got to referee a game between Manchester United and Real Madrid, nobody is going to question it because he is the top ref[eree], you know what I mean? And his officials are the top officials and at the same time, they have to provide in-match assistance to him. So, if it looks like that decision or one of those decisions that could be argued [pauses] he should have enough time to bounce it off the other officials that are there. They're all wired up these days now in any case so it'll take a 10- to 15-second discussion for him to get that right.

He also recommends an ingenious way of getting more calls correct—add more officials to each match. He expanded on that idea by noting, "So you see you've got to divide the field in two, you know, in half and you have a referee and two linesmen on one side and a referee and two linesmen on the other side."

It is often claimed that refereeing is a thankless job (Jungebrand, 2006) and these issues mixed with suggestions illustrate just how much scrutiny match officials are under.

Another oft analyzed and criticized aspect of sport is the punitive system, which will be delved into next.

**Consequences.** Stricter penalties for known offenders was an emergent view expressed by a quarter of the 12 who participated in the study. Juventus' punishments were a trend with these three as well, as Sam illustrates:

Stricter penalties for people who actually get caught doing it! If they do get caught, you don't want to see a money fine. That's the problem with football they always get fines which they pay in money, which they have plenty of to cover the fine straight away. There needs to be stricter penalties, obviously like you said, with Juventus they got kicked straight out down to the second division, out of the Champions League.

Like Sam, Cory is also in favour of the "Juventus treatment" for those proven guilty of match fixing, which he conveyed in this exchange:

C: I think also it really depends on the football association's diligence too. They need to come down and crack down hard on anyone involved in match fixing. And I know the person at the top of Juventus at the time of the Italian scandal.

A: Luciano Moggi.

C: He [Moggi] was banned for life. Yeah, and he was banned for life and I think it's got to be life bans for everyone that if they were involved in it. It's got to. It kind of has to be a no nonsense, you know? Just crack the whip on everyone!

In keeping with the Juventus scandal as the gauge all other punishments should be measured against, Trevor weighed in. After deeming a match fixing player or team as



“unsupportable” that they “don’t deserve second chances with something like that [match fixing]” and those involved should experience “criminal proceedings” he went on to note:

Just as a punishment, you’re on about this Juventus director and he won’t be allowed to play—won’t be involved in football again. I think anybody in any league who is involved in match fixing should never be allowed anywhere near football again.

Whether it be “financial penalties of a sufficiently high level” (Maennig, 2002, p. 79) or lifetime bans, doling out harsher punishments to known fixers would satisfy Sam, Cory, and Trevor.

**Technology.** FIFA has been notoriously slow to adjust to modern technology, having just implemented goal line technology for the first time at a World Cup at the 2014 edition (Psiuk, Seidl, Strauß, & Bernhard, 2014). In the following discussion, Julian presents a thought-provoking argument for why soccer governing bodies like UEFA and FIFA may be hesitating to implement more technological measures to aid officials:

J: I’m not saying that game specifically, but just like the game of soccer so whenever you see that you’re like “whoa, what is the motive? He missed that so blatantly!” And also why is soccer so neglecting going to modern technology to make calls easier? Is that because it’ll be harder to prove, for the ref[eree]s to fix these matches? If Man United could challenge the play. . .

A: Wow, good point!

J: . . . and see that Nani didn’t even touch him and reverse the red card.

A: That’s an angle I never even thought of. I never even considered [laughs]  
They have been dragging their heels, very reluctant to implement. . .

J: Just now [at the 2014 World Cup] they're introducing goal line technology!

Sam draws inspiration from other sports – namely rugby and tennis – in his recommendation to improve soccer:

I'm a big supporter of technology in football. I think they should have video evidence to be able to recall back. It wouldn't take them long, they use it in rugby all the time, they use it in sports like tennis. Just a quick review system, a manager could just [pauses] get one review a game and he can review an incident.

Both contributors to this theme raised intriguing points, one about hesitance and another about other sports' utilization of technology.

**Gambling.** Illegal betting or gambling was an emergent trend as three participants contributed to this topic. In it, Ricky, Jamie, and Cory discussed their concerns surrounding the betting culture in football. Below, Ricky hopes FIFA heeds warnings from the sport of cricket where illegal Asian betting syndicates have corrupted the sport with widespread gambling, match manipulation, and fixing:

I think the danger to soccer being a global game is it's still finding its feet in Asia. And I think looking at cricket that there's—if FIFA don't get a handle on this now, it's going to become [worse] once the Asian betting syndicates get into it. They're going to have a huge problem on their hands. The good thing is that a lot of the players in the top leagues are paid fantastic salaries, but sometimes it might not even be the [pauses] the sum of money that they're taking home. You never know what the motivating factor might be. So, I think there is a very, very different threat from betting syndicates that have got their claws into other sports and I think FIFA's going to make sure that they don't get involved in football.

In a similar line of thought, Jamie also referenced the Asian threats and cricket as an example from which soccer can learn:

The only thing that [pauses] and this just happened in cricket, because there was a few cricket matches that were fixed in England a couple of years ago. The reason they got found out was because people in the far east – in India and Asia – were betting heavily on the three no balls in an over.

Jamie would go on to describe the unlikelihood of three balls in a cricket over and that these fixers were caught with a combination of suspicious betting on that occurrence and an impressive monitoring systems in place in English cricket. Naturally, Jamie recommended world football adopt a similar monitoring system. According to Smith (2011), this monitoring system is slowly being implemented as many sport governing bodies – not necessarily soccer governing bodies – have agreed to assist in detection and reporting of suspicious betting activity.

Cory finds the casualness of gambling and betting in the soccer vernacular highly peculiar:

It's very strange. Maybe it's the North American thing where it's outlawed, other than Las Vegas, but, yeah, it's strange to see, you know the betting odds all over the news that you're reading about European soccer. Just the bookies, you know, they commonly refer to the bookies, "the bookies said this, the bookies said that."

Cory continued:

So there's definitely something that I don't think it can be legislated, because at this point the game is so globalized if you're betting on European tournaments from a pizzeria outside of New York there's nothing—but it's just all these weird

things, the bookies and the different rules they set up. I try to stay away from it because I kind of want to keep my view of the game clean.

The daunting fight against illegal betting in football is well underway, as outlined in works by European Commission (2012), Mansel (2010) as well as Smith (2011).

Despite the ongoing efforts outlined in the above mentioned works, Cory's belief that "it's definitely—it's a tough thing to tackle. It's admirable that people are even investigating it, but—it's definitely a tough problem to tackle" segues well into the next theme as a sense of "what can you do?" has overcome football fans.

**Helplessness.** In an unfortunate reality, a quarter of the interviewees voiced their concerns in the form of helplessness against match rigging corruption. Considered the perceived absence of control over the outcome of a situation (Gelbrich, 2010), helplessness accurately sums up the feelings Sarah, Jamie, and Julian have towards match fixing in their beloved sport.

Sarah, who has lived through match fixing scandals as a fan of cricket and soccer, bellowed, "after seeing it [match fixing] you wish they would all go to jail, you feel like your hands are tied, I guess, because there's so little you [fans] could do about it." She expanded on that notion:

Something dodgy happens and you go, "was that right?" but you stop sort of questioning things because you can't, you know, be paranoid [with] everything that happens and the decisions that happen and stuff. Especially because it is very common match fixing in all sports really. . . . When I think it does happen, you just sort of shrug and go, "oh well!"

Following the same defenseless attitude as Sarah towards match fixing was Jamie. Jamie believes it is a difficult battle to fight, as he broke down the detection methods by asking “how do you track that or trace it?” when tapping phone lines was mentioned in relation to how Juventus officials were caught. He then clamored at the daunting task telephone line tapping would pose:

Phone call evidence? Now can you imagine doing that on a global scale? Could you imagine—there are 20 teams in the [English] Premier League. There are 24 in The Championship [English second division], this is just at the domestic level. There’s another 24 in League One [English third division]. It has—how many phones do you have to tap?

Julian came across as despondent in his language when discussing what can be done to counteract match fixing:

It’s probably been involved with the game for years. It’s an unfortunate thing, but I don’t think it’ll ever be clean because we’ve got these small little countries with money, especially you know, Turkey and Russia that it could always be in the game.

He would go on to quip, “it’s not like they can just do drug tests. There’s nothing they can do to clean this up and I don’t know how they’re going to get to that point.” He followed up that rationale with:

But you just question it “is this game fixed?” What can you do? Was it fixed? Was it not fixed? As a fan there’s nothing you can do but it does take integrity out of the game a little because, well, what’s the point of being a supporter if someone else is determining the outcome?

These three participants have developed a sense of “what can be done?” in regards to match fixing in football. However, each could still be considered fans of the beautiful game—especially Julian and Jamie. The attitudes and beliefs they articulated illustrate they are acutely aware of the match fixing plight, understand it is a daunting task to combat but still remain steadfast in their fandom.

### **Summary of Categories**

The semi-structured interview discussions aided in answering the study’s three research questions:

1. What has it been like to live through this era of match fixing in soccer?
2. How has perceived match fixing affected your fandom, if at all?
3. What changes must be undertaken for trust/belief to be restored in the sport?

The 12 soccer-mad participants shared their personal experiences and views which permitted three overarching categories along with multiple themes to organically emerge. There is a sense of a “dark cloud” currently hanging over football as most, if not all, of the themes under the first category were negatively toned. In terms of fandom impacts, there was a noticeable decline for two informants, while the rest have remained relatively loyal to their club and the sport with one, Jim, even consuming more soccer than ever before. The third category dealt with issues and recommendations to recover some of the sport’s lost allure. Suggestions came in the form of greater transparency and increased presence of technology to ensure on-field decisions are more objective and correct. Greater support for officials and stronger governance against the threat of betting-related corruption were also discussed therein.

## **Chapter 5 — Implications, Limitations, and Conclusion**

The purpose of this qualitative, interpretive study was to better understand the lived experiences of football supporters living through this period of match fixing in the sport. Additionally, the researcher intended on stimulating a dormant North American area of sport management research. In order to better understand and conceptualize the fans' lived experiences, Funk and James' (2001) PCM as well as Giulianotti's (2002) contemporary spectator identities model played instrumental roles in this analysis. A summary of the research, along with implications and recommendations will be examined in the following segment. Lastly, limitations encountered throughout the study will be recounted followed by directions for future research and concluding remarks.

### **Summary of Research**

A 2012-13 UEFA Champions League match was the inspiration for this research project. A highly suspect decision by a perceived corrupt official drew the attention of many on Twitter who took to the social networking site to express their feelings—some in defense of the referee but most in attack. The fervor in the language and rapidity with which these posts were being submitted to the site piqued the researcher's interest in studying such a phenomenon. Increasing interest was the under-representation of the topic in current literature (Buraimo, personal communication, March 22, 2013), as well as the fact that match fixing shows no signs of ceasing. Known and suspected cases dating back to World War I (Caruso, 2009) to summer 2014 (Barnwell, 2014; British Broadcasting Corporation, 2014; Harris, 2014; McLaughlin, 2014) illustrate both the history and contemporariness of this form of corruption in soccer.

In order to conduct such a study in-depth, semi-structured interviews in addition to a cursory content analysis of aforementioned tweets and a demographic questionnaire were completed. The mixture of these approaches, use of the analysis techniques of meaning coding and interpretation as well as with the investigator's interpretive style of analysis, allowed for three major categories to organically surface. Interview discussions took place with 12 soccer supporters – ten males and two females – from North America, Europe, and Africa. Each participant was deemed a highly-identified fan of soccer in accordance with the PCM (Funk & James, 2001) as well as the contemporary spectator identities model (Giulianotti, 2002).

The informants' discussions assisted in contributing to an answer for the first research question: What has it been like to live through this era of match fixing in soccer? The category labelled Fan Attitudes and Emotions During Match Fixing Era contained three themes that aided in answering the first research question. As studying the nexus between match fixing's impact on fandom has not received adequate attention in academia, it was challenging to relate these findings to previous literature in the field of study.

The first theme to emerge was one of skepticism as eight of the study's participants conveyed feelings of doubt surrounding the beautiful game today. A strong notion of cynicism was present in the conversations with these individuals, be it from decisions on the pitch to ones made by governing bodies. The Skepticism theme was populated by eight participants who mentioned the challenges involved with supporting a game with a blemished reputation as strong language associated with feelings of disgrace and disrepute was utilized by some of the above-mentioned eight. A suspicion that cover-



ups are occurring was expressed by five to make up the second theme under the Fan Attitudes and Emotions During Match Fixing Era category. Those who added to this topic felt as though money is possibly keeping those in the know quiet if match fixing was occurring. There was also a sense that it is in the media's best interest to keep corruption out of the news lest it decreases TV viewership or corporate sponsorship. The third and final theme under the broad category of emotionality is that of Favouritism. A third of respondents voiced concerns over certain "darling" clubs receiving preferential treatment. This belief leads to a greater suspicion that match fixing could be happening as UEFA would prefer having these favoured clubs advance further in tournaments for greater exposure and revenues.

The four themes of the second grouping enlightened the second research question— "How has perceived match fixing affected your fandom, if at all?" The second category was labelled Impacts on Fandom and included the themes Unchanged, Minimal, Deescalating, and Projected. Half of the interviewees claimed their fandom has not wavered in the face of match fixing in their cherished sport. A common sentiment was the game means too much to them to cease consuming the sport. This finding was consistent with Funk and James' (2001) description of highly-identified, allegiant fans in their PCM. Giulianotti (2002) also described the traditional-hot – analogous to the allegiance floor of the PCM – fanatic as a classic supporter with a long-term personal and emotional investment in their club. Further rationalization for their unaffected fandom comes from Szymanski (2003, p. 471) who wrote:

While demand for quality and uncertainty of outcome may play a role, fans tend to form attachments to particular teams, typically on the basis of geographic

proximity, and to follow “their team” almost regardless of the quality of the team or uncertainty of outcome.

The six who populated the Unchanged theme fit well with both of these models as well as the quotation referenced above. There are some, however, who showed the potential for their support to waver.

A slight change was deemed to have occurred in a quarter of the dozen interviewees. These three individuals showed some hesitation in answering the question as well as the potential for the fandom to falter. They tended to use less convincing language and vacillated in their replies. Meanwhile, two participants expressed feelings of disillusionment with football leading to deescalation in their fandom. These two happened to be two of the three oldest interviewees, making it likely they possess the faculties to engage in the complex process of consumer decision making put forth by Mullin et al. (1993). Rounding out this classification was the Projected theme, in which there were seven contributors. Common projections that *may* negatively impact their fandom is if the match fixing corruption continues, if their team/favourite players were to be directly involved, and if a noteworthy scandal occurred.

The final research question – What changes must be undertaken for trust/belief to be restored in the sport? – was probed via six themes under the Issues and Suggested Changes to Improve the Game’s Perception theme. Transparency, Referees, Consequences, Technology, Gambling, and Helplessness were the prominent themes that arose to enlighten this category. A desire for greater transparency in FIFA and UEFA’s undertakings was conveyed by five interviewees. Those who added to this theme were adamant that knowing what happens at the top would preserve their fandom. Five people

also contributed to the Referees theme by mentioning officiating in some manner. Some suggestions to improve the game were offering officials more support, such as more referees per match, in an attempt to cut back on poor on-field decisions as well as holding themselves accountable for their actions and decisions post-match. A third theme that arose was identified as Consequences; specifically the three contributors recommend harsher punishments for guilty parties. All three pointed to the penalties levied against Juventus as the standard that should be followed, or exceeded, in future punishments for convicted match fixers. These participants who suggested lifetime bans and imprisonment would be pleased to know that some European nations are beginning to implement harsher penalties including some countries considering sentences between 12-18 years for convicted fixers and illegal gamblers (European Commission, 2012; Smith 2011).

Technology was the fourth theme under the Issues and Suggested Changes to Improve the Game's Perception grouping. Two participants added to this topic with straightforward suggestions of seeing more technology implemented to improve the quality of the sport. Gambling and betting monitoring systems were discussed by a quarter of the interviewees, which aligns with some recommendations from Smith (2011). This subject was seemingly inspired by detection and reporting measures implemented in cricket. Lastly, but most unfortunately, three of the interviewees expressed feelings of helplessness or a "what can we do about it?" attitude. For these three, the love of the game remains, but so too does a sense of defencelessness in the fight against match fixing and corruption in football. In total, 13 themes were established in an effort to help illuminate the three research questions that framed this current study.

### **Implications and Recommendations**

A number of valuable implications and recommendations could be derived both from the methodology utilized as well as the findings of this study. Conclusions that could be drawn include ways to better utilize Twitter, scandal's impact on fandom as well as the importance of integrity in sport management and marketing.

As mentioned earlier, Twitter played a vital role in the recruitment phase of this study. This social media platform is being increasingly used in sport marketing (Witkemper et al., 2012) but somewhat neglected in sport management academia. As Hutchins (2011) and Wenner (2014) describe, it is undoubtedly a convenient and useful instrument to access sport fans from around the globe. It was also a great tool – even if individuals did not commit to participating in the study – to get a glimpse of their fanatical psyche by being able to view their tweet history. Although there were obstacles in recruitment, being taken seriously and with miscommunication inherent in social media, the researcher still felt Twitter was a valuable resource and will surely be more represented in future sport academic studies (Hanna, 2012; Wenner, 2014). Burton and Bruening (2003) agree that combining technology and method is the present and the future of academia. If online research gathering strategies are utilized to their fullest, “sport scholars can advance knowledge in the unique aspects of sport and improve the conditions of people who both work in sport and are served by sport” (Burton & Bruening, 2003, p. 326). Included amongst those who both work and are served by sport are sport marketers, managers, and supporters.

The researcher recommends to academics and practitioners alike who may be considering Twitter in their future work to keep the immediacy of Twitter in mind. The

researcher was met with some resistance from those contacted as the match in question was approximately a year in the past at the time of recruitment. While on the matter of technology, the researcher also highly recommends Skype, FaceTime and other videoconferencing software, especially in reaching far away stakeholders. A unique aspect of this study is the variety of countries, spread over three continents, that the interviewees resided. Access to these fans was made possible by a blend of Twitter and the aforementioned video chat software. As some of these fans were supporting clubs from afar, the combination of Twitter and Skype or FaceTime would be ideal for those wishing to better understand, or market to, non-local fans (Andrijiw & Hyatt, 2009). The options now available to researchers eliminate borders and can minimize geographical and financial limitations, as all online methods mentioned are accessible and free of charge. If these methods are harnessed and utilized to their full potential, sport management literature – and ultimately sport practitioners – will be the beneficiaries. The researcher uncovered a great deal about the issues and effectiveness of online research, but much was also gleaned about the psyche of soccer fans as well as marketing and management opportunities for those in the industry.

A key finding from this study was that although football fanatics are a forgiving group, they have their reservations about the current state of the game. The staunch, unwavering supporters will remain through “thick and thin” (Giulianotti, 2002, p. 32) however for some fans turning their back on the sport in the face of scandal is a real possibility. Any soccer consumer is of great importance in North America as soccer is still gaining popularity (Peterman & Suntornpithug, 2013). In terms of spectatorship, soccer falls well behind the North American “major four” of American football, baseball,

basketball, and hockey (Carlin, 2010) despite soccer being one of the most popular sports around the world (Alegi, 2010; Brahmana, 2011; Palacios-Huerta, 2004; Smith, 2001). As a result, Major League Soccer (MLS) is still considered as a second-tier sport league (Peterman & Suntornpithug, 2013). With these facts in mind, it is of the utmost importance that North American soccer leagues – in particular MLS with franchises in Canada and USA – retain as much of their existing fan base as possible. As an extrapolation from this study, the fact that two of the 12 highly committed fans are starting to deescalate illustrates that another match fixing scandal could have potentially destructive effects on periphery fans of the sport. Corruption is, potentially, a phenomenon that could lead to a downward movement through Funk and James' (2001) PCM or a sliding to the cool side of Giulianotti's (2002) contemporary spectator identity framework.

An implication from the fans interviewed in the current study was the importance for the game to become scandal-free as another controversy could be the reason they cease following the sport altogether. From a practical point of view, MLS could benefit greatly from introducing "integrity officers." No such position exists in the MLS, which is surprising when one considers the Canadian Soccer Association's recent appointment of an integrity officer (Squizzato, 2014). If the MLS is to safeguard the integrity of their product and retain their fan base, it is critical they are proactive in the fight against match fixing in their league. Given what some fans expressed in this current study, a scandal would be enough to shake the foundation of a second-tier league (Peterman & Suntornpithug, 2013) and turn off those casual followers. Disrupting league growth as well as losing supporters are two realities an up-and-coming league like the MLS simply

cannot afford. As Wang, Zhang, and Tsuji (2011) explain in relation to an upstart Chinese baseball league, match fixing and gambling scandals tarnished the league's image and "hurt fans' belief in game authenticity" (p. 349). It is conceivable MLS could suffer the same fate should it experience a match fixing controversy in the near future. Major League Soccer administrators should look to Europe where the game's popularity is undeniably strong and they have begun to implement anti match fixing methods with varying levels of success.

As the game grows in popularity in North America, it is extremely popular elsewhere, especially in Europe (Guschwan, 2011; Peterman & Suntornpithug, 2013). Despite the high degrees of fanaticism the game possesses abroad, there is still a desire for purity and cleanliness, which were common sentiments from participants. European football administrators and sport managers would be wise to hire as many integrity officers and implement educational programs as possible to keep the sport as pure as possible. Although the sport enjoys incredible recognition in these parts of the globe, some informants did express a want for more transparency and purity. Efforts are underway in other sports – in particular cricket and tennis (European Commission, 2012) – to monitor betting irregularities and educate athletes but, in the researcher's opinion, greater efforts need to be taken in football. A movement is afoot to combat match fixing through criminal legislation and Sportradar's sport betting integrity education programs (European Commission, 2012; Smith, 2011). While this is a positive move, none of the study's 12 informants were aware of such actions. If the image of the game is to be preserved and reduce further tarnishing, these efforts should be better marketed to the general public. Fans who are becoming disillusioned with the sport – as two study

participants were – may be interested to know anti-corruption methods are in place as it may prevent them from terminating their fandom.

Another implication derived from the interviews was if, unfortunately, another match fixing impropriety were to occur, harsh action would need to be taken. As stated by interviewee Ricky, “soccer fans are forgiving.” The sentiment gathered from interviews is they can understand that match fixing has happened – especially with so much money and human greed involved in the game today – and are cognizant it may occur again. The fans who took part in this study hoped that if match fixing were to happen again that sufficiently stern punishments are doled out to the corruptors, as proposed by Maennig (2002). Even criminal proceedings, as outlined in European Commission (2012) and Smith (2011) was discussed by three informants. If known fixers, whether they be administrators or players, get off easy it could be a public relations nightmare and the game will have to work especially hard to recover its image in the face of another scandal. On that note, Gorse (2014) pleaded that all stakeholders in the sport industry need to be at the forefront of this process to rebuild the tarnished image of sport. These stakeholders include those in positions of integrity protection, management, marketing, public relations, and even the players and referees on the pitch and managers on the sidelines.

Another implication that could be drawn from the current study is uncovering another manner for decreased fandom in relation to the PCM (Funk & James, 2001). While the PCM is influential and cited often in sport fandom literature (de Groot & Robinson, 2008; Lock & Filo, 2012; Lock et al., 2012; Spaaij & Anderson, 2010a), downward movement through it has been understudied. A sport damaged by match fixing



corruption is a likely phenomenon that could result in a committed fan beginning to reduce his or her connection to a team and/or a sport. Referring specifically to the two deescalating and disillusioned participants, it is conceivable they are beginning to disassociate from a sport they once loved, thus beginning a downward movement through the PCMs (Funk & James, 2001) levels of fandom.

A final conclusion which could be derived from this study is cautionary in nature. As social networking sites are becoming increasingly prevalent in sport studies (Hutchins, 2011; Wenner, 2014; Witkemper et al., 2012) a proliferation of research undertakings in sport management utilizing Twitter to access fanatics is likely. With this in mind, those considering a study similar in methodology to the current one should be cognizant of bravado, posturing, or performing in online reactions (Deller, 2011; Marwick & boyd, 2010). The researcher encountered interviewees who stated some comments were posted to Twitter in the “heat of the moment” and that they no longer felt that way as time passed. This is a common phenomenon in the present-day world of sport fanaticism and social networking sites where we watch with two screens—the television as well as a mobile device (Deller, 2011).

Social networking sites like Twitter are rife with deceit and dissonance between real life behaviour and online self reports (Qiu, Lin, Leung, & Tov, 2012). Oddly enough, espousing a negative mood is a desirable trait if one wants to be influential on Twitter as negatively toned tweets receive more retweets than ones of positivity (Wang, Wang, & Zhu, 2013). Furthering the discussion on online deceitfulness is the notion that users compose different posts depending on their perceived audience, which suggests a level of inauthenticity may be present in their submissions. Deller (2011) believed Twitter users

perform, like actors, by “modify[ing] their performance in terms of language and emphasis according to who they perceive their audience to be” (p. 236). It is conceivable the interviewees in this study submitted emotionally-charged, negative posts to give off an air of boldness to their followers, but the disgust they projected to their online audience did not match their true feelings (Deller, 2011; Marwick & boyd, 2010; Wang et al., 2013).

### **Future Research**

The nexus between match fixing corruption and soccer has been analyzed quantitatively (Boeri & Severgnini, 2008; Buraimo et al., 2012; Forrest, 2012; Mazanov et al., 2012) more so than qualitatively. When the trifecta of fans, match fixing, and football are considered, an even larger gap in the literature begins to appear both quantitatively and qualitatively. Ideally, more work would be completed qualitatively on this subject to get a better understanding of the lived experiences of fans affected by match rigging in soccer. This study may serve as the basis for a deeper qualitative investigation, a longitudinal report, for example. Time permitting, capturing fan reactions immediately following a perceived fix, some months later, then again a year after the fact could contribute to the field immensely by better understanding the forgiving or unforgiving nature of its fans. Observing differences from the day of an incident to a year later could also serve to contribute to fandom literature in general, not just as it pertains to corruption and soccer.

The research conducted by Buraimo et al. (2012) on Serie A attendance figures pre- and post-match fixing scandal was an influential paper for the current study. However, no interviews were completed as their work was purely quantitative. If,

unfortunately, another scandal were to occur, a noteworthy study would be to combine similar quantitative work completed on attendance figures in Buraimo et al. (2012) with the qualitative components found herein. As no interviews were completed in the Buraimo et al. (2012) research, one can only speculate as to why attendance figures decreased in the Italian Serie A seasons post-scandal. If semi-structured interviews were added to an analysis of that type, the guesswork as to why attendance dropped would be removed and answers from the fans themselves would be attained.

Examining fans with more depth in the wake of corruption is one direction for future work, but another could be studying sponsors faced with similar circumstances. Building on Forrest's (2012) claim that "the value of sponsorship will also be reduced if firms become concerned over association of their product with a corrupt sport" (p. 605) could very well be analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. Forrest's (2012) stance is backed by Solberg et al. (2010) who claim commercial stakeholders – such as sponsors and TV broadcasters – are reluctant to get involved with sports that are repeatedly involved in scandals. Solberg et al. (2010) enlighten this issue further with examples of sponsors who have withdrawn their support due to the association cycling has with doping corruption. Since a 2006 doping scandal in the Tour de France sponsors including Quick Step, Gerolsteiner, T-Mobile and Credit Agricole all have removed themselves from cycling with some explaining their decision as reactions towards the doping concern in the sport (Waddington & Smith, 2009). Additional examples of the relationship between sport, corruption, and sponsor reaction include German tool manufacturer Würth and Spanish insurance company Liberty Seguros withdrawing their sponsorships of cycling teams implicated in doping scandals (Solberg et al., 2010). To the researcher's

knowledge it is not known why Sky Sport ceased sponsorship of Juventus after their scandalous 2004-05 season, but the above examples of being linked to a corrupted entity is a conceivable reason.

Analyzing fan-team-sponsor relationship is beyond the scope of the current study but worthy of more attention. From a consumerism standpoint, is having a product linked to a tainted team or sport cause for concern? In a similar vein, would consumers be less inclined to support a company if the company refuses to cease their relationship with a corrupt team or sport? Parker and Fink (2010) examined the fan-team-sponsor triad in the form of fans being presented with negative information about their teams' sponsor. The authors found "highly identified fans informed of a negative action by a team sponsor felt more favourably towards the sponsor if the team continued, rather than terminated, their relationship with the sponsor" (p. 200). However, there is a paucity of research on how consumers react to a company that sponsors a corrupted sport or team. For example, how were Juventus shirt sponsors Tamoil and Sky Sport perceived publically for sponsoring the club during their corrupted 2004-05 season? As an aside, Italian broadcaster Sky Sport did not sponsor again after that season, while Dutch oil group Tamoil stayed on as primary shirt financier for two more seasons after the rulings were imposed against Juventus.

In the sport context, Lee, Bang, and Lee's (2013) study on regaining fans' trust concluded that proper and effective response strategies need to be adopted by organizations or individuals in response to negative incidents in order to minimize their possible damage. With this notion in mind, valuable insight could be gained by studies that illustrate how consumers react to sponsors of corrupt sports or teams as well as ones

that determine how sport marketing practitioners and academics could navigate through a controversial corruption scandal.

Lastly, approaching this topic from the perspective of non-fans could be an intriguing body of work. Delving into the lived experiences of those who have already ceased their football fandom – as opposed to those who still ardently support – by getting to the core of the rationale behind their decision could be influential to fandom and consumerism lines of research.

### **Limitations**

Like any other research method, semi-structured and in-depth interviewing has its drawbacks. Utilizing this method presented some limitations including a vested personal interest, a lack of rapport as well as interview format inconsistencies.

Passion for a topic is a driving force in most research endeavours and the current study was not an exception. As the topic is of great interest and centrality to the researcher, biases (which were discussed in the Reflexivity section) were limited in the interviewing phase so as to not influence the interviewees' responses (Liamputtong, 2009). Swaying or influencing informants' answers in any manner could have been detrimental to that particular interview, and the study as a whole (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009), so caution was taken to not interrupt participants with pre-conceived notions that align with the researcher's agenda or beliefs. Although, at times, the researcher's novice level experience was noticeable, interview quality improved with each passing discussion. This, in turn, may have led to the final interview being "better" than the first in that the interviewer's skills enhanced by knowing when to probe or pursue an emergent theme in later discussions. Also, having previous interviews to reference may

have improved future interviews (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). These inconsistencies may have led to subtle interview differences between participants that “can be problematic for a novice researcher” (Liamputtong, 2009, p. 61). However, these subtle differences should be embraced in the interpretive paradigm as it typically means a deeper understanding with respect to the research questions are being developed over time.

Lack of rapport was another potential barrier to successful interviews for an inexperienced interviewer (Goodwin, Pope, Mort, & Smith, 2003). Lacking rapport may have been the reason behind seven individuals not attending their interview time. Perhaps if these users personally knew the researcher beforehand they would have felt more inclined to attend the agreed upon meeting time. Goodwin et al. (2003) felt qualitative researchers must initiate a rapport-building process from their first encounter with a participant in order to build a research relationship that will allow the researcher access to that person’s story. If this rapport-building process is unsuccessful, interview richness will undoubtedly be hindered. As a counterpoint, however, Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen, and Liamputtong (2007) state, “often researchers reassure their participants that the interview will be a one-off encounter and this may heighten disclosure” (p. 339) due to the unfamiliarity between the two parties involved. In either circumstance, rapport – or lack thereof – plays a critical role in a successful interview. With reference to this study, Dickson-Swift et al. (2007) were accurate in their assertion as the researcher had no issues with reticent interviewees due to a lack of rapport. The opening statement where informants spoke freely about the game and how they began to consume soccer afforded them the opportunity to share as well as become comfortable with being interviewed.

Twitter played an instrumental role in this study, as it was effective in reaching a mass audience. The social medium, however, did present some issues namely in timeliness of recruitment. The match in question took place in March of 2013 with recruitment and interviews occurring 11-13 months after that date. As Twitter is an immediate and short-term goal medium (Branthwaite & Patterson, 2011), a disconnect was created between the immediacy of Twitter and the research questions at hand. Another concern about the use of Twitter was the possibility of not being taken seriously as a genuine account. As the Internet, especially social media sites, are rampant with “spam” accounts the possibility that users disregarded the study’s account as inauthentic existed. No potential participant mentioned requiring Skype or FaceTime as a concern, however it is possible that those with faint interest may have been turned off and ended communication with the researcher knowing that videoconferencing was required. Another limitation was the pool of potential recruits was not only restricted to those with Twitter accounts, but also to those who used said account to tweet about match fixing during a specific time frame. The researcher is certain there are many who feel strongly about match fixing in soccer who did not qualify by virtue of not having a Twitter account or having one but not tweeting about the match in question.

Adding to timing concerns was the fact that another season of the UEFA Champions League was underway while data were being collected. Furthermore, Manchester United was in the midst of one of their worst seasons in the past 30 years, uncharacteristically missing out on a top-five finish for the 2013-14 EPL season. As over half of the interviewees identified as a Manchester United supporter, they may have had misplaced anger about the current season rather than the match fixing issue at hand,

which may have hindered interview quality. Alternatively, these fans could also have been so distraught about the current season to not be bothered with a perceived fix from a year prior. Lastly, there were concerns over Internet connectivity with five of the interviews, as at times the connection was weak and, thus, inaudible. In reviewing notes kept during interviews, this issue resulted in temporary disconnection with three participants and disruption of conversational flow with five total interviewees.

### **Conclusion**

The primary purpose for the current research was to provide a thorough understanding of the nexus between fans and corruption in a sport they support, with a secondary motivation of addressing the paucity in the literature. Through semi-structured interviews, content analysis, and an interpretivist approach, these purposes were satisfied.

The researcher found that negativity shrouds today's fans of the beautiful game, with a tarnished reputation and feelings of skepticism chief amongst the emotions currently associated with the sport. Despite the negative tone with which football was spoke of, those who participated illustrated that a psychological fan-team bond is a difficult one to break, even when faced with uncertainty and controversy. The strength of their bond lends support to Funk and James' (2001) descriptions of allegiant fans as well as Giulianotti's (2002) traditional-hot spectator. The researcher, however, also uncovered that scandals in sport, regardless of the current strength of the bond, have the potential to move supporters downward through the PCM (Funk & James, 2001). This notion was enlightened by seven participants who projected their fandom being negatively impacted if match fixing continued in soccer, as well as the two informants who are beginning to show signs of de-escalation.



The variation in fan responses – unaffected, slight affect, deescalating as well as potential for future change – suggests this study was worthwhile to pursue and build upon, especially if completed on a larger scale. This study also aided in extending academic dialogue on corruption and consumerism in sport while demonstrating a practical need for integrity officers and more officials to protect the image of sport while safeguarding against future indignities. Second-tier sport leagues with a developing, yet fragile, fan base would be wise to become proactive in the fight against corruption in their sport as losing precious supporters could be a devastating setback. Findings from this investigation provide important implications for governing bodies of various sports and/or other sport stakeholders, in particular those who believe in upholding the purity of sport.

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Appendix A

Psychological Continuum Model (PCM)

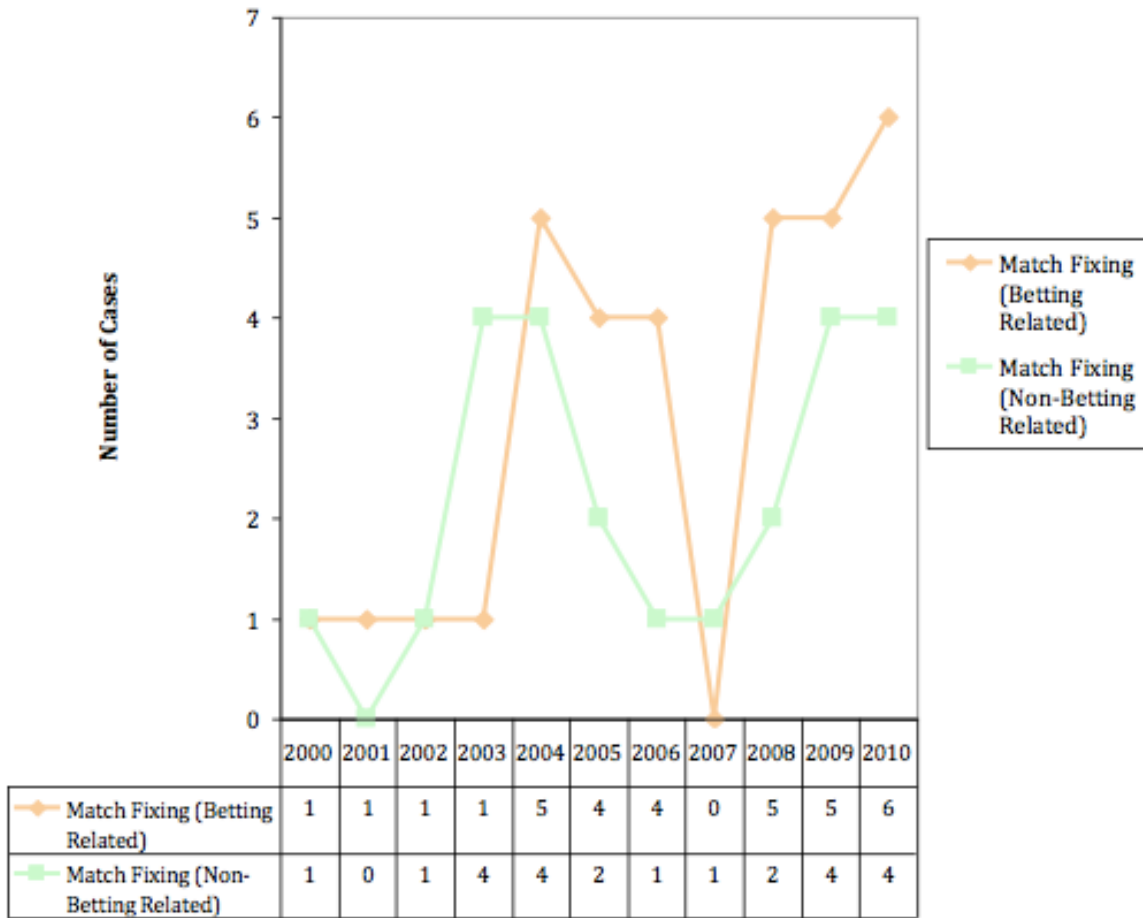
Level of connection	Psychological characteristics
<b>4 Allegiance</b>	Intrinsic consistency – Intrinsic influences most important
<b>3 Attachment</b>	Intrinsic features – Personal importance and meaning
<b>2 Attraction</b>	Extrinsic/intrinsic features – Dispositional influences
<b>1 Awareness</b>	Extrinsic features – Socialising agents/media

(Funk & James, 2001, p. 122)

Appendix B

Breakdown of Reported Cases of Betting and Non-Betting Related Match Fixing

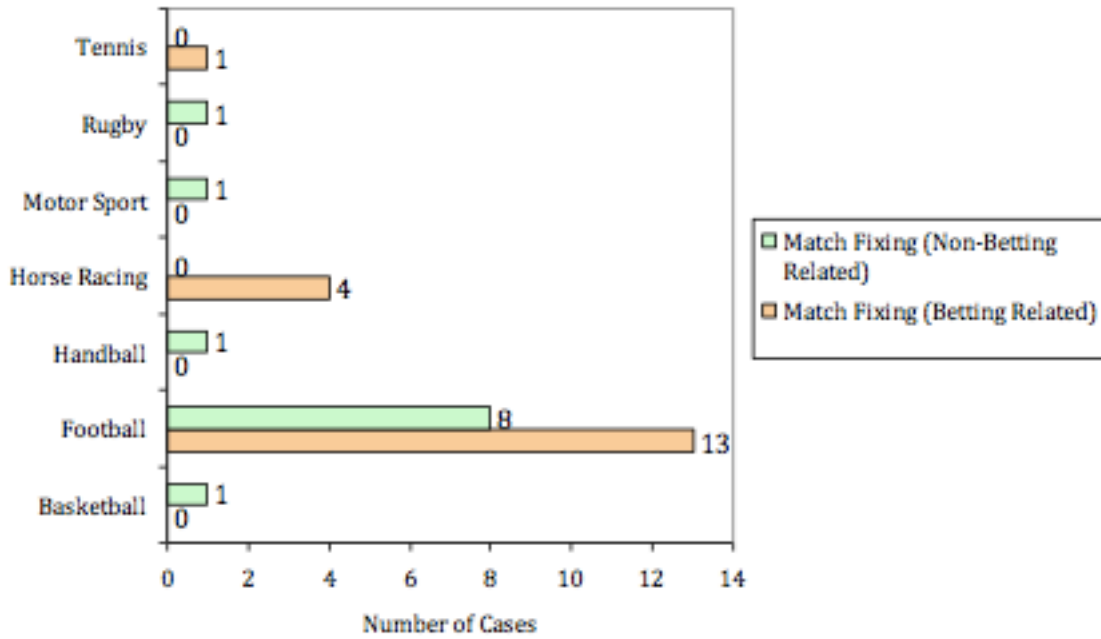
Between 2000-2010



(Gorse & Chadwick, 2011, p. 18)

Appendix C

Breakdown of Reported Cases of Match Fixing in Europe Between 2000-2010 by Sport



(Gorse & Chadwick, 2011, p. 20)

## Appendix D

## Interview Guide

1. Tell me about your first experience with the game of soccer/football.
2. Could you explain how the sport made you feel?
3. Do you support one of Manchester United or Real Madrid? If no, which club do you root for?
4. When did you first become aware of the match fixing phenomenon?
  - [Give Forrest (2012) definition about predetermined result]
5. What is your knowledge of the match fixing phenomenon now?
  - [Remind and discuss interviewee of their March 2013 tweet]
6. If possible, could you take me back to that day and describe your emotions?
7. How, if at all, has match fixing in soccer impacted your fandom?
8. [Depending on answer] What would need to be done for your fandom to return to pre-match fixing levels? ***OR*** Do you envision your fandom changing at all if this current trend continues?
9. Is there anything else you would like to discuss about match fixing?



## Appendix E

## Informed Consent

**Date:**

**Project Title:** When the Beautiful Game Turns Ugly: A Study of Fan Experiences of Perceived Match Fixing in Soccer

**Principal Investigator (PI):**

Adriano Lamberti, Masters of Arts (candidate) in Applied Health Sciences  
Department of Sport Management  
Brock University  
289-213-4269; all1ck@brocku.ca

**Faculty Supervisor:**

Dr. Craig Hyatt  
Associate Professor  
Department of Sport Management  
Brock University  
905-688-5550 Ext. 4382; chyatt@brocku.ca

**INVITATION**

You are invited to participate in a study that involves research. The purpose of this study is to develop a better understanding of soccer fans' experiences and attitudes towards match fixing in the sport.

**WHAT'S INVOLVED**

As a participant, who is 18 years of age or older, you will be asked to participate in an interview. If younger than 18, a parental consent form will have to be completed and sent back to the researcher before participating. You will be expected to answer questions that will be posed by the researcher and be actively involved with the discussion. All interviews will be audio recorded, which the researcher will use to transcribe the data collected from the interview at a later date. Participation will take approximately 30-60 minutes, depending on the level of discussion generated.

**POTENTIAL BENEFITS AND RISKS**

The benefit(s) of participation includes the opportunity to contribute to the overall body of knowledge within the field of sport management, specifically as it pertains to consumerism, soccer and match fixing. There are no known or anticipated risks associated with participation in this study.

**CONFIDENTIALITY**

To ensure confidentiality, interviews will be conducted in a private room, occupied by only the researcher. The information you provide will be kept confidential through the use of assigned code names or aliases, rather than your given name; however, with your permission, anonymous quotations may be used. Shortly after the interview has been

completed, I will send a copy of your interview transcript for you to read to confirm the accuracy of our conversation, and add or clarify any points that you wish. There is a limit to the level of confidentiality that can be assured as the research is being conducted over the Internet.

Interviews will be recorded using a digital voice recorder to ensure accurate reporting of participant responses; interview recordings will be permanently deleted after being transcribed by the researcher. Data collected during this study will be stored on the researcher's personal computer and a USB device, which will both be password protected. Data will be kept for three years, after which time all electronic copies will be deleted and any hard copies will be shredded and disposed of.

Access to this data will be restricted to the researcher, Adriano Lamberti, as well as Dr. Craig Hyatt, my faculty research supervisor, and Drs. Chris Chard, and Lucie Thibault, the thesis advisory committee members.

### **VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION**

Participation in this study is voluntary. If you wish, you may decline to answer any questions or participate in any component of the study. Further, you may decide to withdraw from this study at any time and may do so without any penalty.

### **PUBLICATION OF RESULTS**

Results of this study may be published in professional and/or academic journals and presented at conferences. Feedback about this study will be available from Adriano Lamberti via e-mail once the research study has been completed. Individual participants will not be identified in the possible publication from this research.

### **CONTACT INFORMATION AND ETHICS CLEARANCE**

If you have any questions about this study or require further information, please contact the Principal Investigator or the Faculty Supervisor (where applicable) using the contact information provided above. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at Brock University (13-105 - HYATT). If you have any comments or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Ethics Office at 905-688-5550 Ext. 3035, [reb@brocku.ca](mailto:reb@brocku.ca). Thank you for your assistance in this project. Please keep a copy of this form for your records.

### **CONSENT FORM**

I agree to participate in this study described above. I have made this decision based on the information I have read in the Informed Consent Letter. I have had the opportunity to receive any additional details I wanted about the study and understand that I may ask questions in the future. I understand that I may withdraw this consent at any time.

**YES** I agree to participate in this research study [\_\_\_\_\_]

**NO** I do not agree to participate in this research study [\_\_\_\_\_]

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix F

## Thank You Letter and Member Check

Hello [Name]:

Thank you once again for participating in my study! I have transcribed and attached the interview. You'll notice that your pseudonym is [pseudonym]. Please read the transcript to ensure that it is accurate. (By "accurate", I'm certainly not looking for you to edit this, as conversations are choppy by nature as people search for words in real time. I'm trying to ensure that there are no factual errors. I may have misheard a 15 as a 50, for example, and I'm hoping to avoid such inaccuracies in the data.) If you find any inaccuracies, please note them and let me know. If everything looks fine, please let me know that as well.

Have a great day,

Adriano

## Appendix G

## Commonly Used Twitter Terms

<b>Retweet:</b>	An original post repeated and forwarded by another user in order to propagate news. Retweets are commonly identified as such in a message or with the abbreviation RT.
<b>Reply:</b>	A tweet posted in response to another tweet. A reply is usually identified by the “at symbol”, @.
<b>Mentions:</b>	These are very similar to replies and occur when a user posts another user’s username within their tweet. Mentions are also identified by the “at symbol”, @.
<b>Keywords:</b>	These are identified by the hash tag (#). Users insert the hash tag before a keyword or topic. When clicked, the keyword brings up all tweets that are relevant to that keyword or topic.
<b>Plain:</b>	These are tweets that contain no replies, retweets or mentions.
<b>Via:</b>	Twitter indicates where a tweet was posted from. Common sources include; Twitter, TweekDeck, various mobile devices and the Web.
<b>Followers:</b>	Not all Twitter users post status updates. Some simply follow those who do by subscribing to their tweets. In turn, they receive status updates on their accounts. Both statistics appear on a user’s profile page.

(Wasike, 2013, p. 9)

## Appendix H

## Participant Profile Summary

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Supports</b>	<b>Residence</b>	<b>(Re)Tweet</b>	<b>Occupation</b>
<b>Randy</b>	Male	Early 40's	English clubs & USA	Suburban Cleveland, Ohio	Tweet (green)	Freelance political writer
<b>Julian</b>	Male	Early 30's	Benfica & Portugal	Suburban Toronto, Ontario	Tweet (green)	Bank operations analyst
<b>Ricky</b>	Male	Early 40's	Manchester United	Johannesburg, South Africa	Tweet (green)	Software sales director
<b>Jamie</b>	Male	Late 20's	Manchester United	Manchester, England	Tweet (green)	Employment consultant
<b>Bobby</b>	Male	Early 20's	AC Milan & Italy	Boston, Massachusetts	Tweet (green)	Professional footballer
<b>Sarah</b>	Female	Mid 20's	Arsenal & South Africa	Cape Town, South Africa	Tweet (green)	Sports journalist
<b>Jim</b>	Male	Teen	Ajax, Chelsea, & Netherlands	Almelo, Netherlands	Retweet	Student
<b>Sam</b>	Male	Early 20's	Manchester United	Leeds, England	Tweet (green)	Student
<b>Lucy</b>	Female	Mid 50's	Manchester United	North Wales, Wales	Retweet	Unemployed
<b>Cory</b>	Male	Early 20's	Manchester United & USA	Suburban New York City, New York	Retweet	Unemployed
<b>Trevor</b>	Male	Teen	Manchester United	Birmingham, England	Retweet	Student
<b>Phil</b>	Male	Mid 20's	Manchester United	London, England	Tweet (green)	Rehabilitation officer

Detailed breakdown:

- Male-to-female ratio — 10:2
- Average age — 28.8 years
- Continental representation — Europe: 6, North America: 4, Africa: 2
- Tweet-to-retweet ratio — 8:4

Appendix I

Participant Theme Contribution Summary

	Category #1			Category #2				Category #3						
	Skepticism	Cover-ups	Favouritism	Unchanged	Minimal	Deescalating	Projected	Transparency	Referees	Consequences	Technology	Gambling		Helplessness
<b>Randy</b>	X	X	X	X			X		X					6
<b>Julian</b>	X		X	X			X		X		X		X	7
<b>Ricky</b>	X		X			X		X	X			X		6
<b>Jamie</b>	X			X								X	X	4
<b>Bobby</b>		X	X	X			X							4
<b>Sarah</b>	X				X		X	X					X	5
<b>Jim</b>	X			X										2
<b>Sam</b>		X					X			X	X			4
<b>Lucy</b>		X				X								2
<b>Cory</b>	X				X		X	X	X	X		X		7
<b>Trevor</b>	X			X				X	X	X				5
<b>Phil</b>		X			X		X	X						4
	8	5	4	6	3	2	7	5	5	3	2	3	3	

**Category #1: Fan Attitudes and Emotions During Match Fixing Era**

Themes: Skepticism, Cover-ups, and Favouritism

**Category #2: Impacts on Fandom**

Themes: Unchanged, Minimal, Deescalating, and Projected

**Category #3: Issues and Suggested Changes to Improve the Game’s Perception**

Themes: Transparency, Referees, Consequences, Technology, Gambling, and Helplessness

## Appendix J

## Letter of Invitation

**Title of Study: When the Beautiful Game Turns Ugly: A Study of Fan Experiences of Perceived Match Fixing in Soccer**

Principal Investigator: Adriano Lamberti, Graduate Student, Sport Management, Brock University

Co-investigators: Dr. Craig Hyatt, Associate Professor, Department of Sport Management, Brock University; Dr. Lucie Thibault, Associate Professor, Department of Sport Management, Brock University; Dr. Chris Chard, Associate Professor, Department of Sport Management, Brock University

I, Adriano Lamberti, Graduate Student from the Department of Sport Management at Brock University, invite you to participate in a research project entitled “When the Beautiful Game Turns Ugly: A Study of Fan Experiences of Perceived Match Fixing in Soccer.” In our study, we wish for football fans to answer the following research question: What has it been like to live through this era of match fixing in soccer? We seek approximately 15 participants who mentioned match fixing as it pertained to a March 5<sup>th</sup> UEFA Champions League match between Real Madrid and Manchester United. Study participants will be asked to participate in a videoconference interview that will last approximately 30-60 minutes. We ask that each participant is 18 years of age or older in addition to filling out an informed consent and demographic form.

This research should benefit sport marketing scholars who are trying to better understand the behaviours, thoughts, and feelings of sport consumers.

If you have any pertinent questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Brock University Research Ethics Officer (905 688-5550 ext. 3035, reb@brocku.ca)

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you,

Adriano Lamberti  
Graduate Student, Sport Management  
Brock University  
St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada  
289 213 4269  
all1ck@brocku.ca

## Appendix K

## Reminder Notice E-mail

Hello [Name]:

Thank you again for agreeing to participate in my study on fans' experiences of match fixing in the beautiful game. This e-mail is a friendly reminder that we are scheduled to meet for an interview on Skype/FaceTime at [date and time of interview]. If you cannot make this time, please let me know so we can reschedule at your convenience. If this date and time still works for you then I look forward to our discussion on [date and time]!

Chat soon,

Adriano



## Appendix L

## Demographic Questionnaire

Demographic Questionnaire for Participants of the *When the Beautiful Game Turns Ugly: A Study of Fan Experiences of Perceived Match Fixing in Soccer* study.

1) What is your gender?     \_\_\_ Male     \_\_\_ Female

2) What is your age?     \_\_\_\_\_

3) What is your ethnicity?

\_\_\_ Caucasian

\_\_\_ Asian

\_\_\_ Hispanic

\_\_\_ African

\_\_\_ British

\_\_\_ Other: Please identify \_\_\_\_\_

4) What is your marital status?

\_\_\_ Married

\_\_\_ Widowed

\_\_\_ Single

\_\_\_ Other

\_\_\_ Divorced

5) What is your level of education?

\_\_\_ Some high school/Secondary school

\_\_\_ College/university graduate

\_\_\_ High/secondary school graduate

\_\_\_ Advanced degree holder (Master's/PhD)

\_\_\_ Some college/university

6) What is your current occupation?

\_\_\_\_\_

7) What is your current place of residence?

\_\_\_\_\_



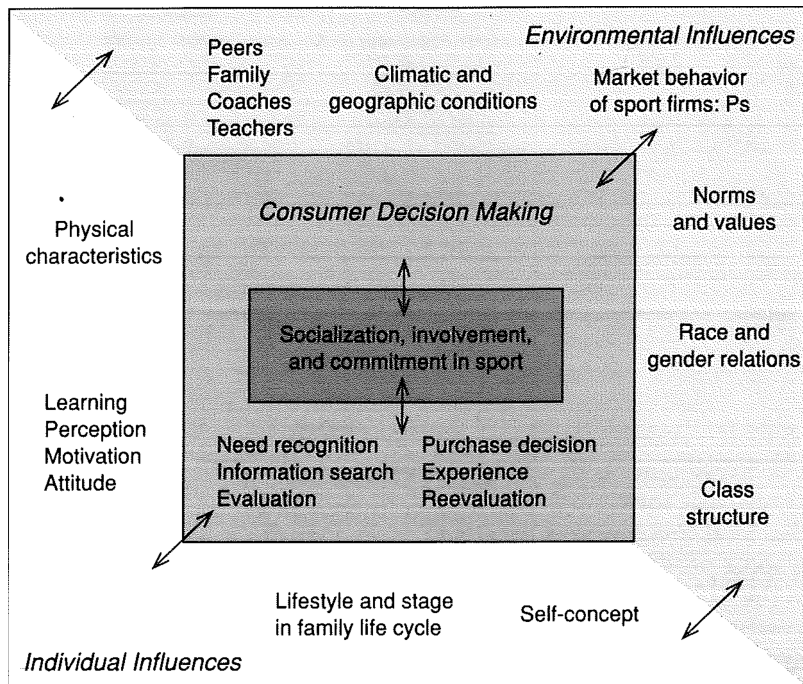
## Appendix N

## Word Usage Breakdown in Tweets and Interviews

<b>Word(s)</b>	<b>Frequency in 283 Tweets</b>	<b>Frequency in 12 Interviews</b>
<b>Match</b>	313	176
<b>Fix / Fixed / Fixing</b>	302	169
<b>Ref(s) / Referee(s)</b>	48	118
<b>Decision(s)</b>	37	44
<b>Turk / Turkey / Turkish</b>	29	12
<b>Investigate(s/d) / Investigation(s)</b>	29	12
<b>Nani</b>	21	23
<b>Various Expletives</b>	18	11
<b>Cheat(s) / Cheated / Cheating</b>	14	13
<b>Disgrace / Disgraceful</b>	14	0
<b>Cüneyt and/or Çakir</b>	13	1
<b>Scandal</b>	12	14
<b>Wonder(s)</b>	10	8
<b>Worse / Worst</b>	10	2
<b>Question(s) / Questionable</b>	10	20
<b>Ruin(s) / Ruined / Ruining / Ruiner</b>	10	8
<b>Robbed</b>	6	7
<b>Joke</b>	6	5
<b>Money</b>	5	49
<b>Disgust</b>	3	0

Appendix O

Consumer Behaviour in Sport



(Mullin et al., 1993, p.61)