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SPORTS FANDOM IN LATER LIFE:
THE EVERYDAY, NOSTALGIA AND HOME

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A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Copyright Statement

Declaration

I declare that the work in this thesis is my own. It should be noted that some of the content in the following document has been published prior to the submission of this thesis. This is mostly in Chapter Seven, which is based on the below journal article (Smith, 2019). I highlight within the thesis where my work has been published previously. I have also presented my work at various conferences during my PhD studies. These are also listed.

Publications:

> Smith, J. A. (2019). "Destabilization, adaptation and the long-term fan object: The search for continuity in later-life sports fandom", *Journal of Fandom Studies*, 7(2), pp169-188.

Conference presentations:

> PSA Sport & Politics Conference 2019, 'Sport and the Politics of Identity', Aston University, Birmingham. Presented a paper entitled: *Distancing, adaptation and mellowing: The importance of sports fandom in later life identity construction.*

> Fan Studies Network 2019, University of Portsmouth. Presented a paper entitled: *"I like to put me nose on the telly": Destabilisation, adaptation and the search for continuity in later-life sports fandom.*

> Fan Studies Network 2018, Cardiff University. Presented a paper entitled: *The Role of Multiple Sports Fandoms in Constructions of the Ageing Self.*

> Fan Studies Network 2017, University of Huddersfield. Presented a mini-paper on interview methods as part of the conference's 'Speed Geeking' panel.

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Firstly, to Cornel and Ben. A superb supervisory team who have helped me more than they probably know. I feel genuinely lucky to have been able to work with both. They have done their best to turn me from being an average media professional into something resembling an actual academic, and helped me to realise what I wanted to do with my life.

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Thirdly, to the rest of my family: Nan, Mum, Dad, Beth, Ellie and recent addition Shadow (we also have fish but I think naming them is a bit much). All are great, supportive, motivating people who have stuck by me despite my apparent determination to turn this into the first decade-long PhD.

Finally, all of my friends who have helped in their own ways through the journey, from our 'PhD pals' gang, Sophie, flatmates Ben and Zoë – all of you (and more) have proven to me just how important it is to have a strong, reliable network to lean on.

Thank you all.

In memory of...

Gordon Smith
1938-2020

My Grandad. We had season tickets at Blundell Park – K99 & 99 – until I moved away to university. Had the best stories. I miss him a great deal. He even had a catchphrase (unbeknown to him):
"... and I'll tell you why..."

Angie Robinson
1953-2018

Offered unwavering support, even when she didn't have a clue what I was going on about. Absolutely bursting with love and kindness. I've never had the privilege to know anybody else quite like her.

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Abstract

This thesis considers the role of sports fandom in the lives of older adults who have left full-time employment. It looks at the centrality of the fan object in the (semi-)retired person's life, the ways in which it helps to structure life after full-time work, and the various ways in which it guides identity construction during the last life phases.

Whilst we are starting to see more work focusing on fandom, ageing and the life course, 'there is a tendency in this literature to discuss aging and the life course atheoretically, ignoring a rich body of scholarship in gerontology, sociology, psychology and human development that examines how lives unfold over time' (Harrington & Bielby, 2010: 430). This thesis seeks to address such shortcomings by working with the ageing sciences – gerontology in particular – to help make sense of the relationship between fan and fan object across what are often very long time periods.

The following thesis covers later life sports fandom in the context of everyday living, arguing that the fan object becomes embedded within the quotidian, helping to routinise fandom and nurture ontological security. It uses the gerontological notion of continuity theory (Atchley, 1989, 1993, 1999) to assess how older fans maintain very long fan-object relationships, arguing that the fan constructs internal "good" objects during their life course. It overviews the later life sports fan's use of nostalgia, with a particular emphasis on what I call 'reconstructive nostalgia' (based on Boym, 2001) as a means of manipulating the contemporary fan-text relationship. Finally, it considers notions of 'home', the dwelling in which fan objects are mostly engaged with, and fandom as an extension of the German concept *Heimat*, which contributes to the creation of '*Heimatic* spaces' (Bennett, 2017) in which fandom in later life is experienced. The later life fan is a creative, imaginative individual.

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Chapter One: Introduction

This introduction sets the scene for the thesis to come. It outlines its main parameters, its aims and objectives, and, more broadly, offers this project's *raison d'etre*. The first part of the chapter offers a general justification of the importance of conducting research on ageing and older demographics, and why analysing the ways in which older people engage with cultural phenomena is equally as important. The section then goes on to define what I mean by the terms "fan" and "fandom", offers an overview of this project's original contribution to the field and ends with a chapter-by-chapter breakdown of the thesis.

This work is situated in the field of fan studies, though it also fits into the field of gerontology, the study of ageing. The average age of the 35 participants with whom I worked during this project is 72.5 – quite significantly older than most research in the field of fan studies (Harrington & Bielby, 2010), though positively ordinary for the field of gerontology. First and foremost, however, the focus of this thesis is on fandom, and the ways in which people who have left the realms of full-time employment engage with their favourite cultural artefacts. It concerns how people navigate the later parts of their lives – the third and fourth life ages (Phillipson, 2006) to be more precise – during a time of greater individuation than ever before (Bauman, 2000, 2005), and also greater uncertainty with regards the journey through late life (Settersten, 2007), and examines the role of these people's fan objects in navigating that journey. It is a work on identity, belonging, psychological adaptation to potentially existential uncertainty and finding meaning and contentedness in the later life ages.

1.1 What I mean by "fandom"

In a thesis focussing on sports fandom, it is important to have a clear definition of what the work takes to mean by the term "fandom". Unfortunately, as Baym (2007) notes, the scholars who contribute to the field of fan studies do not universally agree on what constitutes "fandom". At the risk of oversimplifying the issue, there are broadly two schools of thought on the meaning. The first, more well-established definition, is predicated on sociality: 'a collective of people organized socially around their shared appreciation of a pop culture object or objects' (Baym, 2007: no pagination). This is the position which is most widely adopted in the fan studies literature (see, for example, Brennan, 2014; Brooker, 2002; Fiske, 1992; Hellekson & Busse, 2006; Pearson, 2010). It is part of a general trend in which fans are seen as "other" to mainstream audiences. Dittmer & Dodds (2008: 450) suggest that fans are 'marginalised deviants', something which 'is recognised in communities of fandom, which both serve as a

refuge for these "deviants" to express their pleasure in popular culture and also inculcate community standards in fans regarding their public representation'.

The second definition of fandom is much more individuated. Its initial focus is on the individual's experience, the feeling of a close personal connection with an object or objects. Sandvoss (2005: 8), for example, defines fandom as 'the regular, emotionally involved consumption of a given popular narrative or text'. Duffett (2013: 2), albeit writing specifically about "media fandom", suggests that it 'is the recognition of a positive, personal, relatively deep, emotional connection with a mediated element of popular culture'. Grossberg (1992) opens up the definition of "fandom" to include even non-popular cultural artefacts:

> In fact, everyone is constantly a fan of various sorts of things, for one cannot exist in a world where nothing matters (including the fact that nothing matters). In fact, I think that what we today describe as a 'fan' is the contemporary articulation of a necessary relationship which has historically constituted the popular, involving relationships to such diverse things as labor, religion, morality and politics. Thus, there is no reason why the fan relationship is located primarily on the terrain of commercial popular culture.
>
> (Grossberg 1992: 63)

I read Grossberg, here, as embedding fandom within the everyday lived experience of each and every individual. The fannish processes, the psychic structures behind what we term "fandom" might be found in object-relation *beyond* the realm of popular culture. Whilst this is not the place to enter the debate on whether worshipping a deity would count as venerating a fan object, it is undeniable that there are parallels between that which we traditionally call "fandom" and other, highly personal behaviours and object relationships. This thesis takes the second, more (initially) individualistic definition of fandom as its starting point.

A definition of fandom such as this risks downplaying the complexity of the *process* of fandom. For instance, to suggest that somebody is a fan 'of something', in the singular, is to do a disservice to that individual's wider fannish interests. Williams (2015: 4) notes that often 'fan studies work has been monolithic in approach, with research focussing on single fan communities'. It is too simplistic to label somebody as being merely a *Star Wars* fan (i.e. Brooker, 2002), or a *Star Trek* fan (i.e. Jenkins, 1992) without acknowledgement that their fandom is part of a wider interconnected web of fan objects. This web might have a broadly science-fiction flavour to it, or it might have a general 'space' theme; it might be predicated on Harrison Ford texts, or all of the above. The fan-object relationship does not exist in isolation, it is always part of a larger whole, which is the idiosyncratic experiential construction of the individual. Of course, this is not to suggest that one cannot belong to part of a fan group; and referring to that fan group as a single entity is not necessarily a waste of time, so long as it is

appreciated that characteristics attributed to a particular fan group refers only to an *aspect* of that fan group and does not describe all who count that object as a fan object. That all football fans are homogenised as hooligans, for example, is a notion which has surprisingly found its way into contemporary fan studies literature. Duffett, despite noting himself that fans are often analysed singularly in groups which are 'falsely bounded' (2013: 29), suggests that sports fandom is 'very different' to media fandom, describing it as 'ultimately tribal and based on a controlled, competitive mentality' which 'raises passionate instincts that are significantly different in both meaning and intensity to those associated with enjoying television, music or cinema' (2013: 3). He offers an example of when a mass brawl broke out during a screening of a UEFA Cup match in Manchester's Piccadilly Square and goes on to claim other fandoms 'are not generally associated with the atmosphere of drunken bravado and mass violence that can spoil sporting fixtures' (*ibid*). It is an unfair, lazy stereotype which forgets about the range of behaviours and types of fan that sports fandom includes (sports fans are also television audiences, at big screenings are a kind of 'cinema' audience; they are in-person event attenders, and so on).

I see fandom as a two-tier psychic system. It consists of a symbiotic relationship between the (perceived) external (fan) object and an internalised object. Here I make use of Hills's (2018a) notion of the "good" and "bad" fan objects, whereby the fan carries with them an internalised "good" version of their object at all times, but is able to "bracket off" and separate that idealised internalisation if the fan text with which they are engaging does not represent that perfection. The fan, in effect, is able to create two objects out of the same text: one, personalised, idealised internalisation, based on past positive subjective experience, and another, rejected object which is seen as "other" to the subject's main idea of what constitutes their fan object. In the figure below, I (crudely) attempt to sketch my own two-tier process. At the centre of the sketch is the self. On the first ring out from the centre is the (Internal) Fan-Object Relationship. This is the internalised, "good" fan object to which Hills (2018a) refers. This works in very close conjunction with the self (indeed, the internalised fan object is an extension of self – see Sandvoss 2003, 2005). The outer ring I have labelled as the (External) Fan-Text Relationship. This is slightly different to the "bad" object of Hills's, though it forever has the potential to be the "bad" object. To simplify the process: the subject experiences their fan object through this level first – this is the fan text which the individual interacts with (the film, the television show, the song, the football match). Interaction at the textual level acts as a kind of sieve, filtering the (external) text and ultimately letting through to the internalised "good" object those aspects of the text which are worthy of placement within the idealised internalisation. Aspects of the text which do not tally with that of the internalised "good" object are then othered and separated as the "bad" object.

Key:
(I) F-O R = (Internal) Fan-Object Relationship
(E) F-T R = (External) Fan-Text Relationship
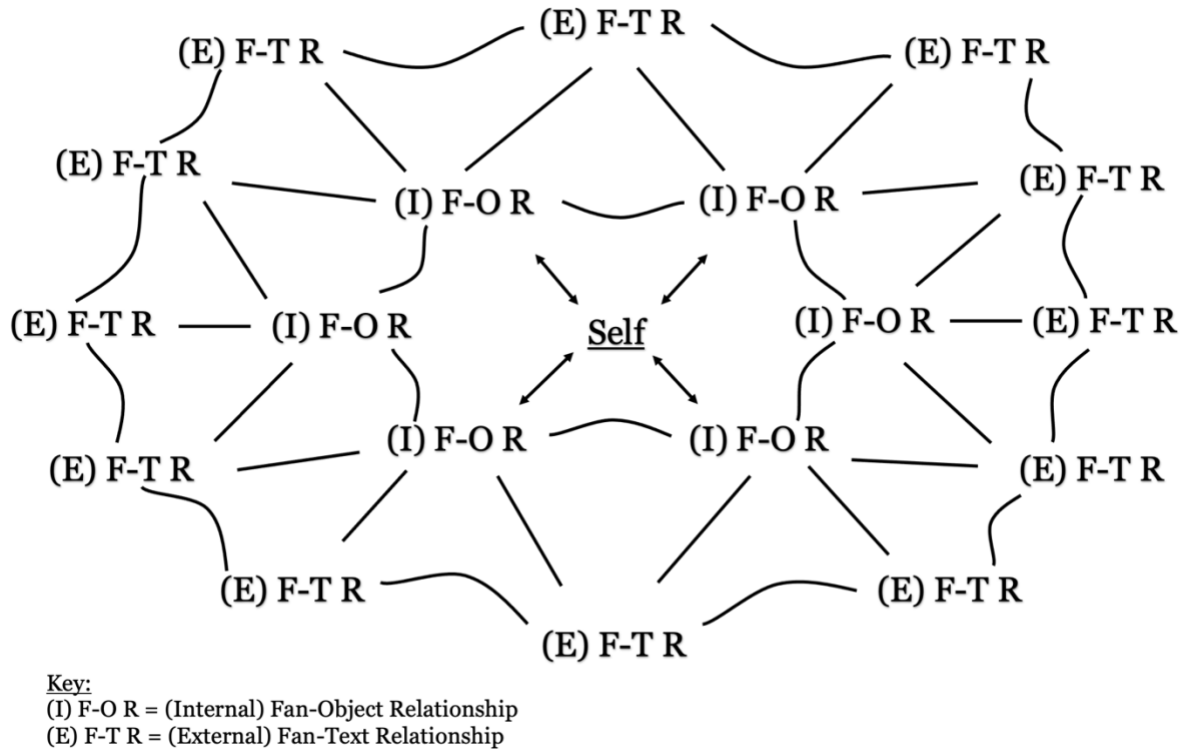
Figure 1 The (internal) fan-object--(external)fan-text relationship

It should be noted that there are more "(E) F-T R"s than "(I) F-O R"s on the sketch. This is a conscious decision and represents the huge number of textual objects that we encounter – and juggle – across the life course. The point of this layer is that fan-text relationships are ephemeral (relative to the life course). No fan-text relationships last long; later I will argue that those who believe they *do* relate to the same text for decades, such as a football club or soap opera, *do not*, in fact, relate to the same text but, in the everchanging world in which we live, constantly *re*-engage with new (but similar) texts. The subjective consistency comes from a long-term relationship with the much more static internal "good" object. This second layer is much more concrete in comparison to the fan-text level. What I am essentially arguing, here, is that the actual fan *text* is, at any one point, merely an ephemeral cultural artefact which has coalesced in the moment, and may or may not, may be closer or further away from, representing that individual's notion of their "good" object. The object which has longevity is the *internalised "good" object* which the individual carries around with them, and which they have spent years moulding.

This slight reworking of our notion of "fandom" comes off the back of Ross Garner's (2018) observations on what he terms 'intraobject antifandom' and associated works on antifandom (Gray, 2003, 2005, 2010; Click, 2007 – also see Click's [2019] edited collection). What you might call the 'classic view' of antifandom positions the fan in relation to two texts – the text

to which they a fan of, and that positioned as the Other; sports fandom offering arguably the most prescient example (Theodoropoulou, 2007). However what Garner (2018) observes in his autoethnography of, among others, his own Manic Street Preachers fandom, is that he is an 'antifan' of certain, smaller aspects of his Manic Street Preachers megatext. He dislikes one of the band's albums, taking particular umbrage with one song, and makes the accurate observation that the classic view of antifandom is far too simplistic; fans often dislike *aspects* of their own fan objects. He coins 'intraobject antifandom' as a means of adapting antifan theory. Fan studies too often obsesses over the text, paying only secondary consideration to the human being who is engaging with said cultural artefact. As Garner does, we need to strip away the text as being *the most* important part of our theorising of fandom – there are more intricate relationships between fan and fan object which need to be explored. As noted, one's fandom is driven by self (Sandvoss, 2005). It is the 'seeing' of self in an object which is the most important thing here, not the text. Indeed, as Sandvoss (2005) observes, fans 'see' different things in the same text – things which mirror their own notions of self. In his autoethnography, Garner (2018) refers to Sandvoss's (2005) work in much the same way, acknowledging the role self plays in textual engagement and agreeing that his dislike of *Lifeblood*, the album he detests, is down to the fact that it 'compromises the discourses which generate and sustain my [Manic Street Preachers] fan identity' (Garner, 2018: 101). In other words, the underlying psychic structures which define Garner's Manic Street Preachers fandom are intact as a whole, but a particular aspect of the Manic Street Preachers text – the album *Lifeblood* – does not 'fit in' with his internalised "good" object. Indeed, it is highly unlikely that *anybody's* fandom concurs *precisely* with their "good" fan object one hundred percent, plus Garner makes the well-established point that a fan may fall out of love with an object before rekindling their affection at a later point once those discourses which generate and sustain a fan identity return (or, rather, are once again perceived).

Fan studies has touched on the notion of "separate" textual readings from its very earliest days. Jenkins (1992), for instance, writes:

> Fans recognize that their relationship to the text remains a tentative one, that their pleasures often exist on the margins of the original text and in the face of the producer's own efforts to regulate its meanings. While fans display a particularly strong attachment to popular narratives, act upon them in ways which make them their own property in some senses, they are also acutely and painfully aware that those fictions do not belong to them and that someone else has the power to do things to those characters that are in direct contradiction to the fans' own cultural interests. Sometimes fans respond to this situation with a worshipful deference to media producers, yet, often they respond with hostility and anger against those who have the power to "retool" their narratives into something radically different from that which the audience desires.
>
> (Jenkins, 1992: 24)

Jenkins, here, writes about the fan *group*, but it could easily be read as referring to the individual fan. Shift the apostrophe on "fans'" in the seventh line in the above quote and suddenly we have a process which is remarkably similar to the psychodynamic process espoused by Garner (2018), Hills (2018a) and myself. Problematically, fan studies often takes Jenkins's position to mean that there ought to be a "correct" reading from any one text, thus positioning the poacher fan (Jenkins, 1992) beyond the realm of "ordinary" textual reading. Writing in the expanded twentieth anniversary edition of *Textual Poachers*, Stein (2013: 351) questions this, by asking: 'With the increased visibility of fan interpretations via digital media in recent decades, do fans necessarily still perceive their position as marginal and in opposition to producer's efforts [sic] to regulate meaning?' She offers the examples of slash fans of the BBC's *Sherlock* 'when the queer subtext is visibly called out [online] repeatedly through the series' and questions how 'various parings in FOX's *Glee*, from the "canonical" Kurt and Blaine to the non-canonical Rachel and Quinn, fit into this picture of marginality and resistance?' (*ibid*). Whilst Stein's questions do mark a move *away* from "correct" textual readings, and towards a kind of universal variety in readings thanks to the rise of the internet and greater mainstreaming (i.e. visibility) of different fannish reading, the bedrock on which fan studies is founded is on the "one", "standard", "correct" reading, and fans' positionality in relation to this.

To me, it is clear that one's fandom is an underlying structure which is only ever 'met' via cultural ephemera coalescing into a textual mirror which is clear enough for one to 'see' oneself *some of the time*. We ought to focus on these underlying structures and the motivations for their construction in the psyche of the individual, before then going on to analyse how the individual utilises cultural artefacts in a bid to 'see' these underlying structures. We must avoid the temptation to overlay the textual world onto our psychic one, because the fit is not snug. A blanket application favours nobody and instead confuses the study of fandom which if seen, in its most fundamental light, as cultural object-relation, is plenty difficult enough to theorise without forcing the two to fit together (for a discussion on analysing the reader/text relationship see Sandvoss [2007]).

1.2 The importance of research on ageing

There are a few reasons as to why it is important to conduct research on the ageing process, and to speak to people about the experience of growing older. Firstly, and perhaps most obviously, this older demographic is growing in size year-on-year due to the global trend of population ageing (Pilipiec, Groot & Pavlova, 2021), albeit with some variance in the rates of ageing between countries (Vogel, Ludwig & Börsch-Supan, 2015); a phenomenon which is,

incidentally, predicted to become exacerbated post-Covid as "lesser-developed" countries struggle to bring mortality rates in their older generations down (Harper, 2021). The general ageing issue, however, is still prominent. Indeed, only thirteen years ago *The Journal of Population Ageing* (2008-) was launched alongside the myriad ageing journals already in circulation. Writing in the first volume's introduction, Harper & Leeson (2008) note that the previous century showed a consistent trend for the populations of more economically developed countries to grow older, with an expectation that the less economically developed countries are following just behind ('the measure of ageing being an increase in the percentage of those over 60 years, and a decrease in those under 15 years' [1]). At the launch of the journal, it was expected that, by 2050, the world will have an over-60 population of more than two billion, including over 25 million centenarians. This will be a cohort which, for the first time in human history, outnumbers the world's younger demographics (*ibid*).

Japan offers one of the most vivid examples of the impacts of population ageing. Life expectancy in the country has long since topped 80 years for both men and women. Indeed, in the latest statistics released by the Japanese government ahead of the country's annual Respect the Aged Day (2021), it was announced that the number of centenarians in Japan has reached the 80,000 mark for the first time, which in turn means that one in every 1,500 people in Japan is aged 100 years or older (Parry, 2020; Spary & Wakatsuki, 2020). The shift in the makeup of Japan's population has been really quite staggering, over what amounts to a relatively short period of time. Indeed, Japan's National Institute of Population and Social Security Research predicts a quickening of the country's ageing problem (JNIPSSR – www.ipss.go.jp). In 1965, 6.3 percent of the population was aged 65 and over. It is forecast that by 2065, one century on, people over the age of 65 will represent 38.4% of the population – an enormous increase. The institute predicts that, by the year 2040, a quarter of all household 'breadwinners' in the country will be aged 75 years or older. This represents a huge projected population shift for a country who, between 1920 and 1950, saw its entire over-75 population hovering between 1.3 and 1.1 percent (*The Japan Times*, 2019, 2020 – online). Now it is predicted that a large proportion of its workforce will soon be in that age bracket and, come 2065, it is predicted that a quarter of the country's *entire population* will be aged 75 and over (*ibid*). The image below (*Figure 2*) offers a pictorial overview of the shift in shape of Japan's population, from the first, pyramid-shaped chart from 1965 in the top-left, to the predicted, inverted pyramid of 2065 on the bottom-right.
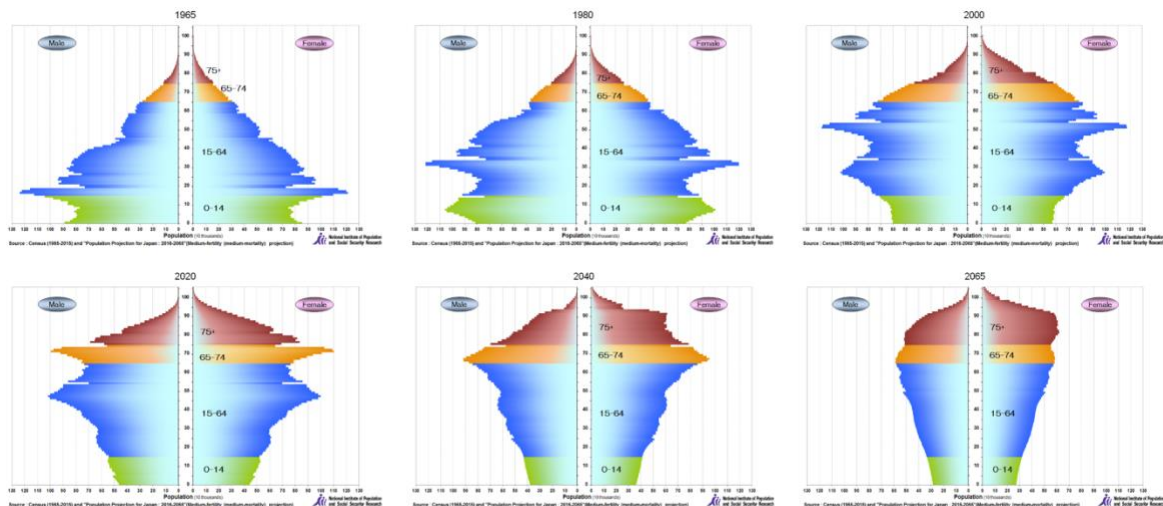
Figure 2: Japan's population evolution 1965-2065 (from Japan's National Institute of Population and Social Security Research – www.ipss.go.jp.

The United Kingdom, the country in which this research project has been conducted, is not experiencing population ageing on quite the same scale as Japan, however it is still significant (Ediev, 2011), thanks mainly to a drop in mortality rates among older demographics as healthcare has improved (Milligan & Wise, 2015). By 2050, it has been predicted that nearly a quarter of the UK's population will be over 65 years of age (Howse & Harper, 2008). As Leeson (2018: 113) points out: 'Growing old in societies dominated demographically by young people is fundamentally different from growing old in societies dominated demographically by older people'. It is vitally important that we conduct as much research as possible with our ever-ageing population, as it is this phenomenon which is literally changing the social fabric of our global society. We must develop a healthier appreciation of, and relation to, older demographics.

Thus, another very important reason to conduct research on the ageing process is as a resistance against the stigmatism of ageism, an issue which, according the World Health Organisation (2015), may even be more prevalent than racial or gender prejudices across the globe. It was a similar reason why the study of fandom first arose in the latter parts of the twentieth century (Gray, Sandvoss & Harrington, 2007, 2017). Much like there was plenty of evidence of the pathologising of fans at the birth of fan studies, so, too, is there plenty of evidence of our living in an ageist society. This evidence ranges from the relatively mundane, everyday selling of a raft of "anti-ageing" products designed to keep the ageing process at bay, as though the later life stages are some sort of forbidden realm which we must prevent journeying to at all costs, to the presentation of ageing in the media – which contributes to the aforementioned. Older women working in the media industry are particularly vulnerable to ageism, principally in the form of 'lookism', 'the widespread practice of commenting upon and

judging the appearance of others, [...] fuelled by demanding appearance norms that spell out the standards that need to be met to be presentable to others and to look beautiful' (Mason, 2021: 1). The BBC presenters Sue Barker (64), Jenni Murray (70) and Libby Purves (70) were forced to leave their roles presenting *A Question of Sport*, *Woman's Hour*, and *Midweek* respectively, around the same time in 2020, with the former accusing the corporation of age-based lookism. Writing in the *Guardian*, Hirsch (2020), a media professional, acknowledges the pressures women face in trying to stay looking "young" for on-screen appearances, and also notes that 'this is true even for radio, now that video clips are used on social media and photography on the BBC Sounds app' (Hirsch, 2020, *Guardian* online).

Levels of poverty in old age, particularly in those over the age of 75, are very high in the United Kingdom. In 2017, poverty levels were 18.5 percent for the over-75s compared to 11 percent for the rest of the population (OECD, 2017). The coronavirus pandemic also exposed ageism – a term first defined by Butler (1969) – in the United Kingdom. The way in which older people – particularly care home residents (Hanage, 2021) – were treated during this time, with the travesty that was the releasing of thousands of infectious patients from hospital settings into care homes full of vulnerable people without adequate testing, resulting in the deaths of at least 42,000 (BBC 2021, ONS), offers some proof of the elderly being treated like second-class citizens. This demographic was the oldest-old, though the younger-old are also experiencing the impact of the pandemic as those over 50 have lost more jobs as a cohort than any other working demographic (Hill, 2021a), and those same people are more than twice as likely to suffer long-term unemployment, if they lose their job during the pandemic (Hill, 2021b).

In light of all of this, the individual's cultural interests are what remain as the *de facto* anchor of consistency in their lives. The fan object's centrality to the life of the fan cannot be understated. Harrington & Bielby (2014: 137) collate an excellent quote from Cavicchi's (1998) well-known work on long-term Bruce Springsteen fans:

> Fans are consciously engaged with the ways in which Springsteen's music works to shape their experiences and perceptions... [Fans'] study of Springsteen's music and the ways in which they use the music to make sense of the world around them both fit together to form a complex kind of listening: while fans interpret Springsteen's music in terms of their experiences, the music works to influence and shape their experiences... Listening involves creating associations between the music and experience; in fandom, the two become so entangled that it is difficult to locate the music's meaning without talking about fans' personal lives.
> (Cavicchi, 1998, in Harrington & Bielby, 2014: 137)

The rapidly ageing populations that we are seeing across the globe calls for research into the ways in which older people navigate the world. Much is being done in this regard. From

analysing care home residents' most comfortable room temperatures across different climates (Forcada *et al.*, 2021) to establishing new designs for user interfaces in an ageing world (see Johnson & Finn, 2017), we are gradually building a more detailed map of the experiences of later life. As Driessen (2015: 193) argues, it is 'vital to explore ageing, the life-course and the longevity of a fandom as independent variables'; no two people are the same. An individual does not simply belong to a particular fan culture, neatly bracketed off from the rest of society. An individual's fannish life is, whilst often perfectly neat and orderly from their own perspective, positively messy when considered in relation to other idiosyncratic individuals. During the build-up to the delayed Euro 2020 football tournament, and amidst the backdrops of a failed breakaway European Super League and the debate about footballers 'taking the knee' in a peaceful pre-match protest against racial inequality (met with boos of derision from some football fans inside English stadiums), Barney Ronay (2021) writes in the *Guardian* that, in spite of the chaos that often follows elite sport (particularly top-level football), it is tempting to look for the single story. In the context of Euro 2020(21), this is 'a grand coming out after the fear and claustrophobia of the past year', a celebration of freedom and the returning to 'normality'. 'Sport may demand this kind of straight-line narrative,' Ronay writes. 'The real world travels in zigzags' (*Guardian* online). It is the centrality of the sports fan object within the zigzagging of later life experience that is the main focus of this thesis. Fan studies can contribute to an understanding of this process greatly.

1.3 Chapter-by-chapter breakdown

Following this introduction, the thesis is split into a further seven chapters: a literature review, methodology, four analytical chapters and a conclusion. Chapter Two offers a three-part literature review. This is due to the multi-disciplinary nature of the research project. The first part of the literature review concerns the field of fan studies, given that this is the main field into which this work might fit. The second part offers an overview of the field of gerontology and the third a mix of the psychological, psychosocial and psychodynamic approaches to fan studies and analyses of later life living. The first two parts of the literature review aim to provide a general overview, but also give the reader an idea of where within each field – from which schools of thought – this project defines itself (which means they also explicate what this thesis *does not* do). This is further elaborated on in the third section. Chapter three is the methodology chapter, in which the thesis overviews the chosen methods for the research project. I used semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 35 individuals who were either fully or semi-retired to gather the data on which this thesis is based. Chapter three offers a justification for the methods used, whilst at the same time overviewing some of the idiosyncrasies that come with working with a sample whose average age is 72.5 years.

Chapter four, titled *Later life sports fandom and the everyday* seeks to position the sports fandom of my participants within the context of their day-to-day lives. It pays particular attention to the role of routine in everyday living, and considers fan practices ranging from what might be called the 'main events' of the attending (or not) the weekly sports fixture of one's favourite team to the micro daily routines of, say, searching for one's team on the internet for any news. The key theoretical point of this chapter is the notion of ontological security (Laing, 1960; Giddens, 1984, 1991), which I argue is nurtured through the fan's everyday engagement with their fan object.

Chapter five, titled *Later life fandom and negotiating long-term fan-object relationships*, moves the discussion on from chapter six by offering an account of *how* long-term fan-object relationships are managed. This is the chapter which is most grounded in gerontological research, as Atchley's continuity theory (1989, 1993, 1999) is utilised, thus going some way to answering Harrington & Bielby's (2010) call for a greater use of the rich literature available in the ageing sciences. Whilst I use continuity theory, this chapter is actually about how the individual reacts to (perceived) change. We are, of course, talking about fans who, in many instances, have been interacting with the "same" object for many decades; thus a change in the dynamic between subject and object over such long periods – be it through textual evolution, personal development or both – is inevitable. I argue, here, that the later life fan adapts their fandom to account for perceived change by rejecting certain aspects of the object in order to retain an affinity with *their notion* of the object. This may mean scaling back their engagement with the object; it is done in order to preserve the object as central to that part of their identity. This chapter also formed the basis of a piece of work published by the author in a special edition of the *Journal of Fandom Studies* on fandom and the life course (Smith, 2019).

Chapter six – *Later life fandom and nostalgia* – is one which, on the face of it, probably seems like quite an obvious area of enquiry. The idea that older fans build their identities by looking back as opposed to living in the 'now' or, indeed, looking ahead, is quite a tempting one to adopt. There are also some negative stereotypes associated with nostalgia; the sense that one is 'stuck in the past' or not up to speed with current affairs. In large part, this chapter rejects such positions. Whilst my data is unequivocal in its evidencing nostalgia in action, I argue that the process is quite an 'active', 'creative' one, which ought not to be thought of in the negative. Through the various forms of nostalgia, the later life individual shapes, moulds and sculpts their 'ideal' internalised object. Whilst it is true that this process often ends up with a significant differentiation between internal and external objects (see chapter seven), the

nostalgic process is very important for later life functioning as, ultimately, another source of ontological security.

Chapter seven, titled *Later life sports fandom, home and Heimat* moves the discussion on from the positioning of the sports fan object(s) in one's everyday life to the role these objects play in the cultivation of a sense of 'home' and belonging. A key theoretical point in this chapter is the German term *Heimat*, whose closest English equivalent is 'home'. Its connotations are significantly broader than the English 'home', with notions of belonging, place, space, Other, general identity and more all conglomerated within. The general premise of the chapter is that older fans, in spending much more time engaging with their favourite cultural phenomena in retirement, spend more time occupying '*Heimatic* spaces'. The fan object and a sense of home and belonging become even more bounded together, as self is expressed through the fan objects that have been and become anchors of identity.

The conclusion aims to succinctly condense the above into a single, coherent chapter which forms the basis of my view of sports fandom in the later life ages. Of course, whilst much is discussed above, and throughout the thesis, there is also plenty which I have been unable to fit in. What appears in the following chapters are those observations which arose in the data analysis stages of my research which I felt were the most cogent and also the most complimenting of each other. The conclusion thus also covers some of the areas which were not presented here, and which may form the basis of future avenues of research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review[1]
Part 1: Fan Studies

The literature review of this thesis is split into three sections. As a product of the University of Huddersfield's Centre for Participatory Culture, this research project is, first and foremost, a fan studies one. This is, therefore, the focus of the first section of the literature review and is followed by a critical review of the other research area into which this thesis naturally fits: the field of gerontology. The third section describes the overall theoretical approach of the thesis: Psychological approaches to the study of fandom and ageing. In the first two sections a broad overview of each field is offered, before the focus is narrowed down to more relevant areas in each discipline.

2.1.1 Waves of change: A Brief History of Fan Studies

Fandom has, in all respects, both practiced and researched, changed dramatically. As we shall see in more detail below, the study of fandom initially emerged as a resistance campaign, rallying against perceptions of madness and general inadequacy. In just four decades, fandom has gone from being the derided pastime of the mentally challenged, the kind of behaviour described as 'lunacy' and linked in the popular media to mental illness (Harrington & Bielby, 1995), to become the norm of the masses, as politicians take advantage of the human capacity for fandom and position themselves and their parties as fan objects, in a bid to win larger, more devoted groups of voters (Sandvoss, 2013; Gray, Sandvoss, & Harrington, 2017). Gray, Sandvoss & Harrington (2007; 2017) identify three broad 'waves' of fan studies scholarship, from its inception towards the end of the twentieth century. The scope of the first wave was not all that wide, being, as it was, a reactionary development. The second broadened its horizons by building on the Bourdieusian model of habitus (Dixon, 2012). It brought the debate of fans into the realm of wider cultural forces ahead of the third wave, at which point the study of fans fragmented into a vast delta; myriad different waterways criss-crossing over the land, but together still constituting the same river. Here the field moved to 'broaden the

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[1] Parts of this literature review have appeared in Smith (2019) – particularly within the sub-sections 'Fan Studies and Ageing', and 'Gerontology, Activity Theories and Continuity Theory'.

scope of inquiry to a wide range of different audiences reflecting fandom's growing cultural currency' (Sandvoss, Gray, & Harrington, 2017: 6). Such a dramatic turnaround in the perception and study of fandom has provided fan scholars with exceptionally fertile soil from which to harvest many new forms of research, spanning across both the cultural field and, gradually, the life course. Throughout all this change, within this growth in fan research and the emergence of the various 'waves' of scholarship, there can still be found, broadly speaking, two schools of thought when it comes to the study of fans, both of which can be traced back to the earliest days of its study. We will look at each in turn throughout this overview.

...

Writing the afterword of Gray, Sandvoss and Harrington's (2007) *Fandom: Identities and Communities in a Mediated World*, Henry Jenkins states: 'In the old days, the ideal consumer watched television, bought products, and didn't talk back. Today, the ideal consumer talks up the program and spreads word about the brand' (2007: 361). He dismisses his own, seminal, *Textual Poachers* (1992) as a thing of the past, and also brings work as late as Matt Hills's *Fan Cultures* (2002) into the same bracket as research whose depiction of fandom is now, not necessarily outdated in terms of the 'activity' of fandom, but outdated in the sense of the times and spaces in which fans consume and practice. Where *Textual Poachers* (1992) depicted a 'weekend-only world' of fandom, and Hills (2002) a 'just-in-time fandom', now Jenkins sees a world in which 'this kind of fandom is everywhere and all the time, a central part in the everyday lives of consumers operating within a networked society' (2007: 361). In this small extract of Jenkins's afterword, he hits on two very important aspects of the study of fans. Firstly, he notes the evolution of fandom itself into an 'everywhere and all the time' pursuit. This is a feature of the first edition of Gray, Sandvoss and Harrington's (2007) volume more generally. In the introduction, the editors note how technological advancement – particularly portable technological advancement, such as the mobile smart phone which gives the owner constant access to the internet – has changed fandom. Technological advancement has brought 'fan objects out with their users to the subway, the street, and even the classroom' (Gray, Sandvoss, & Harrington, 2007: 8). Fan objects can now be accessed in any place and at any time and has probably played a big role in the other major change in fandom which Gray, Sandvoss & Harrington (2007) outline: the mainstreaming of fandom.

The second point that Jenkins makes pertains what might be described as the 'rift' within fan studies, between those who view fandom as a primarily social process and those who view it as, first and foremost, an individual experience. Jenkins is clear to state that he believes fandom now not only takes place 'everywhere and all the time', but that it operates 'within a networked society' (2007: 361), in other words, that the communality and shared experience

of an object or (fan) culture is key in defining fandom. Indeed, this is symptomatic of the wider group of early fan research we might term the 'first wave' of fan scholarship (Gray, Sandvoss, & Harrington, 2007). In order to make the shortcomings of the first wave of fan scholarship clear, we need to take a small diversion and consider the work of Abercrombie & Longhurst (1998), for it is through their research, and the audience continuum which they developed, that we see just how biased towards a particular group early fan research is. It is something which fan studies has grappled with ever since. Later in the same decade that Jenkins published *Textual Poachers*, Abercrombie & Longhurst (1998) developed a typology of audience consumption and engagement, within which resides three 'types' of fan. Their work has not been met without resistance. Hills (2002) believes that their continuum, which features at its most extreme ends the 'consumer' on one side and the 'petty producer' the other, 'reproduces exactly the type of moral dualism which places 'good' fandom in opposition to the 'bad' consumer' (pg. 29). He believes that:

> They view 'the consumer' as somebody who has the least amount of each type of skill that they define and study. This view of the consumer is an essentially negative one: consumers lack the developed forms of expertise and knowledge that fans, enthusiasts and cultists all possess in ever-increasing and ever-more-specialised forms. Consumers are at the bottom of the pile.
>
> (Hills, 2002: 29)

I acknowledge this shortcoming but view it as emerging from the presentation of the continuum *as a continuum*. Our natural tendency as readers is to move left-to-right on the page, and so reading the continuum on the page as moving from the 'bad' casual consumer to the 'good' productive user is a natural inclination. The continuum would have been better presented spherically so as to avoid such an occurrence. The content of the continuum, if we ignore the potential reading hierarchy, is nonetheless convenient for the study of fandom. Abercrombie & Longhurst (1998) explicitly acknowledge that audiences are not homogenous; they are created out of groups of people whose behaviours towards texts vary significantly. On a spectrum which runs: Consumer---Fan--Cultist--Enthusiast---Petty Producer, the middle three terms might be grouped together under the umbrella "fan", which is slightly awkward given that the first of these three middle terms is also "fan". It is unclear why Abercrombie & Longhurst (1998) used this sub-label. Below I outline the characteristics of each of these fannish labels:

> *Fans*
> These are 'individuals who are not yet in contact with other people who share their attachments, or may only be in contact with them through the mechanism of mass-produced fannish literature' (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998: 138). Sandvoss & Kearns (2014: 92) add that the 'fan has a broad media use and does not generally have personal contact with other fans'.

Cultists
Cultists have 'explicit attachments to stars or to particular programmes' (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998: 138) – their media use is more specialised than that of the fan. 'Cultists not only have a deeper attachment to particular programmes that they watch but are also involved in networks of people and media' (Sandvoss & Kearns, 2014: 92). They are more 'social' than the fan, who is more likely to enjoy their fan object in an asocial manner.

Enthusiasts
Enthusiasts are likely to base their fandom 'predominantly around activities rather than media or stars' (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998: 139). This last group 'are likely to be highly involved in textual production (see Fiske 1992), and will be members of tightly knit networks devoted to their fandom' (Sandvoss & Kearns, 2014: 92).

Fan studies emerged in the late-1980s and early 1990s as a counterpunch to the era's prevailing attitudes towards fandom and is often attributed to the works of five scholars – Camille Bacon-Smith, Jenkins, Roberta Pearson, Constance Penley and John Tulloch – the first four of whom specifically addressed that of *Star Trek* fandom, which in the mass media of the time was being described along pathological lines (Gray, Sandvoss, & Harrington, 2007). It was not only *Star Trek* fandom which earned this kind of label (though it did bind those five scholars under a common research theme). Harrington & Bielby (1995: 2) note how, in the 1970s, mass media coverage of fans was 'fairly benign' and 'both harmless and understandable', yet by the following decade, after *People Weekly* magazine had seemingly embarked on a quest to belittle and call out fannish behaviour as total lunacy, the prevailing attitude towards fandom had darkened. Harrington & Bielby (1998: 4) note how fandom was even linked to erotomania, 'a disorder stemming from an idealized erotic delusion that one is loved by a person of higher status'. Sandvoss describes the aims of those early fan researchers:

> Their endeavour was not only the analytic representation and theorization of fandom, but also a form of political representation: a statement against the double standards of cultural judgment and the bourgeois fear of popular culture; a statement in favour of fan sensibilities which gave a voice to otherwise marginalized social groups.
>
> (Sandvoss, 2005: 3)

The approach of this first, counterpunching wave of fan scholarship ultimately had its shortcomings. For all of the good it did in trying to battle the perception of fans as extremist lunatics, unable to tell the difference between the real and textual worlds, they also had the effect of ostracising the huge numbers of people whose fandom did not materialise in the manner of those who featured in their work. As Gray, Sandvoss & Harrington put it:

> ...early fan studies did not so much deconstruct the binary structure in which the fan had been placed as they tried to differently value the fan's place in said binary. As such, early fan studies (and much of the work it inspired) often turned to the very activities and practices – convention attendance, fan fiction writing, fanzine editing and collection, letter-writing campaigns – that had been coded as pathological, and attempted to redeem them as creative, thoughtful and productive. Rhetorically, this

work aimed to render normative the very end point of caricature that popular and academic accounts of fandom often presented.

(Gray, Sandvoss, & Harrington, 2007: 3)

Thus, the first wave of fan studies focused mainly on what Abercrombie & Longhurst (1998) would call 'enthusiasts' and paid relatively little or no attention to the larger group of 'cultists' or the even larger group, 'fans', respectively. However, it was with the second wave of fan studies that a fresh theoretical underpinning came, as Bourdieu (1984) was embraced. This wave 'highlighted the replication of social and cultural hierarchies within fan cultures and subcultures' (Sandvoss, Gray, & Harrington, 2017: 5) and outlined how 'the choice of fan objects and practices of fan consumption are structured through our habitus as a reflection and further manifestation of our social, cultural and economic capital' (Gray, Sandvoss, & Harrington, 2007: 6).

Fiske (1992) applies Bourdieu's (1984) notion of social and cultural capital, describing the 'cultural economy' one can find within the realm of fandom. Fiske (1992: 42) notes that 'knowledge is fundamental to the accumulation of cultural capital'. This is a notion shared by the likes of Hunt (2003) (although he prefers to refer to fans' knowledge acquisition as 'trivia') and Hobson (1989: 150), who outlines how the soap opera fan's fandom 'continues after the viewing time and is extended into other areas of everyday life'. Jenkins (1992: 7) also highlights how integral the 'exchange of knowledge between different segments of the [fan] community' is in fandom. He feels that 'knowledge equals prestige, reputation, power' (2006: 125). This is something that Bennett (2011) explores, in discussing the acquisition, and dissemination, of knowledge between R.E.M. music fans, in particular an online community sub-group known as 'Trobes'. This group attempt 'to recapture the pre-internet experience of listening to and purchasing a new album as a singular event' (Bennett, 2011: 748-749). The trouble is, however, that they are only a small part of the wider community of R.E.M. fans, and so there is an inevitable period between the rock band's new music being released and the 'Trobes' laying their hands on a copy of the physical album where all sorts of imbalances of knowledge among the R.E.M. fan community become apparent. The issue with these approaches is that we again stray dangerously close to that 'good fan–bad fan' binary, that if you accrue enough knowledge, or fan capital, you are somehow a 'better' fan than another who is not as knowledgeable. Every person who identities as a 'fan' (and also those who do not particularly like the term but could be defined as such in any case – as this research will touch on later) should be considered as much a 'fan' as any other 'fan'. The fan object is created in the individual's reading. It is undoubtedly true that some fans will think of *themselves* as superior to other fans in some way, and may even make the assumption based on a perception that they are more knowledgeable about a fan object, but they are not any 'better' or 'worse' of

a fan than anybody else. Hierarchising ourselves, it appears, is something which humanity is unfortunately rather good at:

> In the earlier epochs of history, we find almost everywhere a complicated arrangement of society into various orders, a manifold gradation of social rank. In ancient Rome we have patricians, knights, plebeians, slaves; in the Middle Ages, feudal lords, vassals, guild-masters, journeymen, apprentices, serfs; in almost all of these classes, again, subordinate gradations.
>
> <div align="right">Marx & Engels (1888: 2)</div>

Much like the first wave of fan scholarship had its shortcomings, the second wave has an uncomfortable relationship between macro social processes and individual motivations. This has ultimately seen second wave scholarship fall short of being applicable to fan practices in an everyday, micro context. As Gray, Sandvoss and Harrington (2007) highlight;

> … while the second wave of fan studies proved effective in demonstrating what fandom is not – an a priori space of cultural autonomy and resistance – it had little to say about the individual motivations, enjoyment, and pleasures of fans. If Fiske's (1992) explanation of fandom as subversive pleasure was overly functionalist, so would be attempts to explain fans' interests and motivations through the notion of the habitus alone.
>
> <div align="right">(Gray, Sandvoss, & Harrington, 2007: 6-7)</div>

This is an issue which Dixon (2012), for example, encounters in a piece of research that could be classed as 'second wave' fan scholarship. He attempts to apply Bourdieu's (1984) habitus model to football fandom but found that he could only do so to a certain extent. Fans were, he found, guided by habitus, but he claimed that some of his participants had 'shown to have 'opted in' [to football fandom] by embracing football culture through vast and various influences that extend beyond one's structural background or habitus' (Dixon, 2012: 345). In other words, Dixon's approach did not cater for the 'individual motivations, enjoyment, and pleasure of fans' that Gray, Sandvoss and Harrington (2007: 6-7) exposed as the major weakness in this particular wave of scholarship.

The third wave of fan studies did not necessarily set as a target the finding of an answer to fans' individual motivations, experiences and enjoyments, rather it eventuated as a result of the main feature of the wave: fragmentation. It is in the third wave where we clearly see the 'rift' within the study of fans between the micro-level, intrapersonal, individual experience (Sandvoss, Gray & Harrington, 2017) and the macro-level, social scholarship. This fragmentation in the study of fans is symptomatic of the development within fandom itself to an 'everywhere and all the time' (Jenkins, 2007: 361) phenomenon. As fandom became ever more normalised and ever more visible, more and more we realised that, for many, the traditional experiences of fandom expounded by first wave fan scholars was not the experience enjoyed by most fans (Sandvoss, 2005). The third wave thus 'sought to broaden the scope of

inquiry to a wide range of different audiences reflecting fandom's growing cultural currency' (Sandvoss, Gray & Harrington, 2017: 6). Following the mostly enthusiast-focussed, first-wave research, the study of fandom evolved down myriad paths as scholars sought different fans and fan objects to work with. Sandvoss, Gray & Harrington use a good word in describing the third wave of fan studies scholarship as a 'dissipation of what was previously a loosely coherent subfield into multiple projects with multiple trajectories…[which] have carried fan studies into neighboring [academic] realms' (*ibid*). It is perhaps because of this dissipation which has seen fan studies lose the hegemonic theoretical structure it once had in first wave scholarship. Working with a more diverse range of fans and fan objects has seen, for instance, a growing number of psychoanalytically-inspired works which aim to explore the personal relationship between fan and fan object (i.e. Bailey, 2005; Elliott, 1999; Garner, 2018; Harrington & Bielby, 1995; Hills, 2002; Sandvoss, 2005; Siverstone, 1994; Stacey, 1994; Williams, 2015, 2016; Yin, 2020).

It has, incidentally, been suggested that we are already seeing the emergence of a new *fourth* wave of fan research, however this development is slightly different in nature from the previous iterations. Booth (2013: 123) writes that we are now seeing 'a turn from analysing *fans* to analysing *fan studies*' (itals in original). Booth believes that fan studies has reached a point in its own existence where self-evaluation has become needed. Indeed, he notes that '[a]s a discipline, then, fan studies appears to be becoming more circumspect about its main object of study' (2013: 120). Clearly, Gray, Sandvoss & Harrington (2007, 2017), in identifying three waves of fan research in the first place, have themselves created the fourth wave of which Booth (2013) writes. This is probably timely, since fan scholars cannot even agree on how to define 'fandom' (Baym, 2007).

2.1.2 Issues with the Study of Fans

There are many different ways to approach the study of fans and, with the development of the varied third wave of fan studies, many fields which have shown an interest in so doing. The Fan Studies Network conference is testament to this. The first annual conference dedicated explicitly to the study of fans, the last few years (pre-pandemic) have attracted scholars from various backgrounds, ranging from the more predictable areas of sociology, media, communications and cultural studies (see for example: Barker, 2018; Booth, 2017; Chin, 2017, 2018, 2019; Duffett, 2019; Garner, 2017, 2019; Geraghty, 2017, 2018; Pande, 2017, 2019; Stewart, 2017, 2018, 2019; Waysdorf, 2018, 2019; Williams, 2017, 2018, 2019), to some perhaps less predictable fields, such as history (Crome, 2018), geography and tourism (Garrison, 2018), religious studies (Wagenaar, 2018) and even children's charities (Edwards, 2019).

Yet, despite this variety, there remains a number of shortcomings when it comes to the study of fans. These are neatly summarised by van de Goor (2017), who convincingly deconstructs the study of fans and fandom as a 'field' which has thus far failed on numerous counts. She identifies four broad areas, namely that, 1) the general demographic of 'fans' used in much research is far too narrow; 2) fans are usually studied as single-object agents, with multi-fandom and 'non-popular' objects ignored; 3) the fans themselves are usually only the most 'obvious', visible fans; and 4) fans and their fan cultures are usually framed as different or fighting against the norm, rather than as an ordinary, everyday phenomenon. Taken together, this is a significant shortcoming for an area of study which is by now around forty years old. In considering each point in turn, van de Goor (2017) firstly takes issue with the most basic of aspects within fan studies – the fans themselves. She observes that 'the fans that are studied under the banner 'fan studies' are often young to middle-aged, Anglo-Americans on Anglo-American platforms, portrayed as a 'community' (e.g. one Internet page/community board, a fan-object-related convention)' (2017: 9). There is an element of acceptability, here, given that researchers will usually focus on a particular case study example to help maintain a level of structure within their work – it would be easy to lose focus if researching 'fandom' without a particular example object or area, plus such a broad scope would also reduce practicality in terms of finding participants. However, van de Goor goes on to note that these 'communities are rarely compared to other communities, other fans, or other cultures or ideologies (e.g. Japanese doujinshi culture, elderly fans), creating an illusion of universality of some practices' (2017: 9).

On the second point, she writes that 'the studied fan-objects often revolve around one popular, Anglo-American media text (e.g. Star Trek, Supernatural, Batman) and rarely comparatively address multiple texts— or non-popular or non-media objects (e.g. trains, rakugo, classical ballet)' (2017: 9). This clearly links with her first observation and is an example of fan studies treating its participants as a singular 'fan', rather than a human being hosting multiple, interweaving, overlapping interests. For instance, Brown (1997: 13) suggests that his 'well-defined community of comic fans allows a *unique* insight on "how" and "why" fandom is an important aspect of contemporary culture' (itals mine). There is no question that fandom is an important part of present-day society, but there is no fundamental 'specialness' of comic book fans in the sense Brown suggests. These are also areas which this thesis seeks to address, with explicit attention paid to both elderly fans, and to the way those fans intermingle and knit together their fandoms in forming later life experiences.

The third point van de Goor raises represents quite an alarming omission from fan studies work; that 'the fan practices depicted are often the same, highly visible and easily documented ones (e.g. fanfiction writing, online discussion forums)' (2017: 9). Most concerning is that this aspect of the study of fans does not appear to belong to a single chronological era of fan studies – working with only the most 'obvious', 'highly visible' fans is something which has been a constant throughout the field's inception in the late-1980s and early 1990s, right up to today's contemporary research. Russ (1985) and Penley (1992), writing around the generally accepted 'birth period' of fan studies, were both working with 'slash' fan fiction writers; much of Busse's research (2001, 2005), and the work of Lee (2003), Sabucco (2003), Carruthers (2004), Jung (2005), Williamson (2005) and others, over the turn of the millennium, all concern fan fiction and/or slash fan fiction. More recently, Hellekson & Busse (2014) seem intent on treating the study of fan fiction as its own field, referring to it in their fan fiction reader as explicitly separate from fan studies. This appears to be an entirely unproductive enterprise. What is the worth in fragmenting an already rather niche field? Fan fiction is *one* productive manifestation of fandom but is not *the* fundamental motivation behind the phenomenon. Whilst these kinds of fans are a perfectly legitimate source for research – after all, very productive, what you might call 'overt' fans are still 'fans' – the amount of research dedicated to such 'types' of fandom is vastly skewed in its favour. This is not representative of the actual fannish landscape, in which more 'introverted' forms of fandom are the norm (that is, unless you define 'fandom' as being explicitly productive, something I have argued vehemently against elsewhere).

Finally, van de Goor's fourth point sees her suggest that 'the abovementioned fans and fan cultures are often theorised through the same foundational assumptions (e.g. the fan figured as resistive, subversive, special, other)' (2017: 9). So much fan work carries this kind of assumption that it is difficult to know which to use as an exemplar. Brown's (1997) quote above, and his subsequent work, can be read as hosting an assumption of comic book fans being 'special' and 'different' in some way – he uses the word 'unique' (1997: 13) above – whilst Hellekson's (2009) article on online fan culture uses "us" and "them" rhetoric. These works are not necessarily 'bad' pieces of work, but so many repeat pre-existing assumptions without challenging them. Geraghty's (2014) research on 'collecting' fandom presents the convention environment as a kind of 'sacred' space only for certain fans, Pope's (2010, 2015) work on sports fandom carries a comparable essence of "us" and "them" (see also Pope & Williams, 2011) whilst Hodkinson's observations on goth culture feature a similar notion of the goth as somehow 'separate' from the rest of society. In her work on soap opera fandom, Baym (2000: 35) writes: 'As one of my students recently put it, "I had to change my stereotype of soap opera fans because my professor is a soap opera fan and she has a Ph.D."' She suggests that this

'indicate[s] a pervasive cultural stereotype that soap operas are vapid and so too are their fans' (2000: 35). Within a great deal of research on fandom there seems to be an in-built paranoia that the object under scrutiny is disregarded or separated in some way by the rest of society. Fan work often 'others' itself before then legitimising itself, without acknowledging that the 'act' of fandom is not a fight against some kind of oppressive tyrant, dictating what media we engage with and how we facilitate such relationships in the first place. There is a real lack across a great deal of very good work of the framing of the human being as living a fluid – what Bauman (2000) would call a 'liquid' – life. It is easy to compartmentalise society into neat little boxes (made even easier when we can assign compartments to separate fan texts), but human life is much more complicated than this.

Fan studies, giving van de Goor (2017: 9) one final word, 'appears to exclude all individuals and practices that do not fit disciplinary preconceptions of what fans, scholar-fans, and fan studies have been and should be', and whilst we are beginning to see more research which challenges these scholastic conventions – works from the likes of Chin & Morimoto (2013), Duffett (2013, 2014, 2015), Hastie (2008), Hills (2002, 2013b, 2015), Jones (2015), Linden & Linden (2017) and Sandvoss (2005), have offered research which is 'more theoretical, less singularly focussed (on communities, fan-objects or practices), or non-popular terms' (van de Goor, 2017: 9) – these kinds of approaches 'are a notable minority, and have been largely downplayed in fan scholarship in favour of reproducing existing assumptions on a particular fan-object, practice, or community' (van de Goor, 2017: 9 – see also van de Goor, forthcoming).

2.1.3 Fan Studies in the Third Wave

This research project is very much a 'third wave' one. It aims to avoid reproducing the 'existing assumptions' to which van de Goor (2017) refers and seeks to offer a representation of what 'ordinary', 'everyday' fandom looks like in later life and the importance of that very 'everydayness'. Thus, it seems right to devote a subsection of the literature review to a more thorough appreciation of this 'flavour' of fan scholarship. Of course this means that the literature review may seem a little light in its analysis of first and second wave fan studies work, however given that these types of research are less relevant to my own study, as well as the finite nature of a thesis, it feels apt to do this. After all, acknowledging an entire field's research is simply an impossibility. Incidentally, without wishing to push the wave metaphor too far, it could perhaps be argued that we are now beginning to see the development of a *fifth* wave of fan studies, or at least a greater development of the third wave, if these developments are not so great as to warrant being a 'wave' of their own. The field has broadened to incorporate myriad different fan objects and cultures throughout that third wave, but only relatively recently are we beginning to appreciate the individual as a fan of *multiple* fandoms,

rather than 'assign' them to a particular object or fan culture. We are now starting to see research which appreciates the individual as a fan of the different object forms of a particular character, such as the various Sherlock Holmes iterations (Lapointe, 2017) or the sheer longevity and multiple worlds of *Dr. Who* (Hills, 2017), or even completely different multiple fandoms. This was one of the reasons why I kept the research topic of this thesis to the relatively broad "sports" fandom, rather than focussing in particular on football, rugby, cricket or similar. I wanted to research how the older adult not only perceives their relationship with a particular fan object over their life course, but how they juggle various fan objects across the life course; why interest in one object may wane whilst another increases, and why the *vice versa* may occur ten years down the line. Whilst the ever-expanding third wave introduces to the field of fan studies new fan objects, different fan cultures and practices – something that should not be discouraged – we now need to begin knitting these different behaviours and experiences into the lives of the individuals who consume many of them all at the same time. We might consider, here, the work of Lizardi (2015), and his "playlist past" notion of nostalgic media engagement, where an individual collates a highly personalised collection of media artefacts so that they can (re)engage with them again and again. There seems little value in claiming and then celebrating the idiosyncratic behaviour of a particular fan culture when the same humans might, every Saturday, watch the football with millions of others and engage in a practice which is anything but idiosyncratic. What needs to be celebrated are not the quirks of an individual fan culture but the dynamism of the human being in its ability to straddle such cultures as they knit together a web of conscious cultural experience.

2.1.4 Fan Studies and Ageing[2]

There is a growing trend within the wider fields of cultural and media studies for ageing research to be undertaken. Harrington *et al.*'s (2014) *Aging, Media, and Culture* gives a good account of this, with topics ranging from portrayals of ageing in advertising (Baumann & de Laat, 2014), to social media use in later life (Quinn, 2014), and age and gender in television and film (Bardo, 2014). In terms of fan studies, Harrington and Bielby's (2014) contribution to the above collection was based on an article, which first appeared four years prior, in a work that considers fandom across the life course, and which raises some very interesting points when considered in the context of Kelly's (1993: 1) notion, that 'there is no magical transformation that persons undergo at some standard age, certainly not at 65'. Firstly, the 'messiness' of ageing in the twenty- first century is noted, as Settersten (2007: 250) is quoted:

> In the matter of just a few decades [...] the straight and narrow road into and through adulthood has all but disappeared. Roles, responsibilities, and expectations have been shattered, leaving a brand new world to navigate. [...] The social scripts that

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[2] Parts of this subsection appear in Smith (2019).

> once signalled a single right time and order for all of life's transitions have dissipated. […] The whole life course has undergone some dramatic changes.
>
> (Settersten cited in Harrington and Bielby 2014: 139)

Harrington and Bielby go on to state that 'as normative adult life destabilizes, cultural objects are increasingly providing a reference point for navigating the trajectory through adulthood and later life' (2014: 139). They cite from fan studies works which attest to this; Cavicchi's (1998) study on the centrality of Bruce Springsteen in the lives of his fans, Sandvoss's (2008) exploration of the longevity of Eurovision Song Contest fandom and Stevenson's (2009) similar research on David Bowie fans. We see, here, the subject's perception of the fan object as a self-stabilizing object. However, what is not made explicit is the means by which the fan comes to generate this perception of consistency.

Others' fan studies have focused on the ageing or long-term fan; Driessen (2015) explores the long-term music fandom of Dutch Backstreet Boys fans, Hodkinson (2011) explores the continuing involvement in youth music and culture of 'older' goths and Bennett (2006, 2018) also analyses an 'older' fan culture, but from a punk rock perspective. Here, however, we have stumbled upon an issue within the developing world of ageing fan research: how do we define the ageing fan? Hodkinson's (2011) 'older' fans were aged between 27 and 43, whilst Bennett's 'older' fans (2006) were aged 35-53. Bailey's (2005) 'Kiss Generation' were around 40 years old at the time of his publication, whilst Vroomen (2004) and Brooker (2002) worked with similarly aged fans in their studies of long-term Kate Bush and *Star Wars* fans respectively. There is a differentiation to make here, namely that between the terms 'older' and 'long-term' in such studies.

Terminologically speaking, 'long-term' appears relatively straight forward: when an individual relates to a fan object over a long period of their life course (though there remains a debate as to after what amount of time we can call the period of fan object-relations 'long'. Given my project deals with fans whose fan object relationships span many decades, we can safely assume they are in the 'long' category). 'Older', however, causes more difficulty. It is a term used contextually against the normativity of the consuming of a particular text. So, when Hodkinson (2011) refers to an 'older' goth or Bennett (2006) to an 'older' punk, they really mean older *for a goth*, or older *for a punk*, as compared to the socially accepted normative age of a punk or a goth.

Sport, however, is different because whilst there appears to be a normative age for participating in punk or goth cultures, or being a fan of the Spice Girls, Backstreet Boys or Kate Bush, there is no such normativity of age for the consumption of sport. It is not unusual

in the slightest to see older people in sports stadiums, consuming sports (and, really, there should be no sort of 'acceptable' age range for the other texts). This is because of the longevity of sport as a participatory culture, coupled with its broad social appeal. The explosion of goth and punk culture, of the emergence of the Backstreet Boys, the Spice Girls and Kate Bush has given rise to particular generations of participants, as cultures 'targeted' at particular groups, which has allowed for a historical conceptualization of the normative.

Sports are aimed at no particular generation and are not the only kind of fan objects for which an age normativity of consumption does not apply: Kuhn's (2002) historical study included surviving 1930s cinema-goers. Cinema is similarly broad to sport in its appeal to all ages. You cannot have a cinema-goer who is old *for a cinema goer* because it is aimed at all ages. Similarly, Claessens's (2014) exploration of nursing home residents' attachments to celebrities features a group of participants whose average age is 85.6 years old. It is tempting to refer to these participants as 'old' *for a celebrity fan*, but that would be incorrect; there is no age limit on the fandom of celebrities. To suggest that the people in Claessens's (2014) study are old for cinema fans would be an ageist slur, as it would be to suggest that the normativity for people of this age would be to not have such persuasions.

When working with fans of sport, or cinema, or celebrity or any other object for which the age of normativity of consumption is impossible to accurately pinpoint, the term 'older' becomes redundant because there is no normativity of consumption against which to compare. The only way we can, therefore, refer to participants in terms of an 'age group' in fan studies is if we shift the focus of the study from the text to the reader (Sandvoss 2007), and use an already-established means of 'age-grouping' – such as that from the field of gerontology. As Harrington and Bielby (2010) note:

> While there is growing interest in issues of age and aging within fan studies and within media studies more broadly, there is a tendency in this literature to discuss aging and the life course atheoretically, ignoring a rich body of scholarship in gerontology, sociology, psychology and human development that examines how lives unfold over time.
>
> (Harrington and Bielby 2010: 430)

It is a trend which is not lost on Harrington & Bielby (2018), who note that the majority 'of the nascent research on late(r)-life fandom includes participants who are members of "adult" (18–64 years) or "young–old" (65–74) age groups, to use [other] categorizations typical within gerontology' (408). Thus, they note that fan scholarship 'on the "middle-old" (75–84) or "old–old" (85+) seem largely non-existent, even though humans continue to develop throughout the *entire* life course' (408 – emphasis in original). I am using the 'life phases' approach to dividing the life course, but it amounts to the same thing; there is practically no research

within fan studies which considers the individual who is in the third, moving into fourth life phase (chronologically-speaking, around 50-years and above).

2.1.5 Fan Studies and Sports Fandom

Sport is the most popular cultural pastime in the world. Football, above anything else, is top of that tree. This single game has eclipsed any other cultural form, in terms of popularity, in the twenty-first century. Goldblatt believes that football now 'bears comparison with the world's religions, not as a system of belief or alternative metaphysics, but in the scale, regularity and profundity of its cycles and rituals' (2019: 2). In comparison to other popular culture, 'European football now turns over more revenue than the European publishing or cinema industries' (2019: 2-3). The sports industry is culturally gargantuan. Yet, given the vast appeal of sport around the globe, its representation within fan studies is surprisingly negligible (Gray, Sandvoss, & Harrington, 2007; Schimmel, Harrington, & Bielby, 2007). A reason for this can be traced back to sports fandom's exclusion from the first wave of fan studies:

> Hence, what is at stake in the changing representation of fans in the mass media is more than the obvious difference between sports fandom and fan audiences in other areas of popular culture, which Fiske (1992) highlighted more than a decade ago and which until recently led to the widespread disregard of sports fans in audience studies, not least because sports fans – in light of the violence and racism that marked much of their representation in particular in the 1980s – were a much less likely and indeed likeable subject of study, who evaded the paradigm of a bipolar power struggle between hegemonic culture industries and fans.
> (Gray, Sandvoss, & Harrington, 2007: 4-5)

The history of the study of sports fandom is similar to that of the rise of *non*-sports fandom research. The field of fan studies was born in the final third of the twentieth century as a means of addressing the pathologized presentation of fandom within the mainstream media industry. Similarly, around roughly the same time, scholastic research on sports (particularly football) fandom began to become popular. Just as *non*-sports fans were being portrayed in a pathologized fashion by the media, so, too, were football fans (Pearson, 2012). As Cohen (2002) observes, the media jumps on such things as violence and fear, which thus aides in creating and nurturing moral panics. Hooliganism was the sporting equivalent of *non*-sport fandom's 'erotomania' and Beatlemania moral panics (Harrington & Bielby, 1995). Yet, as Fiske (1992: 38) notes, football fans are often portrayed as violent hooligans, which could of course make the study of sports fan behaviour far less attractive to researchers. Thus, sports fandom has traditionally been marginalised within fan studies.

This has not, however, stopped the study of sports fandom from being popular within other fields. Indeed, there is a vast range of sports fan literature outside the realm of fan studies. According to Meyer & Impellizzeri (2017), the number of football-specific, peer-reviewed

research papers published in 'all fields' has increased almost exponentially since the turn of the millennium. In the late-1990s this figure was less than one hundred per year; by 2020 that number was nearly 900 per year. Now sports fandom features in a wide range of research, from fields as diverse as history – for example, Lewis's (2009) research into female football fans between 1880 and 1914, and Naha's (2012) research into female cricket fandom during the middle twentieth century (see also Odendaal, 2011 and, more broadly, *The International Journal of the History of Sport*) – and sports management (e.g. Larkin & Fink, 2016); sports economics (e.g. Mills & Rosentraub, 2014 – see also *The Journal of Sports Economics*) and sports marketing (see, for example, Pongsakornrungsilp & Schroeder [2011] and also the peer-reviewed journals *Sports Marketing* and the *International Journal of Sports Marking and Sponsorship*). Even the field of medicine has produced its own football-orientated, peer-reviewed journal. Launched in 2017, *Science and Medicine in Football* features a huge scope, with topics ranging from 'physiology, biomechanics, nutrition, training and testing' to 'sports medicine, performance analysis, sport psychology and coaching' (Meyer & Impellizzeri, 2017: 1), all linked by the single thread of football.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, sociology is the discipline in which sports fan research is the most well-established (though there is a growing number of psychology works). Writing in the mid-1960s, Daniels (1966) noted that the broader term "sports sociologist" was of a relatively recent coinage; he suggested that the sociology of sport had become popular around 1950. The field features the long-running *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* (*IRSS* –first published in 1966), for instance, alongside a number of other recent peer reviewed journals, like *Sport in Society* (launched in 1998 as *Culture, Sport, Society* – the name changed in 2004) and *Soccer and Society* (launched in 2000). In terms of fandom, whilst the vast majority of scholarship in the earlier years of the *IRSS* considers the role of organised sport in the local community, the playing of and participation in sport as an amateur – a trend which generally continues in most sports sociology journals today – there were early observations of the role of the sports fan. Heinilä (1969), for example, acknowledges that the football fan has a different perspective from the football player or pundit and Charnofsky (1968) considers the "popular" image (i.e. the fannish perception) of the professional baseball player. Clignet & Stark (1974) offer an overview of the 'modernization' of Cameroonian football, including the 'audience', whilst Nixon (1974: 107) describes how the 'modern' (American) sports fan might 'feel a bit overwhelmed' due to the sheer number of sports teams and media coverage, as part of a piece overviewing the rise of commercialism in sport. These are not direct studies of sports fandom, *per se*, but the underlying role of the sports fan is evident. Articles like these sowed the seeds for more 'explicit' sports fan-focussed works, which started to grow in number throughout the 1970s and 1980s. Scholars like Schwartz (1973), in noting the extreme, and

growing, popularity of watching sport (he referred to the 1970 football world cup final in Mexico City being watched by 200 million people worldwide via satellite television; a trend which has continued to grow, as the 2018 world cup final in Russia was watched by 1.2 billion people, at least according to FIFA [FIFA.com]), suggested that the time had come for scholars to ask questions like: 'What draws people to watch sporting events?' and 'What effects might this behaviour have on people and society?' (1973: 25). Ciupak's (1973) cautiously-titled "Sports Spectators – An Attempt at a Sociological Analysis" connotes a tentativeness in the field which belies its contemporary standing. By the 1990s, sports fan ethnographies were appearing with some regularity, with Giulianotti's various football fan ethnographies – his work on Scottish football fans based in Sweden and Romania (1994, 1995) and his observations on the supporters of Ireland at the 1994 FIFA World Cup in the USA (1996), for instance – making his the most well-known name to emerge from this tradition. As the world's most popular sport, it is unsurprising that football fandom is by far the most common type of sports fandom to have been covered, yet the 1990s did see the emergence of a little more non-football sports fan scholarship, such as Nauright's (1996) examination of the racial tensions within South African rugby union fandom as the country came out of apartheid, and later still, into the new millennium, we finally saw the emergence of some acknowledgment of female sports fandom (see Crawford & Gosling [2004], Pelak [2005] and Scraton, Caudwell & Holland [2005]). This helped in tackling the underlying assumption that the sports fan arena is a male one.

One of the more recent developments in the study of sports fandom is that highlighted by Benkwitz & Molnar (2012). Much like the fan studies field initially focussed most of its attention towards the "right" of the Abercrombie & Longhurst (1998) continuum (i.e. on cultists and enthusiast) before then diversifying to include research with more 'ordinary', everyday fandom (Sandvoss & Kearns, 2014), so, too has the wider study of sports fandom which, since the turn of the millennium, has seen a great diversification. The focus has shifted from a near exclusivity of research concentrating on hooliganism – following its rise and fall through the later parts of last century – to incorporating more of the everyday lived experiences of 'ordinary' fandom. Yet, whilst there is now a great variety in sports fan research from across a number of fields, there is also a broad binary into which much sports fan research is divided. This is the debate between macro structure and micro agency (Dixon, 2013). Interestingly, this is a similar differentiation to that between the structural, Bourdieusian approaches of the second wave of fan studies compared to the agency-emphasising approaches of the third wave of fan studies, which Gray, Sandvoss & Harrington observe (2007, 2017). A feature of these kinds of sports fan research projects is a propensity to create taxonomies, dividing and defining fans through 'type'. There are a number of

different attempts at creating such sports fan taxonomies – see, for example, Boyle & Haynes (2009), Clarke (1978), Nash (2000) and Quick (2000) – however two stand out as the most distinctive: Wann *et al.*'s (2001) typology and Giulianotti's (2002) 'supporter', 'follower', 'fan' and 'flâneur' quadrant.

Whilst each work has its own shortcomings, the main issue with both offerings is that the researchers have drastically oversimplified fandom. In both works there is an ambition to categorise every possible 'type' of sports fan and to neatly compartmentalise every 'way' of being a fan into a well-defined chart which explains a particular kind of human behaviour. Giulianotti (2002), for instance, creates a multi-dimensional taxonomy. This is made from a cross, with the east-west, horizontal line representing on one side 'traditional' fans and on the other 'consumer' fans, whilst the north-south vertical line runs from 'hot' fans to 'cool' fans. The very terminology, 'hot' and 'cool', is troublesome in that it carries with it connotations of a good-bad dichotomy, of the 'proper' fan versus the 'inadequate' fan. Crawford suggests that Giulianotti's work is based on the ideas of scholars like Baudrillard (1990), who 'view communication through an electronic medium as more 'cool' than that encountered via face-to-face communication' (2004: 31). Crawford points to Kellner's (1989: 75) observation of this view of communication, by observing that, actually, 'all language is mediated (through language and signs and so on)', and argues himself that 'it is fundamentally flawed to presume electronic mediated audiences are 'passive' or 'cool' in their forms of support' (2004: 31). Indeed, during the various national lockdowns brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic, it has become clear just how important communication via videocall can be. Given the peer review process, evidence is mostly anecdotal at the moment, however Collado *et al.* (2021: 11) do suggest that whilst physical expressions of sexual intimacy between pre-marital, non-cohabiting partners has obviously reduced, 'the loss of physical sexual encounters during lockdowns is not sufficient to result in negative relationship outcomes'. Communication afforded by digital technology has allowed close, personal relationships to retain love and meaning. There is a danger, however, that fannish stereotypes could become reinforced as a result of the Covid-19 era of professional sport, where the constant airing of phrases like "it's not the same without the fans" during coverage of fixtures being played behind closed doors gives weight to the notion that fandom performed away from the sports stadium is somehow of a lesser quality than fandom expressed in the arena. There are other issues with Giulianotti's work, as Dixon (2014) notes that the taxonomy is not particularly applicable beyond the setting in which it was created – domestic Scottish football fandom. If one is to put forward a model of sports fandom, it really ought to be generalisable to the entire football fan population. This is an area in which Wann *et al.*'s (2001) work fails, too. This project seeks to define fans by a number of dichotomies, such as 'high' and 'lowly' fan identification but, as Crawford

(2004: 32) explains, this 'greatly oversimplifies the often complex relationships fans can have with their chosen interest, and the myriad of ways individuals can connect with [their fan object] and how this relationship can change over time'. Wann *et al.* also seem to draw on fannish stereotype, which is often, if not incorrect, then certainly not representative of the whole picture. They describe an individual as having 'high' identification to their team as someone who is 'dressed (and maybe even painted) in their team colours...' (2001: 3), when of course this need not be the case at all. In fact, an observation from my fieldwork was that it was very unusual for a visitor to be aware that the house being visited was home to a sports fan, and also, practically all of my participants avoid wearing replica football tops when attending matches – there are plenty of people who simply do not express their fandom in an overtly aesthetic way. There is a danger to creating dichotomies; we must not revert back to a good/bad hierarchy of fan 'types' because, as Crawford notes:

> The consequence of creating typologies [...] which often promote the activities of certain 'types' of supporters over others, is that only fan behaviour that is seen to conform to certain prerequisites of 'authentic' behaviour receives any detailed consideration in this literature. In particular, the vast majority of literature on sports fans focuses primarily upon what is deemed to be 'traditional' (often masculine) patterns of support, such as supporter chanting, group solidarity, aggression and 'resistance' (such as fanzines and supporter organizations). Behaviour that is deemed 'inauthentic' or 'incorporative' is often largely dismissed within the vast majority of considerations of sport fan behaviour. [...] While it is possible to identify different levels of commitment and dedication to a sport and different patterns of behaviour of fans, it is important that we do not celebrate the activities of certain supporters and ignore (or even downgrade) the activities and interests of others.
>
> (Crawford, 2004: 33)

Scholarship which promotes the defining of certain fan 'types' in a hierarchy often ends up conforming, via use of the word 'traditional', to pre-established structures embedded in sexism (male-dominated sports fandom), racism (white-dominated sports fandom) or ageism (aggressive, productive, 'physical' sports fandom, for the young). We need to avoid this.

There are other works which criticise rigid typologies of sports fandom. Writing in 2010, not long after the rise of Web 2.0 and the emergence of the participatory platforms that a new online world now offered, Gibbons & Dixon noted that online communication among sports fans was a perfectly ordinary, 'everyday occurrence', which 'should not be regarded as an 'inauthentic' fandom practice, participated in by different fans to those who participate in more traditional fandom practices, such as attending matches in person' (2010: 608). They take issue with the notion that anything other than 'traditional' fandom is somehow not worthy of research and also dislike the "boxing off" of sports fans into rigid categories. This is one of the reasons why the typology of Abercrombie & Longhurst (1998), outlined above, is so helpful; consumption may be assumed within each of their 'categories'. To them, any 'type' of

fan may be classified as a consumer. As Dixon (2013: 2) argues, 'the terms 'consumers' and 'fans' ought to be used interchangeably' due to the 'fluidity of fandom practice'. The Abercrombie & Longhurst (1998) model is best applied when one appreciates that no single fan fits perfectly within any one of the categories – everybody is a fan/cultist or a cultist/enthusiast, or an enthusiast who dabbles in petty production now and again. The same individual may be an enthusiast of one text and a cultist of another. There is a flexibility that comes with Abercrombie & Longhurst's (1998) audience continuum which is not evident in the rigidity of Guilianotti (2002) or Wann *et al.* (2001). Likewise, these football fan typologies – even Redhead's (1993) more 'flexible' active/participatory-passive dichotomy – still manages to split football fans along lines of attendance and non-attendance at matches in person. Abercrombie & Longhurst's (1998) continuum, however, could describe match-going and non-match-going fans within each 'type'. A 'fan' (by Abercrombie & Longhurst's definition) might attend matches on their own, generally keep to themselves and enjoy a match in their own company, or they may be a more casual 'groundhopper'. A cultist may enjoy attending matches with a few friends, or meet friends at the match and belong to a small match-going group. Enthusiasts might travel in fan groups and be more concerned about the social aspects of their group than the football on the pitch in front of them. Flexibility of theory is hugely important, because textual change in sport is often rife. At less than ten years, Dixon's (2013) research is not 'old', yet the makeup of the professional football scene where he conducted his research has changed dramatically. He was based in the North East of England, a place, he stated, that is 'often referred to as 'the hotbed of football'' (4) due to the strength of clubs condensed there. The region had, during his data collection, three Premier League (first tier) sides in Newcastle United, Sunderland and Middlesbrough, one League One (third tier) team in Hartlepool United and one League Two (tier four) team in Darlington. After the decade between then and the time I am writing this literature review, only Newcastle is a Premier League team (though having been relegated to the Championship [tier two] twice), Middlesbrough is now a Championship team and Sunderland a League One team, whilst Hartlepool was relegated out of the Football League and into the partly semi-professional National League (tier five) and Darlington was wound up in 2012 after going into administration twice in three years. A phoenix club has since been set up and started again in the ninth tier of English football – very much an amateur side. This is a huge amount of textual change; simply moving between divisions can drastically alter, for instance, the amount and type of television coverage one's club may receive. We must, therefore, develop theory with in-built flexibility.

We are gradually starting to see more representation of sports fandom within the fan studies field, however much work is still to be done in this regard. Across its near decade of existence,

for instance, the *Journal of Fandom Studies* has only featured four articles which consider sports fandom. One is my own work (Smith, 2019), based in part on chapter seven of this thesis, and one concerns e-Sports (McCutcheon & Hitchens, 2020) – the economics of the eSport industry and the exploitation of gamers' labour. The other two (Bleakley, 2018 and Wann *et al.,* 2016), unfortunately, perpetuate some of the drawbacks of the study of sports fandom outlined above. Wann *et al.* (2016) offer the insight that those fans who identify more closely with a team will likely hold stronger negative perceptions towards that club's rival team. However, they do not engage at all with the now significant array of anti-fandom scholarship, neatly represented by Click's (2019) edited collection on the subject (see also: Claessens & Van den Bulck, 2014; Gray, 2003; Jane, 2014; Phillips, 2015; Sconce, 2007), and which also now includes sports anti-fandom (i.e. McCulloch, 2019; Theodoropoulou, 2007). Instead, they apply the Sport Rivalry Fan Perception Scale (SRFPS), and use it in conjunction with the Sport Spectator Identification Scale (Wann & Branscombe, 1993) in an attempt to quantify the unquantifiable emotional engagement between fan and fan object. Disregarding the methodological weaknesses of conducting a study like this using a questionnaire among university undergraduates, the biggest drawback is the researchers' intent to categorise fannish engagement without acknowledging the fact that people's likes and dislikes change over time and according to personal history. The fans I interviewed all knew who they were 'supposed' to hate, but as I outline with the example of Ross (61) in chapter seven, fans' actual feelings towards 'rival' teams are not always dictated by the prescribed social rules of supporting their club. Bleakley's (2018) work, on the other hand, is interesting in the sense that he at first appears to move away from the kind of typology that we have seen with the likes of Wann, Giulianotti, Redhead and others. He offers a Freudian and Lacanian analysis of Millwall football fandom, which is uncommon in itself, however he falls into essentially the same trap as the aforementioned by ultimately declaring that all Millwall fans experience their fan object via a symbolic masochism, nurtured by the pejorative labelling of other football fans. Bleakley unwittingly creates a 'category' for all Millwall fans as symbolic masochists, though he does, at least, offer an overview of the context of his claim – the social conditions which he argues are particular to Millwall football fans as individuals castigated by all other non-Millwall fans. There is little appreciation for the individual differences among Millwall fans, but Bleakley's work is at least a little interpretive. We are beginning to see some post-positivist work in sports fan studies scholarship, which is very important. As Parry (2012) observes:

> Traditional research on sports fans has typically used some form of quantitative measure to identify behaviours which fans exhibit. As such it is then discussed in an objective, deductive manner which is devoid of human feeling or emotion and which will usually have no trace of the researcher's identity (Wall, 2006). And yet being a sports fan is all about emotion and the experience of supporting "your" team. It is

something to which people commit time, energy, and, in some sense, their self. Traditional accounts of sports fans rarely reflect the individual experience nor do they give a real sense for what being a sports fan is actually like.

<div align="right">(Parry, 2012: 239)</div>

The emotional connection to a fan object is something which simply cannot be described by the impersonal quantitative scales. The data produced by such approaches is hugely reductive and does not do justice to the intricacies, nuances and, quite often, contradictions within fandom. Sports fan research based in the fan and cultural studies tradition tend to be far more successful in this regard. The works of Sandvoss (2003), Theodoropoulou (2007) and McCulloch (2019) are excellent for the simple fact that they, through using qualitative approaches, offer sports fans a voice. This is explored in a little more detail in the final section of the literature, on psychological approaches to the study of fans.

Clearly, this research project fits into the continuing trend of great diversification in sports fan research. From its relatively humble – and reductionist – origins, which far too often sought to analyse young, white, male, football hooligans, we now see a vibrant landscape spanning gender, race, class, different sports and now, with my own work, age. This thesis also very much fits into the category of 'ordinary' sports fandom research (Benkwitz & Molnar, 2012; Sandvoss & Kearns, 2014) as I seek to assess the everyday lived experience of being a sports fan in retirement. Crawford (2004: 28) suggests that 'too often enthusiasm for a new theorization or paradigm overlooks the continued role and importance of previous paradigms'. He is referring specifically, here, to the counter-development in sports fan studies to structural theory, in favour of theories which promote agency. The shift, for Crawford, went too far. For Crawford, we must temper our enthusiasms in breaking from the previous paradigm and accept that power structures still play at least some part in the everyday lived experience of the sports fan. Thus, my own research project follows this same line, that it 'is primarily about the *agency* of fans, however, it recognizes that to a large degree this agency will be shaped by the continued importance of *structures* in people's lives, such as gender, ethnicity and social class', (Crawford, 2004: 6) and also, in this case, age.

Part 2: Gerontology[3]

Gerontology is a huge multi-disciplinary field of inquiry within its own right. Its students of course dedicate entire literature reviews to very specific aspects of its study, whereas I simply do not have the space. I write chiefly from a communications, cultural and media studies starting point, and so have relegated its place within my own literature review to below that of fan studies, but it is no less important, as the comments of Harrington & Bielby (2010) above show. The ageing sciences provide a wealth of research which fan studies has been slow to appreciate; indeed, this thesis is as much a piece of social gerontological research as it is a fan studies project. Multi-disciplinary work is a key characteristic of fan scholarship – there is no reason why that should not extend to the ageing sciences. Therefore, I now outline some of the trends within gerontology. I make no claim to offer a review of gerontology's entire history and theoretical developments, rather I stick to outlining the developments which have directly impacted upon my own work and aided in my own theorisation of later-life sports fandom. This means that I have placed special importance on the development of what came to be known as 'activity' theories, with a particular focus on the continuity theory of Robert Atchley (1989, 1993, 1999), as well as what came to be known as the 'cultural turn' in the field of gerontology (Twigg & Martin, 2015).

2.2.1 Gerontology, Activity Theories and Continuity Theory

'There is no magical transformation that persons undergo at some standard age, certainly not at 65', states Kelly (1993: 1), right at the beginning of his gerontological reader. He expands and accepts that there are transitions in later life for things such as 'resources, opportunities, expectations, and relationships', that 'being widowed does alter the *immediate* context of life' (emphasis mine) and that activity may change due to 'losses of common companions, physical abilities, or opportunities', yet, throughout all of this extraneous change, the individual beneath all of it can be characterised by searching for 'a high degree of *continuity*' (*ibid* – emphasis in original). Theories of continuity in the ageing self are not scarce, having exploded into gerontological consciousness towards the end of the twentieth century (e.g. Fisk & Chiriboga, 1990; Kaufman, 1986, 1993; Kelly, 1993; Leiberman & Tobin, 1983; Tobin, 1991). However, continuity theory as an approach in itself is best attributed to Atchley (1989, 1993, 1999). Continuity theory suggests that the individual aims for a developmental path of least resistance. Although the individual *does* ultimately change throughout the life course, they

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[3] Parts of this section of the literature review appear in Smith (2019).

will look to accommodate that change within the parameters of previous experience and learning. Atchley writes:

> In discussing continuity, it is important to understand the relationship between continuity and change. *Continuity is not an absence of change*. Continuity refers to a coherence or consistency of patterns over time. Specific changes tend to be given significance in relation to a general notion of a relatively continuous whole. Individual change and evolution are usually perceived as occurring against a backdrop of considerable continuity.
>
> (Atchley, 1993: 7 – emphasis in original)

Atchley does concede the paradoxical nature of adult development. He suggests that 'there is both similarity over time and obvious change – one can be identifiably similar in comparison with a past self and still have changed considerably' (1993: 7). The structure of Atchley's continuity theory features two strands: *Internal* continuity and *external* continuity. Internal continuity 'is the persistence over time of psychological patterns of various kinds: temperament, affect, experiences, preferences, skills, dispositions, attitudes, values, beliefs, and worldviews' (7). External continuity 'is defined in terms of a remembered structure of physical and social environments, role relationships, and activities' (12). Thus, external continuity, to Atchley, involves the repetition of the same activities into later life. He is sure, however, to explain that this is not to be seen negatively:

> ... this continuity is not a boring sameness for most but rather a comforting routine and familiar sense of direction. No doubt part of the impetus for external continuity is related to restricted opportunity structures resulting from ageism and societal disengagement, but probably the majority of it results from the satisfaction people get from exercising mastery and the value of experience in preventing and minimising the deleterious effects of physical and psychological aging.
>
> (Atchley, 1989: 188)

Continuity theory occupies a sort of middle ground between two other competing, and contrasting, theories of ageing, which sees "activity" theory at one end of the spectrum and "disengagement" theory on the other. Activity theories are closer in relation to continuity theory and are certainly more positive in outlook. The general premise of activity theory is that one should maintain the highest-possible levels of activity as far into the life course as possible. These activities are substituted into the individual's life as a replacement for the activities lost through retirement, to fill the 'activity gap' which was previously filled by employment and seen as vital in promoting well-being (Havighurst, 1963; Nimrod & Kleiber, 2007). Despite the general support of activity theories, Nimrod & Kleiber (2007) note that there are drawbacks. They write that 'there is reason to suspect that the effects do not apply in all contexts to all subgroups and all activities' (2007: 3), and point towards the research of Iwasaki & Smale (1998), who, in their study of older Canadians' leisure activities, 'found that *social* leisure was highly valued by retired women but not by retired men' (Nimrod & Kleiber, 2007: 3). Nimrod's

own research (2007) suggested that only some forms of activities shared associations with well-being, others were not associated and certain others, like watching the television, were viewed in a negative light. It was not uncommon with my own interviewees to find people who saw watching television during the day as a bad thing or that, whilst they were absorbed by, say, the cricket, the longevity of the game and their watching it on the television for such a prolonged period was undesirable. In fact, it was very common for my interviewees to put a fan object such as the cricket Test match (which can take up to five days for a single contest to conclude) on the television in the background or to listen to *Test Match Special* on the radio, whilst at the same time busying themselves with other activities such as gardening or cleaning the house. Despite these drawbacks, remaining active is generally seen as both healthy in older age and excellent for dealing with stress (Iwasaki & Mannell, 2000; Rowe & Kahn, 1998; Zuzanek, Robinson, & Iwasaki, 1998).

Disengagement theory, on the other hand, has earned a different reputation. Nimrod & Kleiber (2007: 3) go as far as to suggest that 'most gerontologists have found "Disengagement theory" to be controversial and even repugnant'. It certainly has an outlook that could be deemed particularly negative. It was first theorised by Cumming & Henry (1961), who wrote: 'Disengagement is an inevitable process in which many of the relationships between a person and other members of society are severed and those remaining are altered in quality' (1961: 211). It is a 'method by which society prepares for the structure of its members so that when the inevitable arrives [death] it does not disrupt the orderly functioning of society' (Bond, Briggs, & Coleman, 1993: 32). It is a rather callous pronouncement that those in the later life stages are worthless to society. The public need not worry; when these people die society will have already moved on. There are many objections to this theory, ranging from the indifference shown towards the mature hinted at above, to accusations that the cultural and economic structures of the time led to a higher proportion of what was perceived to be 'disengagement' in older people. The most simple is that 'disengagement is *not* inevitable and non-engagement in old age reflects the life-long pattern of social interaction for some people' (Bond, Briggs & Coleman, 1993: 32 – emphasis mine).

A weakness of both activity and disengagement theories is summed up neatly by Lee (2014), in his study of Chinese elders in sheltered housing. He suggests that once one considers either approach 'outside of any specific context, both theories seem to suggest an 'all or nothing' rule of uni-directional travel, when in fact... older people engage, disengage or reengage within different contexts and within different time-frames (or over their life course)' (2014: 1520). Continuity theory allows for this 'malleability', this 'messiness', in an evolutionary process as the individual searches for consistency in their life. Likewise, despite representing the

antithesis of one another, at the heart of both activity and disengagement theory lies the aim of 'successful' ageing, which brings us back on to the path of continuity theory. As Atchley notes:

> Continuity theory is *not* a theory of successful aging. Unlike activity theory and disengagement theory, which gave opposing prescriptions for successful aging (Havighurst, 1963), continuity theory predicts that in their choices people will show a bias toward what they perceive to be continuity. Success may indeed be the result of these choices, but in some cases it will not (Atchley, 1989).
>
> (Atchley, 1993: 6 – emphasis in original)

Whilst Atchley (1989, 1993, 1999) is probably the most well-known advancer of continuity theory, the notion of continuity as being essential for successful navigation throughout the life course has been theorised as long ago as Cavan (1949), who saw important for identity the individual's link between middle and advanced age. Kaufman's (1986, 1993) excellent research on the ageing self, through her notion of the age*less* self, points towards the individual as an active (re)producer of self and identity throughout the life course, similar to Lee (2014), above, though nearly thirty years prior. She suggests that,

> The structure and meaning of one's identity is established as experience, is layered on experience and is simultaneously reflected upon, evaluated, adjusted to, and incorporated. But rather than being constructed to follow the rise and fall of an external trajectory through time, identity is built around themes, without regard to time, as past experiences are symbolically connected with one another to have meaning for a particular individual.
>
> (Kaufman, 1986: 151)

Kaufman is keen to discard the notion of chronological age, and writes at length, drawing on ample empirical data (her 1986 work was based on sixty in-depth, semi-structured interviews), on how individuals do not 'feel' eighty or ninety-years old, at odds with the then-prevailing attitudes towards age-related research which 'mostly implicitly assume[d] that the individual life course follows a curve or trajectory – rising, arriving at a height of something (i.e., occupational success, social status... etc.), and then falling back' (1986: 150). In this 'trajectory paradigm, chronological age is the critical variable' (5), but Kaufman, like Kelly (1993), above, dismisses the notion that sixty-five is some sort of personal milestone beyond a number at which one often no longer works on a full-time basis. The self is regenerative, recreative, evolutionary, *active*.

An issue with Kaufman's work, however, is her *complete* dismissal of age-related self-concepts. She notes that her interviewees 'may, in passing, describe themselves as "feeling old" in one context and "feeling young" or "not old" in another. This is always variable, and in my experience, it is never emphasized. Being old *per se* is not a central feature of the self, nor is it

a source of meaning' (Kaufman, 1993: 17). Whilst I largely agree with her concept of a malleable, active self, I would argue that Kaufman's dismissal of self-descriptions directly associated with age is too flippant. It is unsurprising that some individuals who *do* feel old do not overly-emphasise the fact in an interview – which is, after all, a social performance. That they have merely mentioned the perception in the context of being interviewed by a stranger is in itself interesting and should not be brushed aside. There are people who, despite an 'inner monologue' which says otherwise, feel, at least partly, like an "old person". This is where Troll & Skaff's (1997) work, *Perceived Continuity of Self in Very Old Age* comes in handy. Much like Kaufman and Atchley, they contributed to the growing acknowledgment of the older self as largely seeking continuity, however they went a step further than Kaufman and viewed the self through the lens of James's (1890) and Mead's (1934) "I" and "Me". They offered James's description:

> Whatever I may be thinking of, I am always at the same time more or less aware of myself, of my personal existence. At the same time it is *I* who am aware; so that the total self of me, being as it were duplex, partly known and partly knower, partly object and partly subject, must have two aspects discriminated in it, of which for shortness we may call one the *Me* and the other the *I*.
>
> <div align="right">(James, 1890: 176)</div>

The "I" is completely *internal*, whereas the "me" is *outward-facing*. It might be noted the similarities in the concept with Atchley's continuity theory, where he differentiates between 'internal' and 'external' continuity of self. Around the same era, Tobin (1991; Lieberman & Tobin, 1983) theorised similarly. In fact, Troll & Skaff (1997: 163) suggested that, 'Given the two-part nature of self…, it may be possible to feel continuity in what Tobin (1991) called "essential personhood" ("I")' – and what Atchley referred to as "internal continuity" – 'but discontinuity in appearance or energy ("me")' – Atchley's "external continuity". In other words, this period of gerontological research developed the notion of continuity, which the individual self largely aims for, however, there is at least part of the self – the "me" – which *acknowledges* the ageing process.

Around roughly the same time, another, similar theory was developed, known as selective optimization with compensation (SOC) (Baltes & Baltes, 1990; Baltes & Cartensen, 1999). The approach 'suggests that it is adaptive and healthy to respond to limiting factors in the environment (including one's own health challenges) by being selective about activities of choice, abandoning those that are less personally meaningful and compensating in whatever way necessary to optimize the more restricted number of alternatives' (Nimrod & Hutchinson, 2010: 3). More recently, in the wake of continuity theory and SOC, others have built upon the premise. Innovation theory is very similar in outlook to the above, as it appreciates the individual as active in their identity production into later life, however, it explores later life

through innovations, specifically in leisure pursuits (Nimrod, 2007; 2016; Nimrod & Hutchinson, 2010; Nimrod & Kleiber, 2007). It focuses on the adaptations people make in their leisurely pastimes, which are split into two: Self-Preservation Innovation (SPI) and Self-Reinvention Innovation (SRI), 'in which the term "innovation" denotes addition of a new activity to the leisure repertoire' (Nimrod, 2016: 389). The premise is adaptation with a view to continuity of self:

> SPI activities enable some continuation of past roles. For example, if a retired attorney becomes a fiction writer specializing in law-related stories, the new activity represents a means of preserving an essential component of [their] identity. By contrast, if an attorney who never displayed any previous interest in gastronomy becomes an avid amateur chef after retirement, such innovation may be considered an opportunity for reinvention of self (SRI).
>
> <div align="right">(Nimrod, 2016: 389).</div>

As should by now be clear, gerontological research has, since the second half of the twentieth century, established the notion of continuity in later-life constructions of self. We have long since moved away from ideas of linear ageing, as theories of active self (re)construction have blossomed into myriad forms, all with the same underlying premise. In the case of Nimrod's ample research output, this general approach to ageing has been applied successfully to leisure studies; now it is time for fan studies to do the same.

2.2.2 The Cultural Turn

As a phrase, the "cultural turn" is one which has been used by, and applied to, multiple fields of research. It generally refers to the shift in perspective within the social sciences and humanities across the late twentieth century, having

> emerged as a reflection of, and a timely response to, deep-rooted transformations that have taken place since the Second World War in the world's social and political landscapes. These changes have placed culture in the spotlight and made it a central focus of struggles over identity, belonging, and justice in the contemporary world.
>
> <div align="right">(Scott, 2004: 24)</div>

Whereas earlier work from the likes of Geertz, Foucault and Bourdieu focused on the importance of culture in lived experience, Gilleard & Higgs (2015) suggest that it was actually in the last decade of the twentieth century, through the likes of Bauman, Beck and Giddens, that the cultural turn really gained traction in European social sciences. It was during this time that it became evident we were experiencing a shift in the ways in which people were experiencing life, that we needed new ways of theorising the social world. Gilleard & Higgs (2015: 29) list four ways in which this change might roughly be described:

a) The transformation of national economies from a basis on industrial capital and mass production to a basis on mass consumption.

b) Cultural and economic globalization.
c) The disembedding influences of the market and the media.
d) New social movements.

For Gilleard & Higgs (2015: 29), during this time we saw that a 'greater attention was paid to the body as a source of identity and expression of lifestyle', as we moved away from 'accepting as 'natural' the corporeal binaries of gender, race and able-bodiedness'. As a result, "embodied' signification was explored through gender and women's studies, studies of race and ethnicity, of sex and sexuality and through disability studies' (*ibid)*. In other words, we began to see the move from a focus on structure, to more of an emphasis on agency – not unlike that seen in the developments of fan studies and the study of sports fandom above.

Naturally, there are subtle differences to the ways in which the 'cultural turn' has manifested itself in different fields – for instance, its appearance has been described as a 'civil war' within the field of cultural geography (Schein, 2004: 11), whereas fields like economics and psychology 'have remained relatively indifferent' (Twigg & Martin, 2015: 6). For gerontology, there was no change at all, at least initially. During the 1990s the focus of the paradigmatic shift was on youth and younger people's bodies; only later was this translated into a focus on ageing (Gilleard & Higgs, 2013). Indeed, it is only in the last fifteen or so years that the 'cultural turn' is credited as having occurred in gerontology. With this development, though, has come an explosion of gerontological works with a vibrant array of research focuses based in the humanities (Twigg & Martin, 2015).

What the cultural turn in gerontology has led to, chiefly, is the retheorization of the life course that we saw above: from being a structurally prescribed chronology of checkpoints to a much more fluid, individualised process of ageing (Kelly: 1993). As age has gradually been analysed through the lens of cultural studies, we have seen the deconstruction of previously assumed and uncontested 'normalities' of ageing replaced with a view of the older person as 'agentic, contradictory and potentially desiring subjects who are both implicated in and contributors to contemporary culture and the individualised, consumerist 'project of the self' (Giddens, 1991)' (Gilleard & Higgs, 2015: 30).

Until the 1970s, gerontology had divided the life course into stages, which were initially based on the three prongs of education, work and leisure, which then translated into the three life phases of preparation, active work and retirement (Best 1980; Phillipson 1998, 2006). As Phillipson (2006: 139) notes, '[b]y the 1960s, retirement for men had become a normal feature of the life course, a taken-for-granted part of one's biography', which was swiftly followed by the same for women.

> After the mid 1970s, a number of changes can be discerned arising from the development of more flexible patterns of work, along with the impact of globalization on patterns of employment. These produced what may be termed the reconstruction of middle and old age, with the identification of a 'third age' between the period of work and employment (the 'second age') and that of a period of mental and physical decline (the 'fourth age').
>
> (Phillipson 2006: 139)

This reworking of the later-life ages was not universal, as there were those who ascribed to the four life ages and those who stuck to the original three (Fahey and Holstein, 1993); however, the drive behind the move to the four life ages was dependent on the societal shift into late- or post-modernity (or what Bauman [2000] would term 'liquid' modernity, Giddens [1991] 'reflexive' modernity and Beck [1999] 'second' modernity). It is this post-structuralist shift to an era of much more fluid identity production that the likes of Bauman (2000), Giddens (1991) and Beck (1992, 1999) describe, which led to Moen's (2003) theorization of the third age as one with boundaries so blurred, at both 'ends' of the age, it is difficult to discern them at all. Phillipson (2006: 140) describes Moen's (2003) notion of the third age as 'a period stretching roughly from age 50 to age 75', but without any of the universal structural features that were previously assumed as 'standard', like an unquestioned full retirement at 65. In other words, gone are the days of the rigid categorization of the second and third ages, along the definite line which was retirement. We have entered a new era of indefiniteness between working and retired life.

As Gullette (2015) notes, a greater symbiosis of culture and ageing is both a good and a bad thing. For the study of ageing, the emergence of cultural gerontology has led to the deconstruction of structuralist notions of ageing and the life course. It has fragmented the life course into a myriad of different forms and has started to tackle ageism more broadly by acknowledging that there is no 'correct' way to age. Things which have previously been 'assigned' to certain parts of the life course (i.e., working life and non-working life, or certain fandoms, even) are no longer questioned quite as vehemently. However, wider culture is still inherently ageist. From the plethora of anti-ageing cosmetics to the lack of older representation on television, to the workforce preferring younger workers to the middle or older aged (Gullette, 2015), to the well-established trend for young children to learn that growing older is a negative process (Isaacs & Bearison, 1986; Quadagno, 2011). Gerontology's cultural turn is a positive recent development for the field, but there is a long way to go to reverse decades of ageism. The final part of the literature review concerns psychological and psychoanalytic approaches to the study of fandom and ageing, something I hope will aid in continuing the anti-ageist movement of post-modern gerontology.

Part 3: Psychological Approaches to the study of Fandom and Ageing

As demonstrated in Part 1, the study of fandom has changed significantly from its origins as a resistance campaign against the pathologising of fans – labelled as the 'first wave' of fan studies by Gray, Sandvoss & Harrington (2007, 2017). It has developed through a tendency to theorise fandom as a reflection of wider Bourdieusian hierarchies (the 'second wave'), and, in what is labelled its 'third wave', also features a raft of scholarship on the idiosyncrasies among fans, the close, personal relationships that individuals cultivate with fan objects. Likewise, the same section also noted how the study of sports fandom – particularly football fandom – is gradually beginning to see more micro-level theorisation, following a tradition of macro, quantitative works. In Part 2 of this literature review, we saw how the study of gerontology has followed a similar developmental path, one that has been shaped as part of a wider trend across the social sciences and humanities that came with the 'cultural turn'. The broad shift has been towards a post-positivist world of scholarship, as an emphasis on structure gives way to that of the importance of agency in lived experience. My research follows this broad trend. This does not mean that my work turns its back completely on the structural elements of later life living (see Crawford, 2004), yet it does mean that my starting point is that of the individual, of the close, personal relationship one develops with a favourite fan object, or selection of fan objects. The waves which Gray, Sandvoss & Harrington (2007, 2017) describe are not strictly chronological; like waves on a beach, each overlaps the other. Thus, there is a fairly well-established cabal of 'third wave' scholars whose work takes on a psychological and/or psychoanalytical flavour. I see my work as fitting into this tradition. This is the focus of the final part of the literature review.

2.3.1 The 'psychoanalytic turn' in Fan Studies

We have already observed the 'cultural turn' in the social sciences and humanities. Fan studies, broadly belonging to the wider cultural studies stable, was very much in tune with this. However, later in its development, as part of the 'third wave' of fan scholarship which has been defined as having a greater focus on the idiosyncrasies of individual fans, we have seen what might be termed the 'psychoanalytic turn'. The branch of psychoanalysis which has featured in this type of approach is that known as 'object-relations', which emerged out of the British school of psychoanalysis in the mid-twentieth century. Its most popular advocate, at least within fan studies, is D.W. Winnicott. Its exact origins are a little unclear, for British psychoanalysis can be split into three divisions: one a group of Anna Freud followers, another the followers of Melanie Klein, and the final collection known as the Independent Group

(Kohon, 1986, 2018; Rayner, 1991). Winnicott belonged to the latter (along with other well-known British psychoanalysts in Balint and Fairburn), and whilst this group is said to have developed the theory, it is widely recognised to have been based at least in part on the work of Hungarian psychoanalyst Ferenczi, and then formulated via 'a prolonged dialogue with Klein's and her followers' technical and theoretical innovations' (Keene, 2012: 3). Regardless, this branch of psychoanalysis concerns 'the processes through which humans develop a relationship, comfortable or otherwise, between the inner world of the psyche and the external world of objects' (Kuhn, 2013: 2). When the focus of fannish scholarship is on individual motivations and emotional connections to objects, it is perhaps unsurprising that work of a psychological and psychoanalytic flavour has become popular, at least among a small number of fan studies scholars. Identifying the source of this trend is difficult. In the mid-1980s, Grossberg (1984: 226-227) worked on a project which focussed 'on the ways in which rock and roll produces the material context within which its fans find themselves, a context defined by affective investments rather than by semantic representations'. He followed this with the perhaps more well-known (in fan studies circles) contribution to Lisa Lewis's collection *The Adoring Audience* (Grossberg, 1992), where, again, fans' affective connections to their favourite objects is explored. Clearly, with his focus on the affective relationship between the individual and their object of fandom, Grossberg's earlier work could be seen as an early 'third wave' scholar, however his work is only psychoanalytically flavoured, rather than an explicit advocate of psychoanalytic theory. The same might be said of John Fiske, whose work concerned audience pleasures, and whom Hills (2013a) notes is often credited as a founder of the 'active audience' paradigm. Silverstone (1994), on the other hand, *is* a proponent of object-relations psychoanalysis, in his assertion that television represents a transitional object. Although perhaps not a 'fan scholar', *per se*, Silverstone does theorise the role of television for the watching audience; to him it is a transitional object which nurtures ontological security, the cyclical, repetitive nature of television scheduling a source of comfort in an otherwise chaotic world. His example of the news programme for the adult viewer, in particular, is one which sees a text – the news show itself – collate the world's dystopia in one place, but at the same time comforts the viewer in its presentation. There is 'a finely balanced cycle in the news programming of anxiety generation... and reassurance' (Silverstone, 1994: 16). Harrington & Bielby (1995), in their seminal work on soap opera fandom, marry the focus of studying individual, emotional engagements with objects to the theoretical approach of object-relations. Building on the work of Lembo & Tucker (1990), who accuse cultural studies of being too text-centred and, thus, reductive, they employ object-relations with a view to analysing how pleasure is nurtured through a creative engagement between inner and outer realities – between the soap opera text and self – experienced in the intermediate transitional realm.

Importantly, in adopting object-relations, fan studies has adapted its application; it is used to theorise 'normative', 'ordinary', everyday fandom. So often the psychoanalytic (therapeutic) literature is used to describe pejorative behaviour. For example, Hills (2013s: 81) points to the famous Winnicottian example of the child who played with string, wherein Winnicott suggested that the child's obsession with his plaything was that the 'string symbolised joining together in the face of powerful insecurity and anxiety; an unhealthy failure to achieve separation to the mother that led to drug addictions in adult life (Winnicott, 1971: 32)'. Particularly in the United Kingdom, where mental health care and speaking to psychiatrists has long been seen as either taboo or something only for the psychologically ill, a lot of the psychoanalytic literature concerns the psychologically abnormal. Usually, this is not the case in fan studies, though there is a notable exception: Elliott's (1999) study of the fandom of Mark Chapman, John Lennon's assassin. Elliott (1999) used Kleinian introjection-projection to suggest a psychological dysfunctionality to the fandom of Chapman, though this was a flawed piece of work, given that it lacked any appreciation of 'normative' fandom at all (see Sandvoss [2005: 83-85] for a detailed overview of Elliott's shortcomings). The psychoanalysis of Klein has been used by others – Stacey (1994) and Hoxter (2000) in analysing Hollywood cinema and film fandom respectively, for example – however Winnicottian object-relations is more established. Following Harrington & Bielby's soap fans work in the mid-1990s, the next decade saw the emergence of Sandvoss (2003, 2005), whose work takes on a Winnicottian flavour, an advancement by Harrington & Bielby (2005) of their previous study, and also the research of Hills (1999, 2002), 'whose work constitutes the most comprehensive application of Winnicottian psychoanalysis to date' (Sandvoss, 2005: 89). Of course, once a scholar has found a favoured approach that works well, there is a good chance that they will build upon it in future research. Both Sandvoss (see 2007, 2008, 2014; Sandvoss & Kearns, 2014) and Hills (see 2005, 2007, 2009, 2013a, 2013b, 2014, 2015a, 2015b, 2016, 2018a, 2018b) have published, extensively, research which continues to feature a psychoanalytic flavour.

There are others whose work continues this psychoanalytic tradition. Williams's (2011, 2015, 2016) research on post-object fandom and ontological security advances the Silverstonian thread of television as an object of reassurance and comfort, in considering what happens to the fan in the event of a show's ending. Whilst I take issue with the term 'post-object' – even after a show's ending it can be (re)consumed, thus is still the fan's object – her work offers an excellent summation of the trauma of losing an object, at least from its current form (i.e. a consistently-scheduled show), and how the fan-object relationship adapts during and after that period of significant change – individuals often reinforce their fannish identities in the wake of the loss of their favourite text. Krüger & Rustad (2017) theorise the Norwegian web series *Skam* as a transitional object for younger fans, who use the show as an educational

object to learn about dealing with shame in their wider lives; likewise Johanssen (2018) uses Winnicott's notion of creative 'playing' in analysing user labour on social media, whilst Yin (2020) also takes social media as a case study by focussing on the users of the Chinese platform Weibo, in noting how user data might in the online realm may also be considered as a kind of transitional object.

There does not seem to be much sign of this trend stopping, despite Hills (2013a: 79) observing that 'Winnicott's work has very little to say about the media, let alone about its audiences'. Bainbridge (2019), for instance, puts forward the case for using psychoanalysis in television scholarship, arguing that the approach 'enriches' the field, whilst in offering both a psychoanalytic analysis of *Game of Thrones* as a text, but also an analysis of the audience's reception, Poscheschnik (2018: 1014) argues that 'a mere analysis of manifest contents [of the text] is often too superficial to understand what makes the individual psyche resonate' – the psychoanalytic approach attends to this individual experience. Whitehouse-Hart (2014: 166) notes how a 'psychosocial approach overcomes some of the divisions between the study of texts, readers, uses and spectators found respectively in Film, Television, Cultural and Media Studies', and in the introduction to the 'Media Users' section of Kuhn's excellent *Little Madnesses: Winnicott, Transitional Phenomena and Cultural Experience*, Hills (2013a) gives an overview of the value of Winnicottian object-relations to the field of media and cultural studies. It is based on the premise that this branch of psychoanalysis offers a non-reductive means of theorising the creative aspects of media use in everyday life. He quotes Wiltshire (2001):

> [Object-relations can respond to the] need to reintroduce the concept of creativity... into critical discourse. Winnicott is one of the few writers to offer sustained attention to the origins of creativity... [and] offers a series of ideas and concepts with which to approach a notion that was no doubt discarded because... it was used 'to designate a locus of opacity'.
>
> (Wiltshire 2001: 6, in Hills, 2013a: 79)

His is the best-suited school of psychoanalysis to theorize one's relationship to the cultural world. As Phillips (1988/2007: 7) notes, 'In Winnicott's writing culture can facilitate growth, like the mother; for Freud it prohibits and frustrates like the father'. Indeed, whilst Winnicott himself noted the diffusion of transitional phenomena into adult life through the individual's engagement with culture, there is an element of fan studies as having run with this strand, of having taken Winnicott's original conception of the transitional object and turned it from a material learning tool (the child's teddy bear or blanket) and theorised it in adult life as an abstract, mental concept. Be it through the nurturing of the transitional realm (Harrington & Bielby, 1995) or as a secondary transitional object (Hills, 2002) or a second-order transitional object (Sandvoss, 2005), we have now come to the point, with the likes of Yin (2020)

proposing that online data creation on social media platforms may constitute a kind of transitional object, and myself noting that fan objects are essentially based on memory (Smith, 2019), or at least an idealised internal construction, where materiality is not essential for an object to be transitional. Of course, this does not mean that a favourite material thing (the sports fan's football shirt, signed photograph, ticket stub) cannot be a transitional object, but fandom is created and managed in the intermediate realm of the psyche, a place shaped profoundly by both external and internal realities.

2.3.2 The regression debate

One of the debates when it comes to the use of psychoanalysis in the study of fandom – the application of Winnicott's (1971/2005) transitional object in particular (Hills, 2013; see also Harrington & Bielby, 2013) – is the issue of regression (Hills, 2007; Sandvoss, 2008). I wish to enter that debate here, as it is pertinent to my use of this theoretical approach. Indeed, if I am to suggest that fandom in the later life course is inherently regressive (as, ultimately, I do), then a full consideration – and ultimately defence – of my position seems particularly important, given that is seems we are talking, initially at least, about fans regressing from one extreme of the life course to the other, about an individual in their very latest years drawing on experiences from their very earliest years; a gap of 60, 70, 80 years or more. This follows a broader pattern within gerontology, which has 'outlined how early experiences could affect late life outcomes, and introduced variations between experiences (Elder, 1974, Hareven and Adams, 1982, Cohen, 1987), which altered the broader frameworks for late life' (Grenier, 2015: 406). This small section offers a definition of regression from the broader psychoanalytic stable before considering its use in communications, media, cultural and fan studies – using as a starting point the work of Silverstone (1994). It then offers an overview of the position of this research as a backer of *non*-pejorative, *non*-pathological regression, though simultaneously calling into question our perception of regression as a linear, time- or life course-associated thing, as opposed to a non-temporal experiential state.

For Freud, regression is a means of psychological protection; indeed, in an overview of his work, Feist, Feist & Roberts (2013) include regression as a defence mechanism along with Freud's displacement, fixation, repression, reaction formation, projection, introjection and sublimation theories. Only once libidinal development has been achieved can one regress back to an earlier, more dependent psychological state (Freud, 1917/2001). The use of regression in Freud's work is rather 'static', that is, others have sought to utilise regression in what might be deemed a slightly more 'positive' developmental way. For instance, Jung (1928/1960), whose own approach to psychoanalysis is so often seen as antithetical to that of Freud's, developed his theory of progression and regression, whereby, in order to psychologically develop, one

has to *re*gress in order to *pro*gress. His position comes from a broader view of Freudian regression as being too 'determined'. He writes:

> Regarded casually, regression is determined, say, by a "mother fixation". But from the final standpoint the libido regresses to the *imago* of the mother in order to find there the memory associations by means of which further development can take place, for instance from a sexual system into an intellectual or spiritual system.
> (Jung, 1928/1960: 23)

For Jung, Freud's focus on the mother fixation 'exhausts itself in stressing the importance of the cause and completely overlooks the final significance of the regressive process' (23). To use Freud's approach is to take the view that 'the whole edifice of civilisation becomes a mere substitute for the impossibility of incest', whereas his own approach 'allows us to foresee what will follow from the regression, and at the same time it helps us to understand the significance of the memory-images that have been reactivated by the regressive libido' (23). Freudian regression appears to be something of an 'escape' from contemporary experience to a more ontologically secure experiential arena, whereas Jungian-flavoured regression emphasises the ultimately transformational and developmental motivations of regression. To regress, in this Jungian sense, is to form an ontologically secure platform from which to spring into healthy psychological development.

What psychoanalytic scholars do seem to agree on is the 'everydayness' of regressive tendencies. In Freudian regression, once libido development has been achieved, regressions 'are quite common and readily visible in children' and 'are also frequent in older children and in adults' (Feist, Feist & Roberts, 2013: 39). Indeed, Freud writes that, upon experiencing mourning and melancholia, it is 'when there is *no* regressive drawing-in of libido' that we experience those 'obsessional states of depression following upon the death of a loved person' (1917/1995: 588 – emphasis mine). Jung's progression-regression process of development is a life-long one (1928/1960) whilst Adler (1956) suggested four different ways in which one might utilise types of regression in everyday development (even if he did not use the term explicitly – he preferred 'withdrawals'). Bollas (1992), too, is keen to emphasise that regression is a part of everyday life. To him, it is a feature of the human condition that, due to what he calls the 'complexity' of day-to-day living, we employ 'in order to survive' (242). He suggests that it is our 'unconscious use of objects, aimed to conjugate idiom into being, [which] allows the subject to be disseminated through the complex events that constitute lived experience' (244). He proposes:

> [I]t is my view that our primary adult relations in life – marital, familial, ideological, political – are necessary regressions from the logic of human development, in which transformed simplified structures are found to comfort us against the harrowing

complexity of life: be it in the life of the mind or life in the strange mind of the social group.

<div align="right">(Bollas, 1992: 245)</div>

Bollas's conception of regression, then, is quite Jungian in essence. It is a natural, 'normative' life skill which humans use to navigate the choppy seas of complex everyday living. As mentioned in the previous sub-section, psychoanalytic literature is often written off the back of therapeutic sessions between a psychoanalyst and an individual with poor mental health. Often, then, we read about a patient 'regressing to dependence' or regressing for the sake of 'ego repair' (Bollas, 2011). This is usually part of the therapeutic process for a patient seeking to address mental illness and must not be confused with the slightly less 'extreme' version of regression outlined above. Of the different types, there is regression as a mental illness in the first instance (as a symptom), such as the individual described by Erikson (1959/1994: 58) who has failed, developmentally, to gain 'basic trust' and thus presents with 'radical regressions... of the deepest and most infantile layers'; there is regression by the analysand in-session *as nurtured by the analyst* (as a means of therapeutic technique), and the *non*-pejorative, *non*-pathological regression of everyday life. It is the latter which we focus on in this thesis.

Silverstone's work uses (non-pathological) regression and is especially interesting because his relationship with it changed across his scholastic career (Hills, 2007). His earlier work suggested that television is 'a basically regressive medium; not regressive necessarily in a pejorative sense, but in the sense of putting those who work with it, both as producers and receivers, in touch with elementary thoughts and feelings' (Silverstone, 1988: 43). His later and more widely-known work, *Television and Everyday Life* (1994), still, as Hills (2007: 39) notes, saw television 'as essentially regressive'. This had changed slightly by 1999, when Silverstone turned back somewhat on a wholesale application of Winnicottian theory and its regressive undertone, by suggesting that his *Television and Everyday Life* (1994) was too 'general and perhaps overly reductive', ultimately concluding that 'discursive spaces offered by television in and to which we as audiences contribute are clearly more complex than a singular model will allow' (Silverstone, 1999: 82). Two scholars to come from what might be called the Silverstonian school of media, communications and cultural studies are Hills and Sandvoss, with each taking a leaf from a different 'phase' in Silverstone's relationship with regression. Both are, as we have seen, broadly psychoanalytic in flavour, both utilise object-relations psychoanalysis and thus draw on the work of Winnicott, but whereas one is embracing of regression, the other is warier of the term. With the range of different regressive experiences spanning from the pathological – Feist, Feist & Roberts (2013: 39) note that, in Freud's conception, regressed individuals' behaviour is 'rigid and infantile' – to the non-

pathological – or "ordinary", such as Jung's regression-progression – it is unsurprising that there are different takes on it as a concept. Hills (2007: 44) suggests that 'by arguing that media fans are non-pejoratively "regressive", we run the risk of seeming to agree with far more powerful forms of cultural common-sense which are, precisely, pejorative'. The reluctance to assign the 'regressive' label to fandom is understandable, especially given that the 'common-sense' notion of regression is one of infantility, of reverting to some needy, mother-dependent state. Thus, Hills's fear is that 'it is the extent to which theoretical narratives of media fandom might themselves play into negative stereotypes of fans as childish/pathological – stereotypes which retain a cultural efficacy even in these times where fandom has started to become a little more mainstreamed' (2007: 44). As Bollas (1992: 242) notes, regression 'has been so essential to human life that it has become an unanalyzed convention, part of the religion of everyday life'. The scholar's first course of action ought to make clear that the 'common sense' image of regression as pathological or a therapy-induced technique is not the norm, but that everyday regressive tendencies, our ability to stay 'in touch with elementary thoughts and feelings' (Silverstone, 1988: 43) is the actual norm.

If Hills is more wary of applying regression to fandom, then it 'is Sandvoss who, in a sense, is most faithful to [Silverstone]'s earlier arguments' (2007: 44). When it comes to regression in fandom, even in the very latest life stages, I tend to be more closely aligned to Sandvoss's reading. Indeed, as Sandvoss outlines below whilst drawing on Silverstone's 1994 work, regression is also intimately linked with another key theoretical concept used in this thesis: *Heimat*. He writes that,

> We must not too quickly dismiss the possibility that a continuation of transitional objects in later life constitutes a regressive, though not pathological, experience (Silverstone 1994), which can be intensely pleasurable precisely because of its return to pre-separation wholeness in childhood, fostering a most radical sense of belonging and *Heimat*.
>
> (Sandvoss, 2005: 93)

This statement is really quite central for the theoretical basis of my argument. It appears that the pre-Oedipal psychic environment, before the first "not-me" objects are realised, where one is content with the notion that the whole universe is "me" – a kind of 'pure' experience of selfhood (though with the acknowledgment that self can only be defined against Other, so perhaps I mean a pure experience of "me-hood") – that this is what might be called the 'default' experiential state of the human being. From this point onwards, the object world, 'culture', essentially gets in the way. For the rest of the life course we navigate the complexity of the object world, all the while searching for those objects which allow us to recall the experience of that 'pure me-hood', the ultimate level of contentedness we ever experience. Of course, once the first "not me" objects are realised, once we learn that the Other exists, we develop selfhood,

thus we can never, truly, regress to that purest state of me-hood, however I propose that we can recall the emotional essence of what that felt like and apply it to contemporary situations. By "apply" I mean we are of course aware of what our favourite objects are; we are often able to explain that we engage with specific culture when feeling overwhelmed – watching a particular movie when we are ill, for instance.

Regression must be possible from the very earliest days after the realisation of the object world. When the child is slowly realising that the mother is her own entity, the instances of breastfeeding must remind the child of their 'pre-separation wholeness' (Sandvoss, 2005: 93) prior to this point. When the child is sucking on their thumb or a blanket or a teddy bear as a means of 'mother replacement' (Winnicott, 1971), they must be experiencing a regression back to the experience of breastfeeding, which reminds the child of their 'pre-separation wholeness', which thus now ensures that their thumb or blanket or teddy reminds them of the feeling of their 'pre-separation wholeness'. When the slightly older child watches Michael Darling carrying his teddy bear in *Peter Pan* it may remind them of their own feelings towards their own teddy (or whatever the cultural reference may be). The process starts again with the end product being a text which fosters emotions relating all the way back to that initial 'pre-separation wholeness'. To regress in this way is to ultimately nurture a sense of ontological security. As Giddens (1984: 50) suggests, the 'psychological origins of ontological security are to be found in the basic anxiety-controlling mechanisms' – specifically the development of trust, as in the first developmental crisis one must overcome in the Eriksonian developmental life cycle: Trust vs. Mistrust. For Giddens (1991: 39), it is transitional objects which act as 'both defences against anxiety and simultaneously links with an emerging experience of a stabilized world of objects and persons'. Thus: 'transitional objects establish ontological security' (Williams, 2015: 24). Being the first developmental hurdle to overcome, the emergence of trust is nurtured via our relationship with the first "not me" objects. There is a symbiosis between our pre-separation memory and our first, trusted, "not me" objects. As Erikson (1959/1994: 58) writes, 'we have learned to regard basic trust as the cornerstone of a healthy personality'. To hold a basic trust is to put faith in that which we perceive. Giddens's (1984: 375) definition of ontological security is: 'Confidence or trust that the natural and social worlds are as they appear to be, including the basic existential parameters of self and social identity', or, elsewhere, simply a 'protective cocoon' (1991: 41). To have this trust is to draw on experiences with our earliest "not me" objects – that first defence against the anxiety of the realising of the existence of an object world. To trust is to hold within our psychological skill set the ability to nurture ontological security, and the tools with which we nurture ontological security are (in part) the cultural artefacts which form the textual basis of fandom: our fan objects. Fandom is, inherently, regressive.

2.3.3 Collective Identity and Generational Consciousness

Building on the opening section, this chapter now moves on to considering the nature of some of the more macro, intersubjective notions of communal identity, through what has been termed either 'popular memory' (Boym, 2001) or 'collective memory' (Zandberg, 2015), as well as generation, before going on to introduce into the debate the micro; the interplay between individual and group in constructions of identity, in this instance via the work of Bauman (2000) and, more prominently, Bollas's (1992) 'generational consciousness'. This is particularly important, and calls to mind the work of Crawford (2004: 28), referred to above, where he suggests that 'too often enthusiasm for a new theorization or paradigm' (i.e. poststructuralism) 'overlooks the continued role and importance of previous paradigms' (i.e. structuralism).

More and more study is being devoted to issues of fandom and the life course (Harrington & Bielby, 2010) but also areas from within even this sub-discipline are being attended to – issues of collective memory and generational identity seem to be attracting attention recently (Harrington & Bielby, 2018). Kuhn (2002) was ahead of her time in this respect, with her work on 1930s cinemagoers an early exploration in how a particular cultural artefact might bind together generations of movie fans, or what Zandberg (2015: 111) described as the way a group or community might use collective memory to 'preserve its self-image and transfer it over time'. In roughly the last half-decade we have seen the emergence of a handful of others looking to investigate such areas. Bielby & Harrington (2017) considered the way that loss and grief might be positioned within the collective memory of *Glee* fans after the death of lead actor Cory Monteith, right in the middle of the show's airing. They found much consternation among *Glee* fans about how the actor's death was handled and how this was portrayed on the show, before then comparing the reaction of the *Glee* community to that of fans of the *Fast and Furious* film franchise, which during the shooting of *Furious 7* suffered the death of its own lead, Paul Walker. Fans were much more receptive to the film's efforts than the *Glee* fans seemed to be, leading Bielby & Harrington to conclude that it was down to the *textual* resolution of the crises which ultimately shaped collective memory. Hills (2014) wrote about 'fanfac' (as opposed to 'fanfic') as a means of contributing to a *Doctor Who* collective memory. However, what is interesting here is that the writings of differently aged *Doctor Who* fans appealed to the collective memories of different generations of *Who* fans. 'Ultimately,' Hills (2014: 40) writes, 'this strikes at the heart of fan collective memory, since it decentres the notion of a basic, shared fan experience and threatens to fragment fandom instead into different generational communities and varied taste cultures.' What Hills's work suggests is that, to a point, generational identity trumps fan community; fannish identity is formed

according to the life experiences of the human beings, rather than according to some timeless notion of the 'correct fandom' (see also Hills, 2019). This is why it is important that more research focussing on generational identity is conducted, and why it is also heartening to note that this is precisely one such area that Harrington & Bielby (2018) highlight as being a burgeoning one. For instance, both their own work (Harrington & Bielby, 2013) and Hills's (2016) focus on generational identity by using the work of Bollas (1987, 1992), whilst others such as Jones (2007), in reflecting on his earlier Harry Potter fandom, Brooker's (2002) differential age readings of *Star Wars* and Kuhn's (2002) cinematic fan observations all carry with them a generational charge, whereupon various forms of generational objects offer 'links between self-in-present, self-in-past, and the collective experiences of our generation' (Harrington & Bielby, 2013: 91).

There was also a themed issue of the journal *Participations* (2014) dedicated to generational research. Napoli's (2014) work on social media concluded that the media form strengthens intergenerational bonds, part of a special section which sought 'to help scholars in describing the contemporary audience fragmentation and in exploring the complex interrelations between audiences, technologies and cultural settings' (Siibak, Vittadini & Nimrod, 2014: 100). Loos & Ekström (2014) call for an end to the stereotyping of older people on television, effectively arguing that the 'traditional' senior citizen age (65-and-over) does not represent a single generation (it is an excellent example of ageism in action – the homogenising of a huge number of people), whilst Urresti (2014) positions television as an 'intergenerational leisure artefact'. Gazi et al. (2014) offer an insight into generational usage of media technologies whilst Andò (2014) considers some of the contemporary generational tags which have been given according to media usage (i.e. 'web generation', 'Nintendo generation') and Bolin (2014) observes a distinct difference in the types of nostalgia evoked by media users, across generational and cultural boundaries. Generation, it would appear, is bound intimately with both identity and temporality. Indeed, I would go as far as to say that the development of a generational identity acts as a driving force for nostalgia by linking a particular identity with a particular temporality. The next sub-section explores in a little more detail the formation of a generational identity according to Bollas's (1992) generational consciousness, whilst also contextualising this against slightly more generic identity construction as espoused by Bauman (2000).

2.3.4 Bauman and Bollas: Liquid Life and Generational Consciousness

According to Zygmunt Bauman's (2005: 5) notion of liquid life – and the very closely-related liquid modernity (Bauman, 2000) – we are perpetually constructing our identity. He refers to 'the start and the (unlikely ever to happen) arrival' on our journey towards identity

construction. We never reach "the" identity but are in constant explorer mode throughout the life course. Whilst searching, we pick and choose and sculpt and mould; we try on this identity and that, we sample this character, taste that one, choosing from a smorgasbord of possible selves, all waiting to be discovered, worn and (usually) discarded. Death comes before we realise a "fixed" identity, but even if immortality were the norm, the human living a liquid life would, according to Bauman's theory, never quite get there; they would be stuck on an eternal, never-realising quest for "the" identity.

Where Bauman's work is limited is in its lack of appreciation for the different phases of an individual's life. We do not really get a sense of Bauman's thoughts on the retired person versus the working adult versus the university student. This is where the ageing sciences have been productive, with a seeming willingness to chop up the life course into any number of segments – the work of Erik and Joan Erikson (1950/1997) and their developmental stages of the life cycle, for instance. The general trend nowadays is for the ageing sciences to shun the more rigid, Eriksonian life *stages* in favour of a more linear, life *phase* approach (Harrington & Bielby, 2010). Where Erikson presents an almost tick-box-style version of the life course, reminiscent of a videogame (you must pass this level before moving on to the next), the phased approaches tend to offer broader, more general flavours of behaviour and psychology that occur at various points across the life course. (This is not to say that Eriksonian developmental psychology has nothing to offer; indeed, one Eriksonian proposal – 'ego integrity' – plays a role later in the thesis.)

One such scholar whose work follows more of a 'life course as linear' line of enquiry is the psychoanalyst Bollas, in using one of his more macro theories: generational consciousness (Bollas, 1992). He suggests that during adolescence we are still in the midst of creating our own, new generation. During this part of the life course, we are not yet at a point of recognising our own generation as a single, contained unit, because we have not yet reached the point of the generations above ours (the generation immediately above the newly-forming generation notices the differences of the upcoming new generation and so is able to "bracket off" their own generation as distinct from both the older generations from whom they "inherited society" and the newly-emerging generation, for the first time). Instead, the new generation, whilst aware that they are different from older generations, are merely swept up within this 'period of intense subjective life' (Bollas, 1992: 270); the individual is part of a 'collective process carrying [them] along inside it' (Bollas, 1992: 270). Bollas refers to the self throughout this period as the 'simple self'.

This is distinct from the 'complex self', which begins to develop in and around the age of thirty, or, rather, as soon as the time when a generation recognises the emergence of a new generation below them, with its different ways, and "brackets off" their own generation as a standalone unit in socio-cultural time. Whereas the simple self was subject to an intense period of subjective experience, as the individual is swept along, grabbing at all sorts of objects and flirting with all kinds of identities, the complex self emerges out of a calming in the rate of identity development. The current is still strong but it has slowed enough to allow the adult to "take stock" and "assess" the once chaotic spattering of selves and begin to mould something more akin to (though, we must remember, never quite achieving) a single identity. Bollas (1992: 270) writes of the process:

> This period of the immersion of self in culture [the younger generation and the simple self] gives way in and through time to the complex self who collects these selves into one more or less objectifiable location, when one reflects on those selves as objects. In the course of generational progression one is less immersed in social culture, less idiosyncratic and more conventional, and increasingly inclined to see the self and its objects more clearly.
>
> (Bollas, 1992: 270)

Adulthood slows down somewhat as generational identity eventually becomes more 'settled' – though the speed of flow still remains relatively strong as the individual is still part of Bauman's liquid modern world. Where Bollas (1992) becomes a little vague is in his summation of the later life course, the third and fourth life ages. He writes that in our 'forties and fifties we recognise that one's generational objects – dear to the formation and sense of our generational identity – are timebound' and that the generation which we formed earlier in life has 'now transformed into a historical object', which during our life course represents 'a movement from deep participatory subjectivity (the simple self) to the objectified' (271). Into our 'sixties and seventies we sense our passing from lived experience of our generation into history's time as we become a historical object that will succeed us' (272). Come the end of the third and into the fourth life ages, the developmental flow gradually decreases, slowing further and further until it becomes more reminiscent of a lazy river at a waterpark. The very end of the life course is the closest we get to having a 'set' identity. Though as we have seen, if we are following a Baumanian line of thought, the water does not 'settle' completely. Our identity is never akin to a lake. What I propose is that this 'slowing down' of the river of identity is facilitated by nostalgia. In the later life phases nostalgia shapes and moulds the flow, gently controlling it and preventing identity from running away from itself.

Chapter Three: Methodology

For this research project I wanted to assess the role of the sports fan object (or sports fan objects) in the retired life of the sports fan. I wanted to gauge the motivations for older people's sports fandoms, their emotional attachments to the objects of those fandoms and the structures behind fan-object relationships which have lasted for many decades – more than 70 years in some cases. The best way to ascertain this was to speak directly to those people, following the social sciences' phenomenological tradition, as opposed to a positivist approach (see Creswell, 2012). As Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault (2016: 14) write in a chapter sub-titled 'Go to the People': 'The phenomenologist, or interpretivist (Ferguson, Ferguson, & Taylor, 1992), is committed to understanding social phenomena from the actor's own perspective and examining how the world is experienced'. Thus, I conducted in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 35 later-life sports fans, all of whom have retired from full-time employment. This chapter outlines the methodological process of attaining these interviews, and subsequently the data from these interviews. The chapter is split into two main areas. The first tracks the methodological evolution of my research, discussing the type of data gathered, the sampling and participant recruitment techniques used, the ethical considerations of the research project, the methods ultimately discarded through the pilot phases of the study and some broader considerations for working with older interviewees. The second part assesses the research methods actually used in data collection and then the analysis of that data.

3.1 Methodological considerations

In deciding between conducting a largely qualitative or quantitative study, there was little doubt from an early stage that this project would represent the former. There are many benefits of qualitative research, and it can be particularly beneficial for gerontological inquiry. As Warren-Findlow (2013) writes:

> Qualitative research has the opportunity to contribute to theory development, to allow us to experience the voices of marginalized individuals, and to understand the thinking and processes that people undertake in their everyday lives about events, both miniscule and life changing. [...] [Q]ualitative manuscripts are frequently more accessible and thought provoking about paths our research might take with this deeper understanding of humankind, among both young and old, and the context in which they live their lives. Perhaps especially with older adults, a well-written qualitative study can situate the reader with an older adult, observing her prepare a meal or negotiating a staircase, interacting with family and friends to receive support. Thus, we obtain a deeper comprehension of older adults' challenges and frailties in a way that extends beyond a statistical analysis.
>
> (Warren-Findlow, 2013: 407)

It is this ability to generate a picture of the older individual's "real life" environment, to work closely with another human being and gauge later life experience which attracted me to this kind of research project. The qualitative approach allows for a 'rich understanding' of the lives of older people, 'foregrounding voices which are often absent from what gets reproduced within the evidence base' (Phoenix, 2018: 81).

There is an argument to suggest that qualitative research is not, actually, all that different from quantitative research (Yin, 2006), in so much that the qualitative researcher still often makes use of numerical data, and in their readings of, say, an interview transcript, employs numerical methods in looking for patterns (Bryman, 2004). Gorard (2003: 10) suggests that the difference between qualitative and quantitative approaches 'is essentially a distinction between the traditional methods for their analysis rather than between underlying philosophies, paradigms or methods of data collection.' For him, 'all methods of social science research deal with qualities, even when the observed qualities are counted', thus 'all methods of analysis use some form of number, such as 'tend, most, some, all, none, few', and so on' (*ibid*). In my own analysis I did, of course, look for patterns. The process of coding, and then of analysing that coding, is partly based on pattern recognition, of analysing the number of times particular utterances, or types of utterance, are made. Similarly, I included a demographic survey in my research, which included questions such as the number of years the participant has been retired, how often they have moved home, what ranking out of ten they would rate their sports fandom. This, naturally, offered some sort of quantitative data. However, I would not go so far as to describe my research as using a 'mixed methods' approach (Dellinger & Leech, 2007; Tasshakkori & Teddlie, 1998; Teddlie & Tasshakkori, 2009). I do not see the value of describing my own study as a 'mixed methods' for two reasons: Firstly, the main theoretical developments in the study have emerged from qualitative data and interpretation. Secondly, as Tasshakkori & Teddlie (2003) observed at the start of the Millennium, it has become the norm for all social scientific studies to make some use of mixed methods, thus, given that the major theoretical thrust of my own research is qualitative, it ought to be described as such.

3.2 Sampling techniques and participant recruitment

I used a range of sampling and recruitment strategies, due chiefly to the difficulties of engaging with my target demographic of third and fourth 'life age' participants. My target demographic was chosen to address two drawbacks which are generally associated with fan studies: The first is to do with the age range of fans who are traditionally targeted in fan studies research; the second is to do with the 'type' of fan traditionally targeted in fan studies research. Broadly-

speaking one could define my recruitment as using the snowballing method, however there were subtleties to this, outlined below.

In terms of the age ranges of participants in fan scholarship, there have been moves to address the lack of 'older fan' research through the likes of Bailey (2005), Bennett (2006), Brooker (2002), Hodkinson (2011) and Vroomen (2004). Many of these studies have consciously focussed on 'post-youth' youth cultures, in what is known as the 'second life phase', however this means that the fans worked with in these studies are simply not old enough to satisfactorily describe fandom in the latest life course. Around the turn of the millennium there was a development in gerontology of the new 'third age' (Moen, 2003) and the general shift towards a much more fluid notion of the life course. This shift 'produced what may be termed the reconstruction of middle and old age, with the identification of a "third age" between the period of work and employment (the "second age") and that of a period of mental and physical decline (the "fourth age")' (Phillipson, 2006:139). This new 'third age' was proposed by Moen (2003), and describes:

> [...] a period stretching roughly from age 50 to age 75. She sees this new phase as creating a mixture of uncertainties and opportunities: the former reflected in pressures and insecurities in the workplace (with downsizing and forced early retirement), the latter developed through a broadening in the range of productive activities (with combinations of work, caring, and leisure activities).
>
> (Phillipson, 2006: 140)

Much earlier fan work on so-called 'older' fans only touched the bottom-end of this loose age-range (without wishing to put too much importance on chronological age), whereas I wanted my work to better reflect the fandom of people who had entered this part of the life course and beyond. As I wrote in an article for a special issue of the *Journal of Fandom Studies*, based on this research project:

> I was interested primarily in the later life stages but did not want to fall into the trap of accepting only those over-65 (as 'old' or 'later life' was categorised before the mid-1970s switch to a more fluid notion of the later stages [...]). I was, however, keen to speak to people whose lives included more leisure time than those in full-time employment, therefore the criteria for participating in my study was simply a request that the individual be both a fan of sports and no longer in full-time employment. This led to an age-range of participants spanning 54 to 88 years, which included a variation in 'levels' of employment, ranging from some of the younger participants being fully retired and some in their seventies working a couple of days per week, attesting to the work of Moen (2003) and her creation of the new third age with its blurred perimeters. Of course, the drawback to using a model such as the four life ages is that the boundaries to the third age are so indefinite that there will always be the possibility of the chronologically younger participant, whose finances (for example) are such that they have been able to retire exceptionally early, being omitted from the study. Whilst the 'non-normative' is the new 'normative' in the third age,

there are still parameters of normativity (albeit extremely broad ones) which those
who are able to retire at, say, 30-years-old fall outside of.

(Smith, 2019: 173)

Therefore, my sample was made up of third and fourth life age individuals, who, for participant recruitment purposes, I termed 'retired or semi-retired individuals'. I feel that the age range of the participant sample I ended up with – participants aged between 54-88 and all within the third and fourth life ages – begins to address quite a significant hole in the broader fan studies literature.

As we saw in Chapter Two, in their audience continuum, Abercrombie & Longhurst (1998) split the audience into five different categories, of which three might be classed under the umbrella term 'fans'. The categories acknowledge that there are different 'ways' to be an audience member, with any individual's behaviour in consuming a particular text ranging from the most 'casual' observer – 'consumer' – through ever more enunciative and textually productive behaviours – 'fan', 'cultist', 'enthusiast' – to the continuum's other, professionally-productive extreme, 'petty producer'. Naturally, different behaviours in audience, or fannish, consumption are expressed via different modes of engagement, and thus those individuals might be found in particular physical or digital arenas. For instance, the 'enthusiast', whose fannish behaviour is centred around textual productivity and close-knit community fandom (Abercrombie & Longhurst, 1998), would likely be found on a fan forum or as a participating member of a fan group. This has long been an issue in the study of fans, as Sandvoss & Kearns (2014) observe:

> Fan studies have highlighted forms of fans' creativity and productivity since the late 1980s. However, while these studies preceded the rise and diffusion of digital media over the subsequent decade, fan cultures have increasingly been seen and studied through the prism of digital media, coinciding with and evoking dominant themes in the analysis of the rise of new communication technologies including interactivity, participation, productivity and user-generated content.
>
> (Sandvoss & Kearns, 2014: 91)

Thus, fan studies has focussed heavily on those fans who are the most visible: the textually productive, heavily enunciative and often digitally-based fans who occupy a place towards the right of Abercrombie & Longhurst's audience continuum – petty producers, enthusiasts and more visible cultists. I wished to address this imbalance and focus also on 'fans' (as defined by Abercrombie & Longhurst in their continuum). Of course, 'fans' are a far less visible kind of fan. These are people who may simply enjoy a particular text by themselves and feel no need to enunciatively converse with fellow fans, write about their fandom via fan fic or participate in a digital fan group. Likewise, many of my participants, without wishing to draw too heavily on generational stereotype, were not digitally fluent. A number of my oldest participants did

not own a mobile phone or computer of any description. Many had either eyesight too poor, arthritis too advanced or dementia too progressed to be able to work such intricate devices. Almost by default, then, there is a shift in people's fandom as they get older, from right to left on Abercrombie & Longhurst's audience continuum (assuming they were not already placed on the left), as networking and textual productivity become less possible.

The recruitment of older individuals for any kind of academic research 'can be particularly difficult and time consuming' (Bonk, 2010: 303), due to many factors such as mobility issues and isolation. Thus, with my aim of also including the least visible types of fan, recruitment was doubly challenging. Using an online-only approach to recruitment would be unproductive, as would solely relying on finding sports fans at obvious places such as stadia. Thus, the best way of giving myself the best chance of recruiting a desirable sample was to use a mixed approach, with a focus on snowball sampling. The snowball sampling strategy is 'where an initial contact generates further informants' (Jensen, 2012: 270). As Noy (2008) notes:

> This process is, by necessity, repetitive: informants refer the researcher to other informants, who are contacted by the researcher and then refer her or him to yet other informants, and so on. Hence the evolving 'snowball' effect, captured in a metaphor that touches on the central quality of this sampling procedure: its accumulative (diachronic and dynamic) dimension.
>
> (Noy, 2008: 330)

Despite the view that snowballing is 'arguably the most widely employed method of sampling in qualitative research in various disciplines across the social sciences' (*ibid*), the nature of the technique has led to some seeing it as a somewhat casual means of recruiting participants (Hendricks, Blanken & Adriaans, 1992). However, it is this so-perceived 'informality' which makes snowball sampling such an effective recruitment method. As Deacon *et al*. (2007: 55) note, the method is 'mainly used where no list or institution exists that could be used as the basis for sampling'. This has been the drawback of so much fan studies work in the past – researchers have, naturally, looked in the most obvious places that fans congregate. Fan forums and online fan groups, to take a couple of examples, are such places and provide for the fan scholar a ready-made list of potential participants. The issue here, however, is that these groups reflect only *certain types* of fan – as mentioned above, those who are generally situated towards the right, more enunciatively and textually productive side of Abercrombie & Longhurst's (1998) audience continuum. Snowballing, therefore, offers a chance to also recruit participants who are not so visible, thus helping to make samples that bit more representative of the wider fannish community. Also, given that snowballing as a 'method is applied when it is difficult to access subjects with the target characteristics' and is 'suitable to find unattainable populations' (Naderifar, Goli & Ghaljaie, 2017: 2), such as isolated older

individuals, I was able to gain access to older sports fans who live very insular lives, as well as those who lead more sociable ones.

The starting point for my recruitment was a range of my own contacts – either older people who I knew personally or other, younger contacts who themselves knew older individuals. For instance, my own grandmother is involved with her village church group and so has quite a vibrant social circle. She was able to set several 'snowballs' rolling for me. Of course, a drawback of the snowball sampling method is that you are liable to end up with a phenomenon sometimes known as 'distortion' (Waters, 2015), when a group of participants are all quite similar, or 'narrow', due to each link in the chain knowing the next link (Chambers, Bliss & Rambur, 2020; Polit & Beck, 2017). I addressed this by starting as many separate 'snowballs' as possible. I believe that the ultimate age range of participants, the broad geographical spread of participants and the variety of 'types' of sports fan interviewed attests to the fact that, to a certain extent, I overcame this issue. However, as Waters (2015: 372) notes, a certain level of distortion is often 'an unavoidable consequence of asking participants for referrals in certain cases' and thus I was left with an ethnically homogenous group made up of entirely white British participants. It ought to be pointed out, however, that this homogeny is close to a true representation of the area in which I conducted most of my interviews: North East Lincolnshire, according to the county council's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment of 2015 (nelincsdata.net), 'The overall population of ethnic minorities within North East Lincolnshire at the time of the 2011 Census was estimated at 4.6%, which is significantly lower than regional (14.2%) and national (20.2%) comparators.' Note that these are the *overall* figures – minority ethnic school populations are nearly twice as high, which means that the older minority ethnic figures for North East Lincolnshire, at least according to the 2011 Census (the results of the 2021 Census had yet to be published at the time of writing), is *less than* 4.6%. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to claim a certain level of representativeness in retired sports fans from North East Lincolnshire, though of course this study cannot claim to be representative of all fans, nationwide.

The 'mixed' element of participant recruitment came with my use of convenience sampling, which is 'more the product of expediency, chance and opportunity' (Deacon *et al*. 2007: 56). During data collection, I learned of the Ancient Mariners Walking Football Club in Grimsby, whose low-intensity version of the sport is open only to those aged 55-and-over. I contacted the club secretary and was invited to watch the club's training sessions. Whilst it should not be assumed that everybody who participates in playing sport is also a sports fan, there is a high likelihood that groups of sports players contain within them sports fans. Indeed, from this club I ended up with another four participants. This is what Deacon *et al*. (2007) would describe as

a 'strong' convenience sample, 'where sampling focuses around natural clusters of social groups and individuals, who seem to present unexpected but potentially interesting opportunities for research' (56). I also approached care homes across Lincolnshire, East Yorkshire and Nottingham (this being well before the Covid-19 pandemic). I sent letters out to over fifty care homes, though this resulted in just five interviews with care home residents, from just two facilities. The reason for this, I found out after a conversation with one care home manager, was that the contemporary care home, by request of the government, now generally only accepts those who are unable to care for themselves at all. Thus, the care home population is overwhelmingly populated by the most vulnerable older individuals, meaning a dearth of people who would be fit enough to engage in a 90-minute interview. Indeed, those few care home interviews that I did manage to complete were significantly shorter than the average.

The issue of the *number* of participants to be recruited was not easy to solve. As Darlington and Scott (2002) note, usually, when it comes to qualitative research, 'it will not be possible to decide theoretically at the beginning just how many participants will be needed' and, given the significant personal time and potential emotional engagement demanded by qualitative research (through in-depth interviews), the notion of being able to 'pick and choose respondents on theoretical grounds is a luxury we have rarely encountered' (53). Thus, I waited for what is commonly known as the 'saturation point' (Bowen, 2008). This is the point at which the researcher sees the same, or very similar, data occurring time and again within the data collection process, thus 'signifying that the data contain all information necessary to answer the research questions' (Lowe *et al.*, 2018: 192). During my data collection phase, this point arrived after speaking to 35 interviewees. I did not feel that further participants would add anything new to the data collected, and so concluded the data collection phase of the research. Below I have included a table with some basic demographic information on my participants. The table is sorted according to age, and is also colour coded. Those highlighted in yellow disclosed a major life changing or shortening illness or ailment, whilst those highlighted in green had been diagnosed with dementia. Mort is highlighted in green and blue because he has been diagnosed with both dementia and Parkinson's. The participants whose text is in red font have died since taking part in the study.

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Years retired	Marital status	Importance of sport (out of 10)	Frequency of fan object engagement	Former profession(s)
Toby	M	54	2	Married	8	Everyday	Police Officer
Joan	F	56	4	Married	8	2-3 days	Accountant
Charlotte	F	57	3	Married	N/A	Everyday	Carer/food technician/teaching assistant
Ross	M	61	2	Married	8	Everyday	Mechanical fitter
James	M	62	3	Married	8	Everyday	Chemical engineer
Lauren	F	63	6	Married	7	Everyday	Primary school teacher
David	M	65	7	Married	8	4-5 days	Primary School Teacher
Tim	M	65	1	Divorced/ separated	10	Everyday	"General dogsbody"/cold store operator/taxi driver
Vincent	M	65	3	Married	7	Everyday	Accountant/Transport manager
Carl	M	66	7	Married	8	Everyday	Police Officer
Vic	M	66	3	Divorced/ separated	9	Everyday	Transport manager
Eddie	M	67	2	Married	10	2-3 days	Haulage
Nev	M	68	1	Married	10	Everyday	Office worker/computer operator/window sales
Anya	F	69	13	Divorced/ separated	10	Everyday	Local government officer
Matt	M	69	5	Married	10	Everyday	Postman/Builder
Leonard	M	70	10	Divorced/ separated	10	Everyday	Police Officer
John	M	71	6	Married	8	Everyday	Secondary School Teacher
Tamsin	F	71	5	Married	8	4-5 days	Admin
Ned	M	75	12	Married	10	Everyday	Haulage
Roy	M	75	4	Married	6	Everyday	Shop worker & HGV driver
Albert	M	76	11	Divorced/ separated	n/a	n/a	Engineer
Ron	M	76	n/a	Married	n/a	n/a	Professional footballer
Henry	M	78	10	Widow/ Widower	9	2-3 days	RAF/Quality manager/Post Office manager/Adviser in CAB

Name	Sex	Age		Marital		Frequency	Occupation
Dorothy	F	79	18	Married	7	Less than once per month	Office worker
Edith	F	80	n/a	Married	n/a	Everyday	N/A
Heather	F	80	15	Widow/Widower	7	2-3 days	Primary School Teacher
Ivy	F	80	23	Married	9	2-3 days	Primary School Teacher
Bill	M	81	18	Married	7	4-5 days	Draughtsman (boat designer)
Mort	M	81	15	Single	n/a	n/a	Military (paras) & police officer
Larry	M	82	n/a	Single	10	2-3 days	Factory worker (phones)
George	M	84	n/a	Married	N/A	Everyday	Insurance broker
Ida	F	84	19	Widow/Widower	10	Everyday	Shop worker
Bertie	M	87	n/a	Married	n/a	2-3 days	n/a
Katherine	F	88	n/a	Widow/Widower	9	Everyday	Housewife
Mable	F	88	n/a	Widow/Widower	5	Once per month	Housewife

Figure 3: A colour-coded table of participant demographics. Yellow refers to those who disclosed major life-altering or shortening ailments and green to those diagnosed with dementia. Mort is highlighted in blue and green to represent his dual dementia/Parkinson's diagnoses. Those with red fonts have died since data collection.

3.3 Research Ethics

Ethical approval for the research project was granted after going through the University of Huddersfield's standard ethics procedures, in early 2017. The pilot phase of the data collection stage was conducted in July 2017, with data collection proper starting in August 2017 and running through until the end of May 2018. In line with Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) guidance, all participation was voluntary and each participant was appropriately informed of what participation in the project would entail (escr.ukri.org). Interestingly, Delamont & Atkinson (2018) take issue with the notion of informed consent, arguing that it is impossible for the ethnographer to attain *fully* informed consent with the participant prior to interview, given that the participant cannot know how the data they provide will be interpreted by the researcher. Delamont & Atkinson (2018: 123) argue that the analytical process 'can have consequences for how the informant is represented. He or she can be made to look inarticulate, and accent or dialect can be emphasized, even apparently exaggerated. The informant may dislike how she or he appears on the published page.' From a researcher's perspective, this is simply unavoidable (indeed, Delamont & Atkinson do note as much), therefore it was paramount that participants were as informed as possible prior to their involvement in the

research project. All participants were given a 'Participant Information Sheet' (see Appendix), which invited them to take part in the project and detailed the main aims and objectives of the study, along with details on what to expect from the interview, the reasons why they had been chosen as a candidate, the details of the institution and also my own contact details with encouragement to get in touch with any questions they had about the project. In the same form participants were informed that they may leave the study at any point, without giving a reason for doing so. All was designed to allay any potential anxiety about participation.

Given the above, it was also important to anonymise all participant data. This was outlined in the form, as participants were informed that 'there is absolutely no way of tracing your data back to you. Everything is kept strictly confidential'. This was achieved with the use of pseudonyms throughout the written research, and by the use of participant 'codes' before I had assigned pseudonyms (i.e., 'p2f' for 'participant two, female'). Participants were also informed that the data collected during our interviews would be 'kept on a secure university server to which only the researcher will have access' (see Appendix), thus ensuring that the research project was conducted in line with the Data Protection Act 1998 (note that the Data Protection Act 2018 was published just after I concluded the data collection phase of the study). I also had to ensure that the barriers for participating in the study were as low as possible. For instance, many of my participants have mobility issues, therefore it was important to make clear that any interview a potential participant might take part in would occur in the most comfortable location for that individual – usually in the interviewee's own home.

It is also important to note that researchers 'are themselves often exposed, even vulnerable, while 'in the field'' (Delamont & Atkinson, 2018: 125). Therefore, 'research includes an ethical responsibility to consider the safety of researchers, not just participants' (O'Mathúna, 2018: 449). To help with this, and to also help make my participants feel more at ease, I arranged all interviews during daylight hours. This also had the benefit of ensuring that I was not driving to and walking around areas foreign to me in the dark. Having said that, some areas of Grimsby that I visited are not the safest even during the day, therefore I followed the protocol of ensuring that people knew where I was due to be at all times during my fieldwork, by informing either my partner, close family members or supervisors of my whereabouts at all times. Also, pertaining to my own mental health, working with older people brings with it the risk of the death of participants during the course of the research project. I have been able to confirm that three of my participants have died since taking part in the study, whilst another disclosed during our interview that they had been diagnosed with a brain tumour. I have not been able to contact this person since our interview, which does not bode well for his health. Another

person in their late-sixties agreed to take part in the study, only to pull out after suffering a heart attack, whilst another person in their mid-nineties also agreed to take part but had to pull out due to an illness which, a few months later, they died from. This is not something that you really think about when conducting other research projects with an overall younger participant demographic, so it really helps as a researcher to have strong familial and supervisory support around you.

3.4 Ethical considerations of working with older people

Whilst the above section outlines some of the more 'standard' ethical considerations of all ethnographic research projects, there is need for a separate section concerning the welfare of my particular participant demographic of third and fourth life age individuals, for there was certainly an element of 'vulnerability' among my older sports fans. However, before the ethical considerations for working with these participants is considered, it is very important to note that not all of my older fans were 'vulnerable' in any sense of the word. Poland & Birt (2018), writing on the topic of working in research with older people, are quite emphatic in this:

> The process of biological ageing is an inevitability of old age, however being socially positioned as a vulnerable, frail older person does not have to be. Recognizing and challenging stereotypes and the stigmatizing attitudes and actions that risk defining an older person as vulnerable, merely because of their chronological age, are not only political actions but ethical imperatives. In challenging stereotypes it becomes possible to make apparent that chronological age alone is not a reliable marker of vulnerability. A person may be positioned, or be perceived to be positioned, as vulnerable by limitations in their physical and cognitive capabilities, by poverty, by contracting social networks, and by dependence on others to fulfil activities of daily living (Age UK, 2014).
>
> (Poland & Birt, 2018: 382)

Around half of my participants were certainly not 'vulnerable'. However, I did also interview a number of participants who could be classed as 'vulnerable', according to the criteria suggested above by Age UK. This meant that different 'levels' of ethical care had to be afforded to participants who were in need of greater consideration due to their position as 'vulnerable' people, whereas others were perfectly cogent and not in need of any extra consideration beyond what would be expected of a standard ethnographic research project. For instance, Toby (54) was a full-time police officer just two years prior to our interview, and currently works part-time in a different policing role. Clearly there was no need, here, to offer any extra ethical consideration. Ron (76), meanwhile, whilst not nearly my oldest participant, was certainly the most vulnerable due to his being diagnosed with quite advanced dementia. Naturally this required extra ethical consideration. Therefore, given that it would have been ethically contentious to conduct a one-on-one interview, I conducted a dyadic interview (Lowton, 2018) with both Ron and his nurse present in the room for extra support. Likewise,

the interview I conducted with husband-and-wife Dorothy (79) and Bill (81) was done dyadically due to Bill's suffering a stroke the year before. His speech was impaired, and Dorothy was his carer, so I suggested we conduct the interview as a three, which worked very well. With all of my care home-based participants, who all had varying degrees of diagnosed degenerative cognitive disease, consent was gained by the care home staff asking their patients if they would like to take part in an interview, then I also confirmed with the individuals in the interview that they were happy to speak to me, and then finally the care home staff signed the 'official' consent forms on their patients' behalf. Likewise, I had to be flexible with the small demographic survey that I asked participants to fill in at the end of our interview. If it was clear that the participant would not be able to fill in the form by themselves, through either cognitive impairment or physical disability, then I either filled in the form for them, going through each question in turn, or I was sure to attain the same basic demographic information from the main interview. What became clear throughout my time interviewing older sports fans was that the term 'vulnerable' is wholly inadequate as a blanket term. As McMurdo et al. (2011: 660) note, there is 'a misplaced view of older people as 'vulnerable' and in need of protection from research' in academia, something which is nothing less than patronising.

That being said, there were of course ethical considerations given towards the general safety and wellbeing of my participants. Often, I was interviewing widows and widowers who lived alone, had mobility issues or poor eyesight. Clearly, in these instances, I had to reduce the impact of having an unknown stranger turn up at their door for an interview. Therefore, I was sure to have contacted all participants (who were not in a care home) at least twice, by phone, ahead of our interview. The first phone call was to introduce myself and confirm that they would be open to participating (I would also go through the participant consent form in this conversation), the second I made the day before our scheduled interview to double-check that our pre-arranged time was still suitable, and to remind my participants that I would be arriving at the designated time. This is also one of the benefits of using a snowballing sample, because, by its very design, the current interviewee and the researcher will, at least, have the person who put the two of us in contact as a mutual friend, and thus an instant topic over which to bond is provided, therefore shortening the distance between 'stranger' and 'interviewee'. Whilst I would not describe myself as 'scary' or 'intimidating', at six feet, four inches I am taller than average, and also having a beard and a relatively deep voice does bring with it a certain level of unavoidable intimidation, if not simply due to my height. Therefore, I was sure to present myself in a gentle, friendly way. I smiled and was courteous and ultimately had no issue with interviewees seeming nervous or uncomfortable, beyond the standard one would expect of an individual partaking in an interview. Even those who appeared most

nervous as we started conversing soon relaxed as we got to chatting about sport. Overall, I was very happy with this.

Wenger (2002) raises an interesting point when he suggests that an older individual who is suffering from loneliness may react to a kindly researcher in a more open way, due to the fact that they are isolated. Similarly, one of the aims of the in-depth interview is to 'break down barriers between the researcher and the participant' (Poland & Birt, 2018: 388) – indeed, some see the interview as a means of balancing power between interviewer and interviewee (Robertson & Hale, 2011; Lundgren 2013). Dickson-Swift *et al.* (2006) note that this may lead to the more vulnerable older participant mistaking 'barrier-breaking' for friendship, and forgetting that the appointment is, ultimately, an exercise in academic interviewing. This was certainly something which concerned me with a few participants, particularly those who overtly expressed what a lovely time they had had speaking with me. Indeed, one participant told their daughter (who had put me in touch with the participant originally) what a nice time they had had during the interview, and she subsequently passed on the message. Some researchers stay in touch with their participants via Christmas cards (Dickson-Swift *et al.*, 2006), and Russell (1999) even describes the actions of a researcher going back to take a former participant out on a day trip at a later date. Commenting on the latter, Poland & Birt (2018: 388) note that 'While this may have been a once only act of kindness it raises questions about the 'professional' role of the researcher and the boundaries of research relationships', and they also make a point that it was not explicitly reported 'how this was managed within a predefined ethical framework that usually sets out researcher/participant boundaries.' Despite my concerns on a few occasions of mistaken friendship, I have not sought to send Christmas cards or take participants out on day trips. I did, however, reply to my contact and ask her to pass on my regards to my former participant, and also made enquiries as to the wellbeing of my participants two years later.

3.5 Pilots and discarded methods

I ran a short pilot phase of my study between July and August 2017, wherein I conducted two separate pilot interviews and also a standalone participant observation analysis. Pilot phases, also known as feasibility studies (Thabane et al., 2010; van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001), are a prerequisite in quantitative research – studies which use methods such as surveys – however their use in qualitative research is far more contentious (Williams-McBean, 2019). For instance, some scholars argue that whilst pilots might be handy for less experienced researchers, their use is rendered moot due to the tendency of the qualitative interviewing process to evolve and develop over time (Harding, 2013; Holloway, 1997; Ismail, Kinchin & Edwards, 2018). This may be true, and my interviewing did evolve throughout the data

collection phase; the rewording and reordering of questions to make for a smoother interviewing experience, for instance. However I have separated a 'pilot phase' in any case since these three events had the explicit intention of 'trying out', and ultimately discarding, some methods. For example, I made use of physical prompts in my pilot interviews. This is something I have used in other research projects and found to be helpful as it breaks up an interview and gives the interviewee something new to look at, to aid memory and to form a good object of discussion. However, it felt a little cumbersome in my pilots; one interviewee was not overly mobile, and I am not sure he appreciated being asked to move in his seat – even to stretch out an arm for the sheet of paper. He then had to find his glasses to see the sheet at all. Rather than helpfully breaking up the session, it simply disrupted the flow of the interview. The content of the prompts were constituted of two pictures; one an image of a group of Bangladeshi cricket fans dressed in bright colours and face paint, singing and dancing in a stadium watching the Cricket World Cup. The other was of a group of dour-looking MCC (Marylebone Cricket Club) members queuing outside Lord's cricket ground, waiting to go into the stadium. The idea was to get participants talking about different types of fannish behaviour, however this came up in conversation organically anyway. Thus, for these reasons, I abandoned the use of prompts.

The most notable thing from the pilot phase which I discarded was the separate participant observation session. In my original plan, I was going to supplement my face-to-face interviews with participant observation of older sports fans consuming sport in stadiums – the idea being that this would help to 'flesh out' the description of older sport fan behaviour. This type of method is known being able to produce rich descriptions of behaviour (Hansen & Machin, 2019), indeed it is not uncommon for sports fan research to use, or part-use, participant observational techniques – see, for example, Knijnik & Newson (2021) and Serazio (2012) with Western Sydney Wanderers football and Philadelphia Phillies baseball fans respectively. However, whilst these two studies focus on very 'active' fans, who partake in pre-game activities and sing and dance and cheer during the match, the main finding from my pilot observations of older fans who were attending a 2017 Women's Cricket World Cup group stage match between England and New Zealand at the County Ground, Derby on July 12th, 2017, was that older fans do not really do anything; they simply watch the match in front of them. A few were there on their own and thus kept to themselves. Others were in a pair, yet the activity on show was fairly nondescript. The most active any of my observed older fans got was when it was the interval of the match, between innings, and they ate lunch from, usually, their own pack-up. This is arguably a finding in itself, however the data which this pilot offered simply did not seem to carry with it the richness that my interviews could.

3.6 Research methods used: Data collection

When it came to deciding upon the actual research method to use, I took the view of Lave (1995: 220), who suggests that 'the only instrument that is sufficiently complex to comprehend and learn about human existence is another human'. I was very sure from early on that I wanted to use direct, human-to-human interactions in order to gather my data. Thus, the research method I used for data collection were in-depth, semi-structured interviews, both one-on-one and dyadic (Lowton, 2018). I did also attend the training session of the 'Ancient Mariners' in Grimsby – a local walking football club – in order to meet some potential participants, had a number of casual conversations in their after-training social and was invited to a coffee morning at a local café the following day. This participant observation contributed to my fieldwork, however it was via interviews that I gleaned the vast majority of my data. As mentioned above, my 'default' position on this was to conduct one-on-one interviews, however the health of some of my participants meant that some interviews were conducted with a nurse or carer present, and also, on a couple of occasions, dyadic interviews occurred organically. Tim (65) and Vic (66), for instance, were interviewed as a pair during the coffee morning with the group of walking footballers. Both were willing to be interviewed and, whilst a couple of the rest of the group arranged for interviews at a later date, they preferred to conduct the interview immediately, thus we moved to a separate table and proceeded in the seafront café that we were in. George (84) and Edith (80) were a husband and wife who interviewed dyadically, but only because Edith returned home from a hair appointment and decided that she wanted to join in the interview.

The average length of the interviews was 1 hour 23 minutes (the longest being Anya at 3hrs 17 minutes across two spells; the shortest being Ned at 1 hour, three minutes) however this was significantly reduced by my interviews with dementia patients, who were not fit enough to speak for such a long period of time. Those five interviews ranged from 33 minutes to 49 minutes, so when taken away from the larger sample, the average interview time was 1 hour, 34 minutes. It should be noted that these times are merely the *recorded* portions of my meetings with participants; the general chit chat of introductions upon arrival and departure where not recorded.

The research interview is 'a conversation that has a structure and a purpose' (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015: 5). It is a process whereby the interviewee and the interviewer 'engage in a conversation focused on questions related to a research study' (DeMarrais, 2004: 55). It is a method which offers us an insight into the psyche of the human being, in ways which other methods simply cannot do;

> We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe. […] We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe behaviors that took place at some previous point in time. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer. We cannot observe how people have organized the world and the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about those things. The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective.
>
> (Patton, 2015: 426)

As such, on the three-category 'Interview Structure Continuum' that Merriam & Tisdell (2016) outline – which spans from the 'highly structured', or 'standardised' interview, through the semi-structured and to the unstructured, or 'informal' – my interview style fell somewhere between the semi-structured and unstructured categories. I borrowed characteristics from both of these interview styles. For example, my interviews were 'guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored' (semi-structured), yet also included open-ended questions, were 'flexible, exploratory' and often took a form 'more like a conversation' (unstructured) (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016: 110); all of my questions were 'used flexibly' and ultimately I was looking for 'specific data' in terms of my participants' later life sports fandom (semi-structured), yet my 'goal [was] learning from this interview to formulate questions for later interviews' (unstructured) as I progressed through the data collection phase in search of saturation (*ibid*). Whilst I was looking for a high level of flexibility in my interviews, thus allowing for as little restraint as possible within the realms of sports fan discussion, this did not negate some of the well-known drawbacks of this type of method. As Deacon *et al*. (2007) note:

> No question is asked in a social vacuum. Sometime people give answers they think the interrogator would like to hear, that they believe are socially acceptable or that they wish were the case. Other times they tell the truth (or at least their perception of it). For all these reasons, all answers need to be appraised carefully, and occasionally taken with a pinch of salt.
>
> (Deacon et al., 2007: 64)

Thus, one of the most important tactics in the semi-structured interview was the follow-up, or probe, which allows the researcher to fixate on a particular utterance or observation of the participant and encourages them to outline in more depth and detail what they mean by their statement (Ferraro, 2015).

One method I used within the interview was the oral history. Indeed, asking my participants to run through their fannish history was useful in much the same way that Garner (2018) found when conducting his own autoethnography. He recalled the work of Cavicchi (1998):

> Using my record collection as the stimulus for constructing my remembered fanself is consistent with [Daniel] Cavicchi's (1998) argument that longterm music fandoms

work as "a sort of photo album, organizing the passage of time and helping them create a linear narrative of their lives" (135).

<div align="right">(Garner, 2018: 148)</div>

The oral history is excellent for allowing the researcher to 'document a culture and a way of life, in order to provide some rendering of time and space that may only be accessible as long as there are individuals to speak about it' (Galletta & Cross, 2013: 29). It is a form of 'biographical method', which itself is an umbrella 'term commonly used to include a variety of loosely related approaches that draw on self as a central source' (Bornat, 2015: 113). These approaches have been largely adopted by the cultural turn in gerontology, with its placing of emphasis on 'the importance of focussing on the individual older person and their life' (Twigg & Martin, 2015: 20). 'Gerontologists have traditionally made surprisingly little use of biographical methods' (Bornat, 2015: 113), as individual development has tended to be left to the study of the mind and psychosocial developmental theory. In gerontology, whereas '[e]arlier work in age studies that did look at [older] individuals tended to approach them through a generalised psychology of ageing', the relatively recent development of cultural gerontology, 'with its emphasis on subjectivity and identity, foregrounds the perspectives of older people themselves, decentring dominant, often objectifying accounts' (Twigg & Martin, 2015: 20).

Bornat (2015) differentiates between three different forms of biographical method in the oral history, the biographical narrative interpretive method (BNIM) and narrative analysis, though she appreciates that the actual difference between the three are subtle. Whereas the oral history places slightly more emphasis on a timeline recounting of historical events, BNIM 'involves the separating out of the chronological story from the experiences and meanings that are also present in the interviewing process', there is a greater 'understanding of the biographical interview as a process of constant movement between past, present and future' (Bornat, 2015: 115). Whilst my interviews took inspiration from all three of these biographical approaches, they were more closely related to BNIM.

A biographical approach provided much-needed context to my participants' fannish lives and, although my main focus in this research project is the *contemporary* sports fandom of later life individuals, assessing one's life course enabled my participants to be able to gauge the (perceived) changes in fan text and in their fandoms. Galletta & Cross (2013: 29) note that, in conducting an oral history, often 'the researcher comes prepared with historical reference points, often secured through a study of archival material and through data collected from other oral histories'. As a fellow sports fan I was well aware of a number of the events which could – and did – come up, such as, for Grimsby Town football fans, the club's relegation out

of the English Football League in 2010, or for Manchester City fans, their club's dramatic last-minute, title-sealing goal against Queens Park Rangers in 2012. There were other events about which I was only vaguely aware but turned out to be quite significant reference points in my participants' fannish histories. For instance, many of the Grimsby Town football fans I spoke to recalled the club's promotion from Division Four in 1972 as a highlight of their fannish lives. These 'points of reference become places from which the researcher and participant can probe history' (Galletta & Cross, 2013: 29), thus, as the data collection process progressed, I became more and more knowledgeable about certain historical events, which allowed for smoother oral histories.

This also mitigated the 'gap' between researcher and participant, in breaking down the barriers between two strangers and developing a trust that would ultimately flourish in the form of honest self-assessment and, ultimately, rich data. Given the age difference between researcher and participant, it might be thought that the twentysomething-year-old researcher and the eighty-something-year-old participant would find that they enter the conversation on different experiential planes, and thus find building a relationship in such a (relatively) short time frame difficult. This, however, is often not the case (Jen, Zhou & Jeong, 2020). My positioning as a fellow, knowledgeable sports fan – thanks partly to an oral history education – allowed for generational barriers to be broken. Matt (69), for instance, asked of me: "you're a big football fan, are you? Because you seem to know a lot." This was fairly early on in the interview and seemed to calm him and led into a deeper discussion. Sometimes, however, those 'deep discussions' can go a little off-topic:

> A situation which can occur in any interview is where the person 'goes off script', disclosing information or talking of topics not directly within the formal study remit. With people who may be vulnerable due to cognitive impairment or deferential vulnerability, the researcher has to explicitly consider the ethical response in the moment: whether to stop the data collection, how to respond to a disclosure in ways that support the person without leading to further distress.
>
> (Poland & Birt, 2018: 387)

This occurred many times during my interviews. Probably the two most common asides were those about family, whereby the participant would start to tell me about the life of a child or grandchild (Bertie, 87, and Mable, 88, were particularly prone for this), and health, whereby the participant would go on a monologue about their current medical situation or in, for example, Katherine's (88) case, the trouble that they have been experiencing with their new hearing aid. I was loath to do too much about these asides, however, because I saw each bit of detail about a participant's life as potentially important for ascertaining their later-life sporting consumption, plus this flexibility is inbuilt in the unstructured interviewing style. For instance, Katherine (88) may have been prone to explaining her medical ailments, but it

turned out that her deteriorating eyesight has had an impact on her ability to watch football ("If England's playing Germany, I keep popping back to it and watch the result, but I don't exactly watch it. It goes too fast; I can't see what's what"). Similarly, in Chapter Four Dorothy (79) and Bill (81) explain in depth their weekly, and daily, schedules. Naturally, much of this is non-sporting, however it was very important information for deciphering their televisual habits and framing the way in which they use sports consumption to structure their time.

It is commonly accepted that face-to-face interviews are far more preferable to telephone interviews (Irvine, Drew & Sainsbury, 2012), however given the demographic that I was working with in this project, it seemed particularly important that I secured face-to-face meetings. Firstly, telephone interviews offer a less 'natural' encounter and this often leads to the disrupting need for interviewees and interviewers to double-check on what is being said by their conversational partner (*ibid*). Secondly, I wanted to get inside the homes of my participants and view the place in which they expressed the majority of their fandom – usually the living room. I feel as though my presence helped to shift any notion of the interviews from being viewed as mechanistic, formal, academic affairs to an enjoyable, sporting conversation. This is important for what were biographical interviews, since it was the participants themselves who were the focus of attention, thus optimum comfort was sought. Indeed, within my actual interview schedule, I was sure to begin with a number of straightforward questions to help my participants feel at ease talking. We had already been through an initial meet and greet – the ice had been broken – yet it is still a very noticeable event when the researcher turns on their recording equipment and the interview starts 'proper'. Thus, I started with some background information questions ("Where were you born and where did you grow up?", "What sports do you watch and enjoy?") before gradually easing into some slightly more personal queries such as education, work and the ways this might have impacted upon their sports fandom. The interview schedule spanned ten sections, including "becoming a fan", "consumption", "at the match (if applicable)", "sport at home", and "other interests" and "retirement". Given the flexible nature of my interviews, these were only broad areas of inquiry and the order in which they were tackled changed depending on the individual conversation. The schedule itself went through several iterations as I refined questions, thinking of better ways to approach certain topics and generally ever-improving my 'level' of interviewing, as is common with less structured interview methods (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). I also sought to largely memorise my schedule, which made for a much smoother conversation.

3.7 Research methods used: Data analysis

I transcribed all interviews *verbatim* and uploaded, labelled by participant code, to the analysis software NVivo. Despite the long and, at times, tedious task of transcription, listening

back to the full interviews did afford me a chance to become more familiar with my participants than had I the capital to employ a transcriber or transcription service (Pole & Lampard, 2002). My use of NVivo was quite basic in the sense that I did not utilise the full suite of affordances that the software offers – I merely used it for the most basic coding practices. The main reason for this was the issue raised by Lee & Fielding (2004), that scholars who rely too heavily on coding software such as NVivo are liable to become too detached from their participants. Whilst I was obviously aware of the importance of the coding process, I was also uncomfortable in fragmenting my interview data too much. In coding, there is a risk that context is lost, thus as part of the analytic process I also used non-digital techniques of 'constant comparison' (Glaser & Strauss, 2008), writing notes on a physical printout of my transcripts, using highlighters and sticky notes, all stored in a huge, colour-coded file.

In analysing my data, I used what has been described by Bryant (2016) as the most popular social scientific approach: grounded theory. Grounded theory methods are generally considered to be very flexible approaches, noted for the close relationship the researcher has with their data in developing theory; it 'evokes iterative strategies of going back and forth between data and analysis, uses comparative methods and keeps [the researcher] interacting and involved with [their] data and emerging analysis' (Charmaz, 2014: 1). However, it can be quite a contentious approach as, according to Rokow & Ha (2018: 11-12), 'the method has been misunderstood even by those who use it' and is 'often conflated with qualitative studies'. Bryant & Charmaz (2007) suggest that there are numerous research projects which claim to use grounded theory but do no such thing, and according to Martin (in Rokow & Ha *et al.*, 2018: 12-13), the widely cited grounded theory textbook by Strauss & Corbin (1990), offers such a poor reading of the approach that Glaser (1992) asked for the book to be withdrawn, only for Strauss to refuse. Furthermore, Martin (2018) claims that, in answer to criticism,

> Corbin & Strauss's (2014) revisions muddle the matter more with the view that GT is a family of techniques rather than a strict method. Such writings, along with some of the polemics and unclear explication in the original GT text (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), have hampered the method.
>
> (Martin, in Rokow & Ha *et al.*, 2018: 13)

It is a little difficult, therefore, to grasp an accurate definition of grounded theory, with these contrasting positions. In fact, what may be at work here are two broad factions, which might be described as the 'critical-rationalistic' Glaserian approach and the 'pragmatic, interactionist' Strauss & Corbin form (Ratnapalan, 2019), rallying against one another. What we can say for sure is that it is the flexibility to which Charmaz (2014) refers above, the 'back and forth' between data and theory, that is the hallmark of grounded theory. As Ratnapalan (2019: 667) observes, the constructivist approach 'allows researchers to explore how

participants' experiences are embedded in a larger context of structural, cultural, temporal, and social situations and relationships.' Clarke (2003, 2005), however, did not see this as adequate and so built on the constructivist approach by developing her 'situational analysis'. Clarke's situational analysis acknowledges the experiences of the individual in multiple contexts; 'the researcher becomes not only analyst and bricoleur but also a cartographer of sorts' (Clarke, 2003: 571). By using what she calls 'situational', 'social worlds/arenas' and 'positional' maps, scholars 'can deeply situate the research individually, collectively, social organizationally and institutionally, temporally, geographically, materially, culturally, symbolically, visually, and discursively' (554). It is an appealing form of grounded theory because the 'messiness' of contemporary lived experience is acknowledged (Clarke, 2003, 2005), which, given the idiosyncratic nature of liquid living (Bauman, 2000), seems particularly prescient. If this approach is followed, the research 'outcomes should be "thick analyses" (Fosket 2002) paralleling Geertz's (1973) "thick descriptions"' (Clarke, 2003: 554).

There is also an argument to suggest that my approach was more of a thematic analysis than a grounded one, given that, in coding my interview transcripts, I broadly followed the process described by Nowell *et al.* (2017), wherein I first familiarised myself with my data, then developed some initial codes, sought themes from within those codes, triangulated my findings via a review of the themes before finally producing a report of those findings (see Nowell *et al.*, 2017 for an overview). However, it should be noted that there are those who argue that thematic analysis is merely an aspect of a wider method like grounded theory (see Boyatzis, 1998; Holloway & Todres, 2003; Ryan & Bernard, 2000), as well as those who see it as being a method in its own right (Braun & Clarke, 2006; King, 2004; Nowell *et al.*, 2017).

Ultimately, due to the overlapping nature of the approaches which might be termed 'grounded theory' and 'thematic analysis', the demand for such precise definitions of approach is secondary in importance compared to the theoretical developments to come out of the research produced. So long as the researcher is transparent in their methods and methodology, and is ethically correct, I do not see why work need be dragged back to a such a micro-level definition of the study's design, unless that design has a directly negative impact on theoretical outcome (such as an unacknowledged shortcoming or an ethical misdemeanour). In any case, my analytical approach might be defined as one inspired by grounded theory, particularly Clarke's (2003, 2005) situational analysis approach, whilst including the analytical essence of the thematic analysis described by Nowell *et al.* (2017).

Indeed, of more importance to me is that gerontology often stipulates as one of its main aims the continued fight against older-age stereotyping (i.e. Browning, Kendig, & Minichiello, 1992;

Dannefer & Phillipson, 2010; Hays & Minichiello, 2005; Powell, 1998). Of course the later life stages are different to other life stages, from a scholarly, methodological persepctive, because they are life stages which most researchers have not yet experienced themselves – particularly the very latest stages of the life course – thus I would argue that the chances of lapsing into age stereotyping are greater. There is usually a very noticeable detachment between the scholar and the demographic under study. This is, however, beginning to change. A special edition of the *Journal of Aging Studies* saw several scholars use an autoethnographic method to offer a personal perspective on their own ageing (Ray, 2008), and it is these older, self-reflective scholars who are able to offer a valuable insight into the ageing process and reinforce to younger scholars who are embarking on research of a gerontological flavour, like myself, that we are studying a part of the life course which will not be directly experienced for many decades yet. Thus, when the likes of a 93-year-old Joan Erikson, writing in an updated version of her and her husband's *The Life Cycle Completed* (Erikson & Erikson, 1982/1997), describes the psychological impacts of when our bodily functions gradually begin to fail us, spouses, siblings and friends die, our advanced age exposes us to ageism, or, in reaching the final life phase, the experience of facing our own mortality, we should take note. The thesis now moves into an analysis of the data gathered from 35 later life sports fans, starting with an exploration of the position of the sports fan object in everyday retired life.

Chapter Four: Later Life Sports Fandom and the Everyday

One of the most striking things to emerge out of my in-depth interviews with 35 later life sports fans was the centrality of the sports fan object within the everyday lives of my participants. Fandom is deeply embedded within the everyday lived experience of later life, which often sees the fan object as a fulcrum around which entire days or even weeks are structured. However, as Highmore (2002: 1) notes, the phrase everyday life 'signifies ambivalently'. He writes: 'The everyday offers itself up as a problem, a contradiction, a paradox: both ordinary and extraordinary, self-evident and opaque, known and unknown, obvious and enigmatic' (2002: 16). There is a balance in our everyday lives where routine is both a comforting source of ontological security (Giddens, 1984, 1991; Laing, 1960), yet also a tedious repetition of lived experience, made interesting by the finding of what Highmore (2002) calls the 'mysterious', or what the psychoanalytic literature refers to as the 'aleatory' (Bollas, 1992).

This chapter's main thesis argues that the later life individual uses their fandom as an anchor for an ontologically secure existence. The main way this is achieved is via the forming of fannish routine, which in turn nurtures a 'basic trust' (Giddens, 1991) in time. There are stereotypes of older people as being "stuck in the past", overly nostalgic for a long-lost era (see Chapter Seven) or frightened of or resistant to change. This chapter argues that this is not the case at all. Routine allows the individual to look ahead and plan daily rituals with confidence, whilst also forming an ontologically secure foundation to deal with the aleatory, or to perhaps even go looking for the mysterious. After considering the relationship between fan studies as a field to the everyday, this chapter moves through several subsections. It begins by evaluating later life fandom and routine, and then looks at the 'predictive', 'anticipatory' element of routine in a section on 'hope' and the development of 'basic trust' (Giddens, 1991), before offering some observations on the antithetical notions of boredom and mystery, or 'aleatory surprise' (Bollas, 1992; Hills, 2005). A summary concludes the chapter.

4.1 Fan Studies and the everyday

In terms of fandom, fan studies and the everyday, Jensen (1992: 13), among the earliest fan scholars, calls for research which considers fandom 'as a normal, everyday cultural or social

phenomenon'. However, this has never quite materialised to the extent that it should have done. It speaks much for this lack of development that Sandvoss & Kearns (2014) still have to make explicit in their chapter title in Duits, Zwann & Reijnders's (2014) *Ashgate Research Companion to Fan Cultures* reader that they are theorising 'ordinary fandom' as opposed to the fandom which has been considered to be 'ordinary' in fan studies up until that point ('ordinary' and 'everyday' being used interchangeably in this instance). There is an interesting tension between fan studies and the everyday, which goes back to some of its earliest roots in theorizing fandom as a kind of social performance in a group setting (Jenkins, 1992), the assumption that fandom is somehow 'beyond' the 'normal' audience (see Crawford, 2004: 106). This is perhaps due to the fact that, historically, the majority of fan scholarship has been biased towards the study of what Abercrombie & Longhurst (1998) call 'cultists' and the 'enthusiasts' – fans whose expression of fandom is more overtly participatory, more productive. No doubt this is, in part, due to the fact that these fans are much easier to find; one merely needs to head to an online message board or get in touch with an organised fan group to find a ready supply of participants. However, this is a flawed process which ignores those who are less textually and enunciatively productive (Fiske, 1992), and raises questions as to how fan studies can claim to have theorised 'everyday' or 'ordinary' fandom when such a large segment of fans have effectively been ignored in the literature. This issue is exacerbated in the study of later life fandom. As Sandvoss (2011) observes, the different forms of productivity which Fiske (1992) outlines – semiotic, enunciative and textual – can be broadly mapped onto Abercrombie & Longhurst's (1998) audience continuum: the 'fan' is mostly semiotically productive, the 'cultist' mostly enunciatively productive and the 'enthusiast' mostly textually productive. In later life, fans generally seem to shift left on the audience continuum, for a number of reasons. Biological degradation often renders 'enthusiastic' fan behaviour such as attending matches, belonging to a travelling cohort of fellow sports fans difficult, and the receding of social circles due to peer deaths or moving into a care home gradually eats away at potential partners with whom enunciative productivity can be practiced. All that is left for the older fan in very late life is semiotic productivity – something which can be done by oneself. This is a generalisation, but the trend is there as people grow older. With fewer options to express one's fandom, the role of the fan object(s) in the routinising of everyday, later life becomes incredibly important.

4.2 Routine and ontological security in later life sports fandom

It is widely acknowledged that the move from full-time employment to semi- or full retirement is a significant one in the life course. It represents a shift in the way we experience day-to-day life, a profound alteration to the ways in which we spend our time. As we move out of full-time employment, people often experience a major disruption to pre-existing routines, such as the

daily working routine (Stenholm & Vahtera, 2017). Without that structuring agent in our lives, it is up to the individual to find new structure. This is the case with some of my younger participants, who have recently left full-time employment, evident in the ways in which talk was often based in a future tense, wherein they would espouse their plans for retired life. Eddie (67), who has been fully retired just two years, is very keen on watching some more live sport, such as the County Championship cricket, in his spare time. Nev (68), a year into semi-retirement, is also looking forward to watching some more professional cricket, having upgraded his Nottinghamshire CCC membership specially upon leaving full-time employment. Toby (54) and Joan (56), semi-retired for two and four years respectively, are both looking forward to being able to take more sports-watching-based holidays in their caravan. These are people for whom new routines are not yet established in their daily lives. Of course, the age range of my participants is quite large, thus many of the people to whom I spoke are well used to being retired, having developed new routines for day-to-day living.

These different phases of retired life have long been appreciated within the field of gerontology. As far back as the mid-1970s, Atchley (1976) proposed a model of the stages of retirement which spans from the initial euphoria of realising one's 'freedom' – something Smith & Dougherty (2012) later described as a reliance on an expected 'master narrative' developed pre-retirement – through a disenchanting realisation that retirement does not necessarily equate to that initial euphoric outlook, into a 'reorientation' phase – where the individual re-organises their daily routines in the absence of employment – and a 'retirement routine' phase – where the individual has overcome their disenchantment and reorientation phases and become settled within a new daily routine. Eventually, in very late life, routine is discarded due to severe illness and, ultimately, death. In a more recent application of Atchley's original observations, Mukku, Harbishettar & Sivakumar (2018: 59) describe the reorientation phase as one where the 'retiree develops a realistic view of the social and economic opportunities and constraints of retirement' – in other words it is a period of retirement where one takes stock and reorganises one's life according to the reality of retired living. Once this has been done the individual enters what Mukku, Harbishettar & Sivakumar describe as the 'stability phase', 'when people have achieved certain accommodation and adjustment to retirement' (*ibid*). A new routine is developed.

The reason why routine is so important in everyday life – of every life stage, not just later life (though it is arguably even more important in later life, given the greater propensity for anxiety-inducing developments) – is because routine helps to nurture ontological security (Laing, 1960; Giddens, 1984, 1991). Ontological security is, as defined by Giddens (1991: 243), 'a sense of continuity and order in events, including those not directly within the perceptual

environment of the individual'. It is a psychic state of being which allows the individual to experience a 'basic trust in self-continuity and environmental continuity' (Hills, 2012: 113). This sense of a 'basic trust' is, in turn, 'the main emotional support of a defensive carapace or *protective cocoon* which all normal individuals carry around with them as the means whereby they are able to get on with the affairs of day-to-day life' (Giddens, 1991: 40 – emphasis in original). It is a hugely important mechanism for quotidian living, free of anxiety and despair. Routine is embedded deeply in the lives of all of my participants, with the examples discussed in conversation ranging from seemingly minor day-to-day behaviours right through to annual holiday routines. Whilst there are now a few fan studies works which focus at least in part on routine or ontological security, or both (see Garner, 2013; Hills, 2007, 2012; Williams, 2015, 2016), there is little on routine in sports fandom, which is interesting considering sport is particularly predicated on routine. Writing as a former professional within the sports industry, from the micro actions of passing a ball, bowling an over, serving a game to the wider weekly fixtures, to the macro annual cycles of seasons, sport is based intimately on routine. To take association football as an example, the professional game in England has played one season every year, with weekly rounds of fixtures, since 1888. In its 133-year history, only the world wars and a global pandemic have prevented it taking place. The same can be said of English cricket's County Championship, started in 1890. The Wimbledon tennis championships have been going annually since 1877. Sport is a cultural artefact which can be relied upon to 'show up' year after year.

The most obvious expression of routine in sports fandom is the attending of sports fixtures, the routine of heading to the ground every other week to watch your team play. Of course this pattern may differ slightly on individual difference, and dependent on the sport in question, but it was clearly evident among the people I interviewed. For example, George (84) and Edith (80) tend to watch every Grimsby Town football match played at the club's home ground (Blundell Park), and also take in the odd away game. They have a clear matchday routine:

> George (84):
> Absolutely [we have a routine]. Leave here [home] at two, switch on Radio Humberside and listen to what's going on, getting the teams as soon as we can. Park at Dugard Road, walk – how far, a mile? – through Sidney Park to the ground. Oh, we meet up with the daughters in Dugard Road, both of them if they're both going, one if only one's going, and then meet up with them afterwards at the bus stop and walk back to the cars and that's it. Listen to the after-match ramblings. And then, silly people who ring up and haven't really got anything to say [on the local radio post-match phone-in show].

Notice how George and Edith's matchday routine is really very specific. It is not merely the case that they head to the stadium and watch their favourite team every week, they leave their

house at precisely the same time, park on the same road, tread the same path to the ground and listen to the same radio shows both pre- and post-match. As noted above, the ontological security afforded by this type of routine includes both individual as well as environmental factors. Parking in Dugard Road every match is just as important a part of the process as watching their team. Were they forced to park on an adjacent street due to roadworks, forced to follow a different route to the ground, it would no doubt at least feel odd. Whilst George and Edith's is an example of a weekly (or bi-weekly) trip, fannish routine can be incorporated into less frequent behaviour. For example, Matt (69) is a Manchester City football fan based in Grimsby. The price of following a Premier League team and the logistics of travelling over one hundred miles to City's home ground are some of the reasons why Matt is more of an occasional visitor to the Etihad Stadium. Yet, his trips still involve routine:

> Matt (69):
> Oh I have a routine, yeah... we normally go about, set off about four hours before, so it takes us a couple of hours to get there. [...] So yeah, set off about four hours before kick-off, couple of hours to get there, take a stroll up - I don't know if you've been to [Manchester] City but there's a big Asda opposite the ground. Go in there, get something to eat. Stroll around, walk across to the ground, because they have groups and what have you outside the ground.

Similarly to George and Edith, notice the specificity of Matt's routine. He always leaves a four-hour window in which to drive from Grimsby to Manchester, stops in a particular shop – the big Asda across the road from the stadium – to buy some food, and then takes in some of the entertainment on offer outside the stadium before the match. Again, it is evident the role of environment in Matt's routine. Yet, routine does not have to incorporate behaviour which involves physically attending the spaces in which sport is played (i.e. the stadium). Routine can be well embedded in the home lives of later life sports fans, something which has been neglected in the existing sports fan research (Crawford, 2004). In the below two examples from Vincent (65) and Henry (78), their initial description of routine does revolve around the matchday operations of their clubs, though outside of stadium attendance. Routine is explored *beyond* the matchday as well; with Grimsby Town fan Vincent describing some more general day-to-day behaviour, whilst Henry outlines a full weekend's interaction with the football:

> Vincent (65):
> But every Saturday or Tuesday night, I'm following the results by one means or another – not just the local teams, but I like to see how other leagues are doing, you know, who's at the top, who's at the bottom, what the fixtures are and I'll either do that through Sky *Gillette Soccer Special* or *Football Focus* on normal television. And every day I go on the, every day I put "G-T-F-C" into Google and look what the latest news is... sounds sad doesn't it? And then I'll go on the [Grimsby] Telegraph site and see what they're saying. And often you can find something on the Telegraph site about Grimsby Town that's not on GTFC's own website.

Henry (78):
I find it fascinating to watch a match and then read the report on it.

JS:
The same match?

Henry (78):
Yeah. Because sometimes I think "I don't know which match he's been watching" [laughs] but it all adds to the enjoyment of the occasion, if you know what I mean. You read a report that you disagree with, well, you know, you're partly living that through the match again, if you know what I mean, because you've got to bring up your own thoughts on the match to disagree with the report. And, yeah, I get a great deal of pleasure out of that, I mean, I normally watch *Match of the Day* now on a Sunday morning because if I watch it at night I fall asleep half way through. So I watch it on a Sunday morning, right, and after I've watched *Match of the Day* I go down to the paper shop and get my paper, and then I spend the next hour reading the paper and I read about some of the matches I've just watched and I think "well they've either edited that pretty badly or this guy's not been at the same match" [laughs] because *Match of the Day*, of course, is an edited version, I mean each match, you don't see it all. But it's exactly the same, though, but to a greater extent, if you have a live match on and you watch it, and then next day you read the reports on it, it's quite interesting.

In the context of everyday life, through the description of these types of routine – particularly those described by Vincent and Henry – we get a sense of the weekly, and daily, behavioural cycles which, along with other daily rituals, make up the lived quotidian experience of my later life participants. The kind of daily ritual described above might be linked to what Corner (1999), in a wider televisual context, and what Harrington & Bielby (2005), in a soap opera context, refer to as the continuous 'flow' of everyday experience. For Harrington & Bielby (2005), the continual narrative of the soap opera – which is 'traditionally told in real time and deliberately designed to appear unauthored' (836) – intersects with one's daily routines, thus the real-time fan object narrative and real time daily routine exist symbiotically to create an overall daily 'flow'. I propose the same exists for the later life sports fan. Without full-time employment 'getting in the way', Nev (68) has upgraded his Nottinghamshire County Cricket Club membership, thus enabling him to spend days on end at Trent Bridge, watching his team play. Vincent (65) and Henry (78), above, devote time beyond that when the team is actually playing to continue what we might call the 'sporting narrative', which, in the media, plays out in 'real time', just like Harrington & Bielby's soap operas. George (84) describes how, "when [he's] got an hour", he will log onto *The Fishy*, a Grimsby Town Football Club online fan forum, to follow his team's sporting narrative. It is through these kinds of daily, ritualistic fannish routines that later life fans are able live out their existence in their own fan-object worlds. This is not to suggest that older fans spend all of their time in some fantasy world, but it is to argue that later life fans are able to 'check in' to a well-developed, personalised transitional space (Harrington & Bielby, 1995) with a regularity that keeps threats of existential anxiety at bay.

4.3 Re-establishing old routines

Ontological security is somewhat flexible: individuals can have it, lose it and regain it. As Gazit (2021: 390) writes, 'it is far from being monolithic, static, and power neutral. It is continuously articulated and rearticulated via [one's] particularistic and changing narratives'. For instance, many people, once they reach a certain point in their later lives, move into a care home. This in itself represents a major threat to one's ontological security, as an independent life is swapped for a cared-for life in an environment which is not, initially at least, "home" (Cook, Thompson & Reed, 2015). However, that same environment which threatened the individual's ontological security, can also reinforce it. James, Ardeman-Merten & Kihlgren (2014) found that routine plays a major role in the maintenance of ontological security for care home residents, through not only the creation of a daily routine for the residents themselves, but through residents finding comfort in the routinised workday tasks of care home staff. This malleability of routine is evident in my participants. Eddie (67), below, describes the matchday routine he had when watching his local football team, Grimsby Town. Eddie does not watch Grimsby anymore, but does play golf. Note the link he makes between the two activities:

> JS:
> Did you have a routine on a match day then?
>
> Eddie (67):
> Yeah, pretty much. We'd take it in turns driving, didn't used to go to away matches. We'd go to an away FA Cup match, something like that... yeah you'd always settle at the same time, park in nearly the same place. Might have a beer, go inside to have a beer in the bar in the stand, in the Town Bar, we used to have a beer before the game, sometimes we'd stop to have a coffee or a beer afterwards, because you used to get crowds in those days, had to let the traffic clear. And of course it would be night when you got back. *Same as the golf* [in the present day], it's all, you know, you go golfing at around eleven o'clock, finish by three and [inaudible] if it's on a Friday, if [friend]'s not already there he'll come join us, the girls will come down and join us and again it's all about the craic. Yeah, we've had some good nights.
>
> (emphasis mine)

As is clear in the example of Eddie, if an individual experiences change to the routine which was originally the harbinger of ontological security, they do not necessarily have to rely on the implementation of a completely *new* fannish routine, developed in retirement. Nostalgic reminiscence for a well-trodden, pre-retirement routine could be just as handy, especially if that routine spans pre- and post-retirement, thus helping to soften the 'shock' of an otherwise turbulent part of the life course. For Becker (1993), this is a symbolic connection between old and new routines; for Atchley (1989) this link is between younger-self and older-self 'domains'. As we move through different stages of development, symbolic connections knit together the life course, often according to what is physically possible for the individual to do. Even as we

move through retirement and into very late life this is the case, as Troll & Skaff (1997) write: 'The man who played golf at 70 walks to the television set at 90 to tune into a golf game' (164). In terms of linking 'domains', Eddie (67), for instance, used to regularly attend Grimsby Town football matches with his family and some friends during his teenage years. He stopped once he was old enough to play football himself, though upon becoming too old for the rigours of amateur football, he gradually began to resurrect his old routine which eventually, once the even less physically burdensome weekend pursuit of village cricket had become too much, resembled that of his adolescent years. This lasted through his fifties but eventually petered out (JS: "Is there a reason that stopped?"; Eddie: "[Friends] started dying off I suppose [laughs]") to the point where he reached retirement and was presented with the predicament of a lack of routine. However, Eddie resurrected the ethos of his earlier fannish routine by embracing golf, and with that he has been able to recreate some of the routinised structures of an earlier everyday life. In his golfing Eddie has found a way to use sport as a means of recreating the routine that was in evidence during his Grimsby Town football fan days, a kind of behaviour which has been evident at various points in his life course, stretching right back to adolescence. These kinds of deep-rooted routine do not leave the lives of older people. Even when interviewing participants who had dementia, and otherwise struggled for detail when answering questions, former routines were often well-recalled. Larry (82), despite being unable to recall where in the stadium he would stand when watching Nottingham Forest play football earlier in his life, knew his commute ("I used to get the bus into Nottingham, and then from there go down to the ground on the bus"). Likewise, Bertie (87), who had a similarly advanced form of dementia, was able to recall his routine of watching Newcastle United:

> JS:
> Did you go watch Newcastle?
>
> Bertie (87):
> Oh yes, from when I was ten-year-old.
>
> JS:
> Wow, so you've seen a lot of them?
>
> Bertie (87):
> Yeah. I used to take my wife there. Then when we left there, we used to go across the road, to the wrestling. … Cup of tea and a pie, and then off to the wrestling.

Maintaining routine is vitally important for the later life individual. It offers a sense of stability (Ross & Drentea, 1998), and thus nurtures ontological security (Giddens, 1991), and can also help towards maintaining sociality (Segel-Karpas, Ayalon & Lachman, 2018). It is no wonder that those who choose to work beyond the traditional retirement age cite the maintenance of routine as one of their main motivations for persevering with employment (Sewdas et al., 2017). Indeed, in outlining various varieties of ontological *in*security, Laing (1960: 46)

observes that 'we are all only two or three degrees Fahrenheit from experiences of this order. Even a slight fever, and the whole world can begin to take on a persecutory, impinging aspect'. For later life sports fans, their own fannish routine is a safe haven for ontological security. Thus, it is of little surprise that these routines are often recreated as close to their original iterations as possible.

4.4 'Hope' – basic trust in routinised sports fandom

Sports fandom is unique among fan cultures for the regularity with which the fan is disappointed and distraught by the performance of their object. Of course, any fan object can elicit disappointment: a rock fan may dislike their favourite band's new single; a soap fan may dislike a character, particular storyline or episode; the fan of an actor may be disappointed with the latest film in which they appear. Yet the sports fan seems to be exposed to much more regular disappointment, and those fans are generally resolute in continuing to engage with their object time and time again. Dolton & MacKerron (2018), for example, asked football fans to self-evaluate their emotional state of mind in real time during a matchday using a smartphone app. Data from over 32,000 football fans led to their conclusion that the matchday experience is 'overwhelmingly negative' across the course of the day, and note that results like this make it seem as though 'football fans are irrational' (2018: 16). The study is significantly limited – it does not gauge emotion *during* the match and thus misses potential high points of emotion (when a team scores, for example), it focuses only on fans who attend in-person and it does not factor in the more general experience of simply enjoying the occasion. The underlying finding, that sports fandom exposes the sports fan to significantly high levels of negative emotion, is interesting, though, and is something which appeared frequently in my conversations with 35 later life sports fans:

> Charlotte (57):
> How does it make me feel? [...] Angry sometimes [laughs], get so angry. Frustrated, definitely.

> David (65):
> [... T]here will be times when it's been depressing [laughs] like when Steven Gerrard equalises in the last few seconds, that type of thing when you think you're about to win the Cup and suddenly you don't [laughs] that type of thing. So it's a mixture of emotions I suppose.

> James (62):
> [It makes me feel] frustrated at times, but...

> Tamsin (71):
> [... Y]ou feel frustrated. When England are playing rugby and they're [laughs] dropping passes 'aaarrrgh', you know. It brings out a lot of emotions, sport does.

Toby (54):
Yeah you could argue it's been frustrating but that's what it's like being an Arsenal fan.

Vincent (66):
[I feel] frustration at times [laughs]. You know, you see Grimsby Town, for example, one-nil up and in the ninety-second minute and it's one-all or they've lost the game. And then you get annoyed about it so, the referee's made a poor decision, sent a player off that he shouldn't have, sent a player off and all the pundits are saying it's wrong and so you get hyper about it, so. I feel those emotions when I'm watching *Gillette Soccer Special* [a football results television programme], [thinking] "that shouldn't happen".

Inevitably, these observations from my participants led to the follow-up question of why fans would continue to engage with an object which regularly elicits such a negative emotional experience. The overwhelming reaction to this kind of questioning was a reference to the anticipation of what might be to come – often phrased as having 'hope'. For example, when the conversation turned to the reasons why my participants continue to watch sport in the face of this potential negative experience, they answered:

David (65):
[Laughs] Yeah, because it's the hope that it's not going to happen again and that things will always improve.

James (62):
Because there's the expectation that it'll get better.

Dorothy (79):
I don't know why. Why do you keep watching? Well you're hoping it's going to be better [laughs] that's what you think, isn't it.

Joan (56):
If you watch Grimsby Town you're frustrated all the time normally, aren't you [...] so why do they still go? Because the hope is there, maybe it's the hope [laughs].

Eddie (67):
I find most football boring, to be honest. I don't think I'm on my own in that, [I] just watch it in the hope that it's going to get better. It's got to get better [laughs].

Charlotte (57):
It's the hope, isn't it. You keep the hope alive. I mean, certainly following certain sports, I think if you didn't have that hope and that belief that this time it's going to be different, you wouldn't go. Every Sunday I go down here [local field] I think "right , this week, this is it, this is the one. We're gonna play better" and you think [sigh], but that one week when they do makes it all worth it.

This 'hope', this anticipation of better things to come, is presented in a very similar fashion across many of my interviewees – and this is not in answering a specifically-worded question (meaning that the likelihood of this being a socially-learned answer is lessened) but came through more generic conversation of the broader topic. Also interestingly, whilst in the above

examples participants were talking quite generally, with no specific timeframe in mind, others are more explicit in their descriptions of when anticipation might be felt. It ranges from days beforehand, to the immediate pre-match timeframe, to within the match itself:

> Ida (84):
> I can look forward for days to think, like when United, say, played Liverpool or City, I can think about it for days before.

> George (84):
> Yeah, the bit we enjoy most is, really, the drive to the match, because you've got that anticipation. There's always going to be something – surely, surely, we'll win today... Same old, same old.

> Tamsin (71):
> Well you always keep hoping they'll get better [laughs]. You watch England rugby team and you think they'll come out in the second half and they'll be lots better than that, you know [laughs], and then they don't, they're just as frustrating.

> Henry (78):
> Watching the full [football] match you can get into the game and the flavour of the game and there is a certain anticipation at half time: "what's the second half gonna bring", etcetera.

> John (71):
> Because you're hoping next time it's going to be better [laughs] you've got to be an eternal optimist. You have to be. You're always hoping that next match, next season, next half, next five minutes will be better than what you've just seen.

It is uncontroversial, bordering on the realm of the obvious, to observe that sports fans look forward to engaging with their favourite fan object, however the fact that there appears to be a *constant* anticipatory, 'hopeful' element to sports fandom is interesting. This is particularly the case when fans' anticipation is broken down and found to be experienced across a huge range of timeframes, including within the sports fixture itself. It suggests a fundamentality to the way in which fandoms are performed. This becomes more interesting still when the likes of Ida (84), above, talk about a single, future event taking up psychic energy for days at a time. Coupled with the likes of Vincent (65) describing his daily routine of searching for any and all Grimsby Town news on the internet, and the likes of George (84) similarly logging onto his team's online fan forum "when I've got an hour" and the centrality of the sports fan object in the lives of my participants really starts to become clear.

Hope, itself, is much more complicated than a simple positive anticipation of future events. In her article on the subject, Waddell (2019: 1421) suggests that the 'sustaining of hope depends on a combination of [...]: emotional integrity, self-knowledge, receptivity, intuitive understanding, resilience, fortitude, meaning—a hard-won combination'. To have hope is to exercise this myriad of psychic functions. Particularly if the object is proving disappointing regularly – with many Grimsby Town football fans in my sample, this was certainly the

prevailing experience among fans interviewed – to show the resilience that Waddell writes about is to show creative imagination. The (ample) evidence of the object "Grimsby Town" is that (at the time of data collection) it is a very poor team, yet to continuously imagine them winning a match, upsetting the odds, is a creative process for the individual. This may even be a symptom of the later-life version of creativity which psychoanalyst Jacques (1965) observes. Biggs (1999: 90), in overviewing Jacques's work, notes that 'he described mature creativity as a development beyond the 'hot from the fire' approach of younger adulthood, towards a process of interplay, in which intuitive influences from the unconscious are combined with a considered apperception of a product and reactions to it'. We might think of the apperceptive object as the "good object" about which Hills (2018a) writes; an internalised notion of the "perfect" object, that version of the object which the individual most cherishes, based on positive historical experience (see the discussion on pages 13 and 14).

Anticipation and hope, then, create for the individual an apperceptive "good" object, which forms the cornerstone of routine. Routine is a central pillar in an everyday life filled with ontological security (Giddens, 1984), and is based on a sense of 'basic trust' in the future (Giddens, 1991). To experience a bout of ontological *in*security one's basic trust must be threatened; routine disturbed. Giddens (1984) calls these instances 'critical situations'. In *The Constitution of Society*, Giddens uses the example of the concentration camps in Nazi Germany as arenas in which its prisoners experienced extreme ontological insecurity. Much like Frankl (1959) observes in his famous *Man's Search For Meaning*, it was those who adapted to life in a concentration camp – be it either finding 'meaning', as in Frankl's work, or finding new routine, as in Giddens's (1984) – who stood the best chance of survival. In the far less extreme context of the everyday for the later life sports fan, it is their "hope" which saves them from ontological insecurity, which would otherwise surely be felt when presented with an object which disappoints regularly. The infinite capacity to "hope", to build – even within the microcosm of the single minutes of a football match – anticipatory, apperceptive objects, allows for the foundation of routine on what is, to the individual, a trustworthy object. Of course, if the object continues to disappoint across a very long time, then disillusionment may set in and an adaptation to that object (see Chapter 7 on long-term fan objects and continuity) may occur.

4.5 Boredom in later life sports fandom

There is a strange kind of paradox when it comes to the everyday and our perception of time, in that we both want 'sameness' (see Chapter 6 on nostalgia) yet we may also loath it. As Highmore (2002: 6) notes, 'the most common analogy for characterizing 'everyday life' within modernity (its uniformity, its dullness and so on) is the assembly line', and this kind of

recurrent activity, this 'repetition-of-the-same characterizes an everyday temporality experienced as debilitating boredom' (2002: 8). Whilst we may now have moved past modernity (and arguably even post-modernity) this experience of boredom is not relegated to the workplace; it also seeps into leisurely life. It is not really an area which has been looked into in any great depth within fan studies, with there seeming to be an underlying assumption that fandom is merely something an individual 'does' to *avoid* boredom, as a kind of escape from the otherwise mundanity of everyday life (see, for example: Gantz & Wenner, 1991, 1995; Wenner & Gantz, 1998; Hirt & Clarkson, 2011; Yoon, 2018; Jones, 2020). However, boredom is often intertwined *within* the fannish experience. It shapes people's fannish lives in quite profound, multivariate ways. For instance, it deciphers how long an individual might consume their object in any one session of engagement and has the potential to shape the *ways* in which the individual engages with their object of fandom. Eddie (67) suggests that his boredom of certain aspects of an object (in this case international football tournaments) dictates what he will engage with; Tamsin (71) and Lauren (63) use boredom to dictate how long they will engage with their fan objects:

> Tamsin (71):
> Yeah [I might watch The Ashes cricket competition from Australia late at night], possibly for a couple of hours, if it's exciting. If it gets a bit boring you think "oh, off to bed" [laughs].

> Lauren (63):
> [On the difference between watching sport in person or on the television] … if you're at home, you can choose whether to get up and go and do something else that's a bit more interesting, whereas, if you're sitting there [in the living room], you're getting, unless it is a very boring match for some reason like that last Test match where I was a bit fidgety [laughs], generally I watch it quite intently and I'm in with it. […] [My husband] always likes the cricket highlights and we tend to watch those, watch the highlights programme, and some of the discussion, but again if it goes on a bit long I get a bit bored.

> Eddie (67):
> I'll watch it [football], like I said, I'll watch *Match of the Day* and the England games and that sort of thing. I don't watch much World Cup until the latter stages, because that's generally boring.

In the slightly more extreme example of Carl (66), his 'level' of boredom experienced engaging with Manchester United – his favourite football team – is one of the reasons why his fandom is now exclusively televisual:

> Carl (66):
> Man United are boring now, that's one of the reasons I wouldn't pay all that money to go and watch them again. I watch them on the telly but I wouldn't go to Old Trafford.

It might even decipher which objects the individual is a fan of in the first place, with entire objects labelled 'no-go' areas based on their potential for inducing boredom:

> James (62):
> I'm not a big fan of Formula One, motor racing. I find that a bit boring.

In offering a psychodynamic definition of boredom, Eastwood *et al.* (2012: 492) suggest that 'most of us can relate to the boredom of sitting in a waiting room or of other benign situations'. This is the classic, stereotypical context of a boring experience and is also the focus of much psychoanalytic and social psychological research. However, the boredom which my participants outline is not that felt when negotiating a benign situation, rather the context of the boredom are activities which ought to at least be engaging as a pastime. Yet, boredom kept cropping up in fannish conversation with my participants. There is something of a dearth of research when it comes to the boredom experienced when engaging with popular culture. The fan studies scholarship referred to above tend to only touch on boredom as something which is avoided by engaging in a fandom in the first place.

Adorno (1991) is one who does focus on boredom and the influence of culture. In an essay on free time, he links boredom to the atrophying of imagination, which he sees as having withered under the weight of engagement with what he describes as senseless popular cultural ephemera. 'If people were able to make their own decisions about themselves and their lives, if they were not caught up in the realm of the eversame, they would not have to be bored. Boredom,' he suggests (1991: 192), 'is the reflection of objective dullness.' He argues that it is the 'lack of imagination which is cultivated and inculcated by society [which] renders people helpless in their free time. [...] The reason why people do so little with their free time is that the truncation of their imagination deprives them of the faculty which made the state of freedom pleasurable in the first place' (Adorno, 1991: 192-193). What Adorno suggests is that humanity has forged for itself a society in which our 'free time' can only be defined against its reverse – 'shackled to its opposite', i.e., "work" (1991: 187) – and this free time carries with it certain characteristics which define it; it 'must not resemble work in any way whatsoever, in order, presumably, that one can work all the more effectively afterwards' (190). Within our free time, we take on social 'roles', which 'affect the innermost articulation of human characteristics, to such an extent that in the age of truly unparalleled social integration, it is hard to ascertain anything in human beings which is not functionally determined' (187-188). To Adorno, 'free time' is not really "free" in any sense of the word; people are effectively 'trapped' in their free time. From a similar line of thought, Kracauer (1924/2002) also sees the individual as being bombarded by popular culture, and ultimately concludes that popular culture is very limiting for the imagination. He does believe, though, that it is possible for one

find their own true imaginative freedom, but only if we are to embrace boredom. If the individual 'has the patience, the sort of patience specific to legitimate boredom, then one experiences a kind of bliss that is almost unearthly [...] and in ecstasy you name what you have always lacked: the great *passion*' (1924/2002: 304).

There are some fundamental issues with the views, here, of Kracauer and Adorno. This is through no fault of their own, for my next point is made with the hindsight that they, writing in the first half of the twentieth century, simply did not have. Freud once wrote about mourning that 'It is really only because we know so well how to explain it that this attitude does not seem to us pathological' (in Phillips, 1993: 71). We might apply a similar rhetoric to the culture industry. In the first half of the twentieth century, culture was not nearly as embedded within our everyday lives as it is now. It is unsurprising that there were misgivings about its rise in popularity, about its increasing centrality in people's daily lives. Kracauer and Adorno were writing before the mainstreaming of fandom – a process which has taken place across the second half of the twentieth and first decades of the twenty-first centuries. Through the (admittedly pathologized) Beatlemania era and beyond, from the middle-twentieth century, people started to be able to explore deeper relationships with texts, something which has only been encouraged through generations of technological advancement. As the likes of Gray, Sandvoss & Harrington (2007; 2017) make clear, we now have the ability to walk down the street, always with the potential to engage with our fan object thanks to the piece of smart mobile technology residing in our pocket.

Where Kracauer and Adorno see the boredom as a symptom of a stunted imagination, when one is engaging with popular culture in their free time, I see the exact opposite. Boredom, as I read it in my participants, is a subjective acknowledgement that the object with which the individual is engaging does not 'match' the internalised 'good' version of the object which the fan calls their fan object (Hills, 2018a). Boredom is a kind of alarm bell which rings in the psyche of the individual, letting them know that the object with which they are engaging is foreign to their internal construction. This view is quite close to that offered by some psychoanalytic approaches to boredom, though which admittedly focus more on banal 'waiting room'-type boredom, rather than the boredom which can manifest from cultural engagement. In their three-part definition of boredom, Eastwood *et al.* (2012), for instance, argue that the individual attributes boredom to the object-world – that it is their environment which has changed, not them. Danckert & Eastwood suggest that 'we are driven to be the authors of our own lives. But, when bored, we have lost our agency, the sense that we are in control' (2020: 189). Likewise, Bergstein (2009: 615), writing specifically about the boredom an analyst might feel in a therapy session, suggests one might be experiencing 'an experiential expression of

despair, a re-living of primitive object relations with an emotionally non-existent primary object.' In other words, the primary object of fascination is no longer recognised, the individual being alerted to this change through a subjective experience of boredom.

Also, speaking to my participants, boredom is often consciously juxtaposed with the opposite, non-boring 'version' of the object (i.e. "this bores me; I prefer *this*…"). When watching football on the television, Carl (66) and Anya (69) both note aspects of their objects which bore them before suggesting what they'd rather watch:

> Carl (66)
> I like the game and I sometimes listen to the managers. I'll listen to Jose [Mourinho] because he's Manchester United [manager] but I think he's boring. I thought he was far more exciting when he was Chelsea manager, but since he's gone to Old Trafford he seems boring. He doesn't seem to get wound up.

> Anya (69)
> What I like more than- I get bored watching a full match on there [TV]. I love shows like *Gillette Soccer Special*, seeing what's happening around the game as a whole, rather than a club, an individual club.

As is hinted at in the quotation from Carl, above, and with another extract from his interview, boredom is often not only juxtaposed with a preferred 'version' of the object, but that preferred object might exist only in the subjective past of the individual as a nostalgic yearning:

> Carl (66)
> There's three of them now [television pundits on *Match of the Day*]. In the old days, you've got Jimmy Hill on his own, Des Lynam on his own… they [now] seem to analyse a match for longer than the game is in the first place. I find that a bit boring. […] Alan Shearer says what he thinks, [Danny] Murphy does. But even so, I don't like too much analysis; I get bored with it.

Carl's preferred 'version' of his *Match of the Day* fan object is the older iteration of the show, when it featured fewer analysts and the technology was such that only a relatively brief analysis of the featured match was conducted. For van Tilburg & Sedikides (2013: 450), this type of boredom 'initiates a search for ways to reattain meaningfulness'. As will be explored in much more depth in chapter six (*Nostalgia and Later Life Sports Fandom*), nostalgia acts as a means of protecting one from ontological danger (Routledge *et al.*, 2008). Thus, nostalgia 'may constitute a meaning-regulation strategy in the face of boredom' (van Tilburg & Sedikides, 2013: 450). Boredom is therefore a central component to everyday life for the retired sports fan. It is not a symptom of a stagnated or stunted imagination, as Adorno and Kracauer suggest. Rather, it is more of a defence mechanism, alerting the individual to fact that they are engaging with an object which does not align with their idealised internal 'version' of their fan object. It aides in the continuation of relating to objects which nurture ontological security and helps to keep day-to-day routines on track.

4.6 The 'mystery' and the aleatory later life sports fandom

There was a quality to the interviews I conducted with 35 later life sports fans which is very difficult to evidence empirically. This is because it was more a 'feel' that I, as a researcher, got from conversing with a group of retired and semi-retired people. That feeling was a sort of confidence, a strong sense of self and a belief in what was being said by my participants. A conviction emanated from them. In this case it was not so much *what* was said, but the *way* in which it was being said. There was a 'sureness' which I have not quite experienced before, which felt noteworthy given that, due to my undergraduate training as a journalist, short career as a media professional and other academic research projects, I have conducted quite a high number of interviews which people from all ages across the life course and not felt this essence before. It may be a symptom of the wisdom which comes with the later life stages (see Erikson, 1959/1994, 1982/1997), a self-assurance which comes from the confidence of having refined one's self over many decades (see Kaufman, 1986) or simply some sort of quirk that I managed to elicit when speaking to these older demographics, but it made one finding stand out as noteworthy a little more prominently than perhaps it might have done otherwise. This is the 'surprise' elements of my participants' fandoms. For people who came across as very sure of themselves and self-confident, it stood out when the concession was made that, actually, there are things about their own fandoms which flummoxed and confused. This was sometimes a pleasant surprise, something which contradicts what the individual expected, but I am sure that it is only because of that underlying self-assurance that my participants were happy to admit that certain aspects of their fandom startled them. A kind of refreshing humility.

More broadly, fandom is a great example of a seemingly everyday phenomenon, what is to most fans a very natural, unquestioned relationship with an object, or objects, that, when analysed, presents far more questions than answers for the fan. Indeed, the best way to evidence the 'mysteriousness' of fandom is to tap into fans' own befuddlement. Hesitancy, indecisiveness and a general air of feeling unsure as to their fannish motivations was common among my participants, so much so that in coding a node labelled "I don't know" had to be created. Let us start with some examples. Charlotte (57), for instance, is confused as to the origins of a couple of her fandoms:

> Charlotte (57):
> I don't know why because I don't understand the rules, but I love rugby. I can sit and watch rugby, or, you know, I'd watch a game of rugby and I do not understand the rules at all. Or it's just something about it... [...]

Since I was about five, and I can remember [laughs], I don't know why, seeing them [Manchester United] – it must have been on the television because I obviously I'd not been to Old Trafford – just fell in love with them, and fell in love with Georgie Best. So everything after that had to be red and white. I can remember having a red and white teddy bear – everything had to be red and white.

Charlotte evokes some really quite strong emotional language here – she "loves" rugby – yet appears to have no idea why she loves watching the rugby. This appears to be Charlotte's line of thinking: how *can* she be a fan of the rugby if she does not even know the rules of the game? As we will see in future chapters, affective bonds to an object are not dependent on the accruing of specific kinds of knowledge, certainly nothing as arbitrary as the rules of a sports game. There is a reason why Charlotte enjoys engaging with the rugby, but that reason is not presented to her within the realm of common sense. It is a 'mysterious' attachment (Highmore, 2002).

Ivy (80) has a similarly tough time trying to explain why she is a fan of Liverpool Football Club. Interestingly, in realising that she did not immediately know why she is a Liverpool fan, she thought aloud in identifying some possible reasons, attributing her liking of the club to some other things that she quite likes – note how, whilst she ultimately appears to turn her back on her own musings, those grasps at reasoning are based on the really very mundane:

JS
So how did you come across Liverpool, then?

Ivy (80)
I don't know, I've been at it since I was a kid and I haven't got a clue. I like their accent, mind you I like the Geordie one better and I like Newcastle but I don't know. I can't even remember when I started to support them. [...] I have no idea, to be honest, Joe, what started me off with Liverpool. I don't know.

What might be worth noting about both Charlotte and Ivy is that they are both born and brought up in north Lincolnshire (i.e. the other side of the country from Manchester and Liverpool, respectively, and away from any sort of hotbed for rugby), and neither of their childhood families were fans of the same object, meaning that they were not able to explain away the origin of their fandom by using fellow family members (which is very common among sports fans). This means that there is a mysterious bond between subject and object which goes beyond that of a common-sense apprehension yet is still strong enough to last for many decades. Often the bond that is the subject-object relationship is described using the language of emotion, and it is only after this initial, 'emotionally-driven' attempt at an explanation that a description of a 'deeper' relationship is attempted. The language of affect is very different to the language of basic emotion (happy, sad, angry); participants have a particularly difficult

task in trying to articulate affective bonds (Wetherell, 2012). An affective bond is a mysterious bond. The affective fan-object relationship is an everyday one which is 'made strange' (Highmore, 2002).

Closely linked to fandom as 'mystery' is fandom as surprise: an object's ability to elicit an emotional, or affective, response which takes the individual off-guard, shocking them as to the strength of said self-object bond (Phillips, 1993, 1994; Campbell, 2000). This is one area in the study of fandom which has been considered, though not nearly as broadly as it might have been. Hills's (2005, 2018b) offering of the fan object as an 'aleatory object' appears to be the only application of Bollas's (1992) original idea to the study of fandom (explicitly), which is a shame for this notion offers a potentially productive way of theorizing fandom in an everyday context and is important for it proves that, for all of the 'protection' one may garner from a repeatable, trusted, ontologically secure existence, experience is also shaped by the unknown.

I put in brackets "explicitly" after referring to the work of Hills because Whitehouse-Hart (2014) also offers some very important insights into the aleatory of everyday fannish engagement, however, curiously, her work places emphasis on textual "favourites" rather than "fan objects", though for our purposes we might interchange these terms. Particularly important in her work, in relation to this chapter, are her case studies with "Sue" and "Mary". Whitehouse-Hart argues that the aleatory aspects of television 'viewing can be used imaginatively to address the conflicts and difficulties associated with identity in transition including separation and change' (2014: 146). One of the many examples of aleatory experiences which Whitehouse-Hart describes is Sue's exposure to the BBC series *Our Friends in the North* (1996), a drama based on a friendship group which lives in the Newcastle upon Tyne area. The show stars Christopher Ecclestone, an actor who would go on to become an important object of fandom for Sue. Whitehouse-Hart writes that;

> Initially, the text had an aleatory factor taking Sue by surprise as she found herself gripped by the first episode and also by the strength of feeling she had on this first encounter with Ecclestone. Sue's description of Ecclestone is interesting as she explains that for her: "he's got a Geordie accent. Yeah, I mean he's an *actor*. He can't possibly have a Geordie accent but *that's* what *I always* hear." It is true that Ecclestone does not have a Geordie the accent that Sue perceives, but this, I suggest, points to an element of fixity associated with aleatory qualities of this text which resulted in Ecclestone becoming an evocative object.
> (Whitehouse-Hart, 2014: 136)

The emotional attachment Sue felt towards *Our Friends in the North* took her by surprise, and cemented Christopher Ecclestone as an important, emotive object in her fannish life. Whitehouse-Hart notes that the 'text clearly provides opportunities for narrative

identification' and argues that it is 'her unique sibling experiences, in particular the observation of a younger brother's trajectory in a time of greater opportunity for social mobility, that crystalises around the figure of Ecclestone' (*ibid*). In other words, much like I argue throughout this thesis – see the discussion about the fandoms of Ida (84), Katherine (88) and Dorothy (79) in section 7.7 – texts in which the subject can 'see' or recognise aspects of selfhood are particularly meaningful. What is less clear in Whitehouse-Hart's work is how the aleatory might be experienced when the individual is engaging with texts that already form part of the participant's media landscape. Examples such as Sue's engagement with *Our Friends in the North* are excellent for outlining the visceral thrill of encountering a new, meaningful text, but what about when the text has already been subsumed into the everyday routine? Can the aleatory still be encountered?

For Grotstein (2002: 83), 'Bollas's poetic elaboration of the surprise trajectory of the aleatory object into our unsuspecting lives traverses the narratives of psychoanalysis, romance, and the vagaries of everyday life.' According to Bollas, general, day-to-day living presents itself as twenty-four-hour segments wherein 'a day is a potential space which we characterize by choosing certain objects and releasing varied self states' (1992: 26). This everydayness encompasses two realms of experience, wherein the object world offers 'an extraordinary lexicon for the individual who speaks the self's aesthetic through [their] precise choices and particular uses of its constituents' (1992: 21) – the individual picks and chooses which object they relate to and in so doing experiences self through these chosen objects – but is also balanced out by the fact that this process 'is not necessarily an act of unconscious wilfulness, as much of the time we are responding to the arrival of events sponsored by other subjects or the aleatory movements of objects' (1992: 26).

> [E]ach of our days begins to achieve its symbolic status as the dialectic between our unconscious wishes, needs, defenses, anxieties, and elaboratory self states engages with chance as the environment telephones us, writes to us, weathers us, offers us new books, displays wonderful-looking people, and so on.
>
> (Bollas, 1992: 26)

Everyday life is an object-relational balancing act between the expected and unexpected. Hills (2005) adapts this notion to fandom with an in-depth study of an individual – "Shaun" – who displays what he calls 'cyclical fandom'. Across a series of semi-structured interviews, Hills observed that Shaun would bounce from text to text, object to object, alighting on whatever cultural artefact happened to pique his interest along the way. Once he grew tired of a text, he would begin searching for a new outlet, often surprising himself that this or that drew him in. He referred to texts which were successful in aleatorially catching his attention using the discourse of the addict (searching for that "buzz" which is so "addictive"). 'Self- transcendent

(and self-transformative) aspects of moments of surprise and discovery are positioned by Shaun as immensely seductive and as driving the entire procedure of cyclical fandom and its iterability', notes Hills (2005: 815). However, the aleatory object which acts a central feature in the fandom of Shaun is simply not present in the same way across the later life fandom of my participants. The aleatory appears to feature not as an object, as such, but rather as an instance, a fragment of a text or a small happening which might not quite fit with the presupposed object trajectory, thus causing a small surprise. For instance:

> Vincent (65):
> [L]ike this morning, I've been on [the internet] to see how the results went last night in the EFL Cup, and [was] surprised to see that Tottenham got beat 3-2 [laughs], after being two-nil up.

> Tamsin (71):
> Actually I think Nasser Hussain's quite good. He surprised me at what a good commentator he turned out to be because I didn't think he would be.

> David (65):
> [S]ometimes you can feel extremely elated and excited about something that's happened, and surprised when something happens that you're not expecting to happen [when supporting West Ham United].

> Heather (80):
> Obviously, I would like England to win [cricket's Champions Trophy], but... I'm surprised they haven't included more teams than eight.

> Dorothy (79) & Bill (81):
> But you [husband, Bill] were very pleasantly surprised, because it's not like, it's not as big as you'd imagine - it's not huge, you know. We had quite good seats on the, not on the bottom row - the second seats up. Really, we were level with the athletics.

These are all instances where my participants were surprised by their fan objects, but this is not really the 'level' of surprise which Hills (2005) observed of Shaun. These examples are all small instances from a wider whole; variations which come with the territory of being a sports fan, disparities which each of my participants has likely come across before – they are what you might refer to as 'natural textual variations', rather than the surprise of encountering an entirely new text. In later life sports fandom, Bollas's notion of the 'ordinary day as a dream landscape full of *unexpectedly* intense significance' (Phillips, 1994: 157 – emphasis mine) appears to break down, precisely because my later life participants seem to avoid the aleatory as much as they possibly can. Indeed, this appears to be the largest difference between Shaun, a 23-year-old, and my later-life fans: Shaun appears to actively search for the aleatory, he seems to almost expect the unexpected (thus ironically hampering his ability to enjoy a text in the aleatory way he wishes), whilst my later life fans appear perfectly content with their objectual lot and reserve aleatory experience for the genuinely surprising. My participants may live the ordinary day in a dream landscape, but it generally appears to be a more

choreographed version than that explicated by Bollas. Indeed, Grotstein (2002: 83) notes that, regardless of our position in the life course, 'we may have resistances to being available to encounters with the aleatory object because of its propensity to precipitate 'catastrophic changes' (Bion, 1970) within us'. We might recall, here, the words of Laing (1960: 46) and our continuous proximity to ontological *in*security: 'we are all only two or three degrees Fahrenheit from experiences of this order. Even a slight fever, and the whole world can begin to take on a persecutory, impinging aspect'. Having a strong, ontologically secure 'base' from which to approach everyday living is vitally important for it allows us to deal with the aleatory. Sports fandom allows the later life individual to 'practice' this: the "good" internal object forms the basis of routine and basic trust, which allows the individual to then counter any surprises which arise from that object.

4.7 Summary

The main theme of this chapter has been concerned with how the later life individual has embedded the sports fan object into their everyday lives, and with it, how this relationship has aided in the development, and nurturing, of ontological security (Giddens, 1984, 1991; Laing, 1960). There are myriad ways in which this is achieved. Firstly, the routinisation of fandom might be considered. Sports fandom, in particular, is predicated on routine – from individual, on-field sporting actions (the pass, pass, pass of a football; the cyclical nature of bowling fifty sets of six deliveries in one day international cricket and so on) to weekly fixtures, to annual seasons. Much like the soap opera (Harrington & Bielby, 1995, 2005), sport offers a continuous narrative which plays out in real time. This contributes to a sense of continuity for the sports fan, of being able to put a faith in their object that there will generally always be another iteration. Whilst the fan object may be presented to the audience in a reliable routine, the fan themselves will likewise interact with that object with their own routine. This will, in large part, follow the routine of the object (fixture lists, etc.), but fannish routine is expanded to include behaviour both pre- and post-engagement with what we might call the "main object". If, say, the "main object" in question is a football match, then the fan's matchday routine will involve travel to the stadium, readying themselves for the fixture, consuming other, paratextual objects such as radio preview and post-match analytical shows. The fan's routine may also spread out into the week, as anticipation builds for the "main event". The daily Googling for news of the club in the lead-up to the weekend, reading the local newspaper or clicking through the team's online fan forum. There are many ways in which routine might be performed. Likewise, routine might be a lifelong endeavour. The upheaval of the life course come retirement is a common theme in gerontology (Mukku, Harbishettar & Sivakumar, 2018; Sewdas *et al.*, 2017), but it is also acknowledged that routines which served the individual well

in an earlier life phase are often adapted for the purposes of later life, as the individual seeks to perform their routine as closely as possible to the older variety (Troll & Skaff, 1997), as evidence by Eddie (67), above. Routine allows for a 'basic trust' to be developed between subject and object (Giddens, 1991; Hills, 2012, see also Erikson, 1959/1994), which in turn lets the subject relax into their object world. This relaxation into day-to-day routine might also be described as the quotidian 'flow'. We see this entwined, symbiotic relationship wherein the 'flow' of later life sports fandom is imbued with the ontological security afforded us by routine, which itself is predicated on a basic trust in the future; a future based around an apperceptive, "good", trustful object, creatively constructed in the transitional realm. We are talking, here, about a continual affective process, whose purpose is to protect the individual from the anxieties of an ontologically *in*secure existence. The next chapter moves on to a discussion about how later life sports fans have negotiated a relationship (or relationships) with a favourite object (or objects) across very long timeframes. It further explores the notion of the "good" object and how this internalisation is managed across the life course.

Chapter Five: Later life fandom and negotiating long-term fan-object relationships

This focus of this chapter is on change and how later life individuals, who have interacted with the same fan object for many decades, negotiate this change, both in themselves and the text. Indeed, if the previous chapter considered the fan-object relationship on a day-today basis, the current chapter broadens the conversation to consider the mechanics of this relationship across very long timeframes. It examines how later life fans retain the most important objects in their lives as centrally as they do, in the face of often quite significant developments in their fan-object relationship. In the coding phase of this research project, nodes covering perceived change, in both self and, more prominently, fan objects, were among the most numerous in the entire analysis. Perceived change is a central component of fandom for the participants I worked with, yet so, too, is perceived consistency and sameness.

One of the key considerations of the chapter is the idiosyncratic building of what I termed in the introduction (Chapter One) as the (internal) fan-object relationship – the psychic construction of the fan object which exists 'below' the level of the immediate subject-text relationship. Indeed, throughout the first parts of this chapter I argue that it is precisely *because* the (internal) fan-object relationship is, in its shape and form in the psyche of the subject, an idiosyncratic construction free from the (relatively) solid boundaries of the prescribed text, that people are able to maintain their fandoms over entire life courses. We need that malleability and fluidity to be able to deal with developments, both personal and textual, which would otherwise alter one's fandom beyond repair. These developments arise as we move through our lives; I describe them as 'destabilisations'. To these destabilisations the fan adapts their fandom in order to retain that fandom as important in their everyday lives. I propose two 'types' of adaptation – 'voluntary' and 'involuntary'. The former has to do with the individual's reading of the contemporary text, in comparison to that which has already passed (as in relation to their internal fan-object relationship). The latter is often hostage to the biological process of senescence – this is where changes in the ageing body impact upon one's ability to perform a fandom, thus calling for a change in the way that fandom is executed.

Innumerable experiences have contributed to each of my participants' contemporary notions of their own fandoms, thus, ultimately, this chapter attempts to find a pattern in a developmental process which is otherwise highly idiosyncratic.

5.1 Fluid objects

One of the reasons why this research project focuses on "sports" fans as opposed to fans of a particular text (i.e. "Manchester United fans") is because fan studies has traditionally 'been monolithic in approach, with research focussing on single fan communities' (Williams, 2015: 4). It is so clear that people's fandoms are built *across* textual boundaries, by which I mean that fans pick and choose aspects from particular objects to build, bricolage-style, their fannish interests. This is particularly prevalent with later life sports fans. Whilst of course fans of all ages engage with a wide variety of texts, the later life fan has been exposed to a *much* wider variety of texts across their lifetime. Indeed, in the sporting landscape, what we might refer to as the same 'text' (i.e. a sports club) represents itself as a new text over and over again, across a long time frame. Much like the "feel" of a televisual text like *Doctor Who* is different with each doctor, so, too, does a sports team take on a new "feel" with the building of a new team, the starting of a new season and so on. Indeed, I would suggest that the text which fan studies traditionally refers to as the fan object – such as a particular football club – is, in fact, in itself a densely populated textual network, with no clear boundaries. Fans pick and choose from within this network smaller aspects of text to create an internal fannish construction.

For example, one of David's (65) internal fan objects is based on 'stylishness' and 'flair'. This is a generality, a trait which could not manifest itself as a singular text but could exist *within* a text (or many texts) as a characteristic. Firstly, he notes that: "I was a big tennis fan but not so much anymore. I don't sit down and watch Wimbledon for a fortnight like lots of people do, I've sort of lost interest in that for some reason." Despite initially being unsure, later in the interview, with a small prompt, he then seeks to explain this:

> JS:
> Talking about the tennis for a second, you say you've kind of lost interest a little bit, when, roughly, would that have been?
>
> David (65):
> Probably over the last, a good ten, fifteen years or so probably. I can remember I used to watch it a lot, sort of late-sixties through to the seventies mainly. I don't know, some of the characters maybe seem to have gone but you could probably say that about a lot of other sports I would think. As you get older you sort of remember those characters who were a bit younger and they don't seem to be in place [now] ... So yeah. I think the game doesn't seem to have, when I have watched it all seems to be all bashing, crunching and big serves, do you know what I mean? There doesn't seem to be a great style in it anymore.

In tennis, David misses the 'stylish' players, now perceiving the game to be full of power – "bashing, crunching, big serves". Asked who his favourite tennis players were he recalls Ken Rosewall, Ilie Năstase and Tim Henman – top men's players whose careers spanned from the 1960s to the 1990s – and all of whom featured in their game a single-hand backhand, the yardstick against which even present-day players are measured for 'style' (Roger Federer, Amelie Mauresmo, Pete Sampras and Stan Wawrinka are all contemporary single-hand backhand players renowned for their 'grace' on a tennis court). Little has changed in this regard. On Australian Ken Rosewall, David noted that:

> He was short, he was more a, he was more... he was better to watch, he was good to watch because he wasn't all crash and bang serve, he was, he had some nice delicate shots and all that sort of thing [laughs] wasn't all crash.
>
> (David, 65)

This love of 'style over substance', of technique over brute force can also be traced back to David's notion of self. As a young cricket player he described being derided by his peers for being a batter too focussed on technique, having a solid defensive game and being unable to hit the ball very far, yet a coach complemented him on his technical approach so he stuck with it. David is also an artistic individual. He has a fannish interest in the arts, liking film and attending live music concerts. He also plays music – numerous musical instruments were on display in his home – and taught music as a profession until retiring from full-time tutoring in 2010. A large part of David's identity is technical, artistic, creative. These aspects of his self are mirrored in his sports fandom (Sandvoss, 2005). However, David can no longer 'see' these technical, stylistic traits in the contemporary tennis text – he is unable to perceive that aspect of his internal fan object construction and thus has fallen out of love with tennis as an object. However, his internal fan object still resides within his psyche and he manages to find objects which *do* offer him what he seeks. His tastes span different texts as he searches to find the 'stylish'. For instance, asked about his favourite team sport players, David said:

> I think back to those who were a bit of flair, people like obviously George Best and the [Lionel] Messis and the [Cristiano] Ronaldos and Dimitri Payet, before he left West Ham [...]. Trevor Brooking was a really good hero, sort of thing, of mine at the time.
>
> (David, 65)

In football, David is a West Ham United fan, so it is unsurprising that two of the players referred to above are former West Ham players (Payet and Brooking). However, they come from very different eras (Brooking playing for the club between 1966-1984; Payet 2015-2017), and the others – Best, Messi and Ronaldo – come from a diverse range of teams and eras. David treats each of these players as a 'text' in their own right; they combine to add to his internal construction.

Thus, what I propose is that the older fan develops their (internal) fan-object relationship – their own internal construction of what that fan object represents *to them* – at some point in the life course. I would suggest that this happens during a particular era, probably early on after exposure to the object. From the point of constructing an internal notion of *our object* onwards, we enter a lifelong process of textual comparison, whereby we look for that same constructed object in the cultural field. The object we desire might be described as the internal "good" object which Hills (2018a) has previously theorized. In seeking this internally constructed object, the fan will, naturally, head first for the 'original' text. A football fan will generally engage with the same team from which they built their initial "good" object. For a fandom to then progress, the fan must recognize at least some aspects of their internalised "good" object in the text they are interacting with. Or, rather, the fan must recognize *some* of the texts from within the densely populated textual network (which has hitherto been referred to as the 'text', like a football club). Over time, through textual variations (in sport, new players, managers; in television new characters storylines, etc.) the fan may become gradually disillusioned with the text in which they often engage, if they cannot recognize enough of their internalised "good" object in it. Eventually, the text may be discarded through lack of relation to the individual's perfected internalisation (though they would still remain a fan of the 'original' text, for the individual's fandom is predicated on the ideal "good" *internalisation*, thus they would happily reminisce about older versions of the text, or watch repeats of that older text). This search for the "good" object is a never-ending one. Across very long timeframes, it is entirely plausible that if the original text upon which that original "good" object was formed features few of the characteristics the fan is looking for, they may alight upon a different, possibly even "rival" fan text, if it offers that which the fan longs for.

Ross (61), for example, has always liked 'attacking football' – his internal notion of 'attacking football' is, for him, the yardstick for a good-quality football fan object. He is a Manchester City fan, which presented an interesting conflict during Manchester United's years under former manager Sir Alex Ferguson, under whose tutelage the club won thirteen of the first twenty iterations of the English Premier League. As the 'rival', anti-fan text (Theodoropoulou, 2007), Ross was adept at playing the social 'role' (Goffman, 1959/1990) of Manchester United anti-fan, presenting himself to me, the researcher and (as we established in the interview) fellow football fan, as firmly 'against' all things United. His 'negativity is always directed away from the fan object and toward something external' (McCulloch, 2019: 231). Much of Ross's fannish presentation is footballing cliché; indeed, this seems to affect his identity as a City fan given that he was not born in Manchester. However, as this extract shows, when he questions his legitimacy as a "true blue" (City play in light blue shirts), his anti-fandom saves the day:

> [...] maybe because I'm from Grimsby. I've never felt that I'm a true blue, I'm a very, very bitter blue. I'm a blue – I hate Man United, you know, so I'm a true blue [...]
>
> (Ross, 61)

However, Ross's internal notion of a "good" footballing fan object is, at least partly, a team which plays what he sees as 'attacking football'. This is something he saw in Manchester United's play under Ferguson. As the below three extracts from Ross's interview show, his admiration for the style of football he wants to see trumps textual boundaries. He has admiration even for the text he supposedly "hates":

> And what used to annoy me about Ferguson was he played football in the way I wanted my team to play, but City play that football now. Ferguson's teams were just fantastic: attack, attack, attack.
>
> I thought the football with Mancini was good because we had [Carlos] Tevez, [Sergio] Agüero, [Mario] Balotelli, and [Edin] Dzeko. It was good attacking football.
>
> You know I thought it was great under [Roberto] Mancini [...] it was football like Ferguson played football.
>
> (Ross, 61)

Internal "good" fan object constructions often do not take the same form of a sole text, with its (comparatively) neat boundaries. The internal fan object world does not feature constructions which can be easily mapped onto a singular text at all; it is an arena of ill-defined, fuzzy logic wherein a fan object construction might be based on a particular 'style' of play (as in Ross's case) or characteristic which transcends traditional textual boundaries.

5.2 Different textual readings

When a fan has found a text which represents their internal construction adequately, but then suddenly no longer does (through textual evolution like a favourite player transferring to a different club), this presents the fan with a 'destabilisation' to their fandom. This is when the individual shows an inability to emotionally identify with the fan object any longer, at least to the extent that they have previously. Whilst this phenomenon may arise at any point in one's life, it is particularly pertinent to later-life adults, given the capacity for textual evolution (and personal development) across multiple decades. The subject-object relationship may have changed. Indeed, identification with the object may now be more difficult if the fan perceives the cultural object as no longer possessing the same qualities as it once did. Football, for instance, could be viewed as being a completely different sport now, well into the twenty-first century, than it was in the 1950s (Turner, 2014). Anya (69) notes how she can no longer identify with her favourite football team, Grimsby Town, in the way that she once could. One example she gives is what she sees in the players' car park:

> I mean, the players' car park at Grimsby, I mean their cars were as battered as... [...] you know, it's not like now, it's very different. You know, the players' car park they were probably as battered and bashed [as fans' cars], it's not like the ones now where... too much money but that's probably not their fault it's probably the likes of me that contributes to that.
>
> (Anya, 69)

Anya portrays professional players from many decades ago as 'ordinary people' – they used to have cars that were as "battered and bashed" as any fan, any 'regular person', might have. This is different now because she feels players can afford much more expensive cars – professional footballers have, to Anya, moved from belonging in the realm of the ordinary and into a social status which Anya finds difficult to identify with. (Whether this is an 'accurate' reading, then or now, of her fan text is a moot point – it is the *fan's* perception which is important here.)

Whilst I have noted that this process is very much an individual one – different people experience different outcomes to adaptation – the process can also be considered on a fan-object-by-fan-object basis. Leonard (70) is a particularly good example of someone who has experienced different levels of emotional maintenance in different fan objects, dependent on the importance the fan object plays in his self-identity. He is somebody who became so disillusioned with one fan object, so emotionally detached, that he dramatically altered his fandom with the end result being an evolved, yet retained, identity as a Hull City football fan. A season ticket holder with Hull City, he felt like he could no longer relate to the team he was watching. After relegation from the Premier League, there was a particularly high turnover of players at the club:

> Because they got all these bunch of players in that I could not identify with, and I still don't identify with them. You know, when it's a team and they drip a couple in, and your nucleus of your team is there, so you accept that and you say well fair enough they're either good or they might not be that good or they might be better than what you've got, but when you throw in eight or nine players, you know. There's just no feeling that they've got this feel for the club, you know.
>
> (Leonard, 70)

Leonard gave up his season ticket and, at the time of our interview, had not yet been back to watch his team live in-person. However, he was adamant that Hull City was still part of his identity:

> Sport's a big thing for me. And don't get me wrong, I don't go to City, but I'm so wrapped up in how they're doing, and I still want them to survive, you know, so I'm still looking at the scores.
>
> (Leonard, 70)

Leonard is also a season ticket holder with the city's rugby league team, Hull FC, and is feeling almost as disillusioned as he did with the football club, for many of the same reasons. He cites the lack of 'characters' in today's game as a big difference to the sport of his youth:

> You get the odd character [now] but you had mega-characters, you know, big Jim Mills, you know, played for Widnes, suddenly comes to mind. Vince Farrar that played for Hull, Charlie Stone, these were like characters of the game that used to have a laugh and joke with the ref and all that type of stuff.
>
> (Leonard, 70)

These were 'characters' that Leonard could identify with, such as:

> ... a player called Mick Crane - smoked like a chimney, never trained, but Arthur Bunting [former Hull coach], in an interview once he said, "he never trains but I can't leave him out", because he would, he just did stuff off the cuff, and he'd win you a game just off the cuff because you didn't know what he was going to do.
>
> (Leonard, 70)

This is a similar statement to Anya's (69) above, when she described a past where professional football players' cars were as 'battered and bashed' as fans' cars. Both Anya and Leonard identified in the past with 'their' sports stars on the level of the 'ordinary' – any 'average' person could drive around in the standard of car Anya described, whilst Leonard's notion of the player Mick Crane as somebody who 'smoked like a chimney' and 'never trained' is about as far from being a professional sportsperson as one could get. They projected notions of an ordinary self onto their fan objects. Leonard acknowledges that his 'affection' remains with his memory of the past:

> But, it's still, to me, that's how it was to me, you see. And that will always be where my affection is. So, if you say, "what would you rather be?", I'd say "back then", you know, than now.
>
> (Leonard, 70)

However, Leonard's emotional engagement in contemporary rugby league is still significant:

> So, when I'm watching Hull [on television], I feel, what I do, is I'll watch it for a while and if things aren't going well, I'll turn it off and I'll keep checking the score. And if we win I watch it [laughs], whereas [my son] can actually watch it. So [if my son]'s at home and is watching... I say, "[Son] don't update me on Sky", if we win I'll watch it [laughs].
>
> (Leonard, 70)

Leonard is so emotionally attached to Hull FC (the rugby league team), that he cannot stand to watch his team on the television if they are losing. This is clearly the behaviour of somebody who cares deeply about his fan object. Rugby league played a much more central role in Leonard's life course – it featured in his earliest memories, he played the sport, and has watched it even more than football – and therefore he appears to be trying harder to remain

involved in consuming the sport as a season ticket holder, rather than stepping back from it, like he did from 'his' soccer team. Leonard describes himself as "still hanging in there" in relation to being a season ticket holder for the rugby league club, because the sport plays a more important part in his identity construction. He has still retained some interest in the soccer, though was happy to take a 'step back' from that fandom in order to retain an attachment to it. However, he is much more willing to put the effort in to remaining a season-ticket-holding rugby league fan – "hanging in there", as he put it – because his 'rugby league fan' aspect of self appears to act as a cornerstone of his wider identity.

5.3 Health and later life sports fandom

Sometimes destabilisations to one's fandom are unavoidable. Often, in later life sports fandom, it is one's health which shapes one's ability to perform a fandom. A natural consequence of the ageing process is biological degeneration, otherwise known in the gerontological and wider ageing sciences literature as 'senescence' (for a comprehensive overview, see Finch, 1991). Indeed, the wider health of my participants was an area which, being highly personal and potentially sensitive, I did not want to broach unless the participant was entirely comfortable. Yet, without being prompted, nearly half disclosed during the interview that they had a life-altering, life-shortening or restricting illness, or had recently recovered from life-threatening illness. Most were very happy to discuss their health, showing no discomfort with the topic at all. Whilst I do not want my research to adhere to the 'all older people are sick' and the 'if we live long enough we will all become senile' stereotypes that have historically pigeonholed those in the later life ages (Minichiello, Browning & Aroni, 1992: 2), it is clear that the physical health of the later life individual affects the relationship between that individual and their fan object(s).

There was a large range in levels of health among my participants. Five (Albert, 76; Bertie, 87; Larry, 82; Mort, 81 and Ron, 76) were diagnosed with varying degrees of dementia and lived in care homes, so limiting their opportunities for consuming sport (at least in person). Similarly, Bill (81) had lost mobility and clear speech after his recent stroke, and so relied heavily on his wife for care, making his former behaviour – he used to visit football stadiums regularly to watch matches – impossible. Henry (78) needed an assisted chair to stand up and a wheelchair for longer journeys due to various health issues. He, too, is a football fan who is no longer able to attend games in person, at least not to the extent he used to. Katherine (88) had recently been classed as being in remission from oesophageal cancer, but throughout her treatment was unable to consume sport in her usual way. John (71) had both ankles fused, making journeys longer than the end of his garden arduous, whilst Eddie (67) also had bad ankles, causing him pain when he is on his feet too long. One participant had to pull out of the

research project as they suffered a heart attack the week before we were due to meet for the interview. All of these examples are significant, life-altering health issues and represent only those who explicitly told me about their ailments. It does not include those whose mobility I noticed as being restricted, their general movements limited, in walking me to and from the front door of their home, for example.

Matt (69), is a good example of the way in which physiological degradation has altered his fandom. He can no longer stand for a full ninety-minute football match as it hurts his knees, so he has to ensure he finds a place in the stadium where he can sit down:

> It kills my bloody knees [...] when we went to Leicester [City, to watch a football match], there were a lot of [Manchester] City fans stood up but we felt lucky because around us they were sat down. I don't mind standing up for a bit but standing up all game I don't like, so I won't go in the bottom two tiers behind the goal.
>
> (Matt, 69)

This is significantly different from some of the behaviour he described when attending football matches in the 1970s and 1980s. When he was younger, Matt had "been in one gang which... charged one end of the stand, and then they charged back". "Charging" from one end of a football ground stand to the other is not the behaviour of one who can no longer manage standing still for ninety minutes. In his contemporary fandom, Matt makes a conscious decision about where in the stadium he positions himself, based on the health of his knees. There is a significant difference between simply sitting down to watch a football match and standing, and likewise the different areas of a football stadium play host to different expressions of fandom. For example, there is usually a 'loud' stand, an area which hosts the most vocal fans. Sometimes known as the 'singing section', this is probably best epitomised in German football in the Bundesliga, whose stadia feature loud, singing sections often choreographed by a lead fan, stood atop a podium at the front of the stand. English football does not have quite the same organisational choreography, though stadiums organically develop their own 'loud areas'. At the Etihad Stadium, Manchester City's home ground, one of these areas is in the South Stand, behind one of the goals and near to the away fans' section. As Matt describes, around the ground fan behaviour "is pretty much the same except there's more, behind the goals, there's a lot more singing". He notes that these fans are "stood up all the time, and [...] the two levels below, it's called the singing section but basically they stand up all the time, and I don't like that." This is an area Matt explicitly avoids, despite it being a place which hosts the type of fan behaviour he liked to engage in when younger. He recalls that "I liked to be with everybody shouting and singing and what have you." He has to express his fandom in a different way now, because of his knees. Growing older clearly restricts some

people physiologically, through either illness or general senescence, which in turn can have a huge impact on the way in which the individual interacts with their fan object.

Ida's (84) vision has impacted her fandom significantly. She was in her mid-thirties when she got a detached retina, and in her later life has suffered from macular degeneration. Visual problems have been a constant throughout her life, though her visual degeneration has become worse over the last few years. She had to stop playing golf – which she had taken up at sixty-five, hitting the ball and relying on friends to tell her where it had gone – because she could no longer navigate her surroundings. Now she is virtually housebound, only able to navigate her house and garden because she can remember the layout. She has an interest in many sports, though is especially fond of football, Manchester United in particular. She has a huge television in her living room, and when a match is on she likes to "sit in" it, as she puts it. She has a wooden dining room chair which she places one or two feet away from the screen – there were small, square indentations in her living room carpet in front of the television when I interviewed her – so that she can follow the match as best she can. Despite the proximity, Ida "can't distinguish players' faces like I used to be able to".

> I used to [watch football] more when I had more sight, but... and the thing is, with having to sit so near the telly, I sit on a hard chair and then I get a bit, oo, I have to have a comfortable chair [laughs]. So, I don't watch as much [football] as I did since my sight's gone.
>
> <div align="right">(Ida, 84)</div>

There is a clear health-related destabilisation. Ida can no longer make out much of the action on the television screen, now her only means of watching sport, and her having to sit on a hard chair so close to the screen has resulted in her consuming less sport than she used to. However, in adapting to the changes enforced on her through her visual degeneration, Ida's emotional engagement with her fan object is still intense. She described herself during a recent Manchester City versus Manchester United derby match:

> Ida (84): I was nearly crying when we got to two-nil down [laughs].
>
> JS: Well, that was one heck of a game wasn't it?
>
> Ida (84): Oh, it was brilliant [laughs].

Ida is very passionate about sport, which came across clearly in interview. Her emotional engagement is high in the face of her macular degeneration. Whilst her vision-deteriorating disease has rendered her almost blind, yet she has adapted her fandom in such a way as to still enjoy her lifelong fan object without the need to fully 'see' it. She has not 'mellowed' in the face of distancing from her fan object and has maintained a strong emotional bond.

Carl (66) is in a similar position to Ida. His sight has degenerated to the point where he can no longer drive, and so he cannot drive to Manchester to watch his favourite team, again Manchester United. He also sits very close to the television screen to watch the football ("Mind you if I'm watching [football] I just sit in this chair - I like to put me nose on the telly") and also has difficulty in making out players ("I can see the players, see the ball, but I wouldn't recognise the faces"). Yet when asked how sport makes him feel, he answers:

> Carl (66): I could be on top of the Eiffel Tower, or I could be down, further down than it's possible to travel to the centre of the Earth, depending on how it's gone, really.
>
> JS: So, a whole range of emotions?
>
> Carl (66): A whole range of emotions, happy, sad, elation, despair, frustration...

Like Ida, Carl's degenerative vision has not stopped his emotional engagement in sport; he has adapted to the changes imposed on him. He has become distanced from his fan object by being unable to travel to Manchester United matches, which he previously did on a semi-regular basis, as well as being unable to recognise the players on his television screen through visual impairment, yet he has adapted to this to maintain his emotional ties and, thus, retain a continued sense of self-identity.

5.4 Continuity Theory

The question, then, is *how* these fans negotiate destabilisations, whether they come in the form of health issues, different textual readings or any other perceptions of change. For an answer, I propose that fans *adapt* their fandom to the destabilisation presented. A destabilisation is something to be overcome in order for the fan to continue hosting the fandom as part of their self. This leads to answering the question of why fans do this when presented with a destabilisation in the first place: they are aiming for a consistent experience of self. They want to "feel like themselves". To help explain this, I use Atchley's continuity theory. Atchley (1993: 5-6) writes that continuity theory is evolutionary ('the individual's orientation is not to remain personally unchanged but rather consistent with the individual's past'), constructionist (that people 'actively develop individualized personal constructs') and about selective investment ('[i]t presumes that people make decisions, based on feedback from experience, about where it is best to focus their efforts to develop skills and knowledge'). Continuity theory,

assumes that individual choices are made not only to achieve goals but to adapt to constantly changing circumstances. ... One of the main ideas in continuity theory is that, in adapting to aging, people attempt to preserve and maintain long-standing patterns of thought and behaviour that they believe constitute important and potent adaptive skills and arrangements.

(Atchley, 1993: 6)

Theories of continuity and the ageing self are not scarce. Whilst they exploded into gerontological consciousness towards the end of the twentieth century (e.g. Leiberman & Tobin, 1983; Kaufman, 1986, 1993; Fisk & Chiriboga, 1990; Tobin, 1991; Kelly, 1993), such an approach originated as long ago as Cavan (1949), who saw how important it was for individuals to make links between middle and advanced age. The theory comes in numerous forms, like Kaufman's (1986, 1993) notion of the ageless self, which points towards the individual as an active (re)producer of self and identity throughout the life course, the development of selective optimization with compensation (SOC) (Baltes & Baltes, 1990; Baltes & Cartensen, 1999) and, more recently, innovation theory, used largely in leisure studies (Nimrod, 2007; Nimrod & Kleiber, 2007; Nimrod & Hutchinson, 2010; Nimrod, 2016). However, continuity theory as an approach in itself is best attributed to Atchley (1989, 1993, 1999). It suggests that the individual aims for a developmental path of least resistance; although the individual *does* ultimately change throughout the life course, they will look to accommodate that change within the parameters of previous experience and learning:

In discussing continuity, it is important to understand the relationship between continuity and change. *Continuity is not an absence of change*. Continuity refers to a coherence or consistency of patterns over time. Specific changes tend to be given significance in relation to a general notion of a relatively continuous whole. Individual change and evolution are usually perceived as occurring against a backdrop of considerable continuity.

(Atchley, 1993: 7 – emphasis in original)

Atchley concedes the paradoxical nature of adult development. He suggests that 'there is both similarity over time and obvious change – one can be identifiably similar in comparison with a past self and still have changed considerably' (1993: 7). The structure of Atchley's continuity theory features two strands: 'Internal continuity' and 'external continuity'. Internal continuity 'is the persistence over time of psychological patterns of various kinds: temperament, affect, experiences, preferences, skills, dispositions, attitudes, values, beliefs, and worldviews' (1993: 7). External continuity 'is defined in terms of a remembered structure of physical and social environments, role relationships, and activities' (1993: 12). Atchley is sure, however, to explain that this is not to be seen negatively:

this continuity is not a boring sameness for most but rather a comforting routine and familiar sense of direction. No doubt part of the impetus for external continuity is related to restricted opportunity structures resulting from ageism and societal

disengagement, but probably the majority of it results from the satisfaction people get from exercising mastery and the value of experience in preventing and minimising the deleterious effects of physical and psychological aging.

<div align="right">(Atchley, 1989: 188)</div>

Continuity theory occupies a sort of middle ground between two other competing, and contrasting, theories of aging, which sees "activity" theory at one end of the spectrum and "disengagement" theory on the other. Activity theories are closer in relation to continuity theory and are certainly more positive in outlook. The general premise of activity theory is that one should maintain the highest-possible levels of activity as far into the life course as possible – these activities are substituted into the individual's life as a replacement for the activities lost through retirement, to fill the 'activity gap' which was previously filled by employment and which is seen as vital in promoting well-being (Havighurst, 1963; Nimrod & Kleiber, 2007). Disengagement theory, on the other hand, has earned a different reputation. Nimrod & Kleiber (2007: 3) go as far as to suggest that 'most gerontologists have found "Disengagement theory" to be controversial and even repugnant'. It theorises 'an inevitable process' whereby, in older age, the individual becomes socially 'severed' (Cumming & Henry, 196: 211), a 'method by which society prepares for the structure of its members so that when the inevitable arrives [death] it does not disrupt the orderly functioning of society' (Bond, Briggs, & Coleman, 1993: 32).

Continuity theory is part of a wider branch of gerontology which has moved away from rigid, 'stage-based' theories of ageing, to something more akin to an idiosyncratic undulating of transitions across the life course. It follows the work of Elder (1974), who observed the importance of history and experience on what Dannefer & Settersen (2010) call the 'personological level'. As Grenier (2015: 406) notes, Atchley's continuity theory 'created the space for consistency based on an unbroken thread located in an individual's lifelong identity'. Thus, the frustration Anya (69) feels at seeing what she perceives as the expensive cars of overpaid professional football players parked at Grimsby Town's stadium on a matchday is not only predicated on a contemporary reading of her fannish text, but a contemporary reading in relation to her own personal history with that fan object. Likewise, Ross's (61) disappointment with the pre-match atmosphere at Manchester City's Etihad Stadium ("At ten to three, the Etihad is empty [...], there's no atmosphere going before the game kicks off because there's no one there") is based on a personal comparative analysis between that and his earlier City fandom, visiting the club's old Maine Road stadium ("We'd have been in the Kippax Stand at two o'clock to get our place, and then people started chanting and away fans started chanting and atmosphere built up"). This personal thread is vital for the individual retaining an attachment to an object which, had they not any previous relationship, may not represent a desirable object at all. My participants were very productive in outlining the things

which are 'wrong' with their contemporary texts, yet those same texts play an important part in these people's lives. It is the historical relationship with these objects that later life fans call upon when engaging with the contemporary text.

5.5 The "I" and the "me"

As Rowson & Phillipson (2020) note, continuity theory is helpful but also slightly limited; there is a more fundamental psychological process behind continuity, to do with the construction of self. As overviewed in Chapter Two, the two-pronged definition of self proposed originally by James (1890) and developed by Mead (1934), features an inward-facing "I" and an outward-facing "me" (see also Leiberman & Tobin, 1983; Tobin, 1991 and Troll & Skaff, 1997 for a gerontological take on applying this definition of self to ageing processes). The "I" in this definition is what we might call the internal essence of the individual. The "me" might be thought of as aesthetic, the part of the self which is presented to the world. This notion of the self featuring two parts is prevalent in the branch of gerontology which focuses on perceptions of self-continuity and self-consistency. In Atchley's continuity theory, we might describe his 'internal continuity' as the inward-facing "I" of James's (1890) and Mead's (1934) definition of self. Likewise, Tobin's (1991) 'essential personhood' and what Kaufman (1984: 31) has referred to as the '"core" or "central" self' might similarly refer to the "I". Atchley's 'external continuity' may thus be regarded as the "me" of James's and Mead's definition of self.

Tobin (1991) observes that the one thing all research projects which focus on continuity agree on is that the preservation of self is a highly idiosyncratic process. This, he suggests, is due to the heterogeneity of older populations. Thus, we might analyse individual case studies and note quite significant differences in the ways people manage destabilisations, yet the overarching psychological processes are broadly generalisable. If we work through some of the examples introduced above, we see that, regardless of the 'type' of destabilisation experienced, it is the essence of one's fandom – the "I" – which is protected. For instance, in the similar cases of Ida (84) and Carl (66) who both suffer from degenerating eyesight, their abilities to engage with their fan objects in ways which they have done previously is simply impossible. Their days of being match-going fans, of navigating the crowds, standing in the terraces and watching their favourite team play in front of them have gone. Likewise, their status as sports media fans is gradually being eroded as even watching the television becomes more difficult. Both participants noted how they can no longer make out faces on the screen, for instance. Their "me" part of the self has fundamentally altered from being regular attendees at football matches, and then devoted television football fans, watching everything they can lay their eyes on, to now only just being able to make out shapes on a screen. Their outward projection as a

'type' of football fan has changed. Ida, in particular, is a far more infrequent football consumer because she has to endure sitting on an uncomfortable wooden chair two feet from her television just to make out what is being broadcast. However, both participants were very keen to emphasise the emotional connection they had with their football fan objects (both Manchester United in this case). Despite the aesthetic changes to the ways in which they are now forced to perform their fandom, both participants were emphatic in describing the importance of their fan objects to them, how Manchester United was a key part of their identity. It was very obvious in interview that each person's favourite era was the source of their fandom – for the slightly older Ida she recalled the Sir Matt Busby age with great fondness; Carl reminisced about the Sir Alex Ferguson years. With reference to Chapter Seven, nostalgia plays a very important role – particularly so in the case of Ida and Carl, who can barely engage with the contemporary Manchester United – in forming an affective base, on top of which the essence of their "I" has been built. They may have been forced to change as fans, but they are still, in essence, Manchester United fans.

George (84) offers another good example. He is a sports fan whose main object of fandom is Grimsby Town, having followed the club for his entire life and owned a season ticket for the club whenever he has lived in the area (he has previously spent time travelling for work). However, George's physiology is beginning to impact upon day-to-day life – he already has quite badly arthritic fingers – and he admits that it is beginning to become quite an effort to make it to Grimsby's home stadium (Blundell Park) every other week. In fact, George appears to already be amidst a conscious evolutionary process, by planning his future fan behaviour according to what he has done when he has not felt up to attending in person hitherto.

> JS:
> Can you cast your mind back to those days when you didn't go, did you miss it…?
>
> George (84):
> No, I didn't… I did what I do if Town were playing away, which is glue to Jeff Stelling [football results programme] and… turn the fire up, sit… lovely and warm sitting in front of the fire, watching Jeff Stelling, what is there not to like about that? Why would you trog out to Blundell Park? It might be raining, cold wind blowing. Why would you do it? So that is becoming an increasingly more attractive proposition than going to Blundell Park. As you get older, so I talked about my father-in-law earlier, even he, I mean he went to Wembley twice in his nineties. But he was getting to the stage where he wasn't going to home matches…

George admits that he did not miss attending the matches he did not go to, before describing his 'alternative' behaviour and that of his father-in-law, as if to explain that this is the path which he will take. The outward-facing "me" of George's identity is in the process of shifting from being a regular match-goer to a media fan, yet his "I", the essence of his identity as a Grimsby Town football fan, remains very much intact.

5.6 Adaptation (voluntary versus involuntary)

It is important to note, here, that fans for whom the catalyst of their destabilisation was a health issue make adaptations to their fandom by *degree*, rather than kind. Thus, this kind of adaptation is unavoidable, the fan *must* adapt their fandom whether they want to or not. We might call this "*involuntary adaptation*". When a health issue is involved, fans seek to maintain a fan-object relationship which is as *close as possible* to their pre-destabilised fandom, whilst falling within what is now possible post-destabilisation. Thus, Matt (69), who in his earlier Manchester City fandom was physically 'active' at the football ground in standing with and joining in with the most vociferous parts of the crowd, has gone through an *involuntary adaptation* as he cannot now place himself in such spaces in the stadium due to his poor knees. He still sings if a chant emanates further around the stadium, to his seated position ("[I chant] Stand Up If You Love City and things like that…"), because this is now what he is capable of performing. The same might be said of Carl (66), Ida (84) and George (84), all of whom remain 'close' to their fan object, but only engage as much as their bodies allow them to. This is different to the kind of destabilisation experienced upon a new or altered reading of the fan text, which I term "*voluntary adaptation*". This is when the fan still has the capacity to perform their fandom as they have been doing, but chooses not to, such as in the case of Leonard (70), who is physically capable of performing his fandom in the ways he has done previously, but chooses not to for what he perceives to be changes to his fan text. He reads the Hull City and Hull FC texts differently now to in the past and so has chosen to adapt his fandom.

It should also be noted that voluntary and involuntary adaptations are not one-off occurrences and are also not restricted to being an "either-or" scenario. Older sports fan may experience *both* voluntary and involuntary adaptations to their fandom, at various points in the life course. As well as his involuntary, health-driven adaptations, Carl (66) also showed some displeasure in his reading of the contemporary Manchester United text, calling them "boring" and generally bemoaning the style of his team's play. Thus, his fandom is being shaped by both voluntary and involuntary adaptations. Adaptation, incidentally, is not age-specific. Rather, in later life, there is far more potential for destabilisation due to greater longevity in the fan-object relationship (and, hence textual change), and the increase in senescence.

5.7 The positive-negative experiential continuum

Lee (2014: 1520) notes that many gerontological approaches, like the activity and disengagement theories outlined above, seem to suggest an "all or nothing' rule of uni-

directional travel, when in fact... older people engage, disengage or reengage within different contexts and within different time-frames (or over their life course)'. Continuity theory, on the other hand, allows for this 'malleability', this 'messiness', in an evolutionary process as the individual searches for consistency in their life. At the heart of both activity and disengagement theory lies the aim of 'successful' aging, whereas, as Atchley notes:

> Continuity theory is *not* a theory of successful aging. Unlike activity theory and disengagement theory, which gave opposing prescriptions for successful aging (Havighurst, 1963), continuity theory predicts that in their choices people will show a bias toward what they perceive to be continuity. Success may indeed be the result of these choices, but in some cases it will not (Atchley, 1989).
>
> <div align="right">(Atchley, 1993: 6 – emphasis in original)</div>

Once a destabilisation to a fandom has presented itself, in adapting their behaviour, a fan's emotional investment in a fan object will either, quite simply, decline, remain constant or even increase. The destabilisation itself, in the first instance, is value-neutral – it is neither good, nor bad, positive or negative. It is only in hindsight of the adaptation of the fandom that we can assess whether the initial destabilisation was positive for the fandom or negative; was the fan able to maintain or even enhance their emotive attachment to the fan object, or did it lessen their connection to it? This is a highly individualistic consideration. It should not be confused with being a pronouncement of the 'quality' of that person's fandom; this is not a judgment on whether their fandom is "good" or "bad", merely an observation of the standing of that person's fandom in the context of that person's life, post-adaptation. An evaluation like this could be handy, for example, in the care home setting, for allowing care staff to evaluate the ways in which their residents might interact with an object, how they may retain or increase a resident's interest in an object they know stimulates them. Due to the subtleties of each person's fan-object relationship, I suggest thinking of a continuum with the extremes of positive and negative at each of the poles.

To take an example, we have already been introduced to Grimsby Town football fan, Anya (69), who had become emotionally distanced from her fan object due to an inability to identify with the team's players in ways that she was once able to. Her (voluntary) adaptation to this distancing was to continue consuming the sport in much the same way as she has done for many decades – she purchases a season ticket every season, sits with the same people every season and has generally looked to continue her behaviour, despite the fan object, to her perception, changing. The reason she has looked for continuity is because being a Grimsby Town football fan is a large, and important, part of her self-identity. However, in searching for continuity, she has experienced a 'mellowing' of her soccer fandom:

> Whereas, before, you planned your holidays and everything around Town - weddings and everything. Now, although you try to, if it clashes it's perhaps not so. ... You just thought, "if I didn't have a season ticket, would I come to the next game?" and the answer to that would be absolutely not. You've got to be, whether it's your team or not - and I think this matters – you've got to be entertained, you have to feel as if, well there's something for it.

> (Anya, 69)

Despite these feelings, Anya still attends most Grimsby Town home matches, in a venue which she describes as "appalling". She notes that the toilet underneath the stand she sits in "hasn't changed", and that the facilities have no running hot water:

> Appalling standard, actually. You wouldn't put up with it if you went to a café or something like that, and there was just cold water [laughs]. It wouldn't be allowed, would it?

> Anya (69)

Yet Anya still attends, there is still a significant attachment to her object of fandom which lies at the heart of the search for continuity in long-term fandom. The main premise of adaptation – and in this instance the by-product of 'mellowing' – is that the fan still considers the object a fan object, important in the life of the individual and integral to identity, or self, construction. There may be issues with the fan object, however the individual, through selective investment, is able to adapt to the context of the contemporary fan object, develop a new – or, rather, altered – internal construct of that fan object and what it means to the fan, with the overall result being an evolved fandom. After appreciating Anya's adaptation, we can evaluate where on the positive-negative experiential continuum that particular destabilisation can be placed. Given that she still attends in much the same way as she has for a long period of time, but feels slightly less inclined to, for example, put her fandom of Grimsby Town ahead of large life events like she used to, we can surmise that hers is a 'negative' destabilisation, but only just a little way down the negative half of the imaginary continuum. The destabilisation was not so negative that she has forfeited attending matches, in the way that we saw George appearing to do above, but it is enough for her to prioritise other life events over her fandom in ways which she has hitherto not done before.

5.8 Summary

In this chapter, I have proposed that the text which fan studies has traditionally referred to as the 'fan object' (i.e., in a sporting context, the football club), is actually a densely populated textual network. I have also proposed that the fan, after having previously constructed their own (internal) fan-object construction – referred to as the fan's internal "good" object (Hills, 2018a) – picks and chooses from this dense textual network aspects of the wider text which 'fit' with their notion of what the fan object ought to constitute. In bricolage fashion, the fan

pieces together their 'ideal', idiosyncratic object. This means that the fan may be willing to adopt an object, or an aspect of an object, which is antithetical to the presumed normative performance of that fandom, such as in the case of Ross (61) whose internal, "good" fan object saw him admiring the attacking football of Manchester United, despite his Manchester City fandom. The chapter also introduces the gerontological concept of continuity theory, as originally proposed by Atchley (1989, 1993, 1999), to fan studies and applied it to later-life, long-term sports fandom. Continuity theory is 'a theory of adult development, which proposes that in making adaptive choices middle-aged and older adults attempt to preserve and maintain existing psychological and social patterns' (1993: 5). It is an approach which credits the ageing being as active in their development, as 'adults engage in thought and take action designed to preserve and maintain these patterns in their general form' (1993: 5). This has been useful to consider the paradoxical nature of some of the findings from my interviews with thirty-five later-life sports fans, especially the way that some people seemed to become emotionally *dis*engaged from their fan object whilst still retaining significant *en*gagement in it.

The 'closeness' one feels with their fan object is influenced by the destabilisations one may experience from the object. Destabilisation calls for adaptation to the way the subject interacts with the object of fandom, which will either then lead to a maintenance of the original emotional 'status quo' or a mellowed form of the fandom; an experiential state we can view through the use of the positive-negative continuum. In many cases, the fan will continue to consume the fan object through this 'mellowed' state as, in the search for continuity in self, it still represents the most efficient way of preserving that part of the self. In cases such as that of Leonard (70), a Hull-based football and rugby league fan, the subject may adapt their behaviour and consumption of the fan object, yet still remain a 'fan' of the fan object. In Leonard's instance, giving up his season ticket and being a Hull City football fan 'from afar' was the most efficient way of maintaining his 'Hull football fan' self, albeit in a 'mellowed' way. Likewise, "hanging in there", as he said, with his rugby league fandom, he appeared to be devoting more 'effort' to maintain ties as closely as possible with his fan object. This was possibly due to rugby league playing a much more important role across his life course, so therefore being much more embedded into his identity (thus continuity of this aspect of the self is worth much more to him). However, it may be that his rugby league fandom eventually suffers the same fate as his football fandom, depending on the further evolution of Hull FC, his fan object, and/or himself. One of the main considerations, then, of long-term, later-life sports fandom is that we need to acknowledge the idiosyncrasies of what fandom means in the latest stages of life, in the same ways that gerontology has begun to appreciate the unique nature of personal development (Grenier, 2015). We are all on individual experiential

journeys, and the ways in which we relate to the cultural world is very much dependent on both our personal histories and the type of object which we wish to construct. The next chapter focuses on the role of nostalgia in later life sports fandom.

Chapter Six: Later life sports fandom and nostalgia

Alongside their depiction as being cognitively impaired, past their prime or generally incompetent (Cuddy, Norton & Fiske, 2005) one of the negative stereotypes which is often thrown at older people is a tendency for nostalgic reminiscence; that they live in the past. Nostalgia itself can be seen as a negative emotion, one which is used to escape the present moment in favour of re-living a past glory (see Chandler & Ray, 2002 on nostalgic reminiscence). As I mentioned at the beginning of the previous chapter, some of the most numerous nodes produced during the coding phase of analysis were predicated on "change", be it in reference to the individual themselves, or perceived change in the fan object. However, very often the change referred to by the participant was juxtaposed with a memory or nostalgic reference. Very often, change was bemoaned as having taking place, wherein said change has created a new (or part-new) object in place of the longed-for object. Below are some common examples of recollections from my participants. As both Luo *et al.* (2016) and Routledge *et al.* (2012) observe, nostalgia is experienced by practically everybody, thus I have included a wide variety, from almost the entire age range in my sample, in an attempt to show this:

> Albert (76):
> When Brian Clough came to Forest [1975-1993], Forest were right down in the league and [...] he took the team right up the league, right to the Division One. And from there he went straight up to number one in Division One. He got the... the only cup he didn't get was the FA Cup... [He won the European Cup] twice... on the trot.

> Bertie (87):
> All the family [liked football]. It either had to be one or the other [Newcastle United or Sunderland]. You couldn't be... you couldn't shilly-shally, it either had to be one or the other. And Hebburn, where my wife comes from, was the cut-off point. Half the town supported, from Hebburn, supported Sunderland, and half the town supported Newcastle.

> Charlotte (57):
> Oh [my favourite moment supporting Manchester United has] got to be 1999, hasn't it? Yeah, it has to be. The treble. It's got to be. It's got to be the treble.

> Dorothy (79):
> [I grew up watching] rugby league, yeah. No I would be... well believe it or not, I used to go in at half-time because you could go in for free [laughs] [...]. In them days, well you didn't have the money for us to go, so we used to go in at half-time, me and me brother used to go down [to Barrow's stadium] and go in at half-time, and we used to go and find me dad and stand with him.

Eddie (67):
That's where, my mum's family are from the Halifax area and all around there so I spent a lot of time there [The Shay stadium] as a youngster, because that was a summer holiday, going out to my aunty and uncle's farm. So I spent a lot of time over there.

It is quite difficult to gauge from single snippets of quoted interview – on their own these statements look like simple recollection rather than nostalgia – however each example, here, gave rise to a wider nostalgic conversation. Albert (76) was referencing the hugely successful period for Nottingham Forest under Brian Clough against the club's recent history (they have not played in the top tier of English football since 1999); Charlotte (57) was doing similar in recalling her favourite Manchester United seasons. All of Bertie (87), Dorothy (79) and Eddie (67) were recalling childhood behaviours from living in their hometowns and comparing to their current lives. Given its prevalence in conversation, it is perhaps understandable to see why scholars like Hook (2012) describe the sweet recollection of nostalgic reminiscence as fetishistic. However, in the following chapter I argue that this is a short-sighted view. Far from being a negative emotion, this chapter argues that a non-pejorative nostalgia is actually very important for later life functioning. It is a creative psychic process which helps the individual to keep an agility of mind and a sturdy sense of self. Much like in Synnes's (2015: 170) article on nostalgia and self-narrative, this chapter's 'argument will be grounded in an understanding of nostalgia that is seen as a complex identity preservation relating to the continuity of personal identity (Davis, 1979; Wilson, 2005)'. The chapter begins with a thorough definition of nostalgia. It analyses the role nostalgia has played in fan theory up until this point, considering its various applications in fan and audience literature, before looking at how it might be defined as a non-pejorative, regressive emotion. From this bedrock discussion, the chapter brings in data from my 35 later life sports fans and uses the two types of nostalgia outlined by Boym (2001) – 'restorative' and 'reflective' nostalgia – to coin a new type: 'reconstructive nostalgia'. In turn, it offers a psychodynamic explanation as to the processes behind such fan-object recollection.

6.1 Nostalgia

Etymologically, "nostalgia" derives from two sounds: the Greek *nostos*, meaning to return home, and, depending on who you read, either *algia*, meaning longing (Niemeyer, 2014) or *algos*, meaning pain (Routledge, Roylance & Abeyta, 2017). Either way, the general premise of 'nostalgia as originally conceived means the pain caused by the desire to return to one's native land' (Routledge, Roylance & Abeyta, 2017: 344); it 'is literally the suffering due to restlessness yearning for the homeland' (Sidikides *et al.*, 2008: 304). It was 1688 when the term 'nostalgia' was first used, however there is evidence that nostalgia existed long before it

was given a label; Sedikides *et al.* (2008: 304) note that 'references to the emotion it denotes can be found in Hippocrates, Caesar and the Bible.' Coined by Swiss medical student Johannes Hofer (1688/1934) in the seventeenth century, nostalgia was originally seen as a diagnosable ailment which usually affected homesick soldiers who longed to be back in the comfort of the homes from whence they came. Symptoms ranged from the incessant reminiscing of home to eating disorders, fever and irregular heartbeats (Routledge *et al.*, 2013), and by the end of the eighteenth-century nostalgia was 'seen as a massive health problem within the military' (Neimeyer, 2014: 8). According to Bolzinger (2007), overviewing medical studies conducted between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries, nostalgia could be cured by 'returning home or having the promise of doing so; receiving a visit from family or a person with the same accent; and music that evokes images and memories of the homeland' (in Neimeyer, 2014: 9). It wasn't until 'the twentieth century, [when] nostalgia became viewed as less of a medical disease and more of a psychological condition' (Routledge, Roylance & Abeyta, 2017: 345).

The study of nostalgia is wide-ranging (Niemeyer, 2014). It spans multiple disciplines, ranging from the sociological and the psychological – see Keightley & Pickering (2006), and Arndt *et al.* (2006) and Viennet (2009) respectively – to the historical and the educational (i.e. Bolzinger [2007] and Mitchell & Weber [1999], in turn). Whilst this thesis uses the politically flavoured research of Boym (2001), it mainly leans towards sociological, psychological and psychoanalytic approaches to nostalgia (e.g. Kaplan, 1987). The mix of political and object-relations psychoanalysis has been used in relation to nostalgia before (see, for example, Luxon, 2016) and is a productive means of establishing how nostalgia is used in both social and idiosyncratic ways, how the individual balances internal and object-world relationships and how those two aspects inform one another – one of the key premises in what is known as the psychosocial approach (Hills, 2018).

After nostalgia was acknowledged in the twentieth century as being a phenomenon of the mind, its study by social scientists developed to the point where some of its original tenets were discarded. Gradually, the yearning for home which was a central feature of the term as first conceived became divorced from notions of nostalgia. The likes of Hendrickson, Rosen & Aune (2010), Kerns, Brumariu & Abraham (2008) and Thurber & Walton (2007) studied homesickness whilst at the same time ignoring the idea of nostalgia altogether. Come the end of the twentieth century, 'most scholars no longer equated nostalgia with homesickness... psychology viewed nostalgia as a positive state' (Routledge, Roylance & Abeyta, 2017: 345). This generally seems to be reflected in audience studies, particularly in the study of older audiences, where the role of nostalgia is often seen as one of a stabilising defence mechanism employed by the individual against the turbulences of ageing. In the television audiences work

TV Living: Television, Culture and Everyday Life, Gauntlett & Hill (1999) devote one of their chapters to 'retired and elderly audiences'. Nostalgia plays a central role in their theory. They draw on the work of Erik (and Joan) Erikson (1950), and their 'ego integrity', which they describe as being a point in life where one reaches 'an assured sense of meaning and order in one's life and in the world more generally' (Gauntlett & Hill, 1999: 206). They expand and then apply to older television audiences:

> The individual comes to terms with their own life as they have lived it, and confronts the fact that they lived it in one way and not another. This is something of a struggle, in which it would seem that most people generally succeed, to keep despair and disgust at bay: despair that one has been a failure and can now no longer choose to go along alternative paths to integrity, and disgust in younger people who are doing things differently.
>
> We can see television being used by older people in ways which fit with this model. Entering the later years of their lives and getting many of their images of the world from television, older people seek to preserve a picture of the world as they like to 'remember' it – fundamentally polite, civilised and good-humoured. The lighter sitcoms and dramas help to support this view of the world. (As the television writer Dennis Potter once said, 'Nostalgia is a means of forgetting the past'.)
>
> (Gauntlett & Hill, 1999: 206)

Nostalgia, then, is seen in audience studies as an emotion which is used as much to negotiate the present as it is a means of remembering the past. Broadly, it can be split into two forms, what might be termed 'social' nostalgia, which is concerned with collective memory and generational consciousness, and 'individual' nostalgia, which is motivated more by oneself (Boym, 2001). Tsapovsky & Frosch (2015), for example, observe television audiences using nostalgia transnationally thanks to media globalisation, whereas Bagnall (1996:239), as part of his 'emotional mapping', sees nostalgia as a 'self-referential' emotional tool which can be used to 'stimulate the imagination'. The audiences in question in Bagnall's work are museum and heritage site visitors, however Abercrombie & Longhurst (1998) take on the same idea and work it into a media audience context.

6.2 Fans and nostalgia

When the audience members in question are fans the approach to nostalgia often carries with it undertones of that first, "yearning-for-the-past" version of nostalgia. For instance, for Justin Smith (2005: 320), nostalgia is about a yearning 'for the loss' of an object, about chasing something which no longer exists (if it ever did in the first place). He suggests that cult cinema fans utilise 'retrospective fantasy', describing the psychic arena of recalled experience 'the memory's utopia', that, for the individual in question, is 'foreverunobtainable' (2010: 218 – sic). Stewart (1993) is one who suggests that the past which is yearned for by the nostalgic is something of an imagined construction, whilst Jenkins (1998: 4) writes that 'nostalgia takes

us to never-never land' (1998: 4). He goes on to suggest that 'nostalgia represents a form of the utopian imagination, a longing for a world that never really existed. For nostalgia to operate, we must in fact forget aspects of the actual past and substitute a sentimental myth about how things might have been' (2007: 157). Works which emphasise these aspects of nostalgia risk portraying the fan as somebody who is stuck in the past, living in a self-made utopian bubble, oblivious to the contemporary world.

More than a hint of this is evident in the work of Lizardi (2015) and his *Mediated Nostalgia*. However, for Lizardi, the audience member is more a victim of the wider media's attempts to 'cash in' on their fondness for nostalgic reminiscence. He writes: 'The viewer of contemporary media culture has been [...] lured by a recent narrative trend that is constructing us as past-focused subjects and has us fixing on a recent past' (Lizardi, 2015: 6), and goes on to argue that 'contemporary media nostalgia engenders a perpetual melancholic form of narcissistic nostalgia as opposed to a comparative, collective, or adaptive view of history' (2015: 7). As Driessen (2016: 546) notes, he offers 'an elaborate theoretical and richly illustrated account of an individual, narcissistic version of nostalgia', coining the term "playlist past" in reference to the highly idiosyncratic ways in which audiences are able to use contemporary technological affordances – things like DVD collections and streaming services, iPods and other devices and platforms which have personal archival features – to allow them to (re)experience cultural artefacts again and again. This individuation he sees as narcissistic and melancholic:

> [N]arcissistic nostalgia is exploited by contemporary media to develop individualized pasts that are defined by idealized versions of beloved lost media texts pumped up with psychic investment to a level of unreality. These media texts are returned to on a continuous loop of nostalgic behavior/practice, engendering subjectivity that can be explained by the difference between Freud's conceptions of mourning and melancholia.
>
> (Lizardi, 2015: 7)

Mourning, here, referring ultimately to one's ability to "let go" of a past object; melancholy referring to when an individual is unable to let go of an object, thereby retaining it in the psyche (Roth, 1991).

The chief difference between Lizardi's work and my own appears to be that Lizardi pays attention to the construction of the texts themselves, and how they are presented as nostalgic artefacts. I am more concerned with how the individual takes a contemporary object and finds (or manipulates) within it a nostalgic construction. Whilst my main focus is the individual and how they interpret the texts in front of them, I would perhaps do well to consider that the sports text can also be framed as a nostalgic artefact by sports object producers. Much like the wide range of popular culture texts Lizardi uses as examples of nostalgically-framed objects –

vintage video games, television series and movie remakes, for instance – the sports object can be presented as one which revisits the past. Football clubs often recycle older styles of football shirt, resurrecting the styles of jerseys which the fan base has an attachment to. When Arsenal signed a kit deal with Adidas ahead of the 2019/20 football season, the German sports manufacturer recreated a contemporary version of the yellow and black "bruised banana" away shirt that was hugely popular when the company last supplied shirts to Arsenal, between 1986 and 1994. Naturally, when (re-)releasing the shirt – alongside a wider "retro" leisure range, featuring the older version of the club badge – Arsenal enlisted the services of former players Ian Wright, Nigel Winterburn and David Seaman, who all played for the club during the late-1980s and 1990s, as models.

Nostalgia is certainly framed in a negative light by Lizardi. However, more troublingly, the fan or viewer might be read as something of a "cultural dupe" in his work – the type of passive consumer image which the first wave of fan studies sought to address (Jenkins, 1992). To Lizardi, the audience member or fan is unable to prevent themselves from engaging with an object when the carrot of nostalgia is dangled, which I would argue removes agency from the fan.

Geraghty is one of the few fan studies scholars to consistently use nostalgia in their work. In his chapter in Booth's edited collection *A Companion to Media Fandom and Fan Studies*, Geraghty (2018: 226) argues that '[t]he remediation of classic and long lost children's film, television, games and toys highlights the increasing importance of nostalgia within contemporary popular culture', though, as we have seen through the likes of Jenkins's work, this is often seen as a 'diminished creativity and lack of originality' (*ibid*) on behalf of the entertainment industry, or as some sort of shortcoming of the individual. Geraghty's own position, however, is 'that such a return to the media texts of one's youth points to the importance of identity in an increasingly technological and interactive global society [...] fans literally play with nostalgia; transforming and constructing a new media identity within the wider fan community' (2018: 226). We do not, according to Geraghty, seek 'something previously denied or nonexistent from the past as argued by Stewart, Jenkins, and Smith' but, rather, nostalgia 'is about the tactical ways we remember and use memories to actively engage in the present' (2018: 230). Thus, the main difference between what we might call these two schools of thought on nostalgia in fandom, is one of emphasis. Whilst there is little doubt that nostalgia is an emotion which embraces one's (perceived) past, the likes of Stewart and Jenkins leave the individual's experience there, as if nostalgia is a form of escapism from contemporary living. Geraghty (2014, 2018), meanwhile, and others such as Booth (2015: 19), who suggests that 'each fan will have a different sense of nostalgia for a text guiding her

affective work in the present', are more open to the role of nostalgia in its shaping of present-day experience.

6.3 Nostalgia as (non-pejoratively) regressive

This thesis offers a definition of nostalgia which is based on the psychoanalytic conception of its being a fundamentally regressive emotion (see also Chapter Two). Kaplan (1987: 466), for instance, describes nostalgia as an 'acute yearning for a union with the preoedipal mother, a saddening farewell to childhood, a defense against mourning, or a longing for a past forever lost' (Kaplan, 1987: 466). Winnicott (1971) describes nostalgia as 'the precarious hold that a person may have on the inner representation of a lost object' (30). It is entirely plausible that *the* 'lost object' which we all ultimately yearn for is that initial object which acted as the catalyst for self-transformation, the primary object which triggers what Bollas (1987) calls the ontogenetic process of self-realisation, the journey from living in a completely 'me' world to one in which the realisation of the existence of 'not me' objects is made. It is through this process, and in the earliest stages of psychic life, that we might describe ourselves as being as close as we can be to 'pure self' (what I described elsewhere as pure "me-hood"), a period devoid of the messiness of culture, absent of anything other than the notion that we are literally at one with ourselves, the ultimate contented 'home' life. Stathopoulos (2020), for instance, theorises nostalgia as an illusion whereby we seek an alliance with the primary object, and is often driven from deficiencies with the ego ideal – the ego ideal being 'associated with a yearning to become something that at its root is an internalized image of a lost state of perfection' (Epstein, 1986/2007: 26). Thus, one might say that nostalgia, all nostalgia, is, ultimately, a means of seeking to hold on to those objects which generate ontogenetic memory and, therefore, ontological security. We must not forget, however, that nostalgia is an emotion which is useful for contemporary living – it is not merely an 'escape' from reality. It would be worth recalling again, therefore, the work of Jung and his regression-progression theoretical outlook (see Chapter Two), which 'allows us to foresee what will follow from the regression' (1928/1960: 23). Regressive nostalgia may ultimately find its source in memories of the pre-oedipal mother union, the 'pre-separation wholeness' to which Sandvoss (2005: 93) refers, however this does not take away from nostalgia being an emotion which allows us to navigate the waters of the present day.

Whilst the fundamental function of nostalgia is as a regressive emotion which helps the individual to maintain levels of ontological security, there are some idiosyncrasies between different 'types' of nostalgia and how they are manifested in later life sports fandom. Boym (2001), for instance, differentiates between two distinct 'types' of nostalgia: 'reflective' and

'restorative', in which the former is seen as a very personal, individual construction, whereas the latter is seen as very 'social', based on collective memory and generational identity. These are by no means the only 'types' of nostalgia, but it is indicative of the variety of forms in which the emotion manifests itself. This chapter goes on to look at how individuals might use different forms of nostalgia in relating to the same, or similar, fan object(s).

6.4 Reconstructive nostalgia

Of the many different variants of nostalgia which have been put forward by scholars around the world, Boym's (2001) two distinct forms offer a useful means of analysing the relationship between some of my participants and their objects of fandom. She suggests that 'two kinds of nostalgia characterize one's relationship to the past, to the imagined community, to home, to one's own selfperception: restorative and reflective' (129). Of the two, one, the latter, is much closer to what you might describe as the 'traditional' view of nostalgia – a sort of yearning (though not quite) for a past temporality – whilst the other, the former, is precisely the opposite of what one might consider as a 'common sense' summation of nostalgia. It is what you might call a '(re)constructive' means of relating to past and present objects.

> If restorative nostalgia ends up reconstructing emblems and rituals of home and homeland in an attempt to conquer and spatialize time, reflective nostalgia cherishes shattered fragments of memory and temporalizes space. Restorative nostalgia takes itself dead seriously. Reflective nostalgia, on the other hand, can be ironic and humorous. It reveals that longing and critical thinking are not opposed to one another, as affective memories do not absolve one from compassion, judgment or critical reflection.
>
> (Boym, 2001: 150-151)

In this chapter I take the essence of Boym's work to create a new category of nostalgia: what I call *reconstructive nostalgia*. The genesis of this term lies in the feature of restorative nostalgia that Boym outlines in the above definition: the creative, '(re)constructive', aspect of reminiscence. It is, as the rest of the chapter seeks to evidence, when an individual takes characteristics from a past object and 'applies' them to, or 'sees' them in, the contemporary object. Whilst Boym's *restorative nostalgia* shares the reconstructive feature of my *reconstructive nostalgia*, this is where the similarity ends. Boym sees restorative nostalgia as a communal, society-wide phenomenon, and is highly politically charged. Whilst I will consider the 'social' aspects of nostalgia later in the chapter (under the term 'collective nostalgia' [see Halbwachs, 1941/1995]), this chapter largely focuses on the individual's nostalgic relationship to their favourite object(s). In Boym's work, *reflective nostalgia* concerns an individual object-relationship, however it does not feature the same reconstructive processes as restorative nostalgia – it is simply an individual's yearning for a past object. It is a useful form of nostalgia to consider, and this chapter does touch on instances

of reflective nostalgia within my participants, however I have moved far enough away from Boym's work to offer a fresh term, based on the reconstructive aspects of nostalgic reminiscence, though on an individual level and free from macro-level socio-political influence.

For example, a common theme among older fans was the bemoaning of a lack of a local identity within their fan object. It is a well-known aspect of football fandom, for instance, the link between fan object and place (Sandvoss, 2003, 2005), but there appears to have been an even greater subjective feeling of 'closeness' between many mid-twentieth century football fans and their teams. Thus, to Anya (69), a fan whose favourite sports object is the football club Grimsby Town FC, her recollection of the club of her youth was one in which the players were residents of her local area, embedded within the local community:

> A lot of them had a drink - I'm not saying they had a drink problem - but you'd often find, again, when I used to go out in Grimsby when I was a teenager and twenties and I got married, you would see a player out. He'd be with his wife, maybe some of the other lads. You would see them having a pint and going to the chippy on the way home, you would. [...] You know, again, in my day, Grimsby and a lot of clubs, if they owned, say half a dozen club houses, so the players, like council houses in a way, would rent those, so the wives would know each other and the kids would go to schools in Cleethorpes, you know, they were all in Cleethorpes.
>
> (Anya, 69)

Anya (69) herself was a landlady for a number of Grimsby Town players who moved to the area without family and needed a place to stay. It is her recollection of this kind of visibility in the community throughout the twentieth century which adds to Anya's notion of the 'local player' representing her local team, her home area. However, Anya senses a difference to the contemporary footballing landscape.

> It's a different ball game [now]. They all live, and unfortunately they have to, [live in] these enclaves and compounds, don't they? You know, so I feel sorry for them. They're quite divorced from reality but a lot of it I don't think is their fault, it's just the way it has to be, really.
>
> (Anya, 69)

Her perception calls to mind psychoanalyst Paniagua's (2004: 289) observation, that 'the equation memory = reproduction of objective reality is often a fallacy' (in Erroteta, 2005: 921), and as Edwards (2014: 793) recalls, playing on the Greek term for 'return to home', 'no *nostos* can change the fact that there can never be 'a return to the same''. Anya is using the contemporary 'Grimsby Town', and wider footballing landscape', as an 'Other' object, thus reinforcing her nostalgic construction of 'Grimsby Town' as being a team full of 'local' players. This notion of the footballing world being disconnected from 'regular' society is common among the sports fans I spoke to, and might be partly down to the geographical quirks of

Grimsby. Having grown up there myself, I can attest to the notion of the coastal town – River Humber estuary and North Sea on one side, hundreds of square miles of sparsely-populated agricultural land on the other – being somewhat isolated in feel. It is clear that this feeling of a close connectedness to her object of fandom (she 'knows' the players) is an underlying fandom for Anya – the players' living in the area plays a major part in this aspect of her underlying fandom. Therefore, this is a quality apt for reconstructive nostalgia:

> Craig Disley lives in Market Rasen. His kids go to school at Market Rasen and people are quite used to seeing him in there. "Oh I saw Craig Disley in the Co-Op" or wherever, you know. Because, so again, I think it's very much different, not that anybody bothered him - why would you, you know? Somebody might have said "oh you had a good game" - you always get somebody, don't you?
>
> <div align="right">(Anya, 69)</div>

Craig Disley was a long-time player and club captain for Grimsby Town (recently retired) and Market Rasen is a small market town situated about twenty miles from Grimsby. Anya referred to him multiple times in our interview, positively in tone, singling him out against the majority of other players who play for the club but commute significant distances to their workplace. What is interesting is that Anya sees Disley as embodying the qualities she was very keen on in her earlier fandom of Grimsby Town. Disley is, to her, a 'local player', who has moved to the area in order to represent the town and pull on the black and white shirt as a proud Grimbarian. What is also interesting is that in describing Disley as a 'local' resident, when he lives twenty miles outside of the town, is different to her descriptions of 'local' players from the past, who all lived within Grimsby itself – some in her own house. Disley is the closest contemporary example Anya can find to what she sees as a 'local player'. In 'applying' the 'localness' aspect of her underlying fandom to a contemporary object – thus enabling her to feel that 'closeness' to part of her object of fandom so keenly experienced earlier in life – Anya stretches the credibility of Disley's living situation to her affective advantage. The need, the importance, of being able to nostalgically restore aspects of the fan object in order to facilitate a continued affective bond with the fan object (or at least parts of it) is exemplified in this next example from our conversations:

> Anya (69):
> Well I suppose as well, when you know the players as people, whether you like them or not, you knew their families, you knew their wives, it was very, very different in those days. The players as well I suppose it comes down to everybody lived in the town. Now I don't think there are many that live there. I believe they all travel in by car from… I mean even Disley, I know he lived at Market Rasen, and a lot of them, I assume they're from away because, I think again that's the decline of the club like ours, is that wives and families don't want to come here, to what they perceive as the end of the road. And so players are very much… I mean I know I missed two home games this season but on Saturday, Joe, I looked and I thought: "I have no idea who these people are". I know I can see better now [having had cataract surgery], so I

know what numbers they are and their names on the back, but I don't get the *[Grimsby] Telegraph* these days, you see, and you think it doesn't feel…

JS:
Do you not feel as connected?

Anya (69):
No. You still want your team to win, of course you do. And you just think: "who are you, love?" and it's very much this last two or three seasons. And again, I think again, Joe, modern football, it's the loan system. Yeah, we need it, of course you do, but a lot of these players don't belong to us. You've got them for this and that and the other and I said to [friend] on Saturday, it's like a revolving door sometimes; they're in, they're out, they're in, they're out.

When it comes to 'localness' in her fan object, Anya, through the use of reconstructive nostalgia, can latch on to enough fragments of her fan object to be able to achieve the same affection for those parts of the fan object which she felt so strongly about earlier in her life course. There are many examples, though, of players flying in direct contradiction to this particular aspect of Anya's underlying fandom, for which there are consequences (these are considered a little further down), however, whilst she can legitimately see the possibility for the application of her underlying fannish values and characteristics, the fan object will offer affective positivity.

Carl (66) offers another clear example. A Manchester United and Lincoln City football fan, an underlying fandom of his is a liking for the 'hard' player, the no-nonsense, tough sportsman which he sees as defining sport in his own, imagined past. Anything which is not, as he sees it, 'genuine' irks him yet, like Anya above, he 'applies' in a reconstructive way values and characteristics to contemporary objects in order to retain an interest:

> But feigning injury and diving, I hate it. I hate it. That's what puts me off football at the moment. Especially in the Premier League, I think League Two is not so bad. They're just not such good actors in League Two [laughs]. But they tend to get stuck in more, you know.
>
> (Carl, 66)

Carl projects his underlying fandom on to a fan object which he sees as being suitable for such characteristics. According to the sports statistics website database FBRef, the average number of tackles made by English Football League Two clubs across the 2019-2020 season was 350.38 tackles per team, whilst the average number of tackles per side across the same season in the Premier League was 410.25. According to the data, Carl's observation that League Two sides 'tend to get stuck in more' is imagined fantasy – *he* applies the characteristic because *he* wants to 'see' it, and as an object, League Two football, with its lack of coverage (compared to the Premier League), is a much more 'malleable' object, enabling him to apply these values more easily: "You know, Lincoln are a bit long-ball-ish, with a big fat guy up front that knocks

everybody over, Rhead he's called, but it's good, you now, they want to score goals rather than keep possession, so I enjoy it."

In other areas of football, he likes that which tallies with his underlying fandom, such as particular pundits: "Yeah, I like Graeme Souness, I like the way he speaks, *a no-nonsense kind of guy*, I think he's good to listen to, played the game" (emphasis mine). What is particularly interesting here is that Souness is strongly associated with Liverpool, a traditional 'rival' of Manchester United. His liking of the character of Souness transcends what is often seen as the 'normative roles' of football fandom (i.e., in this case that Manchester United and Liverpool fans ought to dislike one another's objects – see the previous chapter for a more thorough discussion on this). Carl dislikes that which cannot be twisted into fitting his nostalgic restorations: "I'm not into this managers running up and down the line screaming their heads off - argh - it might be in them somewhere but a lot of it is done for the crowd and the TV, I think they're play-actors." Carl had a vague interest in rugby union, which stretches to watching some of the Six Nations matches each year. In his personal fannish world, because rugby union does not really feature all that much, we might consider it a more 'malleable' object, for him, just like League Two football. It is much easier for him to reconstructively apply his masculine underlying fandom and thus like what he sees:

> Yeah, I like [rugby union], I like them getting stuck in and playing, just no matter what, because they can't stop because the other team would score a try if they stopped, and they have to keep going, whereas football, it's just stop-start, stop-start.
>
> (Carl, 66)

This is particularly interesting because rugby is very much a stop-start sport, with its scrums, kicking, and even its rucking and mauling in what is considered 'open play' is quite 'stop-start', yet Carl reads what he wants to read: big, tough men in a constant battle – that which he cannot see in contemporary football. James (62) shares a liking for that 'hard man' sort of characteristic in his Liverpool FC football fan object, recalling that as a younger fan his favourite player was Tommy Smith: "He was a really solid, hard... I guess he started off playing in midfield I think - number ten as they say - and then he moved back into the defence as he got older." He was "not particularly" large, rather "short and stocky, but hard as nails". In his contemporary Liverpool fandom, one of James's worries was that "they often say that you've done a successful club on defence, on the defence, and I don't think the defence is strong enough." He was concerned about one of his key underlying characteristics.

6.5 Object manipulation

Reconstructive nostalgia calls to mind Sandvoss & Kearns's (2014) 'interpretive fairs'. It is as if the individual constructs their fan object from a 'cultural soup', out of which they pick and choose the bits and pieces – choosing from various texts and paratexts, across various times (textual and temporal axes) – in order to piece together their own version of that fan object. The component parts of text which are chosen in order to create the overall object are all identified by the individual as being imbued with regressive potential – each part must carry within it the possibility for ontogenetic memory and, thus, ontological security. This is perhaps best summed up in the different ways in which individuals relate to the same fan object. Two football fans from my group of participants offer an interesting case study when it comes to the way each utilises nostalgia. Their (altered) names are Matt (69) and Ross (61); both fans are Manchester City football fans who were born, grew up in and currently live in the Lincolnshire coastal town of Grimsby, just over one hundred miles away from Manchester. Both also count their local team, Grimsby Town, as a fan object. What is most interesting about the football fandoms of these two fans is that they relate to their Manchester City fan object in quite different ways, and thus also utilise different forms of nostalgia when relating to, and recalling, previous iterations of their fan object. Ross's football fandom is all about grandiosity and impressiveness. He is quite a dramatic individual. He spoke consistently about finding "that buzz", which spanned all sorts of cultural phenomena ("So I got the buzz out of [watching Robbie Williams at Knebworth and Coldplay at the Etihad Stadium] and York races gives me the same buzz"). The pattern is there from his earliest fannish experiences. As a young teen there was a school trip "to watch Man City play Sheff United at Main Road, and I went on it. Forty thousand, blew me away. I had no alternative, that was it." His fandom is all about success, achievement, large-scale, big occasions. He likes to be "blown away" and is attracted to high-quality and significant accomplishment:

> It's like going to Maine Road for the first time - it blew you away, you see, after being to Blundell Park [Grimsby's, much smaller, stadium]. That's why I became a City fan, no other reason, because City were quite a good team in those days, but it wasn't for that thing, it was just going that day and seeing that game.
>
> (Ross, 61)

The way that Ross describes switching his attention between fan objects is particularly telling for what his ideal underlying fandom is, or, as Hills (2018) would put it, and as was discussed in the previous chapter, how he has constructed his own, internalised, "good" footballing fan object:

> I... went to watch Grimsby play City at Maine Road in a League Cup game, a night game. Obviously, I went with all the Grimsby lads. I went as a City fan and I came back as a Town fan again. They beat Town three-nil, and then for '78 I stopped going to Maine Road and then I started watching Town, which was really lucky because I

came into the era of John Newman and that, which is the best era of Grimsby football we've had.

<div align="right">(Ross, 61)</div>

He clearly knows the 'rules' about being a football supporter. It is quite clear that an underlying aspect of Ross's football fandom is success, achievement and grandiosity, being the 'king of the castle'. However, to admit that outright would diminish his fan capital, so in between his impassioned descriptions of what motivates his fandom, he slides in the odd disclaimer – "City were quite a good team in those days, *but it wasn't for that thing*" and "then I started watching Town, *which was really lucky* because I came into […] the best era of Grimsby football we've had" – so as not to come across as, essentially, a 'glory hunter'. If Ross's internalized "good" (Hills, 2018) football fan object is a successful, grandiose, "blow-me-away" object, Matt (69) is the understated opposite. He says that "my nature's a bit to go for the underdog". This can be confirmed by analysing his other cultural tastes, such as when he plays videogames. Football Manager is his computer game of choice – a football simulation game which gives the user the ability to 'manage' a football club of their choosing through a number of 'real world' scenarios, such as hiring players and staff, managing tactics and team formations, and seeing your team play to your instructions through a simulated season. Matt could pretend to manage any of the very best teams in the world, though never does: "I started off as Everton this year, because I was Everton last year. I usually go with teams who are in the Europa League". He only ever chooses teams who are 'underneath' other, more successful sides. When we spoke, he had settled on managing A.F.C. Bournemouth, then one of the smallest sides to have ever featured in the Premier League, and certainly an 'underdog' team. This translates to his fandom of the current, extremely successful, real-life Manchester City, who are now anything but an underdog: "I'm not sure if I enjoy it as much now as when I used to", he says. Matt did not present in a reconstructively nostalgic way during our interview; his was more of a yearning for a past temporality. For instance, one of Matt's longings is for a time before smartphones. Asked what makes a good atmosphere at a football match, he says: "Not people bloody filming the bloody match as it's going on. Cameras everywhere", which calls to mind the kind of atmosphere Kate Bush called for in her comeback gigs in 2014, which Bennett (2017) notes created nostalgic, *Heimatic* spaces for people to enjoy their fandom (see Chapter Seven). Whereas the reconstructive nostalgic takes aspects of a previous object and moulds it into the contemporary object, Matt's yearning nostalgia has resulted in something of an ambivalence towards the current Manchester City.

> I just expect to win. If we win, I think 'oh, so what?', and that's where I've lost a bit of enjoyment. I mean I still enjoy it – the football's absolutely brilliant [under Guardiola] – but the actual joy of winning has gone a bit because you're expected to win. […] I mean I'm old school where everybody was on a level playing field, and that's

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how I'd prefer it to be. I mean it's never going to be like that now, but that's how I prefer it.

(Matt, 69)

The reconstructive nostalgic, as with Anya (69) above, needs to 'see' potential in at least some aspects of the contemporary object to enable them to attribute past characteristics from their internalized "good" object to the contemporary object (thus making it at least part "good"). As Madoglou *et al.* (2017: 63) state: 'Through anchoring processes, the representational object is transformed into something useful for the individuals, as they incorporate it in their pre-existing and already familiar set of beliefs, meanings, categories, rules and interests...'. For Matt, whose fandom, he suggests, was born out of pity ("Well, when the Munich air disaster, you know, I was nine the Munich air disaster, and I just felt sorry for Manchester City, because everybody was going on about Manchester United"), the scope for finding 'underdog' characteristics within a contemporary object which has attained something akin to 'superclub' status appears difficult. Thus, he feels ambivalence towards the contemporary Manchester City and prefers instead to engage with a videogame simulation where he can find aspects of his internalized "good" fan object in whichever team takes his fancy. Interestingly, with Football Manager, Matt "started playing about... only about seven or eight years ago" – around the same time Manchester City started to realise their ambitions of becoming one of the best footballing teams in the country, shedding their 'underdog' tag.

Thus, much like the kind of fan object construction Sandvoss & Kearns (2014) describe in outlining 'interpretive fairs', we see, here, a similar sort of thing. However, whereas Sandvoss & Kearns (2014) write about taking aspects of text and paratexts from the 'now' in constructing the fan object, it appears that fans also take aspects of text from different temporalities in their fan object construction. I would also argue that Matt's 'true' internalized "good" footballing fan object is not now, and perhaps never was, matched against a perfect textual representation of his idealized internal "good" object, but, for a number of factors, 'Manchester City' was the best-placed object which came closest to living up to that internalized "good" object. In a contemporary 'Manchester City' which really does not represent his internalized "good" object at all, he reinforces, through nostalgia, 'old Manchester City', and the wider footballing landscape, as his idealized internal "good" object, and in the present interacts with a malleable, customizable computer game, which can be 'bent into shape' to represent the object he desires. In some ways, in fan studies, our referring to a particular text as a 'fan object' is a little lazy, as the text – as much as we can refer to a text as being a singular, roughly bounded object – does not marry up with the internalized, "good" object perfectly. McCulloch's (2019) 'fantipathy' is a good example of this, wherein we develop something of an anti-fandom towards a particular aspect of what we would traditionally call our 'fan object'. As discussed in the previous chapter,

the boundary of our internalized, "good" fan object falls across the traditionally labelled, textual 'fan object'. Nostalgia, and its variations, is a little like a 'temporal fantipathy', wherein we temporally draw around past iterations of object to produce a contemporary, internal image of the internalized, regressive, ontogenetic memory-inducing – and ultimately ontologically secure – object.

6.6 Ego integrity and narcissism

Ross's nostalgia, in comparison to Matt, is significantly reflective (Boym, 2001). Indeed, Ross is, in a sense, lucky, because the current, very successful, rich Manchester City represents, to him, a little more closely his internalized, "good" object (without going so far as to claim a 'correct reading' of the current Manchester City). Both Ross and Matt are using nostalgia – though in subtly different ways, via their different forms – to reduce the gap between ego ideal and ideal ego. This split between a contemporarily experienced self and an idealized, 'target' version of self (note that 'self' and 'ego' are being used interchangeably here – see Behrendt [2016: 37-39] for an overview) was first outlined by Freud in his famous *On Narcissism* (1914). According to him, once we leave the oedipal phase, an ideal – which represents the ideal that was our *pre*-oedipal state – is created: 'This ideal ego is now the target of the self-love which was enjoyed in childhood by the actual ego' (Freud, 1914/1995: 558). Freud goes on to suggest that:

> As always where the libido is concerned, man has here again shown himself incapable of giving up a satisfaction he had once enjoyed. He is not willing to forgo the narcissistic perfection of his childhood; and when, as he grows up, he is disturbed by the admonitions of others and by the awakening of his own critical judgement, so that he can no longer retain that perfection, he seeks to recover it in the new form of an ego ideal. What he projects before him as his ideal is the substitute for the lost narcissism of his childhood in which he was his own ideal.
>
> (Freud, 1914/1995: 558)

Whether one prescribes fully to the Freudian suggestion that the individual's initial, pre-oedipal ideal was motivated by libidinal drives or not is something of a moot point; what matters is that pre-oedipal life is a narcissistic realm of pure, ontologically secure contentment – it is this feeling which is the basis of the ego ideal. It is my belief that we unknowingly practice a kind of meditation – or mindfulness – through our relation to fan objects. Our fandoms are part of a process of self-realisation through, firstly, ego-integrity – a solidifying of identity; an acknowledgement that the identity that we have built is who we are – and then, eventually, a releasing of that identity in favour of a post-narcissistic state of gerotranscendence (Tornstam, 1989). In a piece entitled "Meditative Transformations of Narcissism", Epstein (1986/2007: 26) notes that 'Attempts by psychoanalytic theorists to analyze mystical phenomena have traditionally resulted in interpretations that view meditation as a narcissistic attempt to regain

an ideal infantile state'. There appears, in these techniques, to be a conscious 'ordering of the psyche', in a bid to experience ego ideal. Epstein continues:

> From early investigation of mystical ecstasies (Jones, 1913, 1923; Schroeder, 1922; Alexander, 1931; Federn, 1951) to Freud's well-known evocation of the "oceanic feeling" as a "restoration of limitless narcissism" (1930) to more contemporary attempts at describing mystical union (Rose, 1972; Ross, 1975; Lewin, 1950; Bonaparte, 1950; Masson, 1974; 1980), the essential point has always been a variation on the idea that mysticism in general and mediation in particular represents an attempt to merge ego and ego ideal, an idea first proposed by Jones (1923) and fully amplified upon by Grunberger (1971) and Chasseguet-Smirgle (1975). "Mysticism… corresponds… to the need for the uniting of ego and ideal via the shortest possible route. It represents fusion with the primary object, and even when the latter is represented consciously by God, it is nonetheless, at depth, an equivalent of the mother-prior-to-the-loss-of-fusion" (Chasseguet-Smirgle, 1975, p. 217).
>
> <div align="right">(Epstein, 1986/2007: 26-27)</div>

Note, in particular, the quote from Chasseguet-Smirgle (1975), where it is suggested that the relating to a cultural artefact can act as the catalyst for regressive experience. A key distinction between classic Buddhist meditation and fandom is that the objects concentrated on in Buddhist meditation techniques are, deliberately, rather modest: the rise and fall of one's breath or a simple visualisation. The fan object, being embedded within culture, comes with all sorts of 'moving parts', not all of which we like (i.e. McCulloch's fantipathy). Not only this, but the longer we engage with an object, the more likely it will change, textually. For the later life fan, this represents a really rather difficult task; in order to engage with an object which offers them a sense of regressive ontological security, an object which offers a reflection of ego ideal, we must 'sculpt' and 'mould' that object into the correct shape. One of the tools we use to do this is the emotion of nostalgia. As noted above, particularly with Ross and reconstructive nostalgia, we pick and choose fragments from different iterations of our object across different temporalities in order to construct our own Frankenstein creation. One of the central tenets of Buddhist meditation technique are concentration practices which, 'clearly promote unity of ego and ego ideal by encouraging fixity of mind in a single object. Such fixity allows the ego to dissolve into the object, to merge with it in a suffusion of bliss and contentment extremely evocative of the infantile narcissistic state' (Epstein, 1986/2007: 32). When we are younger, whilst there is an element of bricolage to our construction of a fan object – we draw a neutrosemic boundary, defining our object, for instance (Sandvoss, 2005) – in older age, after many decades of textual change and development of self, the construction of that object requires much more 'work' on the part of the individual. However, because we have been practising 'building' our fan object over and over again across such a long timeframe, we become *very* skilled in focussing on that one, essentially by now *imagined*, object. We can focus on that object in our mind with a clarity reminiscent of the concentration practices of Buddhist meditation. We are able to unite 'ego and ego ideal by encouraging fixity of mind in

a single object' (Epstein, 1986/2007: 32) as self and object dissolve into a realm of ontological contentment.

It is very difficult to offer convincing primary evidence from single in-depth interviews, but to gauge how one moves from being a *reconstructive* nostalgic to a *reflective* one may be due to a process of disillusionment in the object, whereby it becomes harder and harder to justify 'seeing' characteristics from older iterations of the object in its contemporary version, thus resulting in the eventual historicising of that object as being one which *used to* carry such ideal characteristics. I would tentatively argue that Matt (69) falls into this category, for he still seems to seek to find the odd 'underdog' characteristic, even in the contemporary 'Manchester City', which he otherwise has difficulty engaging with; be it via the implementation of the Financial Fair Play rules in European football:

> And to me… the top clubs, when they started doing the Financial Fair Play, that's why they were doing it, to stop City… … because the more teams that get lots of money, the more chance there is of them getting kicked out the Champions League. Four teams, and there was the big four before City came along and they didn't like it. They just wanted to make it a closed shop, and I think they still do. I think it's totally wrong but that's life.
>
> <div align="right">(Matt, 69)</div>

Or be it via the treatment of individual players – "I mean [Raheem] Sterling, I don't think he dives half as much as he's accused of […]" – or the officiating against his team, through the Video Assistant Referee (VAR) – "[…] and the big one to me is bad fouls that the refs have missed, because I mean the ones that stick out, there was a couple against City earlier on in the season, there was one last week…". When he says, "If you're a young lad just starting to support City now [after the Abu Dhabi Group takeover] you're laughing your head off. But it's not going to be like that all the time", it is said in such a way to suggest that he is expecting (or hoping) that the object will, at some point in the future, go back to 'normal' (by his perception). To reach a high level of gerotranscendence is to reach a state of lessened narcissism (Tornstam, 1989), thus it seems that the eventual discarding of reconstructive nostalgia may help in this developmental process. At 69 years of age, Matt is still relatively young and thus has a long road to gerotranscendence ahead. Ross, eight years Matt's junior, is very reconstructively active, so would appear to have a greater distance to travel in this regard, however even he suggested that he does not feel "the buzz" quite as often as he used to. Perhaps this is one of the first steps on the way to disillusionment, a discarding of reconstructive nostalgia in favour of reflective, as part of a wider trend towards a post-narcissistic state of gerotranscendence.

6.7 Collective nostalgia: Belonging to a social group

If we consider that 'nostalgia is inherent in the human condition' (Pangiagua, 2004: 298 in Erroteta, 2005: 922), then the memories on which those nostalgic constructions are based, according to the sociologist Halbwachs (1941/1995), are socially constructed. He was 'without doubt the first sociologist who stressed that our conceptions of the past are affected by the mental images we employ to solve present problems, so that collective memory is essentially a reconstruction of the past in the light of the present' (Coser, 1995: 34). Halbwachs was not the only scholar who put forward the idea of memory as a social construction, as Warburg, an art historian, also developed, independently, a similar theory at the same time (see Assmann, 1995). The pair were at the forefront of a general trend, around the turn of the twentieth century, which saw memory theory shift from biologically-based concepts – so-called "racial memory", and different to the likes of Jung's archetypes, or "collective unconscious" (*ibid*). '[B]oth Warburg and Halbwachs shift the discourse concerning collective knowledge out of a biological framework into a cultural one' (Assmann, 1995: 125). Halbwachs (1941/1995) argues that:

> [I]t is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories. […] We note, moreover, that in order to answer [questions people ask of us], we place ourselves in their perspective and we consider ourselves as being part of the same group or groups as they. […] Most of the time, when I remember, it is others who spur me on; their memory comes to the aid of mine and mine relies on theirs. [Memories] are recalled to me externally, and the groups of which I am a part at any time give me the means to reconstruct them, upon condition, to be sure, that I turn toward them and adopt, at least for the moment, their way of thinking. […] It is in this sense that there exists a collective memory and social frameworks for memory […].
>
> (Halbwachs, 1941/1995: 38)

I use quite an individualistic approach above in applying psychoanalytic theory to *reconstructive* nostalgia. However, there are multiple types of nostalgia and more socially orientated forms, such as restorative nostalgia, are often built upon cultural memory (Boym, 2001). Nostalgia, more broadly, has been shown to enhance subjective feelings of belonging (Wildschut *et al.*, 2006; Routledge e*t al.*, 2008 Madoglou *et al.*, 2017), which is one of the main benefits of 'social' nostalgias to the later life sports fan. Indeed, this might be seen as an incredibly important form of nostalgia for the later life individual to engage with, as it retains an essence of sociability, of belonging to a group, which, with the ever-decreasing social circles brought about by the death of friends and family, and the deteriorating levels of mobility rendering many past a certain age all but housebound, means that isolation and loneliness are never too far away. People who the individual feels (or felt) close to often feature in nostalgic reminiscence (Holak & Havlena, 1992; Wildschut *et al.*, 2006). Madoglou *et al.* (2017: 63) state: 'The content of social memory, such as social representations, is linked with the individual's significant group affiliation (Jodelet, 1984; Halbwachs, 1925/1994, Laurens &

Roussiau, 2002; Lorenzi-Cioldi & Clémence, 2001; Viaud, 2003)', and Hertz (1990: 195) suggests that, when nostalgically reminiscing, 'the mind is 'peopled'.' In later life sports fandom, there is the potentially vital undertone of where one was *once* a fan, and a member of the group collective, one is *always* a fan and member of the group collective. The later life sports fan can call on the sense of belonging to a group, even if they have not been to the stadium to watch a match in many years.

Wildschut *et al.* (2006: 982) found that 'social sharing of nostalgic episodes may help to maintain their accessibility', something also suggested by Walker, Skowronski, & Thompson (2003). Thus, among the later life sports fans which I spoke to, there were a number of stories which were recounted by separate individuals, clearly having been collectively canonised through social reminiscence. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given that the average age of my participants was 72.5 years, one of these 'social memories' among the Grimsby Town fans I interviewed was Grimsby's match versus Exeter City in 1972, when they beat their opponents 3-0 to win the Fourth Division title. Common themes mostly centred on the crowd, how loud it was; the atmosphere created – at 22,489 fans, the attendance was the largest the club had seen in 16 years (Ford, 2018). There was another story among Grimsby fans which was recited by several people separately (and without prompt), which centred on former manager Lawrie McMenemy (who was, incidentally, the manager at the time of the Exeter match):

Vincent (65):
I remember Laurie McMenemy taking the team down to the fish docks six o'clock one morning, saying: 'look, these are the people that support you, go down and see what they have to do every day' [laughs].
…

George (84):
McMenemy was… well his best story's about Grimsby Town, taking the players down to the docks and doing this, that and the other with the players.
…

Tim (65):
And that season McMenemy came, what happened to Town was just… because nobody expected it. It just exploded.

Vic (66):
He [McMenemy] took all the Town players down to the docks, at five in the morning.

Tim (65):
Early in the morning.

Vic (66):
And said, 'this is what you're playing football for'.
…

Ross (61):

> You know, this was what McMenemy did, and the other lads would have told you, one of the first things he did when he came here, he got the players out on the fish docks at six in the morning, and he said to them, 'this is what people do for a living', you turning up at training at ten o'clock, and that's how McMenemy got it going.

Ross's quote at the end sums up the impact of collective memory really rather well – "and the other lads would have told you". He is sure of the fact that his fellow Grimsby fans know the story; it is something which has bound him to the group collective. He was correct, too. The "other lads" about which he refers were members of a walking football club I visited on the search for participants, and in speaking to members of the club (casually, not in an interview setting), the story did indeed crop up. As Wildschut *et al.* (2006: 982) note: 'Chief among the perceived benefits of nostalgia were its capacity to generate positive affect, bolster social bonds, and increase positive self-regard'. The impact of shared stories is vital in the continued feeling of belonging into later life.

6.8 Summary

This chapter has offered a defence of the emotion of nostalgia. So often it has been theorised as a negative phenomenon (Chandler & Ray, 2002, Turner *et al.*, 2018), fit only for the stereotyped older generation's frail, nondescript ways of life (Cuddy, Norton & Fiske, 2005), yet I argue that nostalgia is an important part of self-identification in later life (Synnes, 2015). Of the different forms of nostalgia, this chapter pays particular focus to 'restorative' nostalgia and 'reflective' nostalgia (Boym, 2001), using the essence of Boym's work to coin a new phrase: 'reconstructive nostalgia'. This is when the individual takes from an earlier internal construction of their favourite fan object an attribute or characteristic which they valued deeply as a fan and seeks to 'apply' it to the contemporary fan object. I used the examples, above, of Anya (69) who recalled the 'localness' of the Grimsby Town football team of her youth, bemoaned the lack of this in most contemporary football fan objects, and then 'applied' the value to her favourite contemporary player, Craig Disley (even though Disley does not live in Grimsby). I offered the example of Ross (61) and his 'grandiosity', and Carl (66) with his favourite 'hard man' attributes. These are examples of fans psychically 'manipulating' their fan objects so that they 'fit' their own, internalized "good" objects (Hills, 2018). Ultimately, I argue that nostalgia is a fundamentally (though non-pejoratively) regressive emotion. In helping to manipulate the desired object into a "good" one, nostalgia helps the individual to create a regressive experience, allowing them to engage with an object imbued with the comforts and securities associated with pre-separation wholeness.

Chapter Seven: Later life sports fandom, home, identity and belonging

This chapter explores the interplay between home, technology, connectivity and belonging. There is a kind of double-focus to the chapter, which sees threads from the three previous analytical chapters come together to weave an appraisal of later life living for the sports fan. One angle is the change in relationship between the sports fan and the physical space(s) in which they interact with their fannish world; the other, interrelated angle is the role of place (or "home", or *Heimat*) in the construction of later life identity. The first half of the chapter focuses on home as the dwelling in which my participants live and begins by evaluating the shift in my participants' lives from full-time employees to part-time workers or fully retired citizens. Here it is proposed that the fan object becomes a more central pillar of everyday life, even if "work" continues for the recently retired through domestic labour. The chapter goes on to evaluate spousal influence in later life sports fandom, with a particular focus on widowhood – the observation here being that one's late partner may leave imprints of fannish behaviour from the relationship, expressed in the behaviour of their widow(er). Fan practices are considered from a later life perspective, particularly the ways in which modern technology allows the contemporary older fan to stay connected with the world and generate a sense of belonging through an expression of their fandom. From the next sub-section onwards, the chapter uses a broader definition of 'home' by introducing the concept of *Heimat*. In these final parts of the chapter it is argued that the later life sports fan nurtures their home as a *Heimatic* space, within which they are able to express their fannish identity.

7.1 Transitioning from full-time employment

A key feature of retired life is that the life course increasingly revolves around one's home, that is, the dwelling in which they live. Heather (80), demonstrates this evolution from living life 'out there' to experiencing more life at home:

> So it was a gradual process for me of going from working full-time, working part-time, volunteering for things, and then I've gradually dropped the volunteering [laughs]. I mean still obviously, there are still some things I volunteer for but not as much. And I've become much more relaxed and enjoyed being here [her home] and doing things, and again this is where this has been a great help, that when I'm home, I'm never bored. I've got the crosswords and Sudokus and things and obviously all the house to sort out [...] and again I can watch, if there's anything interesting on television I can watch that, so it's been a very gradual process.
>
> (Heather, 80)

Heather's gradual transition from working full-time, through part-time employment, to 'working' voluntarily in some capacity before then becoming a full-time retiree was an overwhelmingly popular means of progressing through the life course among my participants, who, depending on whether they were a 'young-old' or an 'old-old' participant, varied on where in this general process they were at. Indeed, the notion that one goes from being fully employed by a company straight to becoming fully retired overnight is a fallacy; as Grenier (2015: 404) observes, 'social and cultural understandings now tend to view transitions' between, for example, full-time employment and full retirement, 'as more fluid and permeable events that unfold across time'. This was the drive for Moen's (2003) creation of a new "third age" in the life course, which straddles the 'traditional', previously rigid, retirement boundary. As Phillipson (2006: 140) notes, this is 'a period stretching roughly from age 50 to age 75', a period which generally begins with the individual being employed and ends with them being retired, though whose journey from one point to the other is idiosyncratic. Very few people in my study retired outright. John (71), for example, was a schoolteacher who went from full-time employment to part-time teaching, to full retirement. Toby (54) completed his thirty years' service as a full-time police officer, but instead of fully retiring has found part-time work in another department of the police force. Leonard (70) did the same, though now works two days per week. Ross (61), a former engineer, pushes trollies at Tesco, Vincent (65) drove the school bus run, Roy (75) keeps the books of his family haulage business whilst George (84) and Tamsin (71) both volunteer for amateur sports bodies. Indeed, the lines between full-time employment and full-time retirement are so blurred that there often seems to be genuine confusion as to how one ought to define oneself, as this interaction with Charlotte (57) suggests:

> Well, I'm not retirement age but I did finish [full-time] work. So I'm not retirement age. I'm on, I'm a director of [husband's] company – I don't bloody do anything, that's in name only – so I don't know, really, if I'm fully retired or not. Two days a week I have the grandkids so their parents can work. But I have a wage out the company, so I suppose I'm not "retired, retired", am I?
>
> (Charlotte, 57)

Clearly, we do not see the abrupt ending of one life phase, giving way for the instant birth of a new one. Society has moved on from the formerly rigid notions of what a 'normal' life course ought to look like, something which was even reproduced in the gerontological literature of the twentieth century in the likes of Neugarten (1979), who suggested that one who retires much earlier or later than the age of 65 was 'off-time'. Thus, fields which study the ageing process, such as social and cultural gerontology, have begun to consider any kind of 'normative', chronological ageing along linear lines to be unsatisfactory, to the point that even the second, third and fourth 'life ages', which were initially designed by social gerontologists

to address the rigidity of the likes of Neugarten (1979), are now seen as not going far enough in acknowledging the idiosyncrasies of later life development (Grenier, 2015).

What is clear is that participants felt that as their working lives receded, more time was devoted to their sports fan objects. I encountered conversations like this:

> JS: Since retiring, or semi-retiring, have you found that you've been able to watch things like this snooker [which is on the television in the room as we speak] a bit more? During the day I mean?
>
> Toby (54): Yeah, subject to work. But I don't, I'm not at work as much as I used to be in terms of time, so I have more time […] So yeah… I'll watch snooker live if it's the snooker now.
>
> …
>
> Joan (56):
> I probably watch a bit more [since semi-retirement] … if I've got more time… but having said that, I probably watch more on the television. […] Like it's nice if we go, like we go up to Scarborough to the cricket festival, if we can get the caravan up there or if we can do it in the day. That's quite nice to do.

Nev (68) is one who had originally planned to fully retire at 65, however his manager gave him the opportunity to continue working for his window sales company in a part-time capacity; a scaled-back role of three self-appointed days per week: "Really now, I'm in the situation where I can quite comfortably fully retire, but it suite me at the moment… I use my time quite well down there, so [I'm] semi-retired". One reason it suite Nev so well is because he has been able to enhance his sporting consumption:

> I've had more time [since semi-retirement], I've been able to watch more, especially now the cricket season's on. Winter's a bit boring in a way, isn't it [laughs], you know because the ice hockey happens once, maybe twice a week, whereas this, you know, I like summer sport because it's the summer as well [laughs] I'm not a cold weather person. […] But as far as the retirement thing's concerned, I just think it's given me the opportunity to do something that I like doing anyway, more of it.
>
> (Nev, 68)

As is clear from his statement, Nev's sporting interests are varied and many, however he is particularly keen for part-time work as it allows him to watch Nottinghamshire play county cricket. He is a member at Notts CCC and likes to watch the domestic County Championship – a competition whose matches last four days and span from mid-morning until early evening, in other words a competition which simply cannot be watched beyond fragmentarily when working full-time. Indeed, as Nev's statement shows, and as Joan outlines above that she will now base small holidays around her sporting consumption, it is important to acknowledge that sports fandom in later life plays a central role in structuring my participants' time. James (62) has been retired for three years, and has managed to travel abroad to watch England play

cricket on multiple tours already: twice to Barbados, once to Antigua and another time to Cape Town, South Africa. His yearly cycle now has embedded within it regular trips – February is he and his wife's favourite time to go – and this is dictated by the English cricketing schedule. The sports fan object plays a more central role in people's lives as other aspects, like employment, fade away.

7.2 'Reorientating' the 'Master Narrative'

Of course, even if the individual does not know the particularities of their transition from full-time employment to retirement before the event, it is a major life transition which one can anticipate. Indeed, according to several life course narrative scholars (see Bergen, 2010; Smith & Dougherty, 2012; Tannen, 2008) individuals follow a culture-specific 'master narrative' to retirement 'embedded within the framework of our society in such a way as to provide order and reinforce a master truth (Boje, 2001; Bruner, 2001)' (Smith & Dougherty , 2012: 455). The larger master narrative shapes more personal narrative structures – Tannen (2008) refers to 'big-N' and 'small-n' narratives, which both fit into the overlaying master narrative – thus giving the individual an idea of what to expect come the end of their working lives.

Retirement itself is, as Achenbaum (2006) explains, a relatively new concept. As late as the nineteenth century, retirement as we know it now simply did not exist – an employee worked until they were physically unfit to do so. Even now, Achenbaum (2006) suggests that we do not really know what retirement ought to constitute; in the last one hundred years, retirees have gone from being older individuals afforded a few 'golden years' of relaxation before death to being a cohort which will represent the largest proportion of the global population, enjoying a decades-long phase of the life course potentially full of activity. Perhaps this 'expansion' of retirement is one of the reasons why its contemporary 'master narrative' is, at least partly, so positive. Basing their research in the United States, Smith & Dougherty (2012) link the retirement master narrative to the culmination of the American Dream, a personal accomplishment. It has also been found to be seen as proof of success in the workplace, especially if one is able to retire early (Jones, Leontowitsch & Higgs, 2010), and is also now seen as holding the potential for newfound leisure activities and learning (Simpson & Cheney, 2007). A common feature of the retirement master narrative – among workers of all ages in the case of Smith & Dougherty's (2012) research – is freedom, the ability to do with their time whatever the individual wants. This is mirrored in my own findings. The actual term 'freedom' was used in a few instances, like in this example from Eddie (67):

> Eddie (67)
> That's the biggest gift [of retirement], really, it's just the freedom to do things you've always been interested in. You can go for golf on a Wednesday morning or a Thursday

afternoon, when the weather's right instead of looking forward to it all weekend [...] and then come Sunday it's chucking it down.

This freedom is often spent engaging with fan objects, of performing fandoms during times when the individual might otherwise have been working (as in Eddie's claim), or else simply 'doing' more fannish things. In the first subsection we saw testimony from Heather (80), Toby (54), Joan (56) and Nev (68); the latter *explicitly* semi-retiring *because* he could spend more time watching his beloved Notts CCC, whose matches so often encroach into traditional working hours.

However, whilst participants were quick to refer to the 'master narrative' of retirement as a fundamentally positive thing, it was also often noted how this part of the life course brings with it other responsibilities which were not anticipated. This is also observed in the literature referred to above (i.e. Bergen, 2010; Smith & Dougherty, 2012; Tannen, 2008), where the phenomenon is labelled as 'fracturing', the bottom line being that, 'for many, retirement is not the exit from work that most people dream about' (Smith & Dougherty, 2012: 473). Indeed, Smith & Dougherty, 2012) observe a couple of common fractures with their participants. The first they call the 'freedom/routine' fracture. This is where the individual, faced with the absence of the routine demanded by working life, feel anxious about the vast, unoccupied time stretching ahead of them. This is not something which my participants stated of themselves, however it was referred to by some as being a phenomenon experienced by other retirees. For instance, Henry (78) says: "I can foresee why it's so easy for a lot of people who retire that say "well, that's it, [I've] nothing else to do", and they sit and vegetate. And they're helped in their vegetation by the box, right." Interestingly, whilst he did outline doing some voluntary work, Henry followed the previous up with: "Now I'm very selective by what I watch on the box. Sport, yes." Henry, a large, widowed man who needs an assisted chair to raise from his seat in front of his enormous living room television, clearly sees in others his own behaviour, one of the 'fractures' of the retirement master narrative.

The second fracture which Smith & Dougherty (2012) find they call the 'individual responsibility/universal expectations' fracture. This is economically driven, that the freedom one is expected to enjoy will be filled by activities the individual can afford to do. In other words, it is not contemplated before retirement that one may not be able to afford to do everything one has planned to. Perhaps this is a finding particular to American society, but financial worries did not enter my conversations with 35 British semi- and full-retirees. I did, however, encounter a different fracture, which might be called the 'familial/spousal care' fracture. This fracture encroaches on the freedom of the retirement master narrative, thus creating more domestic labour for the carers involved. For example, it was very common for

my younger retirees to be offering some level of care to their now ageing parents. James (62) noted that:

> Looking after ageing parents has been a big issue for the last fifteen months, probably. My dad died last May, and my mum's now in a care home, so some of that's, some of that work and stuff, that support and caring and stuff has now... [...] It's, again, you do it because you need to and you have to and you ought to, but it did take up a lot of time. And it's only when you get through it that you think "oh, yeah, that was quite demanding".
>
> (James, 62)

Likewise, Grimsby-based Carl (66) explains: "My mum lives in Lincoln, we have responsibilities. We haven't got kids, but we have responsibilities." He noted in interview that, even if he had the ambition to cross the country to watch his favourite football team, Manchester United, he could not do so regularly for the amount of attention he and his wife need to give to his mother.

The emergence of grandchildren is also a common theme. James (62) noticed that upon retirement he spends "a lot more time with the grandchildren". Vincent (65) spoke gratefully of his grandson liking football and coming around to his home to kick a ball around in the garden. Lauren's (63) grandchildren certainly demand 'work':

> And then of course there's the grandchildren, and we've got four now, and we have [one of them] one day a week. He's going to school in September, [Lauren's daughter, his mother] will be going back to work, so we might be having– might offer to have [their grandson]. We've offered, and it is nice, but it is exhausting [laughs].
>
> (Lauren, 63)

Notice that the ages of these participants are all in their sixties. Of course, past this age it is likely that parents have died, that grandchildren have become old enough to look after themselves. However, later in the life course one's own spouse may need to be cared for. Dorothy (79) and Bill (81) are a husband and wife who were interviewed together for this project. They are both sports fans, however Bill was a little reticent to be interviewed alone because he had suffered a stroke the year before, thus hampering his enunciability in speech. Dorothy (79) is now his primary care giver, and any sporting engagements they now partake in beyond the home have to be assessed in their suitability for Bill – whether the arena involves too many stairs, or parking too far for walking and so on. Naturally this has impacted on both individuals' fannish lives in ways which would certainly not have been anticipated.

Thus, whilst fandom plays a central role in the master narrative of the later life sports fan – with most referring to the 'freedom' of retirement, the ability to 'do more' fandom – there are also various 'fractures' which might impact upon one's later life fandom, things which have

not been anticipated otherwise. Be it caring for one's ageing parents, or newer members of the family, to becoming a spouse's primary caregiver, or suffering a catastrophic personal health scare, retirement offers unanticipated challenges.

7.3 Widowhood, later life sports fandom and 'spousal imprinting'

Arguably the most challenging period of later life is dealing with the death of a spouse (O'Connor, 2013), the loss of the person to whom one has been very closely attached, often, in the case of the participants which I worked with, for many decades. Indeed, widowhood itself is unique to the demographic I interviewed, precisely because of the potential for this extremely long-term relationship. According to Sullivan & Fenelon (2014) simply being widowed can increase one's risk of mortality by 48 percent. It is of course possible to become a widow or widower at a younger age, but nothing can compare to being married for more than fifty years, as was the case for a number of my participants (the average age of the widowed in my study was 83.6 years). Whilst I also interviewed several people who are separated or divorced, I am not counting this as being the same experience. A divorce or separation may also be terminating a long-standing relationship, yet it is the unwantedness of widowhood which stands it apart experientially (van den Hoonaard, 2010). It is an *unavoidable* cessation of an intimate relationship.

I interviewed five widows or widowers. To different degrees they were all generally happy talking about their late spouse (one of my anxieties before data collection was that this would be a subject too sensitive to discuss). I tried to judge in the interviews if this topic was upsetting the participant and thus moved the conversation on when I sensed it was correct to do so. What was very interesting from these conversations is that the fan object, in every case, offered a link to the participant's late spouse. For instance, Katherine (88) said that "it would be my [late] husband" who introduced her to snooker: "I can't remember watching it with anybody else but him." The object is 'imbued' with his presence, which is something she feels particularly when watching other televisual material, like quiz shows:

> I used to like when my husband was here [laughs]. Yeah. It's not much sometimes, on your own. It's the same with quizzes, you know, I mean, you try to beat one another, don't you when you...
>
> (Katherine, 88)

That Katherine still watches these shows despite it being, as she described, "not much sometimes" suggests that she does not simply watch because she enjoys what she sees (indeed, often she does not enjoy the show) but because there is another affectionate attachment: her late husband. The fan object helps to affectively bind one spouse to the other, a bond which leaves its imprint even after death. Probably the most extreme example of this was with Mable

(88), whose husband passed away a few years before our conversation, after they had been married for around 60 years. Mable's cultural tastes have been shaped significantly by her husband. She made the following comment to one of my questions:

> JS:
> So did you grow up following a team at all? Did you like Leeds at all? Because you were near Leeds weren't you.

> Mable:
> Yeah. No, no I didn't. Not particularly, no. […] And my husband wasn't interested in football. He liked rugby.

Given that we were talking about her childhood upbringing, this seemed an odd link to make. However, when we covered Mable's other interests – she is a fan of bowls, both playing and watching on television – it became clear that these were very much dictated by her husband's agenda.

> JS:
> Do you remember how you first got into [bowls]?

> Mable:
> We first got into it at Cleethorpes, actually. Because after my husband retired, he didn't really have any hobbies, you know […]. I mean that was the first time we played bowls, after my husband retired, that was the first time.

Asked if she has a computer or any other similar technological devices, Mable replied: "No, even my husband didn't get into that... well they'd only just started getting into them when he retired so he never bothered with them." Mable stepped back from playing bowls when her husband developed dementia and gave up playing altogether when he moved into a care home, suggesting that she was not, perhaps, quite so passionate about the sport. However, she said: "I like watching the bowls when it's on [the television]", suggesting a lingering affective attachment to a sport which has links to her late husband.

Heather (80) represents a slightly different example. Whereas Mable and Katherine were widowed around three and five years ago respectively, Heather lost her husband of 35 years around 25 years ago, and so has spent much more time living independently (she has never remarried). Heather was a cricket and tennis fan before marrying her husband, who was also a fan of the former himself. However, her husband was also a keen footballer and football fan, which meant that Heather also ended up consuming that sport rather a lot. However, since her husband's passing Heather's engagement in football has been gradually waning.

> Heather (80):
> I did watch a few matches [at Grimsby Town – now her local team – in the recent past] but I must admit it's this whole football thing, you know, I'm sort of growing out of it, I suppose [laughs].

JS:
Growing out of it? Explain 'growing out of it'.

Heather (80):
Well, there are other things I'm preferring to watch. I've watched so much football in my life, with [husband] playing and watching junior football every weekend sort of thing before we had the children, there, and I enjoyed it, that was fine, that was... I saw a different side of [husband] in those days [laughs] but... we made lots of friends and that was nice. [...] I watched a lot of football as well when [husband] was playing but I've gone right off football at the moment because they've got so much money and they're all interested in hair dos and tattoos [laughs] and, you know, lots of prima-donnas just falling over for the sake of it.

Heather much prefers to watch cricket and tennis now, however, despite her waning interest, she still keeps up to date and informed with the goings-on in the football world, particularly with the clubs which she sees as being 'close' to her. This means the clubs which are local to her where she now lives (in north Lincolnshire), as well as from where she originally hails – west London:

Heather (80):
I mean I do look the results for Grimsby, and also for Hull as well. I mean Hayes is going down and down and down and down. [JS: "Hayes have gone really far down now."] They have and they were relegated again the year so they're now in the Isthmian league, I think, [...] And it's such a shame because they must have made a bomb out of selling that ground [Hayes merged with Yeading and became Hayes and Yeading United in 2007, with Hayes selling off their ground] for housing. [...] And what's happened to it? Well, I think [laughs] knowing some of the people who were on the board there, they probably pocketed the money themselves [laughs].

Perhaps the most obvious explanation for widowers continuing to engage with the objects that they associate with their late spouses is linked to maintaining what Andersen & Brünner (2020) refer to as 'commensal routines', which they note may be disrupted upon losing one's spouse. Andersen & Brünner's (2020) work focuses on encouraging the widowed to eat meals communally, thus helping to recreate the commensal routines of married life. It may be that if the later life sports fan 'senses', 'sees' or 'feels' their late partner in the object in question, they may refer to it in a bid to recreate the feelings experienced during previous married commensal routine. It should be noted that whilst the type of fan object is often retained, the substance or volume of that engagement seems to change. Heather and Mable engage with football and bowls, respectively, though to a less 'intense' level than when their husbands were alive. These objects are more a comfortable reminder of their lost loved ones, than a passionate interest in themselves. Aspects of self are not just shared between the individual and their favourite text(s), but are shared between the individual, the text(s) and the *partner* with which they interact with those artefacts. We might call this 'spousal imprinting'. The next subsection and two subsections following thereafter focus on the role of technology in the modern home as allowing one to feel a sense belonging and connectivity to the world, whilst also allowing for

the development and maintenance of *Heimatic* spaces (Bennett, 2017; Räthzel, 1994). The role of the spouse (even after death) must not be forgotten in these processes.

7.4 Technology and connectivity in the modern home

At 83.6 years, the average age of the widowed in my sample is, perhaps unsurprisingly, significantly higher than the 72.5 average age of the study's whole cohort. In this next subsection, on technology and connectivity, there is a greater emphasis on my older participants. This is due to the broad correlation between senescence, mobility and age: the older you get, the less mobile you become (Gale, Cooper & Aihie Sayer, 2014; Luoma-Halkoma & Häikiö, 2020; Shumway-Cook *et al.*, 2005), thus the more time one spends at home. The less mobile, more housebound one is, the more one relies on technology to keep in touch with the 'outside' world. For many of my participants, *physical* mobility was at a life-long low point. However, those living more sedentary lifestyles are not *im*mobile. As Morley (2000) observes, contemporary media is transgressive:

> These technologies must be understood as both transgressing the boundaries of the household – bringing the public world into the private – and simultaneously producing the coherence of broader social experience, through the sharing both of broadcast time and of ritual.
>
> (Morley, 2000: 3)

The television plays a vital role in many of my participants' lives. For instance, with increasing mobility issues, Henry (78) appreciates that "There are things that I can't do anymore", however, pointing to the television in the living room corner, he says: "But that is a great substitute, it really is. As I say, it's opened up such a whole world of sport, really." Earlier in the interview Henry had introduced me to his enormous, curved flatscreen television, complete with soundbar, which dominates his main living space. It is a piece of technology, clearly bought at significant expense, around which his everyday life revolves.

> Got myself a nice box which I'm delighted with [laughs] and I've seen some great sport on there […] [and] in my retirement, since I've had to rely on the box so much, my interest in sport has broadened. I watch a greater variety of sport than I would ever [have] dreamed of, when I watch live sport. […] I watched this American football match and I don't think I'll ever understand that as long as I live! I mean it's remarkable, I couldn't work out what they were trying to do, apart from get the ball over the line at the other end and they don't even do a touchdown, they just run in there [laughs].
>
> Henry (78)

Similarly, Heather (82), who counts tennis and cricket as her favourite sports, says on two separate occasions:

> I think the beauty of having Sky [Sports] is that not only just watching Wimbledon, you can watch all the Grand Slams [from around the world]. And also all the Master's

matches, so you get to know the players better and you can see… for instance this year a lot more people coming in from South America, taking part in the Master's tournaments and doing quite well. So it's interesting to see how it's becoming more worldwide.

…

But again, as I said before, the beauty of Sky [Sports] is that you can watch [the cricket] all the year around because if it's not here then it's in Australia or New Zealand, and the tennis is going worldwide, so it's going from all different areas. And golf as well in America or China even… so that's the beauty of it, there.

<div align="right">(Heather, 80)</div>

Henry and Heather 'are thus enabled to simultaneously stay home and "go places", to remain in the realm of familiar ontological security and yet to experience the vicarious thrill of exhibited difference or exotica of one sort or another' (Morley, 2000: 9). The television allows fans access to global sport, and enables them to follow their favourite sports stars around the world as they compete in various competitions in a multitude of countries, as well as offering a means of experiencing the new and mysterious, as Henry espoused on his watching a game of American football for the first time, and being seemingly delighted by his befuddlement in comparing the sport to its nearest English cousin of rugby ("they don't even do a touchdown, they just run in there [laughs]").

There is an interesting relationship, here, between the local and global, the linking between 'my', the participant's local sport or fan object being played on the global stage. The work of Appadurai (1996) is very useful in this instance. He describes how large-scale, global identities are often imprinted on the local. Indeed, he differentiates between the 'local' – 'primarily relational and contextual rather than as scalar or spatial' (1996: 178) – and the 'neighbourhood' – 'actually existing social forms in which locality, as a dimension or value, is variably realized' (179). Locality is 'constituted by a series of links between the sense of social immediacy, the technologies of interactivity, and the relativity of contexts', it is a 'phenomenological quality, which expresses itself in certain kinds of agency, sociality, and reproducibility' (1996: 178). To experience the 'local' is an 'imaginative' process which, perhaps paradoxically, is partly predicated on relating to the global at the same time. Robertson (1992, 1995) refers to the interplay between the local and the global as 'glocalization'. It is arguably more obviously attributed to the migrant fan, as in the case of Giulianotti & Robertson's (2007) migrant Celtic and Glasgow Rangers football fans, who experience a 'glocalized' Scottish football fandom whilst based in North America (see also Giulianotti & Robertson's, 2004).

But what about my participants? All now live in the country of their birth (some having lived abroad), and so are not migrants. They are not, in Appadurai's (1996: 199) words, 'The many displaced, deterritorialized, and transient populations that constitute today's ethnoscapes [which] are engaged in the construction of locality, as a structure of feeling, often in the face of the erosion, dispersal, and implosion of neighborhoods as coherent social formations'. Yet, it could be argued that they *do* belong to the peoples Appadurai describes. We have already seen the potential for reclusiveness that a senescence-induced lack of mobility might afford the later life individual. In becoming ever more housebound (see Krauss, 2004), many of my participants have effectively been displaced and de-territorialised. Isolated in one's home, one may feel a lack of relation to neighbourhood (one's immediate community, as defined by Appadurai). Yet, they still feel connected to the 'local' through engaging with globalised, glocalised, sporting content. After all, 'sports cultures march in step with global modernization processes' (Markovits & Rensmann, 2010: 43).

Heather, for instance, notes how she follows both the cricket and the tennis around the world via satellite television coverage on Sky Sports. Whilst she 'visits' these places, the presentation of the content on her television is for a British audience – an English-speaking commentator, coverage interspersed with British television adverts. Her 'global' sporting consumption represents a British diaspora touring the world, presenting her with her favourite sports objects. At the same time, however, the act of visiting these global places has the effect of drip-feeding aspects of other cultures into her (mostly) British show. As Giulianotti & Robertson (2004: 547) note, international sporting competition features 'cultural relativization', as 'Globalization relativizes all particularisms, forcing exponents of specific beliefs or identities to confront and to respond to other particularistic ideas, identities and social process across the universal domain.' Thus, this allows Heather to establish her 'local' identity against an Other – something explored in more depth below – which allows her to strengthen her own sense of belonging, to occupy a local space in a global landscape.

Percival (2002) argues that for the later life individual, the domestic setting must facilitate three criteria: routines, responsibilities and reflections. The former two refer to daily living routines (mealtimes, etc.) and caring responsibilities (visitors, grandchildren, etc.). The latter refers to one's identity; the home must offer 'personalised spaces that facilitate leisure pursuits and the display of important sentimental objects' (2002: 747). Percival's work does not stretch beyond the material when concerning the 'reflective' aspects one must include in one's home. He writes that reflection can be achieved 'through the sentiment attached to furniture as legacy, through the blessings bestowed on displayed objects that keep alive the memories of work, leisure and family, or through personalising the spaces that enable interests to be

continued or developed' (*ibid*). To this I would add the technology which allows the individual to express their fandom. Sandvoss (2014: 207) writes that, 'To many in the final stages of their life television takes on the role of a last companion, radio the voice that keeps one company, long after children have left and life partners have passed away or are too ill to offer sustained interpersonal connection'. The way that Lauren (63) talks about her relationship with the BBC's flagship cricket coverage programme, *Test Match Special*, suggest a very 'deep' relationship:

> I love *Test Match Special*, absolutely love *Test Match Special*, so I listen to that an awful lot. I suppose it's, listening to the cricket, I do other things at the same time, you see, so I carry the radio around with me or if I'm cleaning up in there you've got the radio out, and it's, I like that on in the background, and I do listen to a lot of sport.
> (Lauren, 63)

The way that Lauren describes 'carrying around' her radio is similar to the way in which David (65) said, "I've got wireless headphones, so if I'm cutting the grass or something [laughs] I can stick them on and listen to the cricket or whatever". It stretches the definition of 'mobile privatisation' (Williams, 1974/2003) from a broadcast being aired communally *within* one's own household to the intimately mobile actions of everyday life.

7.5 Belonging to imagined communities and fictive kinship

These technological possibilities are very important for the later life individual as it allows them to retain a link to an identity which was a part of the social world before senescence robbed them of the ability of 'physically participating' in that world. As Kellaher, Peace & Holland (2004: 61) write: 'Trajectories or pathways linking the inner and external worlds that make the environment begin to come into focus through [older] informants' accounts of their homes, neighbourhoods, lives and hopes.' Though as Morley (2000: 10) writes, in reference to the work of Marcus, 'in the contemporary world, traditional anthropological notions of community or identity can no longer be mapped on to locality'. This is because, in Marcus's words (in Morley, *ibid*), identity 'is produced simultaneously in many different locales. One's identity where one lives ... is only one social context and perhaps not the most important one in which it is shaped'. This is brought into sharp relief when put into the context of my later life participants. Over half have lived in multiple locales during their lives, with twelve of those moving to a different part of the country (or abroad) at least three times across their life course. Thus, technology allows the later life fan to collate their fannish experiences, which may have been encountered in a different locale, and continue to experience them in their own home. Tamsin (71) offers an interesting example, here. As somebody who spent twenty-five years of her life living in Gloucester, though now living in Lincolnshire, she follows the city's rugby union club. She has a strong affinity with the team, despite never having seen them live:

> I follow Gloucester having lived down there for so long, but apart from that [...] I never went to a live match, no, no. I knew a few people who did but I never watched it live. [...] I knew people who went, who'd come back into work and say: "oh that was a good game on Saturday!" and you used to think: "oh I wish I'd been there" [laughs]. But I never actually did go. Mind you, Kingsholm [Stadium] gets pretty packed, you know, you've got to really know somebody – or you did then – to get a ticket, yeah.
>
> (Tamsin, 71)

The lack of seeing her favourite team 'live' is not really important in Tamsin's fandom (even if she makes a conscious note to tell me this and offer a reason for her not having attended a match, as though the legitimacy of her fandom would be questioned otherwise), it is her sense of sociality and belonging to a group of Gloucester fans, embedded in the society in which she lived and worked, which has established the club as one of her fan objects. Through technology – mostly satellite television at the time of our interview – Tamsin is able to keep alive this part of her identity and feel as though she belongs to the group.

We might think of this in terms of the individual belonging to an 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1983/2016), wherein the collective 'is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion' (*ibid*: 6 – emphasis in original). Thinking about sports fandom using Anderson's term is popular – see Kalman-Lamb's (2021: 922) description of the sports fan's 'desire for connection', and Galindo's (2020) overview of the imagined San Antonio Spurs basketball community for recent examples. When my participants say things like Anya (69), below, then the imagined community seems a good theory to apply:

> I like being part of something that's big, I think. I like, when you... when you, take Newcastle [United], if you like, when you put it [the football] on and you see all of these people, all of these tens of thousands of people with a common goal, I just think "we can't all be wrong", somehow.
>
> (Anya, 69)

Yet there are other dimensions to this kind of 'collective' speak for which an imagined community does not seem to do justice to the perceived relationships the fan has with their community. To show these differences, let us take Anya as an example again. Below are her observations when attending Blundell Park to watch Grimsby Town play football:

> When you're walking up the steps [in the stadium] at a certain time, you think "oh he's here again, he's here again, he's here again" or "she's here, they're here" and particularly you notice with the kids, how they come at like this age [puts hand out horizontally] – there's a family who come and sit the row in front of us at the end, and the girl, I remember her being a baby and her Mum bringing her, and she's there last

week with a crop top on and a mobile and boyfriend [laughs] you think "blimey, am I that old?", you know what I mean? [laughs]

(Anya, 69)

Anya has attended Grimsby Town football matches for many decades and has generally gone to games with the same small group of people, who offer her transport to the stadium as well as companionship. I would argue that Anderson's definition of an imagined community does not quite fit with Anya's experiences. There is a group of fans – her immediate cohort – who she knows well and has a strong, dependent relationship with. Beyond that are her fellow fans whom she *recognises*, even if she does not *know* them personally. She has some kind of longitudinal relationship with them; they occupy the same space as her. This, I would suggest, is closer to 'fictive kinship', 'the idea that someone is part of an imagined family' (Brewster *et al.*, 2020: 5).

There is quite a wide range of applications of fictive kinship, with it being used to describe both tenuous relationships – Kim (2009: 498) describes the fictive kinship of undocumented immigrant restaurant workers as 'fragile', based only on *some* shared interests, and as 'not [having] the same strength that ['ordinary'] kinship does' – and also the very close relationships of care workers and patients (see Karner, 1998) or military personnel (see Woodward & Jenkins, 2011), which have been shown to last long into retirement (see Brewster *et al.*, 2020). One feature which is consistent in its application, however, is that the longevity of these relationships is, as Kim (2009: 498) describes, 'remarkable'. Indeed, Voorpostel (2013) notes that older individuals tend to have more fictive kin than their younger peers. Thus Anya (69), above, has been able to recall watching one of her fellow Grimsby attendees grow up, hitting life milestones (from being "this high" to having a boyfriend) and generally speaking of those who sit in the row in front of her as familial. Likewise, her closer companions have been with her throughout most of her fannish life – some of whom have died, another whose children have grown up, as semi-regular fellow attendees, and moved away to university. Thus, we have a tiered system of illusory relationships: the immediate cohort of Anya's representing fictive close kin, the wider group in her stand an extended fictive kin, and then, bracketing everything and on the widest level, the imagined community of football fans.

7.6 'Home' as '*Heimat*'

So far, this chapter has mostly referred to the home of the later life sports fan as the dwelling in which the individual lives. This part of the chapter assesses the role of the home in the construction of the later life fan's identity, thus a broader definition of 'home' is needed. The term is perhaps more complicated than it, at first, appears. Morley (2000: 3) suggests that

postmodern society has fragmented our conventional notions of 'home', that 'traditional ideas of home, homeland and nation have been destabilised' due to what he sees, writing in the run-up to the new millennium, as 'new patterns of physical mobility and migration' alongside 'new communication technologies which routinely transgress the symbolic boundaries around both the private household and the nation state'. He also suggests that 'In a world that is increasingly characterised by exile, migration and diaspora, with all the consequences of unsettling and hybridisation, there can be no place for such absolutism of the pure and authentic' (1995: 103-104). Indeed, in the face of all of this change – 'nomadology', 'EurAmcentric nature' and 'homelessness' are some of the other anxieties Morley (2000) lists – he sees our construction of home as being built in the micro, domestic setting. His *Home Territories: Media, Mobility and Identity* (2000) considers how the macro notions of national identity ('Englishness', 'Britishness', 'Europeanness', etc.) are built via micro processes of object-relation with domestic digital technology, 'that the articulation of the domestic household into the "symbolic family" of the nation (or wider group) can be best understood by focussing on the role of media and communications technologies' (Morley, 2000: 3).

Central to the rest of this chapter is the term German term '*Heimat*'. The closest English translation to *Heimat* is, indeed, 'home', however 'home' does not do justice to the breadth of meaning residing in '*Heimat*'. As Boa & Palfreyman (2000) note:

> The core meaning of the word 'Heimat', its denotation, is 'home' in the sense of place rather than a dwelling, but as the many combinations such as *Heimatstadt* (home town), *Heimatland* (native land), *Heimaterde* (native soil), *Heimatliebe* (patriotism, whether local or national), *Heimatrecht* (right of domicile), *Heimatvertriebene* (refugees driven out from homeland), *Heimatforschung* (local history), *Heimatkunde* (local geography, history, and natural history) suggest, it bears many connotations, drawing together associations which no single English word could convey.
>
> (Boa & Palfreyman, 2000: 1)

Home, is not merely a single geographical point; it is the multifaceted notion of *Heimat*. As a term *Heimat* developed throughout the nineteenth century, so the idea is no new thing. However, what is different to its use in the 1800s and its use from the early twentieth century onwards (the same definition used today), is the context of its application: originally it was applied *regionally*, rather than as a conception of nation (Boa & Palfreyman, 2000). Therefore, whilst the actual 'process' of *Heimat* may have still been the same, the historical *Ausländer* about which Räthzel (1994) writes, and against whom *Heimat* is defined, was not so much a literal *Ausländer* ('foreigner'), but more simply an 'Other' from a place outside of Berlin, or whichever region it was being used within. Indeed, it was only in the mid-to-late nineteenth century that a mass press, similar to what we have today, developed on a national

scale in Germany (Chalaby, 1998). Thus, it might be suggested that it was only with the development of a press with international interests, reporting on the goings-on from around the globe, that *Heimat* started to become applied in a national context. Boa & Palfreyman (2000) suggest that it was during the First World War, and the emergence of the term *Heimatfront* (home front), that the process of 'nationalising' *Heimat* began, though this would seem to pay too little attention to the media's role in its development towards connoting nation. Barnhurst & Nerone (2009: 8) note that in the early twentieth century the press was often 'heavily instrumentalized' by totalitarian regimes who had 'shown a profound understanding of the power of the press' in shaping public opinion. Although there has been research conducted which suggests that the German press of the early twentieth century was not quite as partisan as is often thought, with newspapers following the more 'objective' style of journalism developed in America (Birkner, 2016), a nonetheless internationalist press, the coverage of developments from around the globe – particularly in the context of war – would have aided in developing notions of *Heimat* (in Germany and elsewhere) as a term with nationalistic connotations. Boa & Palfreyman (2000) traced the term's origins to the expansion of Berlin and the city's rapid growth throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Over this time, *Heimat* changed quite significantly. It was,

> increasingly emptied of specific regional associations, [and] was co-opted in the service of the nation and gendered as a place of security associated with the mother and the sweetheart back at home in contrast to the Fatherland for which men fight and die in foreign fields. No longer antagonistically set over against each other, Fatherland and maternal Heimat increasingly coalesced in the myth of nation and were both set in opposition to the foreign foe or the enemy within.
>
> (Boa & Palfreyman, 2000: 3)

Thus, contemporary definitions of *Heimat* include within it the notion of 'Other'. *Heimatic* boundaries are drawn according to our definitions against Other, or as Räthzel (1994) puts it, against our conception of *Ausländer* ('foreigner'). In her work on people's relationships with *Heimat* and *Ausländer*, Räthzel writes that cultural identity is often 'thought of as something stable, connected with the place in which one lives in such a way that this place must never change. If it does, so it is said, people lose their orientation and start to attack those whom they see as responsible for this change' (1994: 81). Morley (2000: 253) notes that 'people who hold a reified, harmonious image of Heimat, as something necessarily stable and unchanging, are particularly likely to be hostile to newcomers – who are held to be the cause of all manner of disorientating forms of change'. *Heimat* is, ultimately, an imaginary construction which allows one to feel like oneself; it reinforces identity. If we are to take an Eriksonian view of the life course, many of the fans who are part of my study would fall into what he calls the "ego integrity versus despair" stage of psychosocial development (Erikson, 1959/1994), whereupon

one seeks to fortify their sense of self in the face of the despair of having lived their life, having no more time to do with it what they would like and generally feeling that they have not wasted their time on Earth. In later life, a strong notion of *Heimat* can help to fortify one's ego integrity.

7.7 The '*Heimatic* spaces' of later life sports fans

In this final subsection, not only do I argue that in constructing *Heimat*, later life sports fans are reinforcing their ego integrity (Erikson, 1959/1994), I also argue that later life sports fans turn the spaces in which they 'do' their fandom into '*Heimatic* spaces' (Bennett, 2017), imbued with the qualities which so comfort the older individual against potential existential crisis. As Bauman (1998: 117) writes, 'in an ever more insecure and uncertain world, the withdrawal into the safe haven of territoriality is an intense temptation; and so the defence of the territory – the 'safe home' becomes the pass-key to all doors which one feels must be locked' (in Morley, 2000: 31).

Though not extensively, *Heimat* has been used in the study of fandom before. Sandvoss (2005) is probably the most well-known user. In introducing the concept, he refers to a finding of Hodkinson's (2002), who found in his research on goth subculture that participants would emphasise their own idiosyncrasy but would do so with relation to a group or shared framework.

> This projection of self-identity on to a collective, resulting in a distinct sense of belonging, illustrates the ambiguity of identity construction between self and community in fandom. Yet such 'individualized collectivity' is not particular to fandom, but resembles the wider patterns of identity construction that have formed the relationship between self and territory in modernity. In this sense, I believe, fandom best compares to the emotional significance of the places we have grown to call 'home' to the form of physical, emotional *and* ideological space that is best described as *Heimat*.
>
> (Sandvoss, 2005: 64)

In a fannish context, *Heimat* might be defined as 'an imaginary sense of home and belonging at the core of fandom that reemphasizes notions of taste and value, and works to mark those who do not comply as inauthentic fans' (Bennett, 2017: 128-129). There is, as we can see from Bennett's definition, a nod to the interplay between self and *Ausländer* which Räthzel outlines, *Ausländer* in this context being the 'inauthentic fan'. I would argue that *Ausländer* ought also to refer to aspects of the text which the individual deems 'foreign' or 'out of place'. One's *Heimatic* construction is an idiosyncratic idyll which has no place for the unsuitable.

There are two things we must consider before analysing some data from my participants. Firstly, 'representations of *Heimat* frequently involve narratives of loss and nostalgia' (Eigler & Kugele, 2012: 3). Secondly, as Räthzel found, her participants 'initially suggested that Heimat was apparently nothing they currently experienced but something they had known as children. But then they recalled that childhood had not been like that either and that therefore their image of Heimat was illusory' (1994: 87). Thus, we must think of *Heimat* as an imaginary, nostalgic construction. Chapter Six of this thesis considers the different ways in which later life sports fans utilise nostalgia, with reconstructive nostalgia, in particular (see chapter Six, section 6.4), working very well with an individual's *Heimatic* constructions. This subsection will not, therefore, spend too long on the nostalgic aspects of *Heimatic*. Rather, it focuses on the other elements of *Heimat* the likes of Räthzel, Sandvoss and Bennett outline above: projections of self-identity and reactions to perceived *Ausländer* in creating *Heimatic* spaces for older fans to live out their later lives.

Taking the first element, the fan object acts as a platform onto which individuals both project and 'see' reflected aspects of self (Sandvoss, 2003, 2005). For instance, Ida (84), who counts Manchester United as her favourite football fan object, states:

> I like [Wayne] Rooney. I mean a lot of people think he's a thug and that but I think…
> I don't think he is all that well educated, but he was intelligent enough in football. I
> think he was pretty good.
>
> (Ida, 84)

Ida has no qualifications beyond her basic schooling and spent her employed life as a shop worker and a milk float driver. She could easily feel precisely the same way about herself as she does about Rooney, a Manchester United icon – that others see her as not necessarily having achieved a great deal, that she is not all that educated, yet she is intelligent in the things that matter. She is proud of her golfing prowess, for instance, and also about the ways in which she has managed to adjust to life with a degenerative eye condition, which has meant that she has to navigate daily living with very poor vision. This is similar to the 'affluent businesswoman' whose Chelsea football fandom is based around the club as a successful enterprise and thus reflective of her own career, and the middle-aged Chelsea football fans who, despite the club's relative footballing success, put emphasis on 'themes of failure and underachievement', thus reflecting their limited economic progression in Sandvoss's (2003: 28-29) work. In a similar pattern to Ida but with almost opposite characteristics, George (84) – a football fan of Grimsby Town – does have a degree and/or professional qualifications and spent his working life as a high-flying insurance broker, working at increasingly more prestigious arms of his organisation, being based in Liverpool, London and many other places in between. He stated of the then-newly appointed Grimsby Town manager Michael Jolley,

who had trodden the unusual path into football management via a Cambridge degree, a Master's degree in economics and a career as a trader in London and New York:

> And I, the one thing that this man, to me, who's come in, has in his favour is that he's got a brain. Because you look at the crowd on Saturday, they're brainless this team. We're losing one-nil and we bring a couple of defenders on - why? And I, and surely the sight of [former manager Russell] Slade on the touchline, he looked like a tramp to me, bloody old baseball cap inched up there.
>
> <div align="right">(George, 84)</div>

There are clear parallels between George's life and Jolley's, from the similar levels of education to the career path both followed, down to taking issue with preceding Grimsby manager Russell Slade's usual touchline outfit of a club-branded tracksuit and cap – this compared to the three-piece suit Michael Jolley wore, the kind of attire George would have worn working in economics in a London office.

When being asked about some of her favourite snooker players, Katherine (88) alighted on Paul Hunter, who died of cancer in 2006, aged 27. Interestingly she did not recall Hunter by name, rather she noted: "there was another one died not so long since, a real young one […] he was ever so young, wasn't he […]. He had cancer, yeah." Snooker coverage – particularly live BBC coverage of the World Championship at The Crucible, Sheffield – is infused with plenty of historical footage of past players, great games, famous wins, therefore even the most casual of viewers is given a lesson in snooker history; De Kosnik *et al.* (2015) might refer to this as imbuing former players with 'high mindshare'. The year before our conversation, Katherine (88) had come through and beaten oesophageal cancer. This clearly had an impact on Katherine – she enjoyed talking about the process of recovery, the standard of care which her hospital had provided, and we bonded over my recent caring for a family member who had also been receiving treatment for a similar disease. That she picked out Hunter as a favourite player was her seeing self – a fellow cancer patient – reflected in her object. Similarly, Dorothy (79) grew up in Barrow, in the north-west of England, in a rugby league-mad family. Her contemporary fandom is very much shaped by this, with her displeasure at anything non-aggressive, or 'non-masculine'. She dislikes football, for instance, because of the 'diving' and the common connotations of cowardliness that this brings. She does, however, like watching the Australian Twenty20 cricket competition, the Big Bash:

> Oh, I like it because they hit it. Well I like it because they do try, they don't just knock it, they do actually try and get sixes and [fours], don't they.
>
> <div align="right">(Dorothy, 79)</div>

Dorothy dislikes red-ball, unlimited-overs cricket ("I can't understand about five days, four days, and they hardly get anything and they're just tapping it"), much preferring the shortened, Twenty20 version of the game. Naturally this led to my asking whether she liked to watch the

most well-known, and commercially successful, twenty-over cricket competition, the Indian Premier League, to which she answered that she does not. It became apparent, however, that Dorothy and Bill's daughters live in Australia, as does Dorothy's brother and also her nieces and nephews. They have made numerous trips to Australia, which is clearly a part of their identity. Dorothy chooses the Big Bash over any other cricketing fan object because it is the perfect blend of Barrow 'toughness' and 'aggressiveness', and 'Australianism'; she sees aspects of self reflected in her object. Thus, as Sandvoss (2003) writes, the 'actual' history of the sports fan object, its existence as a cultural artefact, can mean little in terms of the relationship one builds with the object (even if club-centred stories do end up being parroted by fans). Rather, the sports fan object 'provides the space for something else: a projection of self through which the fan and the club form a unit in which clubs come to function as an extension of the self of the fan' (38).

The second element – reactions to perceived *Ausländer* – was visible in a few forms. The first kind is that observed by Bennett (2017), and the fan Other, or the 'inauthentic fan'. In the context of Bennett's research, this was the fan who attended a concert during Kate Bush's comeback tour of 2014 and disregarded her plea for fans to avoid filming and taking photographs during the show (Bennett, 2017). The aim, for Bush, was to recreate the environment of her previous live performances, in 1979 (i.e., free of the mobile technology, whose use is so prevalent at contemporary gigs). Those who were seen to use technology during the 2014 events 'were framed as lesser fans' (Bennett, 2014: 139). In the context of my own participants, their evaluation of fellow sports fans takes on a similarly dismissive quality, if those fans are deemed to be 'inauthentic' in any way:

> Carl (66):
> You get a lot of oriental people coming in, part of the holiday, to get a ticket to go to Old Trafford and I think that spoils the atmosphere, you want your regulars.

> Matt (69):
> But [at Manchester] City there's certainly a lot more tourists, you see a lot more people taking photos […] there's a lot more foreigners, you know, you can see they've come…

> Ross (61):
> [W]hat's happened with [Manchester] City is that, instead of getting thirty-eight thousand at Maine Road, are now getting fifty-five thousand, so part of that support is diluted down with tourist fans, especially a lot of eastern Europeans are coming to City, and Japanese.

There is a clear nationalistic, almost racist tone, as the 'inauthentic' fans referred to are non-British fans, people who hail from a land outside the boundaries of the home. It seems to make little sense, given that the Manchester City team is a multicultural one, that all three of the

above-quoted are fans of Manchester-based clubs yet live in Grimsby, over one hundred miles away, and so rely on the television and other media output to retain their interest in the club, just like the so-called 'tourist fans'. However, as Boym (2001: 98) notes, nostalgic reminiscence is also a 'yearning for a different time' – in this case a pre-globalised footballing landscape. We must remember, also, that the yearned-for ideal is an imagined construction; only in their sixties, Britain has been a multicultural country throughout Carl, Matt and Ross's entire lives.

This detecting of *Ausländer* is not limited to fellow fans. I propose that the individual senses 'foreign' aspects *within the fan object*, which do not tally with their notion of *Heimat*. On Leicester City winning the Premier League title against extremely long odds in the 2015-16 English football season, Henry (78) said:

> I thought it was fantastic. I think it's a shame they've dropped so low the season after but there were all sorts of complicated reasons for that. There were changes made at the club, when they became champions - by the foreign owners again - that didn't suit the English way of doing things. And it disturbed all the players in the changing room, and it disturbed the manager in managing and all the admin staff that went with it.
>
> (Henry, 78)

In what could be read as the nationalist, even racist, element of Boym's (2000) restorative nostalgia, Henry chooses to blame the club's "decline" in the following season on the foreign owners, conveniently overlooking the fact that it was under the same owners – the King Power Group, fronted by Thai billionaire Vichai Srivaddhanaprabha – that the club earned promotion from English football's second tier before going on to the most unexpected league title win in modern top-flight English football history. He overlooks that only four of the fifteen players who made more than fifteen appearances in all of the title-winning season were English, or that the title-winning manager, Claudio Ranieri, is Italian. Yet he is sure that this foreign approach "didn't suit the English way of doing things" and even somehow knows that it had the effect of "disturbing" the club's admin staff, which is quite the claim.

If *Ausländer* is perceived within the fan object, the later-life fan with harmonious *Heimat* – or, rather, with a high level of ego integrity – will seek to attack. Later life fans use their fan objects as tools with which to strengthen their sense of self. By attacking the *Ausländer* they distance themselves from the Other, whilst simultaneously acknowledging their own position as 'not' the Other. The more they can reason that they are different from the imagined Other, the more clearly the boundaries of one's identity can be defined. This is very important in an otherwise turbulent phase of the life course. For many fans, these processes take place in the home, as the space in which they perform the majority of their fandom. Even those who are more mobile, like my younger participants who are able to attend sports matches, spend the

majority of their fannish lives consuming at home. Thus, I propose that the values and attributes that are put into the formation of one's *Heimat* are subsumed into the spaces in which that *Heimat* is experienced, thus creating a *Heimatic* space out of the home.

Of course, *Heimatic* spaces do not necessarily have to be restricted to one's dwelling. As Bennett (2017) showed in her research, it was the gig venues of Kate Bush's concerts which were transformed into *Heimatic* spaces for fans attending her comeback tour. So, too, we could say the same about the stadium, or the specific areas of the stadium in which people sit, for sports fans. Anya's (69) Grimsby Town fandom could be described as consisting of two epochs, based on her position watching the Mariners in their Blundell Park stadium. For many years she stood with a small group of friends on a corner terrace. When the Taylor Report (1990) recommended all football stadia in England's top two divisions become all-seater arenas, she was forced to move, with her group, to a seated position. This, Anya made clear, was quite a big event in her fannish life ("If the open corner were still there we'd probably still be there, you know."). Interestingly, Anya does not even think her season ticket seats offer a particularly good view:

> Anya (69):
> [Y]ou get a much better view if you're [sat on] half-way. You see the game much better. You do get a limited view if you're behind the goal, you do. I'm right on the by-line, I am. So, I can see… no I don't think… and again, curse of the all-seater, the minute the ball crosses the half-way line, [the fans around her] just stand up and you've got [a blocked view] – it's the way it is. I know it's everywhere so it's not a particularly good place to watch it I suppose, if the truth were known. But there you go.
>
> JS:
> So why do you go there? That's the interesting question.
>
> Anya (69):
> Because everybody else is there, around you. I mean we've always all been there, our little season ticket corner.

Given that Grimsby only fill around half of their 9,500-seater stadium for an average match (transfermarkt.co.uk), there is plenty of scope for Anya to move seats. Yet she does not because her identity, her sense of belonging and her social group, is imbued in that particular position in Blundell Park's Pontoon stand.

7.8 Summary

As, during retirement from full-time employment, fan objects encroach more and more into everyday life, their significance as 'favourite objects' becomes more and more important as

anchors of identity – particularly as a 'working' (i.e. employee) identity is gradually eased out of (note that the essence of that identity is often retained, but the day-to-day lived experience of that identity is lessened). As we head into a life of post-employment, we replace and 'fill in' the holes left by work with the things which give us most comfort. Thus, it is through a greater engagement with our fan objects that we begin to see, engage with and frame the world.

The fan object was above explored as being an anchor of identity and a surface for self-reflection and projection, much like in research on younger fans (i.e. Sandvoss, 2003, 2005). However, the difference between younger and older fans is that older fans reported an increase in the amount of time they spent engaging with their fan objects, meaning that there is greater scope for the reinforcement of identity via fan object engagement in later life. Also, a double application of 'home' was addressed. Firstly, 'home' as a dwelling was noted as being the physical location in which our lives are increasingly lived out in later life. Secondly, home as a conception of *Heimat*, the psychic arena through which we experience the world, was considered. With their ever-important role in later life, fan objects, being 'nurturers' of *Heimat*, increasingly ensure the later-life individual lives in a *Heimatic* space. Therefore, we saw a process of greater involvement in the fan object, leading to a greater proportion of the life course being lived in *Heimatic* spaces, which more and more took place within the dwelling one calls 'home'. Finally, the *Heimatic* spaces which later life adults build for themselves are predicated on the notion of Other, or *Ausländer* ('foreigner'). By defining ourselves against Other, or *Ausländer*, we reinforce the boundaries of our own identity, thus leading to greater levels of ego integrity (Erikson, 1959/1994). This sense of security and familiarity with one's fan object and, concurrently, self, offers a sense of ontological security through what is an otherwise very turbulent part of the life course.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

This thesis has sought to assess the role of sports fandom in the lives of older adults who have left full-time employment. In working with 35 later life sports fans, I have been able to ascertain the importance of cultural consumption, of a deep, emotional engagement with a particular object, during a part of the life course which brings with it very real danger of existential crisis (Fillit & Butler, 2009; Andrew, Fisk & Rockwood, 2012). Even if the individual feels that their favourite object no longer represents to them the 'ideal' that the object once did, it is the creative, imaginative process of assessing what aspects of the contemporary object *are* as they 'should be', and 'recognising' aspects of the object as belonging to their internalised notion of the "good" object (Hills, 2018) which allows the individual a personal, reflective self-assessment.

Sports fandom in later life is both an expression of the individual's life narrative, but also a reflection of the social structures which determine later life living and consumption. Per the former, favourite fan objects act as a surface on which aspects of self are both projected but also reflected (Sandvoss, 2005), the characteristics of which are drawn from various points in the life course using nostalgic reminiscence. Ultimately, this has the effect of reinforcing identity – strengthening ego integrity (Erikson, 1959/1994), offering a contented, comfortable and stable sense of self – in a period of the life course which features great change. Per the latter, social structures like generational identity and collective memory aid in constructions of later life selfhood, and the development of routine in retirement, often by television schedules, fixture lists, the real-time 'flow' of fan object narrative, helps to nurture a sense of ontological security as, even in one's latest years, a basic trust can be forged in an imagined future.

This was the motivation of the first analytical chapter (Chapter Four), which focused on the role of sport fandom in everyday life of the older individual. The later life sports fan *embeds* their fandom within the quotidian – it is not something which is done as a 'distraction' or gimmick, but something around which everyday experience is built. This helps in developing ontological security (Giddens, 1984, 1991; Laing, 1960), the main theoretical theme in the chapter. Ontological security is nurtured via a number of means. Firstly, the routinisation of fandom plays a key role in developing a consistent pattern for fannish engagement. Sport is particularly predicated on routine, from its weekly fixtures and annual seasons to the actions within sports fixtures themselves, which are so often simple physical actions repeated time

and time again. Just like Harrington & Bielby (1995, 2005) observe of the soap opera, sporting narrative plays out in real time. The yearly cycles of sport, which have always been based on repetition, offer a sense of continuity for the individual. Idiosyncratic sports fan routines are developed by the fan (structured by the fixture list or television schedule), which are often adapted versions of routine from earlier in the life course (see the example of Eddie in section 4.3). Routine allows for a 'basic trust' to be developed between subject and object (Giddens, 1991; Hills, 2012, see also Erikson, 1959/1994), which in turn lets the subject relax into their object world.

Linked to this notion of resurrecting past routine is the notion of nurturing lasting connections with a fandom, which was the subject of the second analytical chapter (Chapter Five) on long-term fan-object relationships. In this chapter, I proposed that traditionally defined 'fan objects' (i.e., a football club), are actually *densely populated textual networks*. I also proposed that the fan, after having previously constructed their own (internal) fan-object – referred to as the fan's internal "good" object (Hills, 2018) – picks and chooses from this dense textual network aspects of the wider text which 'fit' with their notion of what the fan object ought to constitute. In bricolage fashion, the fan pieces together their 'ideal', highly idiosyncratic object. This means that the fan may be willing to adopt an object, or an aspect of an object, which is antithetical to the presumed normative performance of that fandom, challenging the 'authenticity' of that fandom by liking a 'rival' club's player or manager, for instance.

Defining fandom as an individuated, *continuous* bricolage process is very important for making sense out of how an individual might stay a fan of "one object" (i.e., a sports club) for many decades. Actually, the fan does not really stay a fan of that "one object" at all, but holds in their imagination an ideal object – the internalised "good" object (Hills, 2018) – for which the individual is constantly looking in their object relation. The fan shifts across the textual world, looking for those objects which represent to them their object ideal. In Chapter Five I applied the gerontological notion of continuity theory (Atchley, 1989, 1993, 1999), as it offers an excellent means of theorising the ways in which individuals address change in their lives, whilst at the same time retaining a subjective sense of consistency of selfhood. The fan adapts to what I call 'destabilisations' to their fandom and, depending on the role that object plays in the life of the individual, will alter their fandom in such a way as to retain the object in their lives in a capacity which is a close as possible to the internalised "good" object, even if that means 'stepping away' or 'turning down' their fannish intensity with that text.

Naturally, across very long timeframes, the fan might yearn for a long-lost object or aspect of object, which they have not been able to 'recognise' in any recent fan text. Thus, nostalgia plays

a big part in later life sports fandom (Chapter Six). Often nostalgia is seen as a negative emotion (Turner *et al.*, 2018), as something used to escape the present moment in favour of re-living a past glory (see Chandler & Ray, 2002). I move away from this notion of nostalgia, preferring instead to read the different types of nostalgic reminiscence in my participants as attempts to engage with the contemporary object in a more 'productive' way. I have adapted Boym's (2001) descriptions of her 'restorative' and 'reflective' nostalgias to coin a new term – 'reconstructive nostalgia' – and applied it to later life sports fandom. It is when the individual takes from an earlier internal construction of their favourite fan object an attribute or characteristic which they value deeply and then 'applies' it to the contemporary fan object. It adds a temporal dimension to the bricolage fandom described above, meaning that the older fan not only has the contemporary textual field from which to 'build' internal fannish constructions, but also a lifetime of textual experience.

The internalised "good" fan object is ultimately a (non-pejoratively) regressive object, for it is an object which nurtures in the individual the contented, comfortable feelings associated with pre-separation wholeness (Sandvoss, 2005). This does not mean that in engaging with their favourite fan object the subject regresses directly to some infantile state, it means that the fan object (the internalised, "good" object) is one which is part of a string of *versions* of internalised, "good" objects which would, if one were to trace back through the life course, eventually lead to the experience of pre-separation wholeness (for a more in-depth discussion, see section 2.3.2). This contentedness, this feeling of belonging is something strongly attributed to a sense of feeling 'at home' in one's safe haven. Thus, the ways in which later life sports fandom and notions of 'home' interact and intertwine were the focus of the final analytical chapter (Chapter Seven).

Indeed, 'home' might be thought of in two distinct forms. Firstly, we might consider home as the dwelling in which the later life individual gradually spends more and more of their time, the physical space in which the subject lives. The third life phase is one which was created in the gerontological literature relatively recently (Moen, 2003), to account for the now highly individualised process one goes through in moving from employed to retired life. It is common for there to be a graduated process of spending more time at home, as opposed to fully retiring straight away after hitting the seemingly arbitrary age of 65. Later life sports fans – particularly, it seems, those who are fans of sports like cricket, whose long matches typically take place during the working day – will deliberately gauge their move from full employment to semi-retirement and full retirement on their fannish interests (see sections 7.1). This suggests a certain level of anticipation for the individual, thus they work towards a life course 'master narrative' (Bergen, 2010; Tannen, 2008). However, this plan may encounter

'fractures' (Smith & Dougherty, 2012) as other responsibilities, such as caring for ageing parents, present themselves. Naturally, this has a knock-on impact on later life fandom, and the comforting aspects of fandom may become even more important as challenges such as providing end of life care to parents or even spouses is required (see section 7.2). Indeed, the impact of the life of the spouse was evident in those fans who were experiencing widowhood (see section 7.3). I coined the term 'spousal imprinting' to refer to the cultural tastes of the widow or widower retaining an essence of the fandom experienced when the spouse was still alive.

Secondly, we can think of home through the German concept of *Heimat*, which in a fannish sense might be defined as 'an imaginary sense of home and belonging at the core of fandom that reemphasizes notions of taste and value, and works to mark those who do not comply as inauthentic fans' (Bennett, 2017: 128-129). The features of *Heimat* are evident in later life sports fandom, from the way that the fan projects their sense of self onto a collective object, yet also sees reflected in that object qualities that are recognised as self, to the way that the fan 'attacks' what they perceive to be *Ausländer* to that object (be it fellow fans or aspects of the object itself). *Heimat* breeds a sense of belonging in the object and, perhaps most importantly, those characteristics of *Heimat* also become imbued into the places in which fan objects are engaged with, creating '*Heimatic* spaces' (see also Bennett, 2017). For the later life sports fan, whilst these spaces may also be the sports arena itself, with the increasing time spent there it is the home (i.e., the dwelling) as a *Heimatic* space which becomes central to one's later life living.

8.1 Original contributions and impact

Perhaps the most obvious way in which this research project represents an original contribution to human knowledge can be appreciated is in considering the following statement from Harrington and Bielby (2010) about a decade ago:

> While there is growing interest in issues of age and aging within fan studies and within media studies more broadly, there is a tendency in this literature to discuss aging and the life course atheoretically, ignoring a rich body of scholarship in gerontology, sociology, psychology and human development that examines how lives unfold over time.
>
> (Harrington and Bielby 2010: 430)

I have sought to address this in this research project. I have attempted to engage with the ageing sciences where appropriate, bringing in the work of Robert Atchley in particular, with his continuity theory. Harrington & Bielby also note that, of those pieces of scholarship which

do focus on ageing and the life course, works 'on the "middle-old" (75–84) or "old–old" (85+) seem largely non-existent, even though humans continue to develop throughout the *entire* life course' (Harrington & Bielby, 408 – emphasis in original). This is also something I have sought to address in the preceding thesis. Indeed, not only is the average age of my sample 72.5 years, but the upper age range is 88 years. I also proposed that the fan-object relationship is a lifelong *process* of object relation, a consistent rebuilding of the internal "good" fan object against relation to a constantly shifting textual field.

Of course, given the links between senescence and ageing, the broad correlation between degeneration and getting older (Gale, Cooper & Aihie Sayer, 2014; Luoma-Halkoma & Häikiö, 2020; Shumway-Cook *et al.*, 2005), it is these older generations which are most at risk to degenerative illnesses like Parkinson's and the dementias. Given that fan studies has barely engaged with the older fan, let alone the 'old, old' later life fan, it is unsurprising that fan studies has also not engaged with those who have been diagnosed with a degenerative illness. This research project changes that, as five of my participants were diagnosed with dementia, and one with both dementia and Parkinson's. Of course this is much too small of a sample to base a standalone study on, but it does represent a start. My dementia participants offered some very useful data around embedded routine, for instance (see Chapter Four).

Another originality was this thesis's appreciation of 'multi-fandom'. As was noted in Chapter One, often 'fan studies work has been monolithic in approach, with research focussing on single fan communities' (Williams, 2015: 4). It is too simplistic, in other words, to label somebody as being merely a *Star Wars* fan (i.e. Brooker, 2002), or a *Star Trek* fan (i.e. Jenkins, 1992) without acknowledgement that their fandom is part of a wider interconnected web of fan objects. This web of interconnected objects is central to my notion of the internalised "good" fan object (see Chapter Five). The fan, here, creates bricolage-style internal constructions based on their ability to move *across* the textual field, picking up aspects of object which they find along the way. This is what allows the fan to abandon notions of authenticity in fannish performance, such as how Ross (61), a Manchester City football fan, could both espouse hatred for his object's 'rival team' – Manchester united – yet still admire the club's former manager, Sir Alex Ferguson. I would also argue, incidentally, that this insistence on 'splitting' what we traditionally refer to as the 'fan object' is also original. A 'football club' is usually referred to as a text in the singular, yet I read it as a densely populated textual network (see Chapter Seven).

8.2 Limitations

As with every major research project, this one has its limitations. The most pressing issue with this work is the racial homogeneity of the participant demographic. According to the UK government's website (gov.uk), and based on the most recent census data[4], the white-British population of the United Kingdom is somewhere in the mid-low 80 percentile. Thus, my own sample being one hundred percent white-British is inadequate for generalisation across the country's population. There are a couple of reasons why my sample ended up with such a racially biased profile. Firstly, we must consider my sampling technique. I used a snowballing and referral technique for finding participants, wherein biases are often 'an unavoidable consequence of asking participants for referrals' (Waters, 2015: 372) because friendship groups often feature a distinct lack of diversity. As I noted in the methodology chapter, I tackled this problem by ensuring that many "snowballs" were started, thus negating my reliance on single friendship groups. This did not impact upon racial homogeneity, however, probably due to the second point we must consider: geographical racial diversity. The ethnic minority population of North East Lincolnshire in the last, 2011, census was just 4.6% (NE Lincs Community Profile, 2013/14), which was not significantly different from the previous census in 2001, at a similarly low 4.07%. This is a lot lower than the ethnic minority national average, in 2011, of 20.2%. As noted in the methodology chapter, it is not unreasonable to claim a level of representativeness in retired sports fans from North East Lincolnshire, though of course this study cannot claim to be representative of all fans, nationwide. As discussed in the viva examination for this project, when translating this thesis into a monograph, a fresh round of data collection will be conducted, and this will focus exclusively on non-white participants. I have relocated since my PhD data collection phase to the East Midlands. This area is much more diverse – the city of Leicester, for instance, has a non-white-British population of over 55% (leicester.gov.uk).

There is also an issue with the "type" of fans that I spoke to. I make quite an emphasised point about the shortcomings of the fan studies sub field in the literature review (chapter two – see section 2.1.2, in particular). I draw on van de Goor (2017: 9) to suggest that fans which 'are studied under the banner 'fan studies' are often young to middle-aged, Anglo-Americans on Anglo-American platforms, portrayed as a 'community' (e.g. one Internet page/community board, a fan-object-related convention)'. Using Abercrombie & Longhurst's (1998) typology of

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[4] Note that the most recent demographic data for the UK comes from the 2011 census, so it is frustratingly out of date. According to the Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk), Census 2021 data is due to be released approximately one year after collection, in 'late Spring 2022'. Given the increasing racial diversity of the UK between multiple censuses – the white-British population of the UK was 94.1% in 1991, 91.3% in 2001 and 86% in 2011 – we can forecast a continuation of this trend in 2021.

fandom, we can see that fans from the more textually active, "social" end of the fan behaviour spectrum are significantly over-represented, against those whose behaviours are more semiotically productive (Fiske, 1992). I sought to address this, though have perhaps gone too far in doing so. I have *very* few textually productive fans in my sample. In spite of the finding that fans seem to move "left" on Abercrombie & Longhurst's (1998) continuum – I spoke to many fans who could certainly be defined as 'enthusiasts' in their earlier fandom, only to change their contemporary behaviours to something more akin to 'fans' (of Abercrombie & Longhurst's definition) – there is still a significant number of textually productive older fans who are not represented in my study. The popular Grimsby Town online football fan forum, The Fishy, is one such site for fannish productivity, and held an informal poll of members' ages at the end of 2021. Albeit with an admittedly small sample size of 236 votes, the largest share were the 62 members who described their age as being between 55-64, whilst the over-55 vote (roughly the same age range as my own sample) represented 48.3% of the users who partook. As one user commented wryly underneath: "So the fishy is mainly populated by miserable old farts like me then. Explains a lot" (forum.thefishy.co.uk). These more textually productive older sports fans should have had a greater presence in my sample.

Another limitation concerns my theoretical overview of the "internal fan object" (see chapter one, particularly page 13), in that it may be read as being an inflexible or static psychic construction, whereas it should be read as a *two-way* process whereby the text has the ability to shape one's internal construction. In outlining my position, I write that the fan, in effect, is able to create two objects out of the same text: one, personalised, idealised internalisation, based on past positive subjective experience, and another, rejected object which is seen as "other" to the subject's main idea of what constitutes their fan object. I appreciate that this could be read as the fan hosting a singular, idiosyncratic internal construction which either matches or does not match the text being engaged with, thus leading to a simple acceptance or rejection of the contemporary text in question as a "fan object". What I should have been clearer in stating was that, whilst the fan does indeed carry with them an idealised, "good" (see Hills, 2018) object, to which contemporary texts are forever compared and used as a kind of fannish textual "baseline" from which to work, there is also the scope for the text to alter this internalisation. Sandvoss (2003, 2005) gives a vivid example from his research with some football fans of Chelsea FC. These particular fans were overtly racist, however when their club signed Marcel Desailly, a black player and one of the best centre-halves in the world at the time, he was accepted by the racist fans as "one of their own". Textual change had altered these fans' internal "good" objects; Desailly was not simply rejected by the fans Sandvoss interviewed. Likewise, there is plenty of evidence of similar developments in my own sample. Whilst many fans bemoan the relatively recent influx of foreign owners of football clubs in

England, there was a much greater acceptance of foreign players, across roughly the same time frame. Women's sport was also spoken about in largely positive terms, accepted as part of wider sports fan objects, whereas only a few decades ago elite women's sport was all but absent from public consciousness.

8.3 Further avenues of research

As I tried to impress upon the reader in the introduction (Chapter One) to this thesis, research into experiences of ageing and the centrality of the role of fandom within that process is incredibly important, especially as we continue to see the impact of population ageing around the globe (Harper, 2021; Pilipiec, Groot & Pavlova, 2021; Vogel, Ludwig & Börsch-Supan, 2015). In their contribution to the edited collection *Aging, Media, and Culture*, Harrington & Bielby (2014) point towards an interesting finding by Ghisletta, Bickel & Lovden (2006), whose research project compared the effects of different activities upon cognitive degeneration. They found 'that higher engagement in media and leisure activities tends to slow down cognitive decline; indeed, engagement with these activities was more cognitively challenging to older adults than were religious, social, manual, or physical activities' (Harrington & Bielby, 2014: 131). Whilst it is noted the slightly odd definitions of some of these terms (see notes 6 and 7 in Harrington & Bielby, 2014: 141), the inference from Ghisletta, Bickel & Lovden's (2006) work is that fandom could be psychologically beneficial, a cognitive workout which helps to keep brain functioning stronger than other types of activity as the individual ages. Thus, an important area for future research is in bringing together fan studies with the study of dementia. Whilst there is already some sort of an appreciation of engagement in culture and leisure for dementia and Alzheimer's patients – in the launch edition of *Dementia: The International Journal of Social Research and Practice*, for example, Keady & Harris (2002: 5) stated explicitly that their new publication would be one which 'focussed on the socio-psychological issues involved in providing quality dementia care' – there is a significant lack of crossover between fan and dementia scholarship. Indeed, in *Dementia* (2002–), there is only one article which explicitly explores fandom – Sass, Surr & Lozano-Sufrategui's (2021) article focussing on the recent Sporting Memories initiative – and that does not include a single reference to fan scholarship. Clearly, these fields could speak constructively to one another. Whilst, at five participants, my sample of dementia-diagnoses is rather small, there were still some patterns which began to emerge that could be looked at in more detail. That routine was often still embedded in recollections of fannish activity was noted in chapter four, whilst it was also observed the role of family members in ensuring that routines were kept (family members providing fixture lists of live, televised football, and simple instructions on how to access those matches, for instance).

Also, more generally, it is important to further develop the idea of the internal "good" object within the fan studies stable. Firstly, as discussed, this is because fan studies has too often focussed on the individual as a fan of a singular object – the fannish life is far more nuanced than this. Secondly, by having a deeper understanding of the intricacies of the process of 'building' and then relating to internalised "good" objects across the life course, we will be better able to cater for those who have entered the later parts of the life course, particularly those in care homes whose relationship to the cultural sphere is dictated by others, such as carers. We are living on a planet in which rapidly ageing populations are changing the very fabric of our societies, and as Leeson (2018: 113) pointed out in the introduction to the thesis: 'Growing old in societies dominated demographically by young people is fundamentally different from growing old in societies dominated demographically by older people'. As this thesis has argued, older people are psychically creative. They use and manipulate objects to their ontological advantage, during a developmental process which ultimately leads to gerotranscendence. By better understanding the ways in which we do this, there is no reason why we cannot develop techniques of caring and later life coaching which helps us on the way to that place of self-actualisation. The later life course should be a place which we excitedly anticipate journeying to. Once we are there, those final years spent as a bundle of conscious atoms should be filled with a contentment for a life well lived. In this, the fan-object relationship has a vital role to play.

Appendices

In these appendices you will find the various documentation relating to the data collection for this research project. It includes my Participant Information Sheet (1.1), an example of my Participant Consent Form (1.2) and an example of my Demographic Survey Form (1.3). It also includes a letter I sent to care homes asking for potential participants (1.4) and some examples of my notetaking from when 'in the field' during data collection, in the form of two 'descriptive summaries' (1.5), and a commentary on my time with the Grimsby Ancient Mariners Walking Football Club (1.6).

Transcripts

I have not included a copy of my interview transcripts in this document due to their sheer volume (the total transcript word count for all 35 interviewees nears half a million words). I have instead submitted a separate, zipped file with all transcripts included there. In the event that this file has not been passed on with this main thesis, please contact Rukhsana and Frances in the University of Huddersfield, MHM PGR office (mhmpostgrad@hud.ac.uk).

Appendix 1.1: Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet, page 1:

Appendix 5

University of Huddersfield
School of Music, Humanities and Media

Ethical Review Procedure
for Research, Teaching and Learning

Research Participant Information Sheet

You are invited to take part in a research study as part of a research project. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

Who will conduct the research?
Joe Smith, tutored by Professor Cornel Sandvoss, of the University of Huddersfield's School of Media, Journalism and Film, and as part of the university's newly-formed Centre for Participatory Culture.

Title of the Research
The Role of Sports Fandom in Retired Life.

What is the aim of the research?
This research considers how people who have retired (or semi-retired) use and relate to sports fandom in their daily lives. It considers how people of this demographic engage with sports fandom and how their lives are structured around and alongside consuming sport (be it by attending sports events in person, watching on television or any other means of consumption).

Why have I been chosen?
You have been chosen because you meet the simple criteria of being retired (or semi-retired) and consider yourself to be a fan of either a specific sports team, many sports teams or simply have a liking for sport in general and consume and engage in it regularly.

What would I be asked to do if I took part?
If you agree to participate in this study, you will be interviewed by the researcher (Joe Smith) in a one-on-one conversation that should last no more than one hour. This will take place in a location of your choosing – wherever you feel most comfortable – and will generally be about your consumption habits, what kinds of sports you like and how you watch, read or listen about them. We will also have a general discussion about why you like and engage in sports fandom. This will be recorded on a dictaphone (a voice recorder) and will only be used for transcribing the interview (see below).

What happens to the data collected?
The taped interview will be transcribed by the researcher (Joe Smith) and kept on a secure university server to which only the researcher will have access.

Participant Information Sheet, page 2:

How is confidentiality maintained?
It is standard university practice to use pseudonyms within all research. This means that there is absolutely no way of tracing your data back to you. Everything is kept strictly confidential.

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?
It is up to you to decide whether to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without detriment to yourself.

Will I be paid for participating in the research?
You will not be paid in any tangible way; however, you will have the satisfaction of knowing that you have helped in making an original contribution to human knowledge.

What is the duration of the research?
The interview should last no more than an hour, though the overall research project that Joe is conducting will last for roughly another eighteen months.

Where will the research be conducted?
The interview with the researcher (Joe Smith) can take place in whatever location feels most comfortable to the participant. This could be in your own home, in the university or even in a café or pub if you would prefer.

Will the outcomes of the research be published?
While there are no prearranged proposals for this, parts of the final thesis may be published in academic journals at some point in the future (though remember that all data is kept strictly confidential with no way for data to be traced back to any one participant).

Contact for further information
For further information about participating in this study, please do not hesitate to get in touch directly with Joe by either telephone or email.

Email: **joseph.smith@hud.ac.uk**

Telephone: **07809 622112**

Appendix 1.2: Participant Consent Form

University of Huddersfield

School of Music, Humanities and Media

Research Ethics Review

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

TITLE OF PROJECT: The Role of Sports Fandom in Retired Life

NAME OF RESEARCHER: Joe Smith

I have been fully informed of the nature and aims of this research and consent to taking part in it.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the interview at any time without giving any reason, and a right to withdraw my data if I wish.

I give my permission for the interview to be recorded.

I give permission to be quoted (by use of pseudonym).

I understand that the recording will be held in accordance with the University of Huddersfield's data protection policy.

Declaration: I, the Interviewee, confirm that I consented to take part in the recording and hereby assign to the University all copyright in my contribution for use in all and any media. I understand that this will not affect my moral right to be identified as the "performer" in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

I understand I have the right to request that my identity be protected using a pseudonym in the research report and that no information that could lead to my being identified will be included in any report or publication resulting from this research.

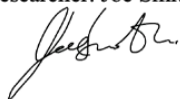Name of participant:

Signature:

Date:

Name of researcher: Joe Smith

Signature:

Date:

Two copies of this consent from should be completed: One copy to be retained by the participant and one copy to be retained by the researcher

Appendix 1.3: Demographic Survey

Demographic Survey, page 1:

University of HUDDERSFIELD

– DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY –

All information on this survey is completely **anonymous**. Upon completion, please fold in half and place in the folder provided by the researcher. Thank you.

Age: _____

What is your gender? (Please tick relevant box.)
☐   Male
☐   Female
☐   Other (please state) _____
☐   Prefer not to say

To the nearest year, how long have you been retired? _____

What is your nationality?
Please write what best describes your nationality.

_____

What is your ethnic group?
Please write what best describes your ethnic group or background.

_____

What is your marital status?

☐ Married   ☐ Single   ☐ Divorced/separated ☐ Widow/widower   ☐ Prefer not to say

How often have you moved to a different part of the country/world?
☐ I have always lived in the same area
☐ 1-2 times
☐ 3-4 times
☐ 5+ times

Do you have a degree or any other professional qualifications?
☐ Yes   ☐ No

Please list your previous occupations.
E.g. 'Primary School Teacher'/ 'Police Officer'. Feel free to write multiple answers.

_____
_____
_____
_____

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Demographic Survey, page 2:

Does your liking for sport predate retirement (or semi-retirement)?
☐ Yes   ☐ No

Have you discovered a liking for any other sports *after* retiring (or semi-retiring)?
☐ Yes   ☐ No

How often do you 'consume' sport?
In all its formats: live in stadia, live on the television, via social media and other internet sources, printed media, highlights and video clips – absolutely anything and everything.

☐   Every day   ☐ Every 2-3 days   ☐ Every 4-5 days   ☐ Once per week
☐   Once per fortnight   ☐ Once per month   ☐ Less frequently than once per month

Do you currently play or have you ever participated in sport?
☐ Yes   ☐ No

If yes, do you also 'consume' this sport?
☐ Yes   ☐ No

How do you 'consume' most of your sport?
Which medium(s) do you use to consume sport? (Tick as many boxes as you wish.)
☐ Live television broadcasts
☐ Live radio broadcasts
☐ Television highlights and discussion shows
☐ Radio talk shows
☐ Newspapers, magazines and other printed media
☐ Social media
☐ Other internet sources
☐ Attending in person
☐ Other (please specify) _____

Now please circle in the above list your *preferred* THREE ways of 'consuming' sport.

Which statement best describes your liking for sport?
☐ I am only interested in/follow *one* sport.
☐ Other sports interest me but I only follow one sport in particular.
☐ I am interested in and follow a few sports.
☐ I am interested in and follow *many* sports.

Are you a member of a professional sports club, fan club or hold a season ticket for a sports team/club.
☐ Yes   ☐ No

How important would you rate the role of sports consumption in your life?
Please rate between 1 and 10.
1 being 'not at all important', and 10 being 'plays an essential, major part in your life'.

_____

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Appendix 1.4: Letter to care homes

As part of the data collection process, whilst I mainly used a snowballing sample, I also contacted over fifty care homes in the Lincolnshire, East Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire regions. As I mention in the methodology chapter, this was a largely fruitless exercise due to the vast majority of care home residents having some sort of degenerative disease (Alzheimer's, dementia, Parkinson's) which has meant that independent living is an impossibility. As a care home manager explained to me, the government want people to live in their own homes as long as possible now, meaning that the care home population is mostly too fragile for in-depth interviewing. Nonetheless, I did manage to recruit five care home participants. This is the letter I sent out.

University of
HUDDERSFIELD

To whom it may concern,

I write from the Centre for Participatory Culture at the University of Huddersfield, and would like to ask for your help in conducting a PhD research thesis.

The project concerns sports fans who are retired (and semi-retired), how they interact with their favoured sports team(s) and how their attachment helps in forming aspects of their identity.

I would like to enquire as to whether any of your residents like sports – watching it on the television, reading about it in the newspaper, listening to it on the radio, have a history of attending sports fixtures etc. – and would be interested to partake in the study.

The process would be an informal, one-on-one interview with myself, in a setting of the participant's choice.

I have already conducted interviews in a care home setting in north-east Lincolnshire. Two participants who had dementia – one quite advanced – spoke to me in the company of a nurse, which was of course not a problem.

Out of the process I gain essential data for my thesis, but the feedback from those who have already participated is that the experience is an enjoyable one. We simply chat about the participant's life and favourite sports teams and stars over a cup of tea.

The study has been approved by the university's research ethics committee (all research has to be ethically approved before it begins) and I would have no problem in providing you with additional, official, documentation from the university, should you need further confirmation of my status.

I do hope that you have residents who fit the criteria and who you think would enjoy spending an afternoon talking about their sporting passions. If you have any questions at all, or if there is anyone who you think may be interested, please do not hesitate to get in touch using the below details.

Many thanks for your time. I look forward to hearing from you,

Yours gratefully,

Joe Smith

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PhD Researcher in Communications, Cultural and Media Studies
Centre for Participatory Culture, University of Huddersfield

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Media, Journalism and Film
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Appendix 1.5: Fieldwork notes, an example

For each participant I wrote up field notes immediately after visiting their home for the interview. I called these "descriptive summaries". They are simply documents in which I noted some of the aesthetic features of the interview just conducted, my general "feel" for the conversation, the participant's body language, the layout of their home and any other observations that came to mind. To save space I have not included all of these summaries, but have included two here as an example for the reader. The examples come from my interviews with Katherine (88) and Tamsin (71).

Descriptive summary for Tamsin (P6f – 71)

Tamsin (P6f) – lives with Ned (P5m – 75)
Age: 71
Gender: Female
Years retired: 5 years
Marital status: Married
How often moved to new area: 1-2 times
Degree or other professional qualifications: No
Previous occupation/s: Administrator; newspaper feature writer; author
How often sport consumed: Every 4-5 days
Importance of sports consumption in life (out of ten): 8/10

This was an interesting couple of interviews because the interviewees were themselves a married couple. Each loves sport and, obviously, each lives in the same home. I interviewed them separately, but in the same room – the living room. The couple live in Barrow-upon-Humber, a nice area just south of Barton, near the River Humber. Their house was a fairly new build, on what looked like a whole new cul-de-sac. The living room was large and featured two black sofas and a matching black leather arm chair. The decoration was pragmatic, not overly fancy. The carpet was plain and hard-wearing. In the corner was an old-style flat screen television, which was very modest in size, especially considering the size of the room. On its stand were a row of DVDs, a handful of which were sporting. A review of the 2005 Ashes series stood out (I have the same box set). On the walls were pictures of what I assume were children and grandchildren. Behind one sofa was hung a photograph of Sydney Cricket Ground, and above the fireplace, in quite a prominent place in the room, was hung a printed copy of a well-known cricket painting called 'An Imaginary Cricket Match', which hangs in the Long Room at Lord's. The below is taken from the Lord's website (https://www.lords.org/news/our-blogs/the-cricket-history-blog/lords-and-royalty/):

On a bookcase behind one of the sofas was a bookshelf which had on it a wide variety of readings from the world of literature. However there was also a healthy scattering of cricket-based books, mostly in the form of autobiography – I noticed Joe Root's in particular as it was sat horizontally on top of other books on the shelf, possibly having been read recently.

The participants were dressed in what you might call 'usual' day clothes. P5m had a collared t-shirt on underneath a dark jumper and dark blue trousers, along with house slippers. His hair was white and shortly cropped and he was clean-shaven. He required reading glasses but was quick to take them off when they weren't needed. He put them on the side of the single arm chair – what I assume to be 'his' chair, where he spends most of his time – but knocked them off at one point in the interview.

P6f was dressed in a dark fleece, zipped all the way up to her neck, and dark trousers. She sat on one of the sofas – the one to the left of me (I stayed on the same sofa throughout). Her hair was dark grey though still had bits of dark colour to it. She wore glasses the whole time.

The body language of the pair was completely different. P5m was very open, often sat forward in his chair, talking and listening with eagerness. This was mixed with sitting right back in his chair, half-laid out, with hand on chin in what looked like deep contemplation. He moved quite often but look relaxed throughout.

P6f was the opposite. She sat back In the sofa, he body following the line of the seat, and barely moved from there. She was sat with arms folded for the majority of the opening exchanges, though did open out as we got into the interview. He hand position changed from folded to clasped on her lap, and once at this stage would often 'speak' with her hands.

Both participants were ultimately smiley and very accommodating. I was especially pleased to have loosened P6f up enough for her to offer to show me a project she'd been working on for Grantham Cricket Club's 200-year anniversary.

Descriptive summary for Katherine (P8f – 88)

Age: 88
Gender: Female
Years retired: n/a – never employed, children in sixties now.
Marital status: Widow
How often moved: Always lived in same area
Degree or other professional qualifications: No
Previous occupation/s: n/a – housewife
How often sport consumed: Every day
Importance of sports consumption in life (out of ten): 9/10

P8f lived on her own in a small flat in the Lincolnshire village of Keelby. She was a widow and, although her short term memory was a little sketchy (she repeated herself a few times throughout the course of our interview), her recalling of players, both old and new, was very good. This was especially the case with snooker, her favourite.

She was a little shy to begin with and it took until a fair way into the interview for her to fully open up. This was due to her not really understanding why it was that *she* was talking to me. She knew that I knew about her liking of snooker, and it was only once I had explained in more detail about my research and my aims of dismissing a number of ageist stereotyping about the mature liking and engaging with sport that she really opened up.

Therefore, to begin with, her body language was a little closed. She sat on the sofa with arms folded for a much of the early interview. To remedy this, I let the conversation drift into other areas, taking the most natural course possible, in an attempt to help 'loosen' her up. As a consequence, there are large chunks of interview which may not seem directly relatable to her sports fandom; however, these chunks do aid in colouring her life, her other consumption habits, ways in which she structures her day-to-day living and other interests.

She was also very sure of herself. A good tactic when interviewing is to stay silent at the end of what would be the usual 'turn' of the other person in a conversation. The aim of doing this is to coax the interviewee to add more detail to what they are saying – essentially in a bid to fill the silent void. P8f did not do this. At the end of her 'turn', instead of adding to her answer, as everybody hitherto has, she stayed silent. Not once did she add to the answer; you might say that beat me at my own game! This should not colour the reader's opinion of P8f as being a poor interviewee, or stubborn, or rude. Rather, she was a good interviewee and with minimal coaxing was able to remember players and key events in her snooker fandom history. In the context of her as a person – 88-years-old and a survivor of oesophagus cancer just a couple of years prior – she was remarkably fit, both physically and mentally, in living alone, completely independently.

Her main exposure to sport as a consumer was through the influence of her husband. I did not want to probe that angle too much as it felt as though digging around her life when her husband was alive would cause undue pain. (She had earlier mentioned, in passing, about missing watching the 'quizzes' with her husband on television.)

The interview took place in her living room. It was of small-average size, rectangular, long and thin. Just inside the door was a small armchair, to the left of which, the other side of the door, was a small sofa, and along from that was another, matching, light green material arm chair. To the right of the first chair was a light mahogany cabinet, with drawers at the bottom and glass-fronted shelving above. Down the wall from the cabinet, ahead of the green material suite, was an average-sized (and quite old), black, flat screen television. She had no Sky Sports or BT box, only a VHS player (and sat behind the first chair was a small stack of VHS tapes, some home videos and a handful of classic Disney movies). Between the sofa and second chair, jutting out into the middle of the floor (in the middle of which sat a small, long, thin rectangular coffee table), was a small table with knitting needles on. The walls were populated with family pictures and the shelves in the glass-fronted cabinet were filled with small animal ornaments, dogs mostly, and at the front of the cabinet sat two happy pigs (there was also a small side-table next to the cabinet, on which sat quite a large ornamental dark striped cat). It was not obvious that this flat belonged to a sports fan.

Appendix 1.6: Fieldwork notes, the Ancient Mariners

The following I wrote on the evening of having visited the Grimsby Ancient Mariners Walking Football Club (GAMWFC) during the time I was 'in the field' for data collection. I include these notes in the appendix because this was not the 'normal' means of collecting data – for the vast majority of my participants I was put in touch with individual people through the classic snowballing method; this was the only time I visited a social group of later-life football fans.

In seeking participants for my study, my search led me to a walking football club, whose purpose was to provide a footballing platform for those aged fifty-five and over to play the game they loved – in most cases rekindling past playing days, which would otherwise be deemed historic due to physiological decline. The main premise of walking football is that the sport is slowed down. As the name suggests, running is banned (though therein lies the greatest of walking football debates – what actually constitutes 'running') and smaller-sided teams are restricted to three touches of the ball per player, per possession.

The club I contacted was the one local to the general area in which I was already concentrating my search for participants. It was called the Grimsby Ancient Mariners Walking Football Club. Established (under its Ancient Mariners moniker) in 2012, the club has, I was informed by secretary Nigel (pseudonym), over one hundred and sixty members. As a port of call, visiting the Mariners proved to be rather fruitful. Nigel's details were easily found and an inquisitive email later I was invited to a training session, taking place at Grimsby's football development centre, where a 4-G pitch is hired two times per week for the team's sessions.

I arrived on what was their hottest session of the year. The sapping twenty-five-degree heat was doing nothing to quash the high spirits of the players, who were coming to the end of their hour-long session. I had been invited to their ritualistic social hour, hosted after each session in the clubhouse. As cups of tea and coffee were acquired by the participants – who, thanks to a power cut, were denied the shower facilities of the changing rooms and were therefore adding to an already muggy atmosphere inside the moderately-sized room – I began chatting to a number of the club members. Two had entered the social room before and were fully clothed in ordinary wear. They had been watching the match from the side-lines, both having picked up injuries in recent weeks. They were both white-haired and in their late-sixties (they described most members as being in their mid-to-late sixties) and gave me the lowdown on some potential participants. There was one man who was pointed out in particular, who they evidently thought summed up the importance the club in the lives of the retired. This man, a short, rather round person who was bald – shaved but obviously also follically-lacking on the top of his head – had apparently lost his wife just a year or two previously, and had proclaimed that, were it not for finding the walking football club, would have definitely 'gone' as well. This was said to me in utmost sincerity. Another was adamant that the physical benefits of regular exercise, whilst obviously good, were nothing compared to the tonic that was regular social interaction. He said: "it's not their bodies that you have to worry about, it's their…," and pointed to his temple, to indicate 'minds'.

Nigel was kind enough to gain the attention of the group and gave the floor to myself. I delivered a very short presentation of the reasons for my being there and used the opportunity to hand out participant information sheets to all in attendance. Sixteen had stayed behind for the social, and there was some interest in what I was doing and why I was conducting my research. There were nods around the room when I suggested that there ought to be more research conducted with the (semi-)retired because you do not suddenly lose passion for the things who are passionate about come the end of full-time employment.

Two people came up to me to say that they would like to speak to me in a one-on-one interview situation. A couple of others were keen to talk but instead of arranging for a one-on-one

interview situation (I got the feeling that these particular people, whilst keen to chat about sport, were a little hesitant in the committing to a one-on-on scenario) invited me to a social engagement that they arranged weekly.

This meeting – their 'coffee morning' – took place the following day, in a seafront café in Cleethorpes. It was completely independent of the walking football club, but comprised of a number of its members, as well as some other football fans. I decided, in order to guarantee data from this group and not risk scaring them off with proposals of one-on-one interviews, to suggest a focus group, there and then, at the coffee house. I conducted a couple of interviews.

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