

Sport Spectators and the Social Consequences of Commodification: Critical Perspectives from Scottish Football

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The commodification of football has been the subject of substantial sociological debate but has received relatively limited scrutiny in terms of sustained comparative empirical research. This article draws heavily on interviews with supporter groups, journalists, and officials in Scottish football to examine a range of issues relating to fan experiences and understandings of football's commodification. The author examines how fans respond to their labelling as customers and considers whether they are alienated or marginalized from football in economic and cultural terms. The author explores how the game's commodification can be at the expense of the most deserving supporters and undermines the future reproduction of fan communities. The author concludes by arguing for a nuanced sociological reading of supporters in regard to commodification, which appreciates both the fans' market pragmatism and their normative critiques of distributive justice in the game.

Keywords: *football; commodification; fans; Scotland; sociology*

Since the early 1970s, the commodification of football has generated substantial scrutiny, primarily of a critical nature, from social scientists and journalists in the United Kingdom.¹ Particular concern has been directed at the impact of commodification on football supporters, notably in the cost of attending fixtures or watching on subscription television stations. In recent work, I have explored in general theoretical terms the impact of commodification on spectator identities with reference to coterminous processes of globalization and post-modernization (Giulianotti, 2002). I have also co-authored a normative critique of the commodification of sport (Walsh & Giulianotti, 2001) that is currently being expanded into a contracted book.

Most analyses by U.K. researchers have focused on conceptual issues relating to commodification rather than advancing detailed qualitative findings from empirical research with diverse groups of supporters. Certainly, at best, there is need to update and extend sociological

knowledge of how football supporters experience commodification. More seriously, it could be argued that an analytical bias among scholars has produced some serious empirical lacunae on this topic.

In this article, I seek to move the sociological emphasis toward that empirical side by exploring the critical narratives of different social groups in relation to the direct and indirect consequences of football's commodification. The research was undertaken between March 2003 and October 2004 and involved interviews in Scotland, England, and overseas with supporters, football officials, and journalists associated with Scottish football. I have a particular interest here in five kinds of questions regarding supporters and commodification. First, within the context of the game's contemporary political economy, how do these respondents construct senses of supporter identity? Second, do supporters adopt a pragmatic outlook in regard to the game's commercialization, and to their market identity, as paying customers, in relation to their club? Third, what financial and cultural sacrifices are made by supporters in regard to the increasing commercialization of the game? Fourth, are there particular forms of resource scarcity within the political economy of football that serve to intensify patterns of social exclusion? Fifth, are there broader pathologies that may reach beyond football in regard to the game's commercialization?

Inevitably, these research questions give rise to diverse responses. It would be absurd to expect a single, unified voice and homogeneous political stance to be adopted by all respondents on these issues. Nevertheless, there are some strong continuities of analysis, argument, and self-understanding among supporters, and these are noted in the subsequent discussion.

Research Groups and Structural Context

Most observations come from supporters and (to a lesser extent) officials at five Scottish football clubs: Celtic, Rangers, Aberdeen, Motherwell and Brechin City. Most interviewees were involved in official supporters' clubs, Supporter Trusts, or recognized fan movements with direct connections to their football club.² Most of the Scottish-based fans can be considered hard-core supporters, in being season-ticket holders at their club and regularly attending away fixtures.

The five football clubs were selected to ensure the canvassing of a wide range of supporter experiences, expectations, identities, and relationships relative to the commodification of football. Celtic and Rangers (known collectively as the Old Firm) are based in Glasgow, have dominated Scottish football since the late 19th century, have a long history of intense ethno-religious rivalry, and attract 45,000 to 60,000 supporters to each of their home fixtures.³ Aberdeen had been

Scotland's team of the 1980s, winning three league championships and two European trophies; but between 1993 and 2004, the club had attracted modest crowds of around 10,000 to home fixtures and had spent much of its time near the bottom of the Scottish Premier League (SPL). Motherwell are based in Lanarkshire near Glasgow, attract around 4,000 to 5,000 fans, and have little history of success. Motherwell became insolvent in April 2002 but were pulled from administration in April 2004 after reaching agreements with creditors. Brechin City are a low-budget, semi-professional club from a small town in the east of Scotland; they attract average crowds of around 500 to 600, and play in the lower divisions of Scottish football. Unlike the other four clubs, which are largely owned and controlled by particular individuals or small groups of shareholders, Brechin are a membership association and so effectively belong to their season ticket holders.

The SPL lives in a different financial and football universe to the big five European leagues in England, Italy, Germany, Spain, and France. The SPL's 2002 to 2003 total turnover was only £154 million, around one eighth of that in England. Celtic and Rangers account for £110 million of SPL revenues, meaning that the other clubs are increasingly uncompetitive in U.K. and European terms. Although in recent years the Old Firm have tended to gain automatic entry to the top European competition, the Champions League, neither team has progressed beyond the first group stage of the tournament, notwithstanding Celtic's run to the 2003 final of the less prestigious Union des Associations Européennes de Football (UEFA) Cup.

More specifically, the views of supporters, officials, and journalists need to be located in the context of five kinds of political economic crisis within Scottish club football.⁴

- In the football season 2002 to 2003, the 12 teams in the SPL had an unsustainable collective net debt of approximately £186 million, around 20% more than their total revenues. Three clubs (Motherwell, Livingstone, and Dundee) were in administration, another (Hearts) was deciding to sell its stadium to pay debts, and a fifth (Dunfermline) would be forced to renegotiate player contracts to stave off insolvency.
- Projected television revenues declined steeply after the SPL initially rejected a £44 million 4-year deal with Sky television but were forced subsequently to accept a 2-year £18 million deal from BBC television. This contrasts with approximately £550 million earned by the English Premiership from broadcasting deals in 2002 to 2003.
- The SPL is dominated by the Old Firm of Celtic and Rangers, whose annual revenues are at least seven times larger than those of their nearest competitors. Thus, the SPL suffers from a

chronic and markedly unattractive certainty of outcome: Only the Old Firm can claim the top two places.

- The Old Firm harbor ambitions to compete effectively against Europe's top clubs but are hamstrung by the SPL's relatively miniscule income from domestic broadcasting deals. Rangers sought to override this problem during the 1990s by recruiting expensive European players but subsequently fell into enormous debt (£72 million in 2004). Both Old Firm teams have worked hard to control debts in recent years, paying low transfer fees for players and seeking to maximize income directly from supporters. Meanwhile, large teams in the big European leagues move steadily further ahead by stacking up ever-greater television income.
- Most clubs outside the Old Firm have been forced by economic and cultural (playing style) pressures to abandon the policy of recruiting experienced but mediocre overseas players and have moved toward playing young Scottish footballers. Unfortunately, during the past decade, the standard of Scottish players has declined dramatically: In December 2004, the Scotland national team was ranked officially at a dismal 86th place in world football.

The discussion is divided into five parts. I begin by considering briefly how supporters define themselves in terms of their commitment to their team and their understandings of other types of football follower. Second, I explore in detail the impact of commercialization in terms of redefining supporter identities. I consider different narratives regarding supporter, fan, and customer identities. I note in particular how many supporters are alienated by the imposition of what the legal philosopher Margaret Radin (1996) terms *market rhetoric* in this regard.⁵ Third, I address the issue of whether supporters are squeezed financially and culturally in regard to the game's commercialization. Fourth, I focus on a specific issue—distributive justice in regard to prestige match tickets—whereby the commodification of football may serve to exclude many dedicated supporters. Fifth, I examine four wider, socially dysfunctional (or pathological) consequences of the commodification of football. I conclude by locating these research findings in the context of prior sociological analysis of football and commodification.

1. Supporter Identity: A Way of Life, Not Glory Hunting

It is important, at the outset, to clarify how particular spectator groups understand their identity as supporters per se. Among the most committed football supporters, who attend their club's home and away fixtures, I shall briefly summarize four core aspects of their identity. First, as Robertson (1992) notes, British cultural studies has long been concerned with "*the natural intimacy* of culture and social relationships and structures—culture as the *way of life* of a people" (p. 40).

Many football supporters indicate that British cultural studies is on the right track empirically because they explain their personal affection for their club precisely in these terms: as a way of life and as one that may undergo cross-cultural diffusion.

Rangers are not a football club, they're a way of life. If people don't like that, fine. I've got a friend who's from Rostock. He's a Rangers man. He stays in a wee East German town, but he's a real Rangers man, he phones me up when Rangers reserves get beat, he's a real Ranger. You can't just say, "I like blue so I'm a Rangers man." (Steve, Rangers fan, Glasgow)

Second, for many, the supporter has a traditional duty to support the team irrespective of its fortunes. The supporter's obligation in this regard should not be countermanded by the market-centered perspective that paying customers are free to voice coruscating criticisms of their team.

As John Greig [ex-Rangers' player and manager] once said on the radio, and I agree with this, if you're a supporter, you'll support your team through the good times and the bad times. (John, Aberdeen fan, Aberdeenshire)

Roddie: People pay money to get into the game, and they say that they've a right to say what they want. But heavy criticism is detrimental to the team, so they should just shut up.

Paul: The clue is in the word *supporter*. You support your team. If you're not happy, then you wait until the end of the game, and boo them off, or just sit there in total silence. (Motherwell fans, Lanarkshire)

The possibility of changing that way of life by entirely abandoning the team or choosing to support a more successful side is anathema to the supporter's self-identity.

Third, regular match-goers differentiate themselves strongly from armchair fans. Dedicated supporters are not influenced by televised football or inclement weather

OK, if it's down to some of the waverers, you've got a percentage there, if it's a cold, wet night at home to Berwick Rangers and you only turn up every now and again, then you'll stay in the house and watch the Champions League or whatever is on. But if you're devout, you'll be there. (Scott, Brechin official, Brechin)

Some supporters criticize the quality of the club allegiance that armchair fans profess to possess. Particular criticism is directed at armchair fans who claim affinity to large, successful clubs located some distance from their homes.

My 11-year-old boy has pals who support Rangers, but they're not real fans, they don't go to games, they've just seen them on TV. So I ask them why they

support Rangers, and not their local team. Anyway, I don't allow them into my house with Rangers shirts on. They have to take them off or change. My wife thinks it's unreasonable but I don't. (Ian, Aberdeen fan, Aberdeenshire)

However, some supporter groups recognize, in line with crowd figures historically, that there are many fans who no longer attend fixtures for a variety of reasons. To safeguard the economic viability of the club, it is important to help draw these supporters back into the stadium. This policy can be undermined socially if established fans are overly concerned with displaying their subcultural capital, in claiming to have some kind of ethical or micro-political superiority, over the missing thousands.⁶

On our Web site, we make strong mention of the fact that this club has supporters much further beyond those who simply go to games. With some supporters' groups, there is a bit of an elitist attitude—you know, "I go to all the games, so I'm right" attitude. To me, that's wrong. If you've not been for 5 years, you've still got an opinion about how the football club should be. The question then needs to be raised: Why aren't you going? What can the club do to make it better for you? Is it just performances, or the loss of terracing, or problems with comfort? (Nick, Aberdeen fan, Aberdeen)

Fourth, supporters also tend to display most respect for those fans who keep the weakest, least successful clubs alive through dedicated attendance.

There's always the view out with the Old Firm that fans who support other teams, not the Old Firm, are the "real" fans. It takes a lot more to watch teams with little chance of winning something. Obviously, Old Firm fans disagree, saying they're as committed as rest. (Michael, Motherwell official, Lanarkshire)

Andy: I went through to East Stirling last week, and if that's not a loyal fan base, then I don't know what is.

Jack: Yeah, me and my mate went to see them. They are officially the worst team in British football, and it's an eye-opener. Those guys who go every week deserve all the credit they can get. That's not meant to be patronizing—I really mean it. They follow their team week in and week out, and they are rank. (Motherwell fans, Lanarkshire)

Regular supporters at all clubs disparage glory hunters, who follow sides only on condition of their success.

Lorraine: What bugs me is all the people who leave Brechin every week to watch the Old Firm. That pisses me off. You could fill two buses with them, easy; not so much Rangers but Celtic certainly. It's always been like that.

Susan: When Brechin were playing Rangers down at Ibrox [Rangers' home stadium], we took more than half the town. I was half an hour late for the bus,

I couldn't get off work. I was raging. My whole family went, my mum went. But what annoyed me most was that all those folk went to the game just because it was Rangers, although they'd never been to a Brechin game, and that pissed me off.

When we won the Third Division championship, there were folk there that never normally go. I went to the toilet and this woman was saying "Oh, it's so exciting us winning the championship." And I said, "How many times have you been in the Glebe [Brechin's home ground]?" and she said, "This is my first time here." I said, "You're not a Brechin fan, you're a glory hunter," and that's what annoys me. I don't mind Brechin fans taking their kids to the Rangers game, if they go every week, but that annoyed me. . . .

John: But you get glory hunters with every team.

Susan: Why can't they go every week so we can get the money in that we desperately need?

John: Because they are what you call "glory hunters." But Brechin has a core of support that will go and watch Brechin in any game no matter what position we're in. (Brechin fans, Brechin)

Long-standing Old Firm supporters tend to be particularly critical of consumer-type or corporate fans whose attendance is dependent on the team doing well. These wealthier, irregular fans can afford to pay for additional benefits from the club, in contradistinction to the experience of ordinary punters.

You'll not see these fashionable fans at ordinary games, but if we are on a winning trail you'll see them. Like last season, we went to Barcelona, we didn't see them outside because we were in the pubs, in the usual meeting points for Celtic fans abroad, but you saw these fans in the game because things were going OK for Celtic at the time. (Tom, Celtic fan, Glasgow)

Diehard supporters also consider that weaker fans are liable to undermine the atmosphere at matches by offering little vocal support for the team.

They buy their season tickets, they're seen as bandwagon jumpers. When Souness came, it was a fashion thing to follow Rangers in the '80s, and a lot of them bought season tickets. To me that's half the problem with atmosphere, a lot of them haven't got passion for Rangers. . . . That's why the atmosphere at games is so bad at times.⁷ (Jack, Rangers fan, Glasgow)

Overall, then, committed supporters articulate their fan identities in terms of a way of life and duty toward supporting the team through good and bad times. These supporters differentiate themselves strongly from armchair fans and from glory hunters or bandwagon jumpers who conditionally follow sides.

In no way do these four dimensions provide an exhaustive checklist of supporter identities. We could add many more aspects, such as how supporters understand appropriate social relationships with their players and directors, the role of team-playing style, the construction of different traditions in terms of fan subcultures, the relevance of specific rivals in developing club identities, and the particular cultural nexus of the club and its surrounding community. However, for reasons of brevity, and in the context of the issues to be raised later in this article, I have concentrated on these four aspects of supporters' self-understanding.

2. Customers, Market Realism and Contested Supporter Identities

Despite the fact that emotional and biographical reasons rather than economic motives are behind their allegiances, no one could deny that supporters are heavily embedded within football's new cultural economy. Across the spectrum of a club's support, the largest financial contribution comes from the regular match-goers who constitute a consumer group that is also most likely to purchase official merchandise.

In terms of propensity to purchase, the season ticket tranche of our support far and away supports the club in a much, much bigger way than the rest of the nine million who have a sympathy for Celtic. So if you like, we've got 53,500 fans who produce most of the consumer sales. I'd love to grow the other nine million identified supporters to that level but we are some way away from that. (Celtic official)

Most supporters are resigned to the commodification of football and so consider the commercial work of their club to be an inevitable feature of the modern game. Supporters forward three kinds of discourse in this regard. First, there is the generalized recognition that to survive at its current level of operation, the club has no alternative to its business strategies.

I think financially, there's probably not a lot that Celtic can do about it. I'm not sure if it's as you say people are in a higher earning bracket now. But we talked about the month of March, we spent about £132 just to watch Celtic in Scotland, and that excluded the use of our season tickets. (Frank, Celtic supporter, Glasgow)

Second, compared to 20 years ago, many supporters of big clubs have routine experiences of attending overseas fixtures. Such heightened cosmopolitanism enables supporters of big clubs to provide critical comparisons with other European teams in terms of the social consequences of football's commodification. Many fans highlight the comparative advantages of their club in regard to ticket prices and the overall match-day experience.

I don't think Celtic have a lot of say in it, it's the way of football, it's a measure of our success. Yes, it is expensive, but yes, the Celtic fans seem to do it. So I'm not sure what Celtic can do to hold down the prices, because we're growing in stature and in Europe. To keep that up, you have to pay players' wages, you have to compete in Europe. I think Celtic's ticket prices for games were perfectly reasonable, compared to some grounds that I go away to where they don't have a women's toilet—I'm talking about Europe, I'm talking Champions League football, and they're charging you £46 for a ticket. (Patrick, Celtic supporter, Glasgow)

Third, some supporters are very cautious about the effects of a significant reduction in costs for fans. In 1998, Motherwell sought to build a stronger local fan base by cutting admission prices and recruiting expensive players with strong reputations. However, crowd figures stagnated and the club was forced into administration in April 2002. In retrospect, some Motherwell fans are critical of these policies.

Cutting prices can be criticized to some extent. At Aberdeen, the old chairman's argument was always that you never cut the prices because he'd never do it at the cinemas he controlled. Once you've done that, you can't get the price back up since you'll be saying to the public, "This is the same product that you got before at a lower price". (Michael, Motherwell supporter, Motherwell)

One of the most controversial issues relating to the commodification of football concerns the proposed entry of market rhetoric by way of reclassifying the supporter as a consumer or customer. There are four strands of argument advanced by supporters, journalists, and club officials on this specific question.

First, some supporters consider the football club as one of many leisure industries that compete to satisfy the consumer's needs. On one hand, televised football is seen as engendering what might be termed a *mundane cosmopolitanism* among Scottish club supporters, thereby increasing their comparative criticisms toward the local team.⁸

The expectations among supporters are much higher than they used to be, I don't know why. Maybe people are watching the telly and seeing what can be done, you know, Roberto Carlos can do this, Zidane can do that. So they say, "Why can't our lot do that, they're just guys the same?" (Henry, Motherwell fan, Lanarkshire)

A lot of folk are fed televised football. They have Sky television, so they get Spanish games, Italian games, the English games are usually of a pretty good standard. Then there's European Champions League games that are on live with high quality players all the time. And then they look at what's on offer at

Pittodrie [Aberdeen's home stadium], and they say, "No." (Dave, Aberdeen fan, Aberdeenshire)

On the other hand, the construction of consumer identities promotes, among supporters, a market rationale whereby, if the game cannot deliver, whether in terms of quality of performance or service provision, the customer may take his or her money elsewhere. This market discourse is particularly relevant when reckoning the opportunity cost of match attendance relative to alternative entertainment. The conclusions of many supporters are not always unsympathetic to the club's commercial interests.

It's dead right in terms of supporters being seen as consumers, and that you'll go off and get something else that fits your needs if football doesn't do it. There are lots more golf courses out there, and you've computers and so on. (Colin, Aberdeen fan, Aberdeenshire)

I think when you look at it in terms of pricing, you've got to look at it in terms of what you get for your spend. Tonight you've also got Elton John playing here for £35 a ticket. In fairness, people will pay £35 for a concert and think nothing of it. For us to pay £30 for a Champions League match at a great level, with all the atmosphere, I don't think we're being priced out. (Peter, Celtic fan, Glasgow)

Second, for commercial figures in the game, the market-focused identity of supporters is understood to be an essential part of football's general modernization in terms of improving stadium facilities, services, and forms of public communication. Thus, the humanizing of football's social environments is rationalized in market terms.

I think, like a lot of football clubs, we've been forced to modernize, it sounds a little cliché, fans despise it, but we should view fans as "customers" as that's what clubs are doing in managing their relationships. . . . Football clubs in general terms have sought to improve their products and services on offer to fans so that it's more in comparison to what you'd expect walking into a shop, café, bar, whatever you will. So there's a certain mind-set change that they're not just fans but customers as well who deserve a certain level of quality, product, price, whatever you want to call it. (Steve, Rangers official)

I think if you compare us with years gone by, and I mean back to the '40s and '50s, I don't know if supporters' clubs existed, or if there was a relationship between fans and club. I think the wooden doors closed Monday to Friday, they only opened to take your ticket money on the Saturday. I think the relationships that we and other clubs have with their fans is much better, through use of databases, supporters' clubs, membership clubs, the club magazine, programs where we're always asking people things, we'll also do independent marketing surveys and so on. (Frank, Celtic official)

Some club officials perceive effective dialogue with fans to have been undermined by the penchant of formal supporters' organizations for confrontational relationships with boards of directors. To establish new lines of communication with the supporter, and to measure their efficacy, club directors reach for contemporary marketing devices.

But, fans are almost trained not to feel part of the club. It's an "us and them" mentality. They don't necessarily want to be part of a "big conversation", and that's not to endorse Tony Blair's daft idea. We do try to communicate more with fans, and yes, we've been to see the supporters' organizations. But it mainly has to be through e-commerce that we reach them. There are more people on the net, and we have a great club Web site, so much so that we are a media in our own right now, we can reach supporters directly. (Kenny, Aberdeen official)

Third, some have argued that, in the contemporary game, the value of someone's commitment to the club must be measured in financial rather than affective terms. The former Celtic chairman and controlling shareholder, Fergus McCann, advanced a categorical differentiation between supporters and fans. For McCann, supporters put their money where their mouth is by buying match tickets and merchandise to advance the side's competitiveness; fans, conversely, lack such direct investment.

A "fan" is the person you have been talking about, somebody who watches the game on television, and so contributes to whatever the television station puts into football. But he's not a supporter of the club. When I say "supporter," I don't mean, "Clap clap, on you go the Celtic." It's when you put something on the table and say, "Yes, I'm going to support you." (Frank, Celtic official)

Many supporters agree with this market-focused differentiation, particularly in the context of Scottish football's grim political economy, and the needs of all clubs to secure regular income to survive. Moreover, in paying into games, these supporters are adding to the occasion, making the spectacle more attractive and socially meaningful.

But I still see the supporters as the ones who pay into grounds every week as opposed to those who are armchair fans. Sure, these people really are fans, they might profess to know more about the game than the supporters who go, they get more information from television perhaps, and indirectly they are putting money in via television contracts. But football without a crowd is not on. So yes, I see a distinction between supporters and fans. (Michael, Motherwell fan)

Fourth, some supporters with backgrounds in business or club administration advance a more neoliberal thesis: that football is an industry in which the deep emotional or community attachments of customers are complicating variables. Politically, it is contended, supporters have

no say in clubs that they do not own. This argument flatly rejects the theses of some sociologists, that supporters see their club as a participatory democracy in which their voice is heard (see Taylor, 1971a). Moreover, it stands in sharp contrast to the view that each club requires a supporters' trust to represent fan interests.

You've an emotional ownership with the club, but supporters have to realize that they are not the real owners of a club. There's a difference between having an emotional attachment and a financial ownership of the club. You have to separate the two. . . . It's got to be run as a business. . . . The only problem in football is that emotions play a huge part, and that's the difference. They're trying to run a business and customers have an emotional tie to it. In my business, none of my customers are like that. (Ian, Aberdeen fan, Aberdeenshire)

Reform of Scottish football is not a matter for supporters. I speak as a shareholder and former chairman of a Scottish club. It's a business like Marks and Spencer, it's not for supporters. Marks and Spencer's customers don't create Web sites to articulate their views. Football should be the same; it's a business. Reform is a matter for the clubs. . . . There is a sense that football is a public property, but it's not, it's a private business. The SPL is a private body that sets it's own rules for its members. We'll not get away from that. (Bill, Scotland fan, Glasgow)

In sharp contradistinction, football supporters and some officials advance two kinds of criticism in regard to the entry of market rhetoric to the relationships of fans and clubs. First, some fans point to evidence of hypocrisy among clubs by, on one hand, defining *supporters* as *customers* while, on the other hand, taking these customers for granted in terms of public relations.

Any club that's out of touch with its fans, the fans vote with their feet and stop coming, so yes, they need to be in touch. So yes, there should be encouragement, but there won't be much because most chairmen, no matter where you are, are probably pretty self-centered and don't like criticism: "It's my money, I'll do what I want." (George, Brechin official)

I know personally one lassie who used to be in the ticket office, and she got on great with everybody. But she doesn't work there anymore because they told her she's getting too familiar with the customers. It must be the only business in the world where they sack you for being too friendly with the customers. (Charlie, Aberdeenshire)

Second, the most serious and sustained criticism by supporters occurs through the rejection of their categorization as *customers*. Rangers fans in particular have denigrated a market categorization that they consider to be fundamentally inadequate for capturing the nature of their football identity.

Bill: It's not just with Rangers, but with all clubs, it's changed, especially the most successful ones. We're perceived not as fans now but as customers. The game is run as a business, but it's not as cold-hearted as business. It's an emotional thing, supporting your team.

Jack: In the '70s and the early '80s, they needed us. They weren't getting 50,000 a week. But now, they don't want me there, they'll sell my seat if I don't take it. (Rangers fans, North-West England)

Some fans reject the notion of customer by arguing that, unlike some of their club's owners and directors, the dedicated support has no market mobility. As one message posted on a leading fan Web site asked,

I'm not a customer customers come and go. I'm a supporter, a fan, a follower. I will be there through thick and thin. Will David Murray [the majority shareholder at Rangers]??? (PC Reg Hollis, www.followfollow.com, 31 May 2003)

Thus, supporters do not understand themselves as possessing simple market choices between clubs. If clubs close or merge, these supporters cannot transfer their allegiances to another brand or club.

There is a great chasm between the people who run our club and the supporters. The people who run our club refer to us as customers, whereas we see ourselves as supporters. A customer has a choice. A supporter does not have a choice. If you took this to supporters of Third Lanark, now Third Lanark have not been around for 36 years, but supporters of Third Lanark are still supporters of Third Lanark, where else can they go?⁹ That's what we say, we're Rangers supporters, we don't have a choice, we don't have anywhere to go. (David, Rangers fan, Lanarkshire)

A similar form of defense is advanced by supporters of small clubs when they are confronted by the arguments of some business figures in football, that their teams should amalgamate to produce more competitive sides. The supporters respond that they would be alienated by their club's enforced closure and would be unlikely to establish a deep emotional (and financial) bond with a new football team.

Overall, then, the established supporters are market realists in terms of accepting the club's commercial endeavors as a *fait accompli*. In turn, club officials and particular supporter groups emphasize the market's role in modernization and communication with fans. The market-centered differentiation between supporter and fan has also been forwarded and adopted by some club officials and supporters, although others disparage clubs that offer poor customer

service. More seriously, the imagining of supporters as consumers generates particular critical discussion, notably in failing to convey the deep personal bonds between fans and clubs.

3. Financial and Cultural Sacrifices in Contemporary Fandom

The relationship of football's advanced commodification to the possible social exclusion of supporters has generated some strong critical commentaries (Conn, 1998, 2004; McGill, 2002; Wagg, 2004). Certainly, the financial demands made by clubs on supporters are greater than ever.

The direct cost of match tickets has gone up markedly. At Rangers, in the 1987/1988 season, a season-ticket for the Main Stand cost £120, or for the Copeland Road Stand it was £100, whereas the cheapest adult entry price for an individual match was £3 for the standing enclosure. Sixteen years later, these figures stood at £555 for the Main Stand center (up 462% from 1987) and £377 (up 377%) for the cheapest season tickets, and £20 (up 666%) for the cheapest adult entry. At Celtic for 1987/1988, season ticket prices were £85 for the Main Stand, £50 for the standing enclosure, and £2.50 for the cheapest adult entry price for an individual match. For 2003 to 2004, Celtic charged £530 for the Main Stand (up 624% from 1987) and £330 (up 660%) for the cheapest season tickets, and £22 (up 880%) for the cheapest adult entry (with restricted view) for an individual game. The total U.K. Retail Prices Index inflation rate during this 14-year period was around 70%: Less than one tenth of some of these rises in ground admission prices. Thus, if Scottish football clubs do understand themselves as one of many leisure industries striving to attract consumers, it would appear that in admission costs alone they have failed to match their erstwhile competitors. Of course, this says nothing of the huge proliferation of increasingly expensive club merchandise that has appeared during the past decade.

And yet, at the biggest clubs, the market exclusion of supporters would appear to lack statistical referents. At Celtic, for example, average annual crowds were as low as 18,390 in the season 1983/1984 but stood at 58,500 for 2003/2004; for Rangers, average attendances hit a low of 16,400 for the season 1981/1982 but were 49,250 for 2003/2004. Old Firm supporters at home and away fixtures, by their very presence, seem to refute the claim that rising costs are driving ordinary supporters away from stadiums.

Supporters, officials, and journalists advance four lines of discussion regarding social exclusion. First, for some staunch or faithful fans, alienation from their club may well have cultural and social elements rather than purely financial causes. Again, the misrecognition of supporters as customers comes into play.

I don't think we're squeezed out financially. You'll always find money for a season ticket. It's just that you don't feel like you're wanted there anymore, you're just a customer, not part of the fabric of the club. (Alan, Rangers fan, North-West England)

Second, some fans deploy the instrumental logic of consumerism to debate the role of market choice in meeting football's expenses. Such market rationalizations are not restricted to those with low disposable income but involve more subjective considerations regarding the value of football-related commodities.

Steve: I know people who aren't going to away games, they just can't afford it.

Tom: My point is that it's not poorer people who don't go, it could be people who are fairly well off, who say 20 odd pounds for Easter Road or 30 odd pounds for Champions League games is not on. Maybe it's too much from their point of view.

Neil: People complain about the price of tops, but my view is, well, don't buy them.

Tom: There is a choice element to that, you don't have to buy every club magazine. I choose not to. It's the same with the tops. (Celtic fans, Glasgow)

However, clubs reckon financially on the successful promotion of expensive tickets and new lines of merchandise to their supporters to generate future revenues. The family thus constitutes an extended financial unit into which fresh doses of commodity fetishism can be injected on an annual basis.

Grant: If you go to Celtic or to any club and you're a season ticket holder, you get these glossy brochures. If you've got kids, they see the new strips, the new tracksuits, and they want them.

Linda: I'm like that with the new brochure. And you hear about the £25 million merchandise deal that they'll get from Nike, and I'm thinking, "Aye, but who's paying for it?" I've to run out and buy three new strips in July, not just one. (Celtic fans, Glasgow)

Third, many SPL club supporters reported that they were less likely to attend specific away fixtures. Supporters criticized these host clubs for charging excessive admission prices, imposing high concession rates for young people and pensioners, and providing inadequate facilities. Such criticisms point to definite categories of social exclusion in the game.

One time at Parkhead [Celtic's stadium], we paid £23, I was told by stewards to sit down, and I said, "Where? There's no seat", and they said, "Rangers fans

were here the other week and broke them, and we're not replacing them". Tome, the pricing of football has to come down, to something basic—maybe £15 or so. (Andy, Aberdeen fan)

The big issue for us is pricing. We're very angry with the price of admission at away games. Aberdeen charge £20 for adults, £15 for kids and OAPs [Old Age Pensioners] as their concession price. That's not a concession! It should be half. We were here for the game against Inverness a couple of weeks back, and we'd six kids standing outside because they didn't have £15 to get in. Only through some dialogue with the stewards did we get six of them in for £60, otherwise they'd have been left standing outside. To me it's diabolical. (Brian, Motherwell fan, Lanarkshire)

Fourth, no one denies that supporters often must part with sizeable shares of their disposable income to maintain football participation. Some observers profess perplexity at the scale of supporters' financial sacrifices, suggesting that the game has a greater personal and social hold on its followers compared to the past.

As a rule of thumb, I have a left of center and Christian socialist background, so I would believe that poorer fans are left behind, but to be honest, at games, I don't see much evidence for it. A season ticket at Ibrox costs £350, but I still see guys on low incomes spending on it. I can maybe see why this happens if it's a real passion for them, so that it's worth it for them. (Gordon, sports journalist)

But the point you have to bear in mind is that you ask, "What is the customer base and what can it support?" There's a lot of fans don't go now, there's no question about that, and I don't know how ordinary people can afford to go.

You see kids with parents going—how can they afford it? Even at Celtic Park—you see the parents and the two children, decked out in all their gear—how do they afford it? I think the reason they afford it is that football is so central to their lives that they spend all of their disposable income on football. (Michael, Motherwell supporter)

This heightened level of financial and temporal commitment to the game can have some high personal costs. Forms of extreme ambivalence and self-alienation can strike some supporters with low disposable incomes but strong senses of obligation toward backing their team:

We work all week and do without other luxuries. I work all the overtime I can get. I feed and clothe my kids. I get them to their football. The only thing I do is go to football and have a few drinks. Sometimes I'm like, "You're one sad sick bastard", but that's all I can afford to do. I pump every penny I can afford into that bloody club. Sometimes I get no thanks for it. (Linda, Celtic fan, Glasgow)

Overall, supporters do report that some of their associates are squeezed out of attending fixtures, particularly away matches that they deem to be poor value for money. Although some supporters argue that market choices may be made regarding consumption, other observers recognize that ever greater demands are made on fans' disposable income to maintain support for their club at the expense of alternative cultural domains.

4. The Political Economy of Scarce Access: Re-Commodifying Match Tickets

The marketing people at Scottish clubs recognize that in maximizing their revenues, they are stretching the financial elasticity of established supporters. New sources of revenue are required to depressurize economically these diehard supporters.

We found the average income of fans is £14,000 and they spend an average of around £1,000 on season tickets, following the club, merchandise and so on. And that's a pretty significant amount of money that a person is spending if they're only bringing in £14,000. It's difficult, hence the reason that you're talking about globalization. It's difficult, we're reaching saturation in Scotland with the audience, the fan base, hence our desire to bring new customers to the table, as opposed to squeezing the existing customers. (Scottish club official)

Two fresh social sources of income generation are noteworthy here in regard to supporters.

First, the development of a large international fan base is a long-term goal of larger SPL clubs. Only the Old Firm have any serious potential, and their overseas supporters are primarily first-generation Scottish or Irish expatriates. Most Old Firm supporters consider that little fundamental difference exists between fans in Scotland and those overseas. A few fans, however, are wary of any prioritization of international markets.

The club sometimes feel those guys are more important than the regular supporters, because there's a bit more money and marketing opportunity out in the States, and that line will come back to haunt the club I think. They've got to deal with the guys who are here every week, deal with us to get tickets, help us get tickets, back us up when the press rip the hell out of the supporters by demonizing us constantly. (Geoff, Rangers supporter, Glasgow)

Second, supporters are more directly aware of the various corporate packages and personal perks offered by clubs. Many fans appreciate that their club must optimize these revenues to survive.

Chris: Give the club their due, they do try to involve supporters in fund-raising things. But there is sometimes a difference—they're aiming more for businessmen to get involved, and there's a sense of an old tie network.

Nick: The focus is on getting funds into the club, and it is tied to the business community. That's not a criticism but more a fact of life. We try to get our views over if it is going too much one way.

Chris: There's never the sense that the real fans are being excluded every week. They just know it has to be local businesses to give assistance. (Brechtin fans, Brechtin)

Certainly, financially, clubs require more business people, there are more people who are looking at hospitality and business class seats, and as a regular supporter who has a normal season ticket seat, we have to accept that that is the case, that these people have the money to invest in the club. (Pat, Celtic fan, Glasgow)

Nevertheless, some supporters are highly critical of the reward principles that are used to attract investments: "It seems to be the more money you have to contribute, the more you can get out of the club. For me, that flies in the face of everything that Celtic were founded for"¹⁰ (Gerry, Celtic fan, Glasgow).

The strongest criticism of this strand of commodification concerns the priority that these wealthier supporters can buy in regard to obtaining tickets for prestige fixtures, such as Cup finals, major away fixtures in Scotland, or glamour away matches in Europe. Priority ticket schemes effectively re Commodify match tickets and are considered to be highly unjust in favouring wealthier patrons over other fans: "I think it gets a bit annoying that so-called money men get the tickets in front of the ordinary Celtic supporters. We're all putting money into the club so we should all have the same opportunities" (Sheila, Celtic fan, Glasgow).

Specifically, priority schemes produce, for many supporters, a crucial market pathology in terms of fundamental distributive injustices. The most deserving supporters are perceived as being denied their due rewards (match tickets) for supporting the team in more arduous or demanding circumstances. Typically, supporters contrast the financially based commitment of these elite clients with the more dedicated and longer standing passion of ordinary, well-traveled fans.

I think what's happening is the ordinary supporters don't seem to be getting the chance to get the tickets like those who are in particular schemes. They're putting the money in and so they get the priority. There was a lot of guys went to all the games in Europe but they didn't get the Seville tickets.¹¹ To me, that's not fair, they should be getting first. (Steve, Celtic fan, Glasgow)

There is perhaps a belief that, for example, when it comes to big matches, the so called "suits" always manage to get their hands on match tickets whereas the "ordinary" fans who have been to every game (including, say, Motherwell

on a wet, windy midweek when the game is on Sky television!) miss out on Cup Final tickets, etc. (Nick, Rangers fan, Glasgow)

We ran a bus to Prague last year, the only one that went, we stayed in Prague, and traveled up to Teplice on the day of the game.¹² Celtic gave us 51 tickets for that game, not a problem, because nobody out of the guys who get priority in the executive clubs wanted to go. And we're on a boat coming home when we hear we've drawn Barcelona in the next round of the Cup. Then all of a sudden we weren't getting 51 tickets. We still ran a full bus, and there was only one guy who didn't in the end get into the Nou Camp stadium in Barcelona. But at the same time, I think Celtic could have a look and say, "There's guys running a bus to an away venue, they should have priority." We go to every game that we can—Europe, friendlies, you name it . . . (Brian, Celtic fan, Glasgow)

Some fans indicate that these injustices in ticket distribution alienate established supporters, although with varying consequences. Some supporters may harbor their disaffection personally; others may be alienated from the club in more long-term ways:

If I could afford it, I would probably buy nice comfy seats at Celtic Park, but I wouldn't do it with the expectation that it gives me more rights than the ordinary punter who's been traveling for years. There is a bit of resentment that's crept in, that the "Big Time Charlies" can come in and get the tickets while the guys like us are waiting for the scraps. (Gerry, Celtic fan, Glasgow)

But in the glory days, the club didn't want to know us. There are thousands who haven't forgiven the club. People who queued all night to get a ticket for one big European game, the queues were huge, but all the folk at one oil company had two tickets in their pay packets for that month. That's the kind of thing, if you know fans from that time, it put them off. (Donald, Aberdeenshire)

Public disputes between these different kinds of supporter are relatively rare. When they arise, however, they are likely to be initiated by established fans who object to signs of disinterest from wealthier spectators.

One of the things that irks me is that if you go to a Cup final at Hampden, you see bus load upon bus load of people arriving with the new Rangers scarf, because they've never had one before, and they're straight into the Center Stand. The other night at Ibrox, at the game against Panathinaikos, I was fortunate enough to secure a seat in the center stand just next to the director's box. I was in there, as soon as the Panathinaikos goal went in, the ball hadn't even hit the net, and the couple in front of me were up and out of their seats. I couldn't hold my tongue, and said, "I hope you're not looking for a ticket for the Cup final", although I wasn't as polite as that. It was only two to one to them at that point and still a fair bit of the game to go. (Chris, Rangers fan, Aberdeenshire)¹³

Overall, then, supporters certainly appreciate that their club must identify new revenue streams, including the corporate sector. They are wary of the possibility that these new economic and social relationships can unravel the close political and cultural ties between the club and supporters. At the largest clubs, the distribution of tickets provides the most acute barometer of social differentiation and exclusion within the support. Supporters are critical of the structurally established distributive injustices that enable suits and fat cats to access prestige match tickets at the expense of the hard-core support that follows the club to fixtures home and away.

5. Wider Pathologies in Football's Commodification

Supporter discourses also indicate that a wider range of injustices arise in regard to the commodification of football. Here, I detail briefly four of these problems.

First, I noted earlier the contested issue of the consumer identity of supporters. Following from this, we need to consider more fully the perceived threat to football from alternative leisure experiences. If football clubs are to downplay the participatory identities of supporters in favour of constructing consumer subjectivities, they must consider how the game competes within the recreational marketplace. Many supporters point to the cheaper, superior entertainment that is offered outside football, such as in cinemas, in public bars, and on satellite television.

A good comparison is with the cinema. Years ago, it was about the same price. Now you can go to the cinema for £6 or so, £14 for a family ticket, but at the football it's £15 minimum for the cheapest adult seat. You go to the cinema and it's warm, dry and you get the car parked; but it's cold, wet, and you're not sure what you'll get at the football. (Donald, Aberdeen fan)

What I find with a lot of them, a crowd goes to the bar along from the ground, they sit there, getting well pissed on £15 or so, it's warm and dry, they watch the scores come in as the day goes on, they sit and have a natter; and there are tons of people doing that in the city every Saturday afternoon. There are countless other attractions around as well. But the Scottish football authorities have lost the plot about why they open the gates on a Saturday and they don't have 30,000 rolling up. They're not mixing with real fans; they drive in with a chauffeur and traveling rug. (Jim, Aberdeen fan)

A lot of fans who were there in the past aren't there now. They're sitting at home. At the end of the day, people said pay-per-view [live football on subscription television] won't work, but it will if it's only £6 or £7 to see a game compared to £20 or £22 or £24 to get in, plus your travel cost and your program and food. If you're a parent, it could turn into a £75 or £100 day out; and that's not on. Pay per-view doesn't do that. (Ian, Motherwell fan)

Second, dedicated supporters are generally accepting of, and often actively promote, their club's marketing endeavors and merchandise sales. However, these customers are alienated when the club fails to deliver adequately in regard to the products that are sold.

With the club "bond", people were paying over a £1,000 to guarantee your seat for life. Now as long as I keep paying my money every year for my season ticket and I keep my nose clean, surely I've got a seat for life? They say you can sell it again and get the value on it, but I can't see anybody getting their money back on it, plus you've got to pay for your season ticket on top of that. And I wouldn't say it was the best stand in the world. (George, Rangers fan)

The club's record at dealing with things here [in North America] is, to say the least, abysmal. We helped promote that fan package for them, I think we sold 300 to 400 memberships at one convention; myself and two family members signed up, and I was back in their office 8 months later saying, "What happened, I've not heard anything from you? You've cashed the money the next day". But it was just apologies, they'd sublet the contract to some company in the south, it was a complete breakdown. Even now I was talking to the boys yesterday, they're getting DVDs that are meant to be for North America, but they arrive here and they're not working. (Jim, Celtic fan, Ontario)

There was a real shambles with the new strips. About 2 weeks before they were released, all our club members were given "exclusive access" to buy them at a special price: £40. When they hit the sport shops, they were £25 within a few weeks. We've sent them a strong letter and when we met, we voted to boycott all direct buying until the pricing was changed. They were fleecing their own support! We're just too damn loyal when it comes to the top [team shirt]. (Doug, Tayside)

Third, supporters pay substantial sums to watch their team, hence an evident level of professional endeavour and competence is expected of the players. Indeed, supporters are only too aware that after years of massive wage inflation, most of their football money goes on players: In the SPL for the season 2001/2002, 8 of the 12 clubs had salary expenditure of between 83% and 154% of annual turnover (Morrow, 2004). Such figures can generate a vicious financial circle, as player contracts soak up club revenues, thereby alienating fans who stop attending, placing the club in debt.

I think it ties in with what is the value of the product. If you've paid a fiver and it's not that great then you say, "Oh, well". But if you've paid £20, and players are just swanning about, then it's the old argument: "Who is paying your wages?" People will say it's just not worth it. That's why Scottish football is at the crunch as it could wither and die. (Steve, Motherwell fan)

Even if they've battled but lost, you can come away with a good feeling. But if they're just crap and not trying, why waste your time? That's what people are

saying now. Players haven't done their job and they're going home with a huge wage packet. (Helen, Aberdeen fan)

Fourth, in maximizing revenues from supporters, Scotland's clubs are perceived as undermining the football participation of young fans. This consequence of commodification runs the risk of killing the source of football's future players and audiences (Walsh & Giulianotti, 2001). Many clubs have some kind of family section where parents and children are seated together, but the atmosphere and viewing angles are often comparatively poor in these locations. Moreover, Old Firm fans often struggle to attend fixtures with their children as most seats are allocated annually to season ticket holders. For away fixtures, as noted earlier, the away supporters typically find that there are few if any concessions available to young fans.

Stephen: Do you not feel that one of the problems at Ibrox is the age. I'm 36 and I go to games and still feel young. There are not many youngsters about.

George: Part of that is down to the season ticket problem. My boy's 13 and I could not afford to take him to a game, because he couldn't sit beside me. I'd need to give my season book to a guy next to me for nothing, then go and buy two tickets for an adult and parent to sit. That can't ever be right. (Rangers fans, Glasgow)

They forget, my kids are 9 and 7, I take them to as many games as I can. That's the future support. . . . I'm taking three of us up to Dundee, and it's £60 before I'm out the door. (Anne, Celtic fan, Glasgow)

Concluding Comments

Where, we should ask, do these discourses leave sociological understanding of supporter identities in relation to commodification? Certainly, the supporters here advance different lines of argument or vocabularies of motive regarding the practical and normative aspects of football's commodification. Nevertheless, it is possible to highlight three important strains of thinking among supporters.

First, many fans maintain established discourses regarding their identity as supporters, in terms of viewing their club as a way of life and differentiating themselves from armchair fans or glory hunters. These arguments accord with and elaborate some prior observations of social scientists regarding the strong emotional and community-focused nature of supporter allegiance (see, for example, Armstrong, 1998, p. 8-9; Clarke, 1978; Hoggart, 1957, p. 85; Robson, 2000; Taylor, 1971a, p. 363). Among supporters interviewed here, affective, nonmarket understandings of their identity were very apparent in many interpretations of distributive justice within football. In general, supporters were highly favorable toward according major benefits in the game to long-

standing, widely traveled fans as opposed to those who had simply bought favor within the club. For example, where demand outstrips supply, tickets to key fixtures should be allocated to the former rather than the latter.

Second, many supporters displayed strong signs of either pragmatic accommodation or positive intellectual engagement with particular aspects of football's commodification. These supporter observations fit with the general points of some sociologists regarding the construction of new, market-focused identities among football spectators (see, for example, Critcher, 1979, p. 170-171; Giulianotti, 1999; Nash, 2000; Taylor, 1991, 1993). Inevitably, the financial crises endured by Scottish football were apparent in the thinking of many fans. The general rise in club ticket prices, merchandise commodities, and corporate packages is understood as an inescapable aspect of football's commercialism. The basic rationale is that if the supported club doesn't keep up with the prices of other clubs, it will fall behind financially and competitively. Some supporters accept the entry of market rhetoric to redefine the club in clinical terms as a business with customers. It could be argued, in this instance, that we have a potential case of misrecognition to adapt Bourdieu's (1988) concept whereby the market rhetoric of the club has the potency to transfer itself into the supporters' self-understanding.¹⁴ The higher costs of following football are taken by some to be an index, not of direct economic exclusion of supporters but of the rising financial and emotional commitment of fans to the game. More generally, the entry of market rhetoric regarding customers and products in Scottish football may be understood as the cultural price that has to be met by sport to ensure that facilities and services offered to supporters are humanized and modernized.

Third, and nevertheless, there are potent supporter criticisms regarding particular aspects of the commodification process. Strikingly, some supporters express their opposition in terms that are closely congruent to the critical analyses of some sociologists (see, for example, Armstrong & Young, 1999; Critcher, 1979; Giulianotti, 1999, 2002; Taylor, 1971b; Wagg, 2004). The most direct and recurring critique concerns the business-focused introduction of the terms "customer" or "consumer" to describe the supporter. Many supporters flatly reject such market rhetoric on the grounds that it fails to grasp the deep emotional, biographical, and community-focused quality of their attachment to their club. Supporters also forward implicit criticisms of the failures of football institutions to live up to their promise that commercialization and modernization of the game will improve the quality of the fan's experience. Some marketing divisions in football are considered to have failed to deliver value for money. The visiting supporters at away grounds also consider themselves to be particularly open to exploitation by

specific clubs. Moreover, supporters are especially critical of the unjust prioritization of financially advantaged fans when tickets to key fixtures are distributed. Other, more general pathologies associated with the commercialization of the game are noted. When understood in terms of a leisure industry, the game often struggles to provide the value for money by which comparisons are made with other consumer experiences. The problem is compounded when high-paid players fail to deliver sufficient endeavour to justify the supporters' outlay. Finally, more broadly, supporters recognize that commodification can undermine the socialization of young people into following their team at fixtures home and away.

One could, of course, advance the statement that all of the above points simply prove that supporters adopt simultaneous stances of resistance and accommodation toward football's commodification. One might argue that this generalization is reductive, inherently contradictory, and does some academic violence to the politico-cultural diversity and analytical depth of these supporter discourses. A more nuanced sociological conclusion must contain two elements.

First, we should appreciate the conjunctural nature of our respondents' comments. On one hand, we must refer to the substantive political economic context in which these social actors operate. Contemporary supporters are themselves better informed than were their predecessors in regard to the political economic problems faced by the Scottish game. On the other hand, we can consider the historical and interpretive processes by which the game has been gradually framed as a market-focused domain of recreation. The earlier comments of club officials on marketing and communication with customers also contributed in this regard, as did supporter discourses regarding their representation as consumers.

Second, we should appreciate the intricacy of the sociological problem by considering how supporters construct complex cultural political discourses about football's commodification. Evidently, although many speak a prudent language on the financial exigencies faced by their club, there are some clear limits in supporter thinking regarding the acceptability of commodification. In regard to the Old Firm, many diehard supporters are committed to spending heavily on tickets and merchandise and thereby put money into the club to assist in building a competitive team. Indeed, it would be churlish to ignore the fact that every match-goer is making an essential economic contribution to the relevant club. Nevertheless, these supporters typically reject the assumption that by placing substantial additional sums in the club, individuals or corporations should be allowed to queue-jump in regard to priority match tickets.

On this issue of distributive justice at least, we find the supporters drawing important normative lines regarding the commodification of sport.

Notes

¹ See for example Taylor (1971a, 1971b, 1993), Clarke (1978), Critcher (1979), Moorhouse (1986), Armstrong (1998), Giulianotti (1999, 2002), Nash (2000), Walsh and Giulianotti (2001), Wagg (2004), and Williams (1999).

² All U.K. football clubs have registered official supporters' clubs, whose functions are typically to organize travel to home and away fixtures and to distribute match tickets. Supporter Trusts have been established at most British football clubs. They are democratic bodies open to all fans who, when joining, receive a share in the club. The major function of Trusts is to pool small shareholder votes to give fans a stronger collective voice inside their club and even to gain a seat on the board of directors. Other fan movements include internet chat groups and, in Scotland, recent formations such as the Red Ultras (at Aberdeen) or the Blue Order (at Rangers) that seek to organize more vocal and spectacular displays of support for their teams at fixtures.

³ Both clubs have significant historical connections to Northern Ireland. Celtic supporters retain a strong Irish-Catholic identity, whereas Rangers have a staunch Protestant and Unionist culture within their support.

⁴ Most of the following figures are from Price Waterhouse Coopers (2004). For England, I have used Deloitte (2005). For an earlier discussion of these issues, see Giulianotti (2003).

⁵ On the ethics of commodification, see also Walsh (1998a, 1998b).

⁶ Thornton (1995) develops the concept of *subcultural capital* out of the work of Bourdieu. Thus, in youth subcultures, we find individuals who typically claim subcultural capital as a form of social status by seeking to display that they have more grasp and depth of involvement than do the other participants.

⁷ Graeme Souness was Rangers manager from 1986 to 1991. During that time, he exploited fully the club's strongest economic position in Scottish football by signing leading British players and dominating the domestic game.

⁸ On the concept of *mundane cosmopolitanism* in relation to globalization, see Tomlinson (1999).

⁹ Third Lanark were a prominent Scottish club with a strong history that included several league and cup wins until they were closed down by a liquidator in 1967.

¹⁰ Celtic were founded in 1888, by a Marist priest in the poor east end of Glasgow, as a charitable institution to feed the needy, primarily Irish-Catholic immigrants.

¹¹ Celtic lost to Porto of Portugal in the 2003 UEFA Cup final, contested in Seville. Eighty thousand Celtic fans from across the world traveled to the match; less than half of them managed to gain tickets to get into the stadium to see the game.

¹² Celtic played Teplice of the Czech Republic in the third round of the UEFA Cup in March 2004. The match was a relatively low status one for many Celtic fans because the club were almost certain to qualify for the next round of the competition, whereas Teplice are a team with no meaningful history in European football.

¹³ Scottish cup finals are played at a neutral venue, Hampden Park, in Glasgow, which holds 52,000 people. If Rangers or Celtic play in the final, they rarely receive more than 30,000 tickets for their supporters. This ticket allocation is significantly less than either club's number of season ticket holders, thereby placing an immense premium on match tickets.

¹⁴ Bourdieu (1988) employs the idea of misrecognition to explain the reproduction of social inequalities and divisions, notably through having the dominated groups understand that they are personally responsible for their failure in free and meritocratic systems of education.

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