



‘Football as the Women’s Second Language’

An Audience Study of Transnational Female Fans Living in Lund.

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Abstract

The sport of football is commonly perceived as a domain traditionally associated with masculinity, thereby marginalizing women who, as female fans, constantly encounter societal expectations regarding their genuine passion for the game. To achieve the status of being perceived as authentic, they often are 'forced' to negotiate their gender identities so that their fandom identity becomes evident. As a result, female fans of male football find themselves struggling in a world where their gender identity and fandom identity collide and are in conflict. Furthermore, female fans struggle to maintain the intensity of their fandom not only due to the male nature that constitutes football as a sport but also due to living and studying abroad. The role of media and transnationality play a crucial role in understanding and exploring how these factors shape female fans' experiences, engagement, and fandom. To critically analyze and engage with those concepts, 13 audience semi-structured interviews and one expert interview were combined with the media-go-along and media ethnography method. The audience interviews reveal the complex relationship of transnational female fans' engagement with football in their home countries and Lund. Gender roles in football come up as informants show that despite the progress made in the last year, in many countries, football continues to be predominantly associated with expressions and performances of traditional masculinity.

Furthermore, this method exhibits how identity is fluid and multifaceted. At times, transnational female fans are compelled to engage in identity negotiation, a process intertwined with the complexities of gender, national and transnational affiliation. Nevertheless, generally, they try to empower each other and engage in conviviality as they find common ways to share life with others in Lund. Lastly, the media ethnography exhibited how bars in Lund are still packed mostly with men. This phenomenon is dominant not merely in other countries but also Sweden. A few informants who joined me to watch matches in the bar showed how their gender is an obstacle to doing fandom the same way as men because they often lack the confidence to show their genuine support for the team fearing that they will encounter judgment. This study elucidates the struggle of female fans in assimilating within a milieu delineated by entrenched norms of traditional masculinity, both in their home country and Sweden.

Keywords: *Fandom, gender, identity, engagement, transnationality, media-go-along*

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1. Introduction

In 2016, my uncle became the president of the local team in Albania. Despite this great opportunity, I never visited the stadium he owns and never attended a match to support his team due to social pressure reinforcing the narrative that football is a male sport. Over the years, the stadium was always packed with male fans, which made it inaccessible for female fans like me to join. This background story was the departure point for my thesis and all other projects at Lund University in the last two years. The gender dynamics and fandom practices of transnational female football fan communities are intriguing aspects to analyze and explore, given the scarce academic research literature in this realm. Scholars have conducted various studies on women's football (Caudwell, 2013), but only a few have explored the engagement, fandom, and gender dynamics of transnational female football fans of male football. This study focuses mainly on this particular group, aiming to unpack and unravel how gender dynamics interplay in many cultures and how media and other aspects of sociality shape one's engagement and football, both in the home and host country.

Female football fans who watch male football remain a minority group despite the progress that has been made in the last decade to promote women's sports in the media. Over the years, the narratives around football fandom have been mainly constituted by a male-hegemony culture (Martínez-Andrés et al., 2017). An authentic football fan is socially constructed and believed to be a traditional male fan (Pope, 2008). Due to this factor, female fans often face different societal pressures to perform fandom in a way that conforms to the male fans. In cases when they refuse to adapt and conform to those beliefs and practices, female football fans' fandom is often questioned upon one's authenticity. Hence, female fans usually have no choice but to make several attempts to join and belong to this community. This often includes negotiating their gender identity or, in Connell's (1987) terms, 'redoing' their gender.

'Redoing' gender means complying with men's rules of performing fandom their way and being involved in the same activities as male fans, such as going to pubs, drinking beers, shouting, swearing, etc. Those behaviors and practices conflict with the social and gender imaginaries (Taylor, 2004; Butler, 1999) of one's understanding of womanhood. In many cultures and societies, women are not expected to watch football or support and belong to a fan community (Clark & Paechter, 2007; Coombs & Osbourne, 2022; Dunn, 2014). On the contrary,

women are expected to perform housewife duties and involve and engage themselves in activities that highlight their femininity (García & Welter, 2013). Hence, given the dynamic of football as a sport, women do not fit properly in this category.

In response to such a traditional convention, Butler (1999) and other feminist scholars (Connell, 1987; West & Zimmerman, 1987; Pope, 2008) challenge those narratives by claiming that gender is socially constructed. Those academic works may have influenced many female fans to challenge the discourse of womanhood and perform fandom in ways that make them look more masculine to prove their authenticity to others. However, such attempts to appear more 'authentic' can lead to legitimizing gender stereotypes by suggesting that "women with feminine attire are not interested in the game" (Pfister & Pope, 2018, p.256). Thereby, the discourse of womanhood often conflicts with being a fan. This research explores those dynamics and challenges the social constructivism of gender and fandom over the years by proposing that female fans should neither feel pressured to adjust to male fandom nor female fandom. On the contrary, everyone should feel welcome and listened to, regardless of gender and fandom practices. Furthermore, in this research, I want to look at *power relations* and the underlying layers of social problems, such as gender inequality. Flyvbjerg (2001) writes about power relations as the source of generating divisions and inequalities and claims that "it is precisely by paying attention to power relations that we may achieve more democracy" (p.98).

Furthermore, this thesis aims to contribute to a growing body of research by adding a transnational aspect to it. The transnational element seeks to explore the cultural differences and the role of media in shaping one's engagement and fandom. It seeks to analyze how the media hinders and/or enhances and enriches the experiences and engagement of female football fans living in Lund. It also seeks to explore other factors that have contributed to this realm such as the social aspect and cultural differences. Furthermore, this thesis expands on existing literature that explored the national identities of female fans of male football (Lenneis & Pfister, 2015) by adding the transnational audience and exploring how they perform fandom abroad. This research is primarily about female football fans, but it can also apply to all fans, regardless of their gender, who should feel included and represented in the academic discourse.

This thesis explores and answers three central research questions, each with significant implications for understanding gender, fandom, and transnational aspects in female football fandom. These questions are not just academic inquiries but key to challenging traditional gender

norms and fostering a more inclusive and diverse football fandom. This research is guided by three questions:

RQ1: How do transnational young audiences living in Lund engage, experience, and perform football fandom?

RQ2: How do they reflect on the role of media use in being a football fan?

RQ3: How do they negotiate their multiplicity of identities when they perform their fandom?

The first question aims to explore three modes of engagement; context, motivation, and modalities. Those three elements of engagement help to understand the experiences of transnational female football fans and the ways they perform fandom. This first question aims to capture the past experiences of informants and how they shaped their fandom today. The second question aims to explore and analyze how media shapes informants' engagement and fandom. It seeks to understand the role of media in enhancing or hindering the development and intensity of informants' fandom. The last question aims to examine the multiple identities that come through as informants share their experiences as football fans. Those identities include gender identity, national identity, and transnational identity where the most evident, prominent, and complex one is gender identity. This last question seeks to understand how informants negotiate their identities as they navigate between being female football fans and international students living in Lund. Furthermore, this thesis argues that despite progress shown over the years, female fans remain as a marginalized demographic within the fandom community, largely due to how gender and fandom are constructed and conceptualized in many societies. Rather than conforming to a predetermined script dictating their engagement with fandom, female fans should be afforded the autonomy to create their own modes of self-expression without the imposition of male-centric norms, thus advocating for the recognition and validation of their fandom.

2. Literature Review

The first section of the literature review is situated around gender negotiation and understanding how gender is perceived and expanded by many scholars. Here concepts such as ‘doing gender’, gender performativity, gender expectations, and hegemonic masculinity will be critically discussed and explored. The second section of the literature review is followed by a discussion on conflicting identities and how female fans often need to negotiate their gender identity to display their fandom identity. Here I argue that negotiating one’s identity can lead to legitimizing male hegemony. Lastly, I explore fandom practices in online and offline settings and argue that football is a ‘language’ that women have to learn, unlike their male fans who are automatically perceived as authentic fans. On the contrary, female fans have to learn how to do fandom in a way that is ‘authentic’ and acceptable to men and other women as well.

2.1 Doing gender

Gender is not an innate, natural component that exists from birth but rather is a performance where one needs to conform and meet societal expectations. ‘Doing gender’ is a concept coined by Candace West and Don Zimmerman in 1987 to challenge traditional conventions around gender and enhance one’s understanding of it. Their main argument focuses on gender and sex and how the former is not determined by the latter but on the contrary, gender is constantly changing and evolving. In their book, ‘Doing Gender’, West and Zimmerman (1987) give definitions of both gender and sex to differentiate between the two and explore further their relationship. They write of sex as being “ascribed by biology” and gender as being “constructed through cultural and social means” (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 125).

Bridges and other colleagues (2020) apply West and Zimmerman’s theory and write that “gender is something we do rather than predetermined by sex” (p.896). ‘Doing Gender’ is therefore a concept situated around social constructivism (Couldry & Hepp, 2016) and performance. Many scholars in communication and gender studies applied this concept to understand the role of gender in how society operates and explore how gender is socially constructed and underpinned by many social factors. West and Zimmerman (1987) write “We

argue that gender is not a set of traits, not a variable, nor a role, but the product of social doings of some sort” (p.129) and that “we claim that gender itself is constituted through interaction” (p.129).

2.1.1 Gender performativity and gender performance

Society assigns individuals gender roles at birth which then determines how individuals act and perform. Sex and gender become thus intertwined with each other and influence how society thinks and perceives gender roles. Stuhlmacher and Linnabery (2013) write about gender roles and argue that “roles consist of behavioral expectations individuals hold for themselves and others based on one’s social positions. People develop perceptions about their own and others’ behavior based on their role beliefs” (p.222). They argue that gender roles are influenced by expectations that derive from social norms and what society assigns to be acceptable over history (Stuhlmacher & Linnabery 2013). Other scholars state that “sex differences are due to the interrelation of the gender identity defined by expectations and ideals of the cultural milieu” (Chalabaev et al., 2013, p.138).

Social constructivism around gender roles and gender identity shapes one’s understanding of sex and gender and how the former influences the latter. These social norms are embodied in ways individuals see themselves through others in society. Erving Goffman (1959) wrote an influential book about performance and social interaction in everyday life. Whereas other scholars such as West & Zimmerman (1987), and Butler (1999) wrote concretely about gender and gender roles, Goffman’s significant contribution was largely to the field of sociology. Nevertheless, I argue that his contributions have indirectly influenced gender performativity by Butler and ‘Doing Gender’ by West and Zimmerman. Goffman writes that when individuals interact with each other they assume that everyone has an ‘essential nature’ that is discerned through the natural signs which according to him are given off or expressed by them (Goffman, 1976, p.75, cited in West and Zimmerman, 1987, p.129). However, he argues that “Gender depictions are less a consequence of our "essential sexual natures" than interactional portrayals of what we would like to convey about sexual natures, using conventionalized gestures” (Goffman, 1976, p. 130, cited in West and Zimmerman, 1987).

Similarly West and Zimmerman challenge the essentialist view by arguing that gender is not static and unchanging but instead, it is something that people “do” and perform in their everyday life. However, I argue that gender is not a portrayal of what we would like to convey to others but rather it is an outcome of an institutionalized ideology constructed and reinforced by society over the years. For many individuals, it is not an option to perform gender as it is internalized and fabricated by various social institutions. As a result, many do not even question those beliefs but rather conform to them. Applying West & Zimmerman’s theory is applicable and relevant to my study to understand if transnational female fans in Lund resonate with their concepts.

2.1.2 Gender expectations

Gender display is an outcome of societal expectations. Butler (1999) explains that individuals perform their gender identity based on the perceptions and reinforced beliefs of what it means to be a female and what it means to be a male. Many scholars have applied Butler’s and West and Zimmerman’s theories to understand gender practices in different fields such as football fandom. They write, “The men and women are doing gender engaging in different societal practices clothing, appearance, body language, behaviour, etc) that according to the prevailing gender order, are associated with either men or women” (Lenneis & Pfister, 2015, p. 176). Furthermore, Schull & Kihl (2019) write about how individuals strive to meet societal expectations to avoid being judged by others. They write, “individuals are often judged by what behaviors are perceived to be gender appropriate with a specific context” (Schull & Kihl, 2019, p.3).

Butler (1999) succinctly states that “culture is invariably figured as male, active, and abstract” (p.45). The culture has power over the individual by playing a hierarchical role “in which culture “imposes” meaning on nature, and, hence, renders it into as ‘other’” (Butler, 1999, p. 45). Nevertheless, Butler challenges these views by arguing that gender is not static and is not ascribed to sex but is constantly changing and modifying. Sometimes these changes and modifications can take time and courage as the individuals are pressured to behave and act in a certain way that the media, public discourse, and society expect and reinforce.

One notable example that reflects the mentioned point above is female football fans and how they strive to fit into different fandom groups. Even though there is little research that

addresses female football fans of male football, some scholars such as Lenneis & Pfister (2015) have applied a critical approach in their work to explore female football fandom of male football and to discuss gender negotiations and gender expectations, which, according to the authors, lead female fans to question their identity. One crucial aspect of their study is the dissonance between womanhood and fandom, a critical point that will be discussed in detail later in this chapter. Female football fans of male football find themselves struggling to prove their fandom, which often leads to a conflicting nature of who they are and how they want to present themselves in public. Goffman (1959) coins the term *impression management* to describe this phenomenon. He metaphorically writes how, likewise, in theater and real life, individuals are part of the frontstage and backstage experiences. On the front stage, Goffman argues that individuals are constantly trying to save face by wearing a mask that allows them to perform in an appropriate and acceptable way. On the contrary, backstage individuals feel less pressure to perform, and since there is little to no one watching, they remove this ‘mask’ and are free to be themselves, with less pressure to show and prove to others. This thesis will explore this area further to understand if this narrative is present in how transnational female fans in Lund engage with and perform fandom.

In the same way, Lenneis and Pfister argue that female football fans constantly switch from front stage to backstage. In their article, they interviewed a few female fans about their fandom practices and societal gender expectations. From these interviews, Lenneis and Pfister explored gender negotiation in light of gender expectations and stereotypes. They argued that female football fans feel insecure and unsure of how to perform in their fandom. Societal expectations reinforce a strong belief that women should maintain their femininity and act as females, that is, to dress, behave, and speak in manners that society approves of. However, football remains a male sport and thus considers feminine practices as not authentic enough to prove one’s fandom (Dunn, 2014; Pitti, 2019; Bruce, 2015).

Consequently, female fans struggle to navigate between the two, femininity and masculinity, when performing fandom. Excerpted from their study, Lenneis and Pfister (2015) write, “because women are not supposed to dress up for a game, Freja wears sneakers, torn jeans, a hoodie, and a football shirt when she watches a game from the fans stands” (p.176) as a result they continue to say, “these and similar examples provided by the studies in other countries illustrate that gender is adapted to social situations, performed in interactions and negotiated in

encounters with the environment e.g the football stadium and the crowds of fans” (p.177). This thesis examines those theories on deeper levels by visiting one of the bars here in Lund and interviewing the transnational female fans living there.

Furthermore, another explanation for gender inequality in sports fandom could be the unfair distribution of power. De Beauvoir (1998) wrote about gender power and hierarchy. Unlike Butler, who discusses social constructivism and cultural norms as the main factors that explain gender performativity, De Beauvoir’s main focus was on how power is distributed differently. She explores how power is given to men, which leads them to see themselves as superior to the opposite gender automatically. This gender inequality that De Beauvoir writes about is reflected in different fields and areas, more concretely in football and fan stands (García & Welter, 2013; Pope, 2013). She argues that power relations reiterate the ‘otherness’ in our society, where men are the subject and dominate over women. Informants agreed that male fans dominate over female fans as they are taken more seriously, and their fandom is rarely questioned. This shows that power dynamics still exist in sports fandom, and I am interested in unpacking this narrative in my study.

2.1.3 Hegemonic Masculinity

Male power and dominance are not active merely to women but to other groups as well. Unlike other scholars who see women and men as two different poles, Connell (1987) argues that “femininity and masculinity need not to be treated as polar opposites” (p.281). Not only does she write about masculinity in relation to femininity, but Connell also writes about how male power is structured within their domain. Connell argues that the exclusion is targeted not only to women but also to other men with feminine attire. Here, she refers to homosexual groups. Connell is, therefore, concerned with white heterosexual men who see themselves as higher than the ones who do not portray the same features. Connell succinctly states, “both femininity and masculinity vary, and understanding their variety is central to the psychology of gender” (p.277).

Furthermore, Connell discusses gender expectations and refers to them as sexual characters. She writes, “Common conceptions women and men as groups have different traits: different temperaments, characters, outlooks and opinions, abilities, even wide structures of personality” (Connell, 1987, p.271). Women and men are expected to behave a certain way, automatically placing them in two separate categories. Girls are taught to play with dolls at a

very young age, whereas boys are taught to play with car toys and physical activities such as football. Scholars support this by claiming, “In the schools in our study, girls sometimes hide their interest in football to fit in with local concepts of femininity” (Clark & Paechter, 2007). Lenneis and Pfister refer to these expectations as sexist behaviors and write, “The sexist ideologies and practices in and around football stigmatize homosexual players and fans and deny women the status of “authentic” supporters, arguing that they do not attend matches because of love of the game but go there to lust the players on the field” (p. 160).

Similar to West & Zimmerman, Connell bases their approaches and theories on the ‘Doing Gender’ perspective and argues that hegemonic masculinity is an outcome of social realms. Connell writes, “The social models and or prescriptions are internalized to a greater or lesser extent” (p.308), where she explains how “the newborn child has a biological sex but no social gender. As it grows older society provides a string of perceptions, templates, or models of behavior appropriate to one sex or the other” (p.308). Connell's revolutionary ideas shed light on how gender is perceived in today’s social realms, such as football and fan stands. The explanation that Connell, Butler, West and Zimmerman (1987) and other influential scholars would give to today’s gender inequality in football is due to social expectations and social constructivism of what it means to be a male and a female. Informants resonated with those arguments as they claimed that social expectations in their countries hindered the development of their fandom.

2.2 Conflicting identities

2.2.1 Inauthentic fandom

Unlike their male counterparts, many female football fans experience a clash between their gender and fan identity. This notion often creates a dissonance between womanhood and fandom, where female fans have to choose to downplay one over the other. Jones (2008) argues that “women sometimes downplay their gender identities to reinforce their fan identities” (p.516). Scholars say that one of the main factors that lead women to downplay their gender identity is the lack of authentic fandom (Jones, 2008; Pfister & Pope, 2018; García & Welter, 2012; Pope, 2011; Kossakowski, Antonowicz, & Jakubowska, 2022). In their research Hoeber and Kerwin (2013) state that “ a woman is assumed to not be a sport fan, unless she proves she is one” (p.328). Radmann & Hedenborg (2022) write, “female sports fans are typically depicted as

‘inauthentic’ in their support and are assumed to have little sporting knowledge” (p.254). Even though women’s sports have evolved and progressed significantly in the last decade, many scholars agree that football is still perceived as a masculine sport, where football fans are mainly assumed to be men (Jeanes & Kay, 2007; Kondakciu, Souto & Zayer, 2022; Lawrence & Crawford, 2018). Hoeber and Kerwin write (2013), “there is a commonly held belief that women are not sport fans because they are not committed to a particular sport team or player, they have little knowledge of the game, players, and history, and they follow for inauthentic or inappropriate reasons (e.g. socializing with friends, sexual attraction to the players)” (p.332). Sveinson and Hoeber (2016) refer to this phenomenon as the marginalization of women which according to them “marginalization occurred because women by virtue of their gender, were not expected to be sport fans” (p.12). As a result, to appear authentic in their fandom, female fans often find themselves negotiating their gender identity (Jones, 2008).

2.2.2 Post-feminism and third-wave feminism

Negotiating one’s identity means ‘redoing’ gender and complying with masculine ways of doing fandom. Such examples include drinking beer, going to pubs to watch the match, swearing, and wearing boy’s t-shirts (Lenneis & Pfister, 2015). Instead of meeting societal expectations that align with how women should behave in public spheres (Butler, 1999), female fans negotiate their femininity and partake in masculine roles. However, Pfister & Pope (2018) argue that sometimes such attempts to appear more ‘authentic’ can lead to legitimizing gender stereotypes by suggesting that “women with feminine attire are not interested in the game” (p.256). Scholars argue that such behavior can lead women to comply with hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987; Sveinson, Hoeber & Toffoletti, 2019; Sveinson & Hoeber, 2015).

Other scholars (Cooky, Messner, & Musto, 2015; Jeanes & Kay, 2007) write of female football fans in their articles as passive, marginalized objects due to hegemonic masculinity in football fandom. However, post-feminist scholars such as Gill (2007, 2017) argue that women are individualistic and empowered to take active rather than passive roles in a post-feminist era. Whereas Butler argues for gender performativity theory, where sex is seen as fluid, shaped, and influenced by social structures, post-feminist scholars argue for a natural sexual difference (Gill, 2007; Thorpe, Toffoletti, Bruce, 2017). Gill (2007) writes of “ a shift from an external male judging gaze to a self-policing, narcissistic gaze” (p.151), whereas before the sexualised

representation of women “presented them as passive, mute objects of an assumed male gaze, today sexualisation works somewhat different differently in many domains” (p.151).

Gill (2007; 2017) examines post-feminism as a sensibility and highlights the personal success of women “leaving unexamined the structural conditions in which certain types of feminine bodies (in this case white, slender, heterosexual) are privileged within culture” (Sveinson, Hoeber, Toffoletti, 2019, p.369). Post-feminism elevates personal agency over structural power, providing a sense of individual choice that makes one feel comfortable with one's own decisions of celebrating one's femininity. On the other spectrum, third-wave feminism “broadly claims to embrace the messiness, complexity, multiplicity, a nonjudgmental attitude towards cultural productions, and an attempt to think outside existing gender, sexuality, and race binaries” (Sveinson, Hoeber, Toffoletti, 2019, p.363). Third-wave feminism, thus, seeks to challenge traditional conventions by promoting autonomy and freedom and by celebrating inclusivity and intersectionality. These two feminist waves lead to this section's crucial concepts: emphasized femininity and masculine femininity.

2.2.3 Emphasized femininity

Emphasized femininity in this study refers to feminine attires, roles, and norms that are socially constructed and tightly connected with how women should behave and act in society (Connell, 1987). The roles and norms women are told to take on derive from culture and different social structures and are underpinned by various factors and elements. For instance, a component of emphasized femininity highlights the passivity and submissive behavior of women towards men. In addition, emphasized femininity perceived women as sexual objects whose presence serves mainly to please the male gaze (Mulvey, 2006). Mulvey writes in the context of cinematography and elaborates on the concept of scopophilia to refer to sexual pleasure in looking at someone, in this case, looking at women from a male gaze (2006).

Postfeminism strives to challenge this view and present women as active individuals who have the agency to empower themselves for their own pleasure and not the male gaze (Gill, 2007; 2017). Nevertheless, scholars argue that postfeminism can instead reinforce emphasized femininity (Thorpe, Toffoletti, & Bruce, 2017; Sveinson, Hoeber, & Toffoletti, 2019; Jones,

2008; Kossakowski, Antonowicz, Jakubowska, 2022). The following section seeks to illustrate this argument by highlighting examples from female football fandom.

As argued above, postfeminism seeks to elevate women's portrayal of their bodies in traditional and digital media because it shows women's agency in choosing how to present themselves. It also argues that women can be both feminine and successful (Thorpe, Toffoletti, & Bruce, 2017). In football fandom, this behavior is closely tied to the emphasized femininity presented by Connell (1987), which automatically links female football fans to inauthentic fans (Jones, 2008). Many female football fans who attend matches in the stadium are perceived and pictured as 'bimbos' mainly because of their 'feminine' behavior and 'sexy' outfits (Kossakowski, Antonowicz, Jakubowska, 2022). A crucial aspect worth examining in this section is the way women choose to present themselves through their outfits. Audience research on female football fandom has shown that women who wear pink outfits are not 'real' fans (Sveinson, Hoeber, & Toffoletti, 2019). By wearing 'sexy' and 'feminine' outfits such as heels, dresses, and short skirts, women are perceived as passive individuals who attend matches to support their partners or attract the attention of male players.

This perception is made primarily by male fans (Kossakowski, Antonowicz, Jakubowska, 2022). However, other scholars demonstrate that other female fans as well create a similar impression to those who appear in 'pink' outfits (Jones, 2008; (Sveinson, Hoeber, & Toffoletti, 2019). In their study, Sveinson, Hober, and Toffoletti explored women's perceptions of sports fan clothing and found that many participants did not like it when women wore feminine clothes (2019). The participants "spoke about women who wore heteronormative, feminine clothing, and thus were seen as not real fans, like themselves who were a team jersey" (Sveinson, Hober, & Toffoletti, 2019, p.743). Other female participants in a different study demonstrated a similar response and reaction towards 'pink' merchandise targeted to female football fans (Sveinson & Hoeber, 2015). In their study, Dunn (2014) also highlighted the negative connotation 'feminine' clothes and attire bring to today's female football fandom. 'Feminine' clothing, thus, was seen by other female fans as reinforcing hegemonic masculinity and impeding women's integration into male football. Instead of fighting the stereotypes that highlight women only attend matches to look for 'hot' boys, these female fans choose to challenge the traditional conventions and partake in masculine femininity roles. I will explore those concepts further by analyzing how transnational female fans living in Lund experience and engage with such phenomena.

'Bimbos'

As was explained above, 'bimbos' refer to female fans who perform fandom in a feminine way, such as dressing in feminine clothes (e.g. heels, dresses, skirts, wearing pink) and refusing to partake in male fandom (e.g. screaming in the stadiums, drinking beers, etc.) (Kossakowski, Antonowicz & Jakubowska, 2020). Jones (2008) writes how this group of people aims to distance themselves from emphasized femininity (Connell, 1987) to appear more authentic in their way of doing fandom. Jones (2008) writes, "They complained about women getting 'dolloed up' to go to football matches, wearing make up and high heels" (p. 528). In Jones's (2008) and Dunn's (2014) terms, this is called negotiating one's gender identity to conform to traditional ways of doing gender. Sveinson, Hoeber, and Toffoletti (2019) refer to this movement as third-wave feminism, whose focus is on gender fluidity and, as a result, "enables women to produce and negotiate their own gender and fan identities" (p.742). Nevertheless, this thesis argues that in this context, negotiating one's gender can instead reinforce hegemonic masculinity, and it seeks to explore this argument further in the analysis section.

The pressure of conforming to men's way of doing fandom creates a male-dominated environment. Pfister and Pope argue that negotiating one's gender can legitimize gender stereotypes and reinforce the notion that "women with feminine attire are not interested in the game" (Pfister & Pope, 2018, p.256; Lenneis & Pfister, 2015). As mentioned above, studies show that female fans who see themselves as 'tomboys' are judgemental towards those female fans who fit the 'bimbo' category (Kossakowski, Antonowicz, & Jakubowska, 2022). Instead of showing support, it appears that 'tomboys' show a strong dislike towards women with feminine attire and instead embrace men's ideology of doing fandom. Even though both, post-feminism and third-wave feminism, aim to elevate women and grant them autonomy and freedom (Thorpe, Toffoletti, & Bruce, 2017), this thesis argues that in this context, this freedom, instead of liberating for women is coercive and constraints women's rights to perform fandom they way they feel.

Furthermore, in this whole narrative, women are portrayed and seen as victims who constantly have to negotiate their identity to fit men's way of doing fandom. Women have to follow men's script when it comes to performing fandom; for some, this means relinquishing

one's gender identity. Kossakowski, Antonowicz, & Jakubowska (2002) write, "being a 'mate' and enjoying the status of a real fan has its consequences for women, who lose some parts of their feminine identity as they are no longer perceived as women" (p.280). This narrative creates a dissonance where womanhood intersects and, as a result, conflicts with fandom. If female fans are too feminine in their way of doing fandom, then they are considered inauthentic. Therefore, to prove their fandom, they turn to 'tomboys'. However, by doing so, they can, perhaps unintentionally, reinforce and legitimize hegemonic masculinity. This study seeks to explore this area further by interviewing female fans in Sweden to understand if this narrative is present in this context.

2.2.4 Masculine femininity

In response to emphasized femininity, women develop and reinforce masculine femininity in their way of doing fandom. Masculine femininity "is a form of subversion of traditional femininities" (Zuaneti Martins, Santos Silva, & Borel Delarmelina 2022, p.291). One of the main ways to perform masculine femininity in stands is to dress as men and behave as one of them. By performing their fandom this way, female football fans strive to show and demonstrate to others that they are authentic fans and are not there mainly to appeal to and look 'sexy' for the 'hot' male players (Stuhlmacher & Linnabery, 2013). Jeanes and Kay (2007) argue that media plays a significant role in reinforcing hegemonic masculinity and constructing an ideology that favors male fans over female fans when it comes to football fandom. Similarly, Couldrey and Hepp (2006) write about the significance of understanding the media and society's role in constructing our reality around specific issues. As a result, many female football fans find it necessary to prove their fandom and put on 'a mask', in Goffman's terms, that will allow them to appear more masculine in their way of doing fandom.

Research shows that female football fans experience gender fluidity while performing their fandom (Sveinson & Hoerber, 2016; Jones, 2008), where they express that they feel more masculine when the game is going on. Participants explain how, at a very young age, boys are more incentivized to play football, and while growing up, media also creates a similar impression, which in turn makes it challenging for girls to feel comfortable with their femininity when doing fandom (Pope, 2011). As a consequence, women turn into 'tomboys', a term "which

generally refers to women who are stripped or have given up their femininity (Kossakowski, Antonowicz & Jakubowska, 2020, p.271). They add “a woman to be accepted into the structure of fandom, has to follow a male script” (Kossakowski, Antonowicz & Jakubowska, 2020, p.279). Furthermore, not only do female football fans strive to follow a male script to get accepted into the fandom community and be taken seriously, but they, in turn, show a strong dislike towards other female fans who express fandom in a feminine way.

This next section of the literature review is called ‘Fandom Studies’, and it seeks to navigate through online media and offline settings to understand how it shapes female football fans’ performance.

2.3. Fandom Studies

2.3.1 Mediated Self-presentation of Female Football Fans in Social Media

Online media allows female football fans to negotiate their identity and portray themselves how they want to. Walther (2007) asserts that “people are concerned with the way others perceive them” (p.2540). As a result of that statement, Coombs and Osbourne (2022) write, “Some women downplay femininity, emphasize masculinity, or highlight their sport knowledge in order to blend in and be acceptable by men” (p. 140). As a part of digital media, social media provides certain affordances that allow women to perform fandom in the way they think is ‘right’. Radmann and Hedenborg (2022) support the idea that women use social media to perform fandom and demonstrate different conceptions of femininity. They can present themselves as ‘feminine characters’ or ‘masculine characters’ through social media. Female football fans turn to social media to prove to others their fandom and ‘authenticity’, where some choose to partake in male fandom roles and practices.

Furthermore, social media enables female football fans to ‘play’ with their identities online. Alison (2015) argues that “sometimes, you might change your behavior to suit the people you are with, or the situation in which you find yourself” (p.5). In their study, Kondakciu, Souto, & Zayer (2022) explored how the informants were malleable in how they presented themselves online. The online self would often intersect and, as a result, conflict with the offline

self. Some informants showed that they feel more comfortable presenting themselves the way they want on social media because they have more flexibility, such as remaining anonymous. Alison (2015) writes that through social media, one creates “ a completely different persona that provides us with a false sense of anonymity” (p.17). The affordance of remaining anonymous on social media (e.g. Instagram, Reddit, Facebook, etc.) gives female football fans space to perform fandom without fearing a sense of judgment from others (Alison, 2015).

Social media is not merely used to hide or negotiate one’s gender identity but also to show support and empower other women. Radmann, White, and Hedenborg (2022) write of social media as a platform where individuals can show solidarity and empowerment. Eskandari (2022) asserts that “social media have facilitated a space for experiencing collective belonging and solidarity” (p.267). Instead of seeing social media as a platform where they feel pressure to perform a certain way, female fans see it as an opportunity to connect and learn more about football events (Lewis, Brown, & Billings, 2017). Thus, social becomes a safe space for many to feel themselves and belong to a certain community. This thesis seeks to understand how transnational female fans living in Lund use media to engage in their fandom.

Regardless of this positive side of social media to connect and empower individuals, I argue that social media can sometimes be a place where others feel a need to alter and change one’s self to belong to a certain community. Coombs and Osbourne (2022) argue that social media can negatively shape the way women perceive themselves and it can perpetuate gender inequality. They argue that “women’s sport have struggled to receive media coverage compared to men’s sport” (p. 265). Cooky, Messner, and Musto (2015) conclude that “in nearly every broadcast, network producers decide to focus on men’s sports, rather than the many women’s sports that are taking place daily” (268). In addition, Van Zoonen (1992) believed that the representation of women in media is distorted by representing them as individuals who can only perform traditional roles, such as taking care of their home. This insufficient coverage of women’s sports may prompt many female football fans to turn to men’s sports and, in turn, perform fandom by conforming to men’s ways. In Connell’s terms, this turn can perpetuate and legitimise hegemonic masculinity where women are seen as secondary in the stand.

Nevertheless, even though social media can serve as a tool to perpetuate hegemonic masculinity, it can also serve as a platform where individuals can feel free to express themselves the way they want to. Grey, Sandvoss and Harrington (2017) assert that “mediated discourses

about fans have been transformed over the past decade through social media, which give fans themselves a voice and the opportunity to publicly respond”. In their study, Radmann, Hedenborg White, and Hedenborg (2022) discussed how female fans use social media to advocate for women’s rights in sports. Furthermore, individuals turn to social media to find their community of fandom and to follow certain sports news channels (Lawrence & Crawford, 2018). Coombs and Osbourne (2022) conclude that digital media can strengthen one’s fandom. In this way, digital media creates the ground and the opportunities for individuals to find their online communities and be vocal about their beliefs.

2.3.2 Doing Fandom

Similar to gender, fandom practices are not just influenced, but often dictated by various social structures. These structures establish guidelines on how to perform and engage in fandom, shaping it in a way that is deemed acceptable and conforms to societal values. Scholars argue that “since football began, fandom has been perceived as an innate disposition of men, as a natural, desirable expression of manhood and masculinity” (Rapoport, 2020, p. 11). They emphasize that fandom is not “an inherent characteristic of an individual, but rather, a collective attribute of fans” (Rapoport, 2020, p.4), highlighting the collective nature of fandom and the sense of community it fosters. Furthermore, fandom practices are deeply intertwined with different cultural elements, which assign meaning to those practices. Similarly, Grey, Sandvoss, and Harrington (2017) argue that fandom and fan experiences are deeply woven into existing social and cultural conditions. This is a crucial point to consider, given that this study aims to explore the fandom and identities of young international female fans in Sweden. Flybjerg (2001) argues that context matters and should be studied critically to understand and further explore the case.

2.3.3 Women’s Football Fandom

Football fandom is closely linked with male fans and their fandom practices, thus, excluding female fans from this group. Scholars assert that “fan is conceived of as almost innate disposition and natural expression of manhood and masculinity, so that reference to women’s fandom is commonly based on comparing their doing fandom with hegemonic male model of the authentic fan” (Rapoport, 2020, p.136). Fandom is not women’s natural territory and it certainly

is not their native language. They have to learn fandom while growing up and they usually learn it through interaction with other male fans (Rapoport, 2020; Baker, 2020). Scholars argue that since “fandom is women’s second language, they constantly have to prove both to themselves and others” (Rapoport, 2020, p.140).

Nevertheless, the pressure to prove one's fandom can lead to the perpetuation of hegemonic masculinity. Radmann, Hedenborg White, and Hedenborg (2022) state, “The female football fan’s performance of femininity contains several aspects of hegemonic masculinity” (p.303). In football fandom terms, doing fandom ‘correctly’ means conforming to traditional male ways of doing gender, otherwise, fandom is considered inauthentic. Nevertheless, conforming to men’s way of doing gender can reinforce gender inequality and reproduce hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987; Bridges et al., 2020). Symons (2024) discusses the concept of the 'panoptic gaze ', which refers to the constant surveillance and scrutiny that women’s behavior and performance in the stands are subjected to. This surveillance leads women to constantly quest for authenticity, a pressure that is rarely felt by men due to the assumption that their fandom is authentic. However, as it was argued above, in this narrative not only do women need to prove their authenticity to men but also to other women who are watching them.

The issue of authenticity and proving one’s fandom extends beyond gender, rooted in fandom practices that are culturally and socially ingrained. As previously discussed, women often feel pressured to downplay their femininity and negotiate their gender identity in the context of fandom. The clash between post-structuralism and post-feminism can reinforce male hegemony and create a dissonance where women feel insecure about their identity. My argument is that instead of urging female fans to change who they are, we should challenge the fandom practices that dictate who is a ‘real’ and ‘authentic’ fan. Women should not feel compelled to conform to a certain behavior to be accepted and taken seriously. They can wear heels and dresses if they choose, and they can abstain from shouting and drinking beer, and yet their fandom should be respected and acknowledged.

2.4 Transnational audiences

Lastly, this thesis aims to explore the concept of the transnational audience, which refers to individuals who, due to migration, travel, or other reasons, maintain connections with multiple

countries. The goal is to understand how this transnational element can shape an informant's engagement, experiences, and fandom. This aspect is relevant to include and analyze because it adds more originality to this research and it demonstrates how context (Flyvbjerg, 2001) plays a crucial role in understanding one's engagement and fandom. Furthermore, the transnational element can shed light to media usage and how it can enhance one's connection and relationship with their home and host country.

Online media plays a pivotal role in strengthening the connections between transnational audiences and their home and host countries. Metykova (2016) argues that transnational media, such as Al Jazeera, have emerged as a counterreaction to globalization. They define transnationalism as "the increasing tendency among migrants to maintain ties with their country of origin" (Metykova 2016, p.91). Duru, Favell, and Varela (2017) write, "transnational communication intensifies ties with the country of origin and makes it a part of everyday lives (p.239). Metykova (2016) argues that "new media technologies have contributed to easier access to media contents and provide a cheap and ready-made way in which migrants can maintain their links with their country of origin" (p.81). Furthermore Athique (2016) asserts that "the media ecology has evolved substantively in recent years and this is naturally reflected in more contemporary accounts of diasporic media audiences" (p.85). Transnational audiences, such as international students living abroad, effectively utilize online media and new technological advances to communicate with their families and friends at home and to stay updated with news. Additionally, through online media, they can engage with different artifacts that evoke a sense of home. Media also facilitates their integration into another country by providing a platform to learn a new language, understand a new culture, and connect with diverse individuals.

Online media strengthen the social, cultural, economic, and political relationships across borders. Vertovec (2001) writes, "dense and highly active networks spanning vast spaces are transforming many kinds of social, cultural, economic and political relationships" (p. 5). Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton (1992) write of transnationalism to "emphasize the emergence of a social process in which migrants establish social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political border" (p.9). They argue that "the multiplicity of migrants' involvement in both the home and host societies is a central element of transnationalism" (p.9). For instance, one form that migrants impact the economic relationship between two countries is by sending money to their families and friends back home or by investing in different business projects both in their

country of origin and in their host country. In this way, migrants' involvement and engagement in their home country and host country, through media and technological devices, shape their social-cultural and economic experiences and relationships.

Furthermore, through media, migrants can experience a taste of home while living abroad. Bonini (2011) refers to media as a 'home-making' tool that enhances migrants' experiences and strengthens their relationships with their country of origin. Bonini (2011) writes, "a good metaphor to illustrate it might be: the media serve as a portable set, a modular backdrop that represents our home and what we use when we are travelling to take a picture of ourselves, pretending that we never left" (p.870). Furthermore, he adds, "a migrant may have no place to sleep, but he cannot afford not to have a mobile phone" (p. 870). The use of mobile phones, particularly, has enhanced and strengthened migrant's relationship with their home country as they ensure to keep in touch with their families and friends and keep themselves updated with the local and national news.

Transnational audiences are prone to feeling like a minority group. Athique refers to the diaspora community as a minority population. Athique (2016) writes, "the pervasive logic of cultural nationalism tends to favor an ethno-cultural distinction between majority and minority populations. Thus the word 'minority' becomes associated with racial or cultural difference" (p. 81). Hall (1996) discusses the representation and inclusion of non-whites in Britain and writes of the Other to refer to the minority group. Sellers and Shelton state that "racial discrimination is a pervasive phenomenon in the lives of many racial minorities" (p. 1079). They write that racial discrimination can be blatant or subtle. Berry (2019) has introduced the term acculturation to describe "the psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members" (p.10). Furthermore, Matsuoka (1990) claims that "acculturation can lead to conflict" (p.341). This depends on how well migrants adapt to a new society and new culture but also on how the host country perceives the cultural differences. In this thesis, the researcher will explore how transnational audiences have experienced fandom in a foreign country and how that reflects or contrasts their fandom back in their home countries.

2.4.1 Transnationalism and identity

Transnationalism and identity are closely linked to each other. Identity plays a crucial role in understanding how transnational experiences are shaped and formed over time. Vertovec (2001) writes, “transnationalism and identity are concepts that inherently call for juxtaposition. This is because, on the one hand, many peoples’ transnational networks are grounded upon the perception that they share some form of common identity, often based upon a place of origin and the cultural and linguistic traits associated with it” (p.576). Athique (2016) argues that “diasporic audiences must be connected transnationally to others who share their ethnicity” (p.82). In this way, the national and collective identity is retained and celebrated through the transnational experience. Furthermore, Hall (1996) writes that identity is constructed only “through the relation to the Other, the relation to what is not, to precisely what it lacks...” (p.4). When migrants move abroad they are faced and confronted with new ideologies and beliefs which in turn can lead them to question their identity. Hall (1996) would argue that identity is fluid and is constantly changing and evolving based on one’s experiences. Transnational audiences, thus, often reflect on their identity and that has been changed or retained over the years. This thesis seeks to enhance further this concept by exploring the transnational audiences living and studying in Sweden.

3. Methodology

The present study employs a qualitative approach to understand and explore the experiences of transnational female football fans living in Sweden. Qualitative research enables critical examination of the phenomena while exploring the “diversity of meaning and values created in media” (Brennen, 2012, p.5). This paper investigates how values are created and how they shape one’s understanding of football fandom. Furthermore, qualitative research is interpretive and interdisciplinary, and it seeks to use language as the main tool for understanding people’s experiences (Seale, 2012; Creswell & Poth, 2016; Brennen, 2012). Language, according to Brennen (2012) “is a fundamental aspect of all qualitative research. It is through our discourse-or, in other words, our writing and speaking- that we communicate ideas and information, create communities and construct our social realities” (p.14).

Furthermore, the qualitative approach enables researchers to interpret data and find meaning in them, not aiming to solve problems but to understand, underline, and explore various social phenomena further. The focus is not to present statistical data and variables, which is not wrong in itself but is certainly not the aim of this research, rather the focus is to delve deeper into a certain given phenomenon to detect hidden narratives and to critically discuss how they shape one’s experiences and understanding of social structures. Brennen (2012) writes, “Qualitative researchers do not identify variables, operationalize research terms, construct hypotheses, conduct experiments, measure data or replicate findings. Instead, they ask research questions, search for meaning, look for useful ways to talk about experiences within a specific historical, cultural, economic and/or political context, and consider the research process within the relevant social practices” (p.15). Interpreting data and finding meaning are two of qualitative research's most significant and crucial components. Through interpretation and searching for meaning, researchers can shed light on underlying narratives and bring these discussions forward to explore them further. Bruhn (2012) explains that “data is the source of information through analysis and of meaning through the interpretation” (p.292)

This research is conducted in light of standpoint theory because it aims to critically discuss and navigate gender and fandom identity by listening to the voices of the less privileged (Harding, 2008). Scholars argue that female football fans remain a minority who constantly struggle to fit in the fandom community and prove their fandom to others, given that their

fandom is rarely taken seriously (Clark & Paechter, 2007; Heinecken, 2015; Coombs & Osbourne, 2022). Harding argues that “the sexist science has persistently attempted to document and explain women’s social inferiority in ways that justify male-supremacist discrimination against women as natural” (p.104). Harding’s theory seeks to challenge Western and triumphalist science. It proposes to study science from below and take a feminist perspective because we will consider the voices that are not being heard (Hermes, 2023). Harding’s theory enables the research to assess the positionality of female football fans regarding football fandom.

Furthermore, this research builds on a case study (Flyvbjerg, 2001) and phronetic research because it acknowledges the importance of context and how it can shape the informants' experiences. The study aims to take a bottom-up approach, highlighting that “what is right and true in a given communicative process is determined solely by the participants of that process” (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p.91). Thus, it seeks to challenge the notion that the study's results are accurate and relevant at all times and places. Flyvbjerg (2001) argues that focusing on a specific case allows for a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. Case studies provide concrete examples and “detailed examination of a single example” (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 66) and “generate precisely that concrete, practical, and context-dependent knowledge” (p.70). Furthermore, phronetic research has its point of departure on value-rationality and resides on values (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p.129). Similarly, this research explores different values structured and designed for and by society.

Lastly, the study takes a social-constructivist stance because it seeks to understand and further explore the nuances of social structures and how they shape one’s understanding of football fandom. Berger and Luckmann (2011) write that “the reality of everyday life is shared with others” (p.43). Similarly, as written in the literature review section, scholars such as Butler (1990), West & Zimmerman (1987), and Connell (1987) argue that gender is a performance and is socially constructed. Goffman also argues that it is through interaction with others that we realize and understand how to behave and act in certain situations. Social interaction and institutions, thus, play a pivotal role in understanding how norms and behaviors that we today consider dominant views in society, came to be. Couldry and Hepp (2016) assert that the social world is not given but it is formed and shaped by interaction.

Furthermore, Couldry and Hepp (2016) state that social theory is transformed by media theory and argue that social is therefore mediated. They write that society is mediated and

“changed its dynamics and structure by the role that media continuously play in its construction” (p.15). Therefore, This thesis will conduct the study while considering how the social world is constructed and mediatised and how that shapes one’s experiences in football fandom.

3.1 Methods

3.1.1 Semi-structured Interviews

The primary method of this research is semi-structured interviews. Seale (2012) writes, “Interviews are most importantly form of communication, a means of producing different forms of information with individuals and groups” (p.207). In this study, interviews create the ground for understanding female football fans' experiences by gaining in-depth information from the words and language of the interviewees (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Interviews provide rich data and insights and allow informants to express themselves and share their experiences. Instead of assuming what one wants to say, interviews enable researchers to ask follow-up questions immediately and further explore their answers. Semi-structured interviews allow informants to reflect on their answers and delve deeper into their experiences (Seale, 2012). Furthermore, Seale (2012) argues that “qualitative interviewing is particularly useful as a research method for accessing individuals’ attitudes and values-things that cannot necessarily be observed or accommodated in formal questionnaire” (p.209). Studying attitudes and values is a crucial component of qualitative research because it helps one understand social structure and how these two components have been socially constructed in different times and places.

Furthermore, qualitative interviews provide rich data and insights worth analysing. Seale (2012) writes, “Perhaps the most compelling advantage of qualitative interview is that, when done well, it is able to achieve a level of depth and complexity that is not available to other, particularly survey-based, approaches (p.210). Kvale (2007) writes of interviews as conversations that shed light on informants' experiences and their lives. Interviews ensure the construction of systematic knowledge and scholarship. Kvale (2007) succinctly writes, “ The research interview is an inter-view where knowledge is constructed in the inter-action between the interviewer and the interviewee” (p.2).

Furthermore, “Particularly open-ended or in-depth interviewing are designed to give more space where interviewees are encouraged to explore deeper aspects of ‘self’”(Mann, 2016,

p.48). Semi-structured interviews were chosen for this study because they allowed the informants to reflect on their lived experiences. Lastly, by studying and analyzing the language used by the informants, qualitative interviews can ensure transparency in the research (Weick, 2016).

3.1.2 Participants

For this study, 12 semi-structured interviews and one expert interview were conducted, 10 of which were conducted in person and three online (Google Meet). The informants were 12 international female football fans living and studying in Lund. One of the informants was abroad during the interview, but they confirmed that they had lived in Lund for about a year and would return soon. All the informants were female because, as argued above, this thesis seeks to adopt a standpoint theory where the experiences and voices of women are heard. In addition, the researcher was interested in exploring gender dynamics and how gender can interplay with fandom.

Given that football continues to be perceived as a male sport (Pitti, 2019; Pope, 2011), this thesis seeks to explore female fans' experiences and their reflection on how gender interplay and perhaps intersects with their fandom and passion for football. Furthermore, all the informants were international students because this thesis explores the transnational element of how migrant students (Bonini, 2011) studying in Lund experience their fandom abroad and how their background stories shape their engagement and fandom. The interviewees were selected using a snowballing method (Seale, 2012). The researcher asked friends to suggest others whom she didn't know so that they could be part of the project. In addition, the researcher posted in public groups on Facebook and asked to join the FC Helsingkrona women's team. Before requesting access, the researcher emailed the organization's owner to ask if she could join the training. There, the researcher could talk and connect with a few girls who later joined for the interview.

The interviews were conducted primarily in-person in Lund, and two were conducted online. Even though the researcher was aiming for in-person interviews, Hine (2015) argues that "any mode of interviewing needs to be chosen to be comfortable and convenient for the interviewee" (p.79). Furthermore, Seale (2012) writes, "In most qualitative interviewing, the interview takes place face to face. However, in some context, it might be impossible to meet with

your interviewees” (p. 218). Similarly, the researcher tried to adapt to the informant’s requests. The online interviews were more challenging to conduct and analyze due to technical issues. In addition, the nonverbal cues were not as evident as in in-person interviews, making it harder to dissect the interviews later.

Furthermore, this research aims to explore the transnational audience and their reflection on how they perform fandom. Hence, the informants came from countries such as Argentina, Bolivia, the Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, Italy, Hungary, Iceland, Spain, Greece, Uganda, China and Sweden. In addition to those interviews, the informant added one more interview where the informant came from Sweden. The reason why the interview was conducted was to understand how gender and fandom are being negotiated in Sweden, given that all informants are living in Lund. They often drew comparisons between their countries and Sweden. Moreover, the Swedish informant came from Västerås but lived and studied in Lund. Hence, the interview was relevant to understanding her experiences in her hometown and how they were similar or changed when she moved to Lund.

3.1.3 Ethics

Furthermore, all the informants willingly decided to be part of the project and were informed about the consent form. Each interview was recorded and transcribed later to access the interviewees' words and avoid summaries. For this study, all the informants were told before the interview if the researcher could record the interview. The questions were designed to give the informants the space to reflect. However, some informants could have been more talkative. Hence, follow-up questions were implemented on the spot to ensure the reflection and elaboration of answers (Seale, 2012). Lastly, all the names of the informants have been modified and given other names to ensure privacy and anonymity.

3.1.4 Media-go-along

Semi-structured interviews were combined with the media-go-along method to ensure further elaboration and critical analysis. Jørgensen (2016) defines this method as “a process of access, of entering the media service at hand, while producing empirical material within it” (p.39). This method was selected because it enabled the research to observe and follow how informants use online media to get more football information or simply join an online

community. In this way, this method ensures transparency by having access to the informant's experiences of how they navigate through online media, what posts they choose to interact with and what posts they decide to avoid, how often they post online (applicable to those who do) and how frequently they comment in public posts (applicable to those who do). For this study, the researcher asked the informants to show some accounts they follow on social media, such as Facebook and Instagram. The researcher asked the informants to show me how they navigate through the pages and interact with the online community they are part of (relevant to those who joined a closed and open online group).

3.1.5 Expert interview

In addition to the semi-structured audience interviews, the researcher conducted one expert interview (Bruun, 2016) with Pierre Nordberg, the Supporter Liaison Officer of the Malmö FF team. The interview was conducted online via Zoom to ensure flexibility and convenience for the interviewer. The expert interview was designed to be a conversation to discuss how female fans of the Malmo team navigate their way to watching matches in the stadium. The central focus was understanding the ways in which the club enhances and facilitates female fans' fandom and if there are any opportunities for female fans to watch matches in the stadium. The questions were prepared before the interview. However, the expert interview was shorter than the other semi-structured interviews, and it was not transcribed due to the conversational nature of the interview.

3.1.6 Coding

All the interviews were transcribed manually, and after that, inductive coding was applied (Bazeley, 2013). The first step was applying descriptive coding, where the researcher used a Google document form and highlighted some comments from the informants that were found to be relevant and repetitive. The second step was applying analytical coding, where the researcher entered all the descriptive codes in an Excel sheet and then clustered them into different groups. The clustering was primarily conducted based on repetitiveness. The researcher used mind maps to facilitate the analytical coding process. Lastly, thematic coding was applied, where three major themes emerged from the analytical coding. This process required intensive reading and analysis of the data and going back and forth to the transcripts to ensure

transparency, critical analysis, and engagement with data (Bazeley, 2013; Seale, 2012) and to avoid any personal and biased input.

3.1.7 Media Ethnography

This thesis has adopted media ethnography as the second method to complement interviews. Media ethnography was chosen to gain more insights into the phenomenon and to ensure a critical perspective and further observation of the study. According to Abu-Lughod (2008), ethnography seeks to avoid generalization by considering the individuals' experiences. Similarly, this thesis aims to prevent any generalization and instead give voice to the experiences of female football fans and their reflection on their fandom. Furthermore, media ethnography ensures "holistic interpretation" (Shröder et al., 2003, p.162), where the researcher can gain a "nuanced understanding of your informants' own sense-making process" (p.171). In this study, media ethnography was a compelling tool for understanding female football fans' practices in the stands and pubs. In addition, ethnography helped to investigate how "people and communities, both online and in the so-called 'real world', were making everyday use of digital technologies" (Pertierra, 2018, p. 85). Media ethnography enabled the researcher to observe and join female football fans while watching football. The researcher could take notes and write diaries of how the individuals combine their online media with offline media.

For this method, the researcher visited a popular pub in Lund called O'Learys because many informants have visited it. I went there twice with a different informant and kept a diary of how they watched the games and supported the team. I also kept a diary of how other female fans in the pub watched the games. Some notes included how women were dressed, what drinks they ordered, who they were watching it with (e.g., with other female friends male friends, or significant others), the intensity of their support, how attentive they were to the game, etc. The researcher then reflected on the notes and clustered them into three main groups: dress-up, fandom practices, and intensity of watching.

This thesis applied a multi-method approach. The triangulation process enhances the rigor of the analysis and aims "to develop an in-depth understanding of social experience" (Brennen, 2012, p.5). By adding complementary methods, the researcher can explore the phenomenon from different angles and consider other ways to explore the issues. This approach

will in turn add more value and rich insights to the phenomenon being explored. Therefore, by using multiple methods, this study gained a holistic and deeper understanding of the phenomenon (Bazeley, 2013).

Furthermore, through triangulation, the researcher gained “several perspectives on the same phenomenon” (Bruhn Jensen, 2012, p. 301). This highlights the importance of context, which enables researchers to study and consider how cultural, historical, and economic factors interplay with various phenomena and human experiences. Lastly, triangulation helps to identify other narratives that may not be possible if only one method is being applied. Therefore, the triangulation approach helps discover and explore issues more profoundly and fundamentally. This thesis uses one primary method: semi-structured interviews, media-go-along, and media ethnography.

3.1.8 Limitations

A fundamental limitation of this research is the lack of exploring queer identities and engagement with football. Interviewing only women closes the possibility to include other marginalized groups who might share the same struggle such as queer community. Hence, this research only took into account women’s voices and perspectives which is very crucial to explore but future research can extend it to queer communities and enhance the study further. Another limitation is that the methods, though they provide rich insights and data, can also allow for self-reflexivity, biases, and interpretation (Bazeley, 2013). This limitation can influence the study which is why reflecting on them is crucial to enhance the rigor and validity of this research.

4. Analysis

This chapter explores three themes: *Engagement, A media experience and Multiplicity of identities*, where each theme seeks to answer the research questions. The first theme explores the three parameters of engagement, context, motivation and modalities. The second theme analyzes digital media and analogue media such as TV. Furthermore, it investigates how physical spaces such as bars and stadiums shape informants' engagement and fandom. The last section explores how informants negotiate multiple identities, such as gender, national, and transnational identities, when performing their fandom. Furthermore, this section critically analyzes how sometimes the identities can conflict with each other and aims to understand how informants deal with this clash.

4.1 Engagement

One of the key findings of this research is how engagement shapes female football fans' experiences. Engagement in this section refers to the informants' relationship and interaction with football. The main concern here is not to understand engagement as a form of showing numeric results but to understand and explore how informants engage with football in the light of their background stories and experiences. Hill (2019) argues that engagement should not be measured merely based on metrics, numbers, performance, and brand loyalty. In Hill's terms, engagement is a protean feature that goes beyond the surface to reflect and explore much more fundamental elements such as identity and subjectivity. Dahlgren and Hill (2020) define engagement as "an energizing internal force; rooted in affect and identity, it is a subjective disposition that can propel us to do things (p.2). Johnston and Taylor (2018) state that engagement is "dynamic and multidimensional" (p.3). Engagement, thus, is not a constant feature that withholds change. On the contrary, it perpetually evolves and alters based on various factors.

4.1.1 Context: Schooling and Gender Roles

Social institutions such as schools play a significant role in shaping transnational female football fans' experiences. In some countries, schools determine the development of one's journey to following and supporting football. Some informants shared that it was during their time in school that they experienced gender clashes. Their male friends tended to be very judgemental towards girls who expressed a desire to watch football. Informants asserted that their male friends did not want to hear their opinions on different matters concerning football because of their gender, which indicated that girls are not knowledgeable about games. Furthermore, some informants shared that some of them were even banned from playing football in their schools.

“I used to work as a chemistry teacher before I started my Ph.D. and in this high school where I was working was only for girls...but for example, they were not allowed to play football, crazy, it was 2018”

(Female fan from Bolivia)

Other informants shared that they were not welcome in schools and encouraged to join a team. Every time that they tried to play football with their male friends, they would get physically hurt, or they would get comments such as “You are a girl, you cannot play football”. For some, those experiences marked the beginning of a challenging journey toward becoming football fans since they continued to face those comments even later in their life. Some others remained silent and decided not to show their passion for football, fearing their male friends would judge them. One informant said,

I think I never indicated that I watch football so I think most of my guy classmates didn't even know that”.

(Female fan from Hungary)

Those responses and experiences illustrate schools' central role in shaping one's engagement with football. Informants discussed that when they were younger, they did not have a voice to raise against those gender discrimination stories. They felt powerless to take a stand on these issues due to being surrounded by a community that perpetuated a male-hegemony environment. Informants shared that this is one of the main reasons their engagement with

football increased as they grew up; it was only then that they had the freedom to express their passion for football. In their study, Martínez-Andrés and other colleagues (2017) discuss gender dynamics and gender segregation in elementary schools. The study's results showed that teachers and other leaders in educational institutions fail to create an inclusive environment for girls to play football. In contrast, boys are encouraged to attend football matches.

Pope and Kirk (2014) assert that despite the increasing number of female fans in sports, girls remain less physically active than boys during sports activities in schools. They discuss that some girls even resist joining sports because they fear being judged by their male friends. Furthermore, Pope and Kirk (2014) explored the role of schools in shaping young female football fans' engagement and fandom in England. They concluded that the lack of involvement in football during their early school stages led female fans to disengage and lose interest in football. Informants echoed a similar experience. However, they agreed that the disengagement was soon replaced with positive engagement as they grew older.

One major factor shaping this experience was the freedom to be independent of their families, social institutions such as schools, and sometimes even their countries as they embarked on a study abroad journey. One informant shared,

“I have been playing football since I was 17 because my parents didn't love to do it but when I was old enough to go by myself that's when I started”.

(Female fan from Italy)

Another informant shared that her dad used to beat her for playing football. However, when she was old enough to decide on her own, her passion for football strengthened and intensified. Hill (2019) discusses how the audience switches from negative to positive engagement to disengagement due to different factors. One major factor is place and socio-cultural values. Similarly, the informants in this case grew from disengagement to positive engagement because they were no longer bound to their families, schools, and countries.

4.1.2 A male dominance experience

One key aspect that was dominant in the interviews was how almost every informant started watching and playing football due to being influenced by a male family member. Most of

them pointed out to their fathers, some referenced their brothers, and a few even mentioned their uncles. None of the informants pointed at their mothers, sisters, or female friends to explain how they started watching football. They all agreed that a masculine experience constituted their journey to becoming football fans.

“I just started following football with my brother and I guess that’s where my interest in playing started from because I was always hanging out with my brother and I was always playing football with his friends, the boys who were going to school within the village”

(Female fan from Uganda)

One informant shared that she had to hang out with the boys in school and become friends with them to get invited to play football. Those responses exemplify the male nature of football. It shows that football has a masculine influence and is mainly constituted by a traditional male community. Similarly, Pope (2011, 2013, 2014) states that football has historically been associated and linked with traditional male fans who show their masculinity through screaming, swearing, and sometimes even being violent to one another.

4.1.3 Authenticity

Despite the progress made in the last few years to support women in playing and supporting football, informants shared that in their countries, football continues to reinforce a male-dominated pervasive nature. Flori from Argentina shared,

“In Argentina, it is still male-dominated, sport and also fandom. Of course there is a growing movement of women when they go to the stadium but the majority are going to be men anyway”. Some of them discussed how due to their gender their authenticity and fandom are often being questioned. Lee from China said, *“men always want to test your authenticity...and lots of posts where a girl shows that she is a female fan male fans will say do you know where is the country of Neymar, do you know how many people in the pitch and things like that”*. Rea from Iceland shared that the male fans get shocked when she tells them that she watches football. Other informants shared that most of the time their comments about football are not taken seriously. This factor led some informants to be quiet about their fandom, especially when watching with other people. During media ethnography, the researcher noted how some female fans showed a lack of confidence in their fandom and were hesitant to be vocal about their

support of the team. Some claimed to feel ‘panoptic gaze’(Symons, 2024), the pressure that male fans look down upon them in judgment, therefore, they decided to be quiet when they watch games in public.

The social constructivism of gender plays a crucial role in reinforcing a male-dominant environment in sports. Lenneis and Pfister (2015) write, “gender is embedded in social structure and institutions, integrated into individuals’ identities and performed in social interactions” (p.162). Butler (1999) and Connell (1987) draw on social constructivism to explain gender inequality and imbalance in many social settings. This notion of football being a boy’s game has shaped how football is perceived in many societies. The social constructivism around football has steered a male-dominated culture where men see themselves as better and more knowledgeable in sports than women. As a result, many female fans feel insecure about their fandom. Ebba from Sweden shared that even though she was born and raised in a gender equality environment, she still thinks that football is highly considered a male game, preventing her from being vocal and confident about her fandom.

Furthermore, the male-dominant culture of football has spawned many ultra and hooligan groups, which make it difficult for women to feel safe and secure when they are watching the games in public.

“why...why do you have to be violent while watching the game or like why do you have to be violent at the stadium, there is no need... I think they do it to prove something, idk, they have male-dominance issues that they have to prove themselves”.

(Female fan from Italy)

Bairner (1999) associates the aggressive behavior of hooligans with masculinity and argues that “young men find themselves in a situation that encourages the sort of aggression that wins them greater respect from their peers” (294). When asked where they feel the safest, all informants agreed upon home. Some discussed their concerns about going and watching games at the stadiums or public places because of the hooligans and ultras. Ellen from the Netherlands shared,

“I wouldn’t say stadiums because you might have some hooligans there as well...especially in the city where I am from, Rotterdam, there are quite some hooligans and I remember always where there is a game, I think last year, champions, and then the whole city was crazy, people just destroying stuff in the city, it got a bit out of hand”.

Apart from endangering people's lives, hooliganism causes large economic costs. Priks (2010) writes, "potential spectators avoid attending games in fear of violence, which leads to losses in consumer surplus" (p.450). Whereas some scholars are more concerned about the economic angle of it, during an interview with the Supporter Liaison Officer of the Malmö FF club, Pierre Nordberg discusses the social aspect and how the team is constantly seeking to create a safe space for female fans by ensuring that the behavior and actions of hooligans and ultra groups are well being closely monitored.

4.1.4 Motivation

Another parameter of engagement worth exploring is motivation, which explains the factors influencing individuals' choice to watch football. Dahlgren & Hill (2020) write that motivation refers "to the intentionality behind the engagement. All human action has some sort of intentionality behind it, even if this resides at an unconscious level" (p.29). Informants shared different reasons for engaging in football in Sweden. These reasons include wanting to be part of a community, belonging, and making new friends. Informants shared that being away from their home country, families, and friends often made them feel homesick. Going out to watch football or joining a football team was an excellent opportunity for informants to make new friends.

"football in particular is how I met my first friends and stayed close so it has been that icebreaker, like if I go to a community it's like if there is a football team, can I try to join a football team... yeah but sports has been central in friendship that is for sure and how I am to integrate in societies, especially since I moved from Uganda to come here, I have always used sports football, volleyball to make friends"

(Female fan from Uganda)

Informants shared how wanting to be part of a community and spend time with friends facilitated and enhanced their experiences as football fans. Due to being far away from their families and friends back home, informants explained how watching football in an international environment created a sense of belonging and community. Similarly, Dahlgren and Hill (2020) discuss the term 'socialities' and its pivotal role in steering and sparking an individual's interest in engaging with media content. Socialites can "tell us something about the ways we are members of various communities, groups and networks" (p.29). Pallas (2021) discusses how

many immigrants attempt to integrate and form new connections with people from their home or host country. He writes, “this connection can be achieved through common activities, like sports” (p.11).

When asked about their journey to watching football, some informants shared that back home, football was almost always displayed on TV, in public areas, and in institutions such as schools. For some, escaping watching football was inevitable because of the dominance and popularity of the game in their home countries. They discuss how this factor played a crucial role in their fandom and served as a starting point for becoming fans of football.

“I mean, back home football is the national sport, so all my brothers were fanatics about this hometown club, and yeah I mean, I mean sometimes I watched, but it was not because I liked it, it was just because it was there and I watch sometimes and it is more like a group activity but I don’t think I was so invested in it back then.”

(Female fan from Saudi Arabia)

Even though today, all of them consider themselves fans of football, some informants shared that when they started watching football, it was not necessarily due to their personal choice but instead due to the ubiquity of the games on TV and in public areas. This finding shows that football is a very dominant sport and that its popularity and ubiquity can shape an individual’s experiences and even compel one’s fandom. In Gray’s terms, “they were forced into being audiences” (2021, p.39). Grey writes about the ubiquity and inescapability of media content, which often leaves the audience no choice but to adhere and engage. He claims, “But engaged dislikes were almost universally of texts with which the audiences felt stuck. And as I will show, the ability to “turn it off” regularly required more than the simple act of pressing a button on a remote control, as many of our respondents felt haunted by media that intervened in their daily lives even if they avoided it (Gray, 2021, p.39-40).

4.1.5 Modality: from engagement to disengagement

Hill and Dahlgren write, “some of the most intense experiences we have with media are in the past, embedded in our memory” (p.19). Many informants rested on past experiences as they reflected on their fandom and journey to becoming football fans. The PhD student from Uganda spoke of nostalgia for when she and her brother used to listen to football games on BBC

radio while living in a small village in Uganda. The absence of television at home created a different environment and experience from today's way of watching football. She shared,

“it kind of touches deep because now my brother is grown we are all in separate worlds so it is like that memory that you found but can't replay and if you go back it is not the same cause now we would watch on TV so it was like yeah it was like a pure and shared love for football that we used to just sit there with a tiny radio in our hands and we are fidgeting the frequency for BBC sport”

(Female fan from Uganda)

The nostalgia for creating the same environment with the same people again made the informant feel less driven to watch football, even though she continues to follow football. Furthermore, due to different factors, most informants described themselves as moderate fans, and some even said that they feel less of a fan now that they are living away from home. One of the primary reasons contributing to that was the need for more time or problems accessing live streaming. Eve from Uganda and Aria from Bolivia discussed the issue of needing access to the games or sometimes needing help finding the correct link and website. The informants shared that at some point, they just feel tired of trying in vain and decide to let go.

For some, engaging with media content comes at a cost. Some informants shared that they need to pay to a certain streaming website to keep up with the games back home. The lack of financial income led some informants only to watch games occasionally as they would do back home. Hill (2019) discusses various factors such as “commercial constraints, censorship, surveillance tracking of audiences and users by algorithms” (p.31) that prevent users from engaging with media content. Nevertheless, in this push-and-pull dynamic (Hill, 2019), audiences push back through illegal streaming due to the intensity of their fandom. Laura from Italy stated that she is looking for other ways to watch football games. She claimed that she had to use illegal streaming to access matches back home because her platform would not work in Sweden.

Some others shared that they watch games at the pub or other public areas to avoid illegal streaming. Nevertheless, some others claimed that there is a financial cost to watching games in public places, which is another reason why they would not watch the games. The informant from Argentina said,

“because I was completely broke economically, I didn’t go to Copenhagen but everyone was meeting in Copenhagen that would be my first choice if I had the resource”.

(Female fan from Argentina)

Many informants discussed the necessity of ordering drinks while watching games. Rapoport (2020) writes, “They agreed that beer is the game’s beverage and that there is some sort of unconscious pressure to order drinks while watching the games. However, some informants shared that at home they felt much more relaxed and chill. Some of them even said that they would not pay too much attention to the games if they were watching them at home. Goffman (1959) uses the metaphor of front stage and backstage to discuss how individuals behave and act differently when they are in public instead of in private places. In public, he argues, individuals constantly strive to save face and act according to social norms. Even though informants did not speak of that directly, one can understand the pressure to perform in public using Goffman's theory.

Furthermore, other informants shared that their fandom intensified when they moved abroad. Kristina from Greece shared that her boyfriend in Sweden watches all the games, and because of him, she feels more motivated to follow along. Kristina also shared that she is less motivated to go out and engage in other activities because of the bad weather. Hence, she has more time to chill inside and watch games with her boyfriend. Furthermore, Lee from China shared that she can watch all the Tottenham games due to the European time zone. She claimed that games would stream late at night back in China, and sometimes she had to skip them, but here in Sweden, she can watch all the games due to the time zone. She also added that she has a lot more free time in Sweden, which allows her to support her team on different levels, such as going to bars, traveling to the UK to watch the games in the stadium, or just watching at home on her computer. These examples demonstrate how fans’ engagement changes based on social, economic, and cultural factors (Dahlgren & Hill, 2020)

4.2 A media experience

4.2.1 *Digital media-Lund*

Audiences roam through different platforms to engage with media content based on their comfort and accessibility. Hill writes, “roaming signifies audience access to media through myriad ways; viewers and users can watch their favorite drama on TV, iPad, laptop, mobile phone, read related content and reviews, and take part in discussions in radio, newspapers and social media” (p.34). Even though they are away from their home country, informants shared that they use different platforms to catch up with family and friends. In the interview, Lee from China shared that while away from her home country, she still manages to connect with her friend who lives in China. She and her friend often plan a date when they virtually watch matches together while messaging on WeChat about the games. In this case, social media enhances their communication and strengthens their relationship by providing the space to catch up and experience a home feeling. Others shared that they use social media and different sports apps while being on the move to learn more about the matches and find out the results. Through the media-go-along method, a few informants could show how they navigated through different apps to learn more about their favorite teams. Sometimes, their schedules are too busy to watch the games, or often, streaming does not work correctly, so they turn to different sports apps to find out about the results of the games.

Furthermore, informants shared that when they do not have a chance to watch matches in the stadiums, they go out and watch games at the bar in Lund. In this way, they illustrate how they can be in two places simultaneously through media. They shared that they can watch matches in Lund through online media while messaging their family and friends in their home country to ensure their connection is preserved. Moores (2012) discusses how electronic media provides a commodity for users to feel present in places where they are absent. Moore refers to electronic media as “a placeless culture” (p.8) that makes evident the “doubling of places” (p.13). He argues that users can be in two places simultaneously through electronic media. Electronic media creates no sense of place as individuals roam through different platforms to engage with media content. Due to transnational media, individuals are no longer linked to one place but can watch games and follow sports through online media and different apps.

Due to piracy issues (Trepte, 2021) Kristina from Greece said that she and her boyfriend often check Twitter for updates to find out about matches. Eve from Uganda showed how she uses the app to read news about her favorite team and vote for the ‘man of the game’. In that way, she shared that she feels closer to her team and certainly more engaged. Laura from Italy, said,

“what I have been doing now that I was abroad to follow my team here in Italy was like I had a friend who lived there also supported the same team and we most likely couldn’t have watched the game but what we would do was like after always watch the highlights and the interviews of the players and then the coach”.

(Female fan from Italy)

Laura shows how social media plays a crucial role in enhancing her fandom and enriching her experiences as a fan. While away from her home country, she can use social media to learn more about her team and stay engaged as a football fan. Social media platforms create the space to connect and stay active when television and other media types are unavailable to informants. Social media enhances and deepens the informant’s fandom by providing engaging content. Coombs and Osbourne (2022) state that “digital media and social media more specifically, play an important role in digital fandom as it facilitates the opportunities for sports fans to express their fandom and strengthen their fandom” (p.262).

While social media certainly created a space for female fans to gain more information, most said they avoid posting about their fandom on social media for security and privacy reasons. Kristina from Greece, said, *“Actually no, on social media no, because as a person I usually really reserved with what I publish because of the algorithms and stuff, my boyfriend explained to me that how whatever we publish it’s like is like extracted from algorithms so now I am even more cautious”.* Trepte (2021) discusses how social media information can be used and exploited for economic reasons and benefits. Due to these factors, informants shared that they avoid being active social media members.

Nevertheless, media has agency over users; users, in return, have agency over media. During the interviews, some informants shared that they use social media to promote gender equality and sometimes even boycott websites and accounts that seek to promote gender inequality in sports. This shows that some audience members are aware of their agency and use it to promote social change and voice their opinions. Hill (2019) sees audiences as pathmakers who

“have agency as they navigate their way through television and its storytelling across different media (the TV, iPad, laptop, mobile phone, books, radio, newspapers), different places (home, work, trains, buses and planes, public and private spaces), and different times” (p.30). Furthermore, scholars such as Coombs and Osbourne (2020) and Bowen, Gordon, and Chojnacki (2017) argue that social media is a compelling platform for facilitating social change. Similarly, some informants were active social media members because it helped them to voice their opinions and post and repost content that seeks to promote gender equality.

4.2.2 A pub experience: Home vs Lund

When asked to reflect on their fandom back home and that in Lund, some informants did not recall very good memories. Flori from Argentina shared her passion for football, which sometimes translated into fierce and aggressive fandom for others in Sweden. She stated that in Argentina, everyone was loud and vocal about their team, whereas in Sweden, she shared that people took a laid-back approach and were more reserved. She recalls one evening watching the game at Olery’s in Lund between Argentina and the Netherlands, where she almost got kicked out of the bar. She shared,

“The way I reacted for me was completely normal and the way the Dutch people reacted was completely normal but apparently the way that all people saw or perceived the Dutch way was more normal and accepted socially than my way, kind of mine sounded more like aggressive”.

(Female fan from Argentina)

At that moment she felt excluded and judged based on her behaviors and nationality.

Similarly, other informants shared that back home, they felt more relaxed and more inclined to behave in a way that reflected their selves. They said that at home, everyone expects others to be crazy about their teams, whereas in Lund, screaming and jumping were not very common. Informants shared some other moments of tension between her and international friends in Lund. The most dominant ones were when their jokes were taken seriously and considered offensive. The informants said that those jokes are considered socially acceptable in their culture, but in Lund, they were perceived as offensive. Informants shared that those events

shaped how they supported her team in ways that they had to be more attentive when watching games around others.

Athique (2016) writes, “the word ‘minority’ becomes associated with racial or cultural difference” (p.80) and incorporates Hall’s work into discussing how the negative representation of a certain culture and community can steer racism which in return can lead to tensions in social circles (p.79). Informants shared a few tensions in their social circles, mainly due to cultural differences. Nevertheless, they still reconcile the tensions by trying to find common values between them and their friends. One informant from Saudi Arabia said that watching games with others from a different country creates a feeling of belonging. Even though they share different cultural traits, she claims she still feels part of a community where everyone shares mutual interests, such as watching football. Duru (2015) writes of conviviality to illustrate how “people from diverse backgrounds construct culture through shared ways of living in a place and develop a sense of belonging to a place because of and in spite of differences” (p.254). Informants shared that they feel less homesick when they watch games together with other fans in a pub, even if they come from a different country. This shows that despite cultural differences, transnational female fans in Lund seek to be part of a fandom community, whether online or offline, for reasons such as to make new friends, to stay engaged, and sometimes just to hang out.

4.2.3 A stadium experience (home edition)

Many informants shared that they attended several matches at the stadium back home. One informant shared that she even traveled to the UK to watch her favorite team play since football in her home country is rare. Most of them mentioned stadiums when asked about their favorite setting to watch a match. They shared that being at a stadium is different from watching games in pubs or on TV. Watching a live event brought informants closer to the games and their favorite players. Moreover, watching games with thousands of other fans in a massive arena they described as an authentic experience that every football fan should live at least once. They claimed that watching games in those arenas is very entertaining as fans there tend to be creative with supporting their teams by singing, creating new songs, playing instruments, etc.

“once you step into the Tottenham stadium, it is stunning because it is a new stadium and it has a lot of high technology and the atmosphere is very good and you can see the hardcore fans in the stands. The feeling of engagement makes me feel very good”

(Female fan from China)

The Tottenham fan spoke enthusiastically of her experience of watching her favorite team playing ‘live’. The place itself, the stadium, ignited in her a different feeling that she had not felt while watching games on TV at home or in pubs. Hill explores the art of watching a live event and argues that place and space contribute to developing and transforming positive emotions into affective practices. The audience gets attached to the feeling that a certain place arises in them. Hill (2019) talks about warm-up acts as the main elements “in shaping of the affective structures of live entertainment” (p.164). Those warm-up acts include lights, the setting of the different objects on stage, etc, and can stimulate a strong bond with the audience.

Similarly, informants shared that different elements of watching a live event, such as the splendor of lights and thousands of people cheering, create a strong feeling they do not experience in other places. Priambodho (2018) explored the experience of watching live events and discussed how the feeling of watching an event with other people in a big room intensifies one’s engagement and expertise to much deeper levels. Informants echoed that as they shared how enjoying the game with thousands of other fans made their experience more memorable.

4.2.4 A TV experience-home edition

Informants shared that they do not have a TV to watch matches in Lund because most of them live with other students and cannot afford to buy one. However, when they were asked about their experience of watching matches on TV back home, many spoke of this experience with nostalgic notes. Sara from Spain shared how she and her family used to gather around the TV and watch football games while grabbing a bowl of snacks and some cold drinks when she was home. This was a feeling that she did not experience in Lund. Other informants talked about the old days when everyone in the family gathered around the TV and watched games together. Being together with the family in the same room, cheering for their favorite team, made this feeling even more special.

Gauntlett and Hill (1999) write, “as well as being built into the lives of individuals, television is integrated into the households in which they live – physically, as a point of focus in the arrangement of one or more rooms, but more importantly, socially, as a locus of attention and social interaction” (p.35). In many households, TV serves as a tool that allows family members, relatives, or close friends to share the same space and interests. Informants shared that the safest setting to watch a match was at home, where they already knew the people with whom they were watching. They claimed that they feel free to be themselves in those settings and perform fandom in ways they want to and see fit. Hence, they described the TV experience of watching matches as a way of creating memories with their loved ones and feeling safe and being themselves.

4.3 A Multiplicity of Identities

4.3.1 Gender Identity

During the interviews, informants showed that they hold multiple identities simultaneously. So far, we have seen their identity as fans, and in this section, we will explore further their gender, national, and transnational identity. Hall (1996) argues that identity is fluid and undergoes different changes over time. Informants were aware of their identities as they shared their experiences of being football fans in Lund. The most dominant and evident of the three was gender identity. Informants talked about gender imaginaries in their home countries and how that shapes their engagement and sometimes conflicts with their fandom. They argued that back home, girls are not expected to follow football.

“I think sometimes when I tell people or like a lot of times when I tell people that I play football or I like football they get a bit shocked and in other countries, I would say people are a bit more shocked but also here as well (Sweden)”

(Female fan from Ireland)

Informants explored gender dynamics in their home country and Lund and how girls are expected to behave and react during a match. They said that if girls become too involved in football, such as starting to play, attending every match, and going out to watch games in public spaces, then they get comments such as ‘they are lesbians’. On the other end of the spectrum, if they are passive during games, such as not shouting too much, not swearing, dressing up, and

taking a bit too much care of themselves, then they are perceived as inauthentic fans who attend matches to either support their partners or seek to find one. This conflict of identities was displayed even as informants talked about other female fans in public spaces where the majority of the informants felt safer performing a masculine fandom.

Kossakowski, Antonowicz, and Jakubowska (2022) write about conflicting fandom and argue that female fans “either want to keep their identity traits and take the risk of not being accepted as ‘real’ fans or they choose a ‘masculine’ role because being a fan requires to embrace masculinity to a large extent” (p.280). Jones (2008) explores this tension between fan and gender identity and argues that “women sometimes downplay their gender identities to reinforce their fan identities”. Similarly, informants demonstrated this tension as they reflected on their fandom. Some of them shared how, in their cultures, gender and fandom are seen as fixed identities. Girls are not expected to be football fans because football fans are automatically associated with boys.

Taylor discusses how social imaginaries are a product of social norms. Taylor (2004) writes, “The social imaginary is not a set of ideas; rather, it is what enables, through making sense of, the practices of a society” (p.2). He argues that social imaginaries refer to “ways people imagine their social existence... the expectations are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations” (p.23). Furthermore, O’Neill (2016) writes, “the imaginary is essentially a commonly shared moral conception of the ideal society” (p.2). In this ideal society, informants shared that women are not expected to be football fans because football is considered a masculine sport.

4.3.2 Masculine femininity fandom: praised or condemned?

Masculine femininity refers to the groups of female fans who present themselves as traditional male fans. During the interview, informants could share their opinions on how other female football fans perform fandom. Due to football being a masculine sport (Pope, 2011), many female fans seek to prove their fandom, often imitating men’s traditional way of doing fandom. Kossakowski, Antonowicz, and Jakubowska (2022) state, “a woman to be accepted into the structure of fandom, has to follow a male script” (p.279). Eskandari states that “women had to prove their authenticity to be considered as real fans, not only to males but also to other female supporters” (p.262). Instead of fighting and resisting male hegemony, female fans often legitimise it by doing fandom men’s way. That includes shouting during the games, drinking

beers, wearing casual clothes such as hoodies, and associating themselves with the male fans. Kossakowski, Antonowicz, and Jakubowska would categorize them as ‘tomboys’. Kristina from Greece shared that in her early stage of becoming a football fan, she mostly hung out with the boys and always talked about football. She shared that many of her friends would call her a ‘tomboy’ because of this.

Butler (1999) states that society assigns individuals gender roles but argues that one should not rest on those gender classifications. Butler’s call is to challenge traditional conventions and resist social norms by allowing individuals to choose their gender identity. Butler (1999), Connell (1987), West and Zimmerman's (1987) theories reject emphasized femininity and instead embrace reinforced masculinity in females. This often leads individuals to push themselves towards a gender identity that they do not necessarily agree with but still decide to take it on due to social pressure. Even though Butler argues to withstand social pressure, sometimes this leads individuals to legitimize and promote social standards of gender. Female fans are told that emphasized femininity equals inauthentic fandom (Pope, 2011; Jones, 2008; Kossakowski, Antonowicz, and Jakubowska, 2022). Therefore, many take on masculine roles and present themselves as less feminine to appear more authentic.

Many informants disagree with the emphasized femininity group and condemn their behavior by arguing that they are not authentic fans. Most agreed that fans who appear feminine on stands, such as wearing too much make-up, dressing up, and not shouting and cursing, are conceived to be inauthentic fans who have either come with their partners to find a partner or simply to hang out.

“When I see these feminine fans I think or sometimes I think they are not even fans they are just with their boyfriends or husbands usually at the games and usually that is the case, and sometimes there is a community of boyfriends and then they all bring their girlfriends or wives and the wives socialize independently from the men but they are still sitting at the game but I think they are not paying attention”.

(Female fan from Hungary)

Nevertheless, ‘tomboys’ can sometimes receive negative comments such as being too aggressive, unwomanly (Jones, 2008), and often judgmental to the other feminine group. Ebba from Sweden shared that she usually feels judged and not wanted by the ‘tomboys’. She argued

that those groups of people think of themselves as more authentic and look down on other female fans. In response to these comments, Gill (2007, 2017) would probably argue that in post-feminism, women gain empowerment through their femininity and wanting to look ‘sexy’ and sexually appealing. During the interview, Rea from Iceland shared,

“I also think that wearing a lot of makeup and like being very feminine when you go to games, which I usually do, is very cool and I think it is nice, and I think it strong to be unapologetically feminine in masculine spaces and I think both of them are good”.

(Female fan from Iceland)

Eva from Uganda shared how her favorite female football player always takes good care of her appearance during games and ensures that in every match she wears makeup, however, she still manages to be the best player of the game at the end of the match.

The best way to view those two groups of fans is by allowing them to be themselves and not pushing them into changing their core selves. Scholars argue that fandom is a social construct (Hognestad, 2012) mediated as a male game (Jeanes & Kay, 2007). Media often displays socially acceptable norms of being a football fan. Historically, authentic football fans are perceived to be males (Hills et al., 2021) who follow certain scripts such as shouting, swearing, being aggressive, etc. If one does not follow this script, that person is considered an inauthentic fan.

Nevertheless, some informants shared that individuals should feel free to express their fandom in ways they want to without feeling pressure to follow a certain way of doing fandom. If female fans want to dress up for the games, their fandom should not be questioned because of how they present themselves. Similarly, if female fans want to wear sporty clothes and appear less feminine, their fandom should not be questioned based on their appearance. Female fans should not feel pressured to change their identities only because the media or society reinforces those norms.

This section demonstrated how the gender and fandom identities of transnational female fans in Lund often conflict. This conflict usually emerges from social norms and different ways society and media conceptualize gender and fandom practices. The tension was evident as they reflected on their fandom and other female fans’ fandom. Some of them were convinced that feminine fandom was inauthentic fandom because women who take too much care of their appearance might attend matches to receive attention from males. Some others condemned this

view by supporting both groups, the feminine and masculine and claiming that female fans should feel free to express themselves.

4.3.3 National vs transnational Identity: bittersweet conviviality

National identity plays a major role in one's fandom. Informants spoke enthusiastically of their World Cup experience as they reflected on their fandom. Many recalled the World Cup event as they recalled the long, hot summer nights with their families and friends cheering for their teams. Many described the World Cup as an event that united their country. Ana from Hungary shared that she did not have excellent relationships with her country due to corruption and other political and economic aspects. She exclaimed that stadiums in Budapest are built off stolen money, which can often lead her to boycott the games; however, when the national teams are playing, she decides to watch the matches. She feels a sense of home, belonging, and unity during this time. She shared,

"I only watch the Hungarian national team games because I know some people who also watch it and sometimes we talk about it and I also wanted to mention that the national team games are really something that unites the whole nation because there is a lot of tension in the Hungarian society yeah I would say, like politically...so there is always a lot of tension in society but during football games, it's not visible it is just Hungary and I think that's something that I like about it".

(Female fan from Hungary)

Hannah agreed that during the World Cup, she saw the positive side of her country. She shared that almost everyone in the country gathers around the TV to watch the games while others buy tickets to attend matches at the stadium. During this time, she explained that Hungarians feel united and very nationalistic. Kristina from Greece said that matches in Greece tend to be very aggressive and fierce, which is why she likes watching the World Cup instead. She feels safer when the World Cup games are on TV because the event seeks to elevate the international experience apart from competition.

Other informants shared that sometimes they feel homesick while living abroad, and supporting one's national country in the World Cup awakens their longing for their country.

“I think it is always nice to root for your home country, also because I felt so homesick after coming here so I think I developed a sense of belonging that I think I never had in myself, I never thought that I was not that nationalistic but I think I am since coming here and seeing the difference of...I don't know being in another country versus being in your own country, just different treatment, even if you are in such an advanced country like Sweden, no one would treat you good like in your own country, or like with the good opportunities and things”

(Female fan from Saudi Arabia)

Being away from home and feeling homesick is another major factor that pushed informants to watch World Cup games. During those times, they felt very nationalistic, even more than they usually are in their home country. The last World Cup happened in 2022, and informants shared some moments when they watched the games with their friends. One pivotal moment they recalled was those evenings when their countries were playing. They shared that during those times, they would invite all their friends to go to a bar and watch the games, and there, they felt very connected to their home countries despite the geographical distance. Many informants shared that they left their home countries due to economic and political factors. They described this relationship as a bittersweet feeling because despite the financial drawbacks and political turmoil in their countries, they still felt attached to their countries, and that was evident, especially during the World Cup when their country was playing. Football served as a way to connect and unite people worldwide.

Flori from Argentina shared that she wanted to invite her Argentinian friends to support the country together during the World Cup. Sometimes, she shared that when she noticed Argentians in a bar, she would talk to them and invite them to watch the game together. This showed a sense of solidarity and unity, and despite leaving their countries for a better future, they still felt emotionally connected. Many informants shared that they still keep in touch with their fandom community back home and often send messages to discuss the games from afar.

Furthermore, Duru, Favell, and Varela (2017) argue that transnational communities strive to connect to their country of origin, intensifying the ties and relationships with people back home. Vertovec (2001) writes, “migrants maintain various forms of contact with people and institutions in their places of origin” (p.574). Most of these developments occur over different technological scapes (Appadurai, 1990), such as joining a family WhatsApp group to talk about football, sending football reels and memes to their friends back home, and texting someone back

home while watching the games to ensure that they discuss every moment of the event. Alesandra from Spain shared how, while living in Sweden, she and her family have a WhatsApp group where they share every football news to ensure they keep their love and passion alive. Lee from China shared how she keeps her phone close to message her friend back home when their favorite team is playing.

5. Conclusion

This study delved into the intricate dynamics of transnational female football fans' engagement, fandom, media experiences, and identities. Despite being a minority demographic group, these fans have shown remarkable resilience in the face of various challenges to belong to a fandom community, both domestically and internationally. The study conducted 13 audience interviews combined with media-go-along, one expert interview and applied media ethnography to analyse and answer the research questions. From these methods, three themes emerged; *Engagement*, *A Media Experience*, and the *Multiplicity of Identities*. The main argument of this paper is that female fans of male football, despite their minority status, continue to make their presence felt in the fandom community. Many informants echoed that they feel more secure and confident in Lund when it comes to performing their fandom, however, their past experiences with engaging with football in their home countries shaped the way how they perform fandom today. For example, some of them remained quiet when watching games with others in public showing a lack of confidence.

Despite the progress recorded in the last few years and reported by the informants, questions persist regarding the authenticity of their fandom. Adhering to a male-centric model of performing fandom perpetuates a male hegemony culture. This study advocates for a shift in societal norms, where female fans should be afforded the freedom to express support for their teams according to their own preferences, free from societal scrutiny or the obligation to validate their fandom. Gender ought not to determine the capacity of one's fandom. Women should be empowered to dress and behave in manners that reflect their personal values, without feeling compelled to conform to society's way of doing fandom. This shift in perspective would not only promote inclusivity but also foster a more vibrant and diverse fandom culture.

Furthermore, this thesis contributes to the existing literature in many ways. First, it intertwines digital media (e.g. social media, TV) with offline media (physical space such as watching matches at the bar) to elucidate the multilayer dynamics of media in shaping the engagement of female fans. Second, while other studies have focused on national female fandom (Lenneis & Pfister, 2015), this study brings the transnational element to add more originality to the existing literature and to expand on what other scholars have already researched. Third, it

employs the media-go-along to understand how transnational female fans in Lund use different apps and websites to strengthen and intensify their fandom.

5.1 Finding

RQ1: How do transnational young audiences living in Lund engage, experience, and perform football fandom?

To answer this research question, this thesis found out that transnational female fans residing in Lund engaged, experienced and performed fandom in myriad ways, some of which underwent alternations and changes due to different factors, notably the experiences of living abroad. The first finding of this present study was how engagement shaped the informant's fandom and their experiences with football. Dahlgren and Hill (2020) argue that engagement is a protean factor that switches back and forth from positive to negative engagement to disengagement. Informants illustrated how their engagement, fandom, and experiences with football changed and evolved over the years. They started their journey to watch football influenced by a male family member, and then they learned more about it as they interacted with peers in school. Informants shared that it was during school years when they experienced gender clashes in football. There, they learned that football is a boy's game, whereas some others were never encouraged by their family members to play and follow football. Hence, it was not until they grew up that the informants started engaging more actively with football.

This first section shows the male nature of football and how the engagement of female fans changes based mostly on socio-cultural factors. The lack of experience and engagement with football at an early age shaped the informant's fandom. Some shared that if they were more encouraged as little kids to watch and play football by their families and schools, their fandom would probably be more intense today. Some others shared that they never let go of their passion for football even if that meant getting beaten by their fathers. Nevertheless, as informants changed their culture and moved abroad, some were more exposed to football while others were less.

Some of them started following football to make new friends, some others got into a relationship, and their partners motivated them to continue watching games. In contrast, some others claimed they have a flexible schedule while living in Lund, which allows them to stay

more engaged. Some others shared that football was always on TV at homes, schools, and even malls, so this factor pushed them to watch games. Other informants shared that their fandom became less intense as they moved to Lund. One major factor that influenced their experiences was the need for access to different websites to watch the games and the lack of time due to studying full-time. This again illustrates how engagement changes over time and how various factors can shape one's fandom.

Furthermore, the social constructivism around football developed a male-hegemony culture in many of the informant's societies. This factor shaped informants' fandom as they became less confident around male fans. Some informants decided to stay passive and not publicly show or vocalize their opinions about football, fearing that they would get judged. One of the main comments female fans get from male fans in public is their lack of authenticity and knowledge about football. Those experiences have made female fans less assertive and vocal about their fandom. Social constructivism and gender imaginaries (Butler, 1999; Taylor, 2004) influenced how female fans perform their fandom in public (Goffman, 1959).

Furthermore, this thesis explored the different motivations to watch football, ranging from seeking to make new friends to keeping their passion for football alive. The former factor was evident as informants shared that being away from their families and friends and living in a new country led them to search for new friends. Informants shared that football is one of the best ways to make friends. Lund offered a variety of opportunities for informants to get involved with football. One way is to join a nation's team to play football, and another common way is to hang out with your friends after class and watch games at the bar. The latter factor concerns mostly those fans who are very passionate about football and who share vivid memories of their experiences of watching football back home, and they want to keep that feeling alive by continuing to be a supporter of their team.

Another factor concerned the ones who shared that they feel they have more free time in Lund and, therefore, can enjoy watching games with friends, making it more like a night-out event. The motivation for engagement illustrated the diverse backgrounds of the informants and their personal stories. Those introverts shared that making friends through football is very effective, whereas others shared that watching football games often reminds them of being home. Some others simply wanted to support their favorite team. Dahlgren and Hill (2020) write, "elucidating the motivations of citizens and audiences will enable an understanding of where

engagement is coming from...and where it may have an impact on our lived realities” (p.16). The motivation for engagement showed how crucial the social aspect is for the informants and how it enhances their fandom.

The majority of informants described themselves as moderate fans. The primary reason was the streaming issues they experienced while living in Sweden. Some decided to watch matches less often due to having problems with streaming, and others chose to watch through illegal streaming. This illustrated how audiences roam through different media avenues to find the content they like and often push back to several websites through illegal watching. Furthermore, they also claimed that due to being away from their families, the intensity of their fandom also decreased as their friends in the host country were not fans of football.

Nevertheless, despite being geographically separated, some managed to message and video call their family and friends during games and discuss the highlights of the match. Those responses demonstrate the role of the media in enhancing their fandom. However, it also shows how those who experienced trouble streaming the matches could not stay updated and engaged. In this case, the media was a backlash to hinder informants’ fandom.

RQ2: How do they reflect on the role of media use in being a football fan?

To address the second research question, this thesis examined the different media avenues through which audiences roam to engage and sustain their fandom. The second section of this thesis focused on media experiences and the role of media in enhancing and hindering transnational female football fans’ engagement and fandom. The researcher incorporated the term ‘roaming audiences’ to analyze the myriad ways informants roam and navigate through media platforms and content to watch the games and stay informed and updated about their favorite teams. In addition, they used online media to keep in touch with their family and friends back home and send messages about their favorite or least favorite moments during the games. Furthermore, informants illustrated the push and pull dynamics (Hill, 2019) by watching the games via illegal streaming to avoid paying money. This shows how the audience sometimes pushes back to media content by either not being willing to pay and choosing another streaming platform or sometimes by not being willing to post or stay engaged with social media. This

section analyzed how media and audience have power and agency over each other (Corner, 2011).

Another key term in this section was ‘a placeless place’ and the ‘doubling of place’, indicating how informants can simultaneously be in multiple places. They can watch games on their laptop in Lund while texting their friends in China about how the match is going. They can also go to a bar in Lund to watch the game while the match is being played in another country. Furthermore, when they cannot watch the games live, they can catch up later on social media or different apps to check the results and some of the highlights of the games. This media flexibility allows transnational female fans in Lund to choose the desired place and time of where and when to watch matches.

Nevertheless, despite this flexibility, the media experience can sometimes lead to tensions and conflict. Some informants shared how watching the games in a bar in Lund can develop and escalate to a cultural clash. Cultural differences between countries shaped the informant’s fandom in Lund. They claimed that others perceive their behavior in Lund as ‘abnormal’, whereas it is considered socially acceptable in their home countries. This led to informants almost being expelled from the room due to their ‘extreme’ reaction and sometimes led to misunderstanding among the fan groups. However, despite the differences, the love and passion for football unite fans. Hence, they constantly seek common ways to experience a feeling of conviviality.

Furthermore, informants described the experience of watching games at the stadium as much more exciting and fun than watching in bars or at home. The splendor of the stadium, the whole experience of buying the ticket, waiting in line, entering the stadium, the massive groups of fans singing and playing different instruments, and seeing their favorite player from a closer distance were all factors that made this experience memorable. Those factors were analyzed as affective practices that producers use to pull and push the audience into watching games at the stadium. The positive emotions they receive from those events create a strong feeling for female fans. Some even mentioned that real fans should go and watch games at least once in the stadium. Informants associated strong and real fandom with the experience of watching games at the stadium. Another memorable experience for informants was watching games on TV. Unfortunately, this experience was lacking in Lund since most informants lived in student accommodation, and affording a TV was impossible for everyone. Nevertheless, they reflected

on when they lived in their home country, where TV was an everyday experience. TV served as a medium to gather and unite people, an aspect some informants shared was missing today.

RQ3: How do they negotiate their multiplicity of identities when they perform their fandom?

To answer the third research question, this thesis found out that transnational female fans residing in Lund negotiate multiple identities at once, where the most evident, dominant, and complex one is gender identity. This thesis found how some informants reflect gender imaginaries by claiming that genuine fans are the ones who show masculine femininity or, as Kossakowski, Antonowicz, and Jakubowska (2022) refer to ‘tomboys’. Some others discussed how emphasized femininity should not necessarily be seen as inauthentic fandom. They reflected how one’s fandom should not be judged based on appearance or practices. Female fans should not feel pressured to fit into either group or be constrained to choose how they want to present themselves. In an ideal world, one’s fandom never gets questioned or judged based on gender or performance; however, everyone should feel they belong and be accepted into the community, regardless of gender and fandom practices.

The last two sections focused on national and transnational identity. Here, informants reflected on their experiences of living in the host country and the role of football in enhancing their relationship with their home country. Many informants shared that their favorite football event is the World Cup because of nationalism. They feel more connected to their country during those significant events. Furthermore, they reflected on the role of online media in strengthening their fandom and maintaining ties with family and friends back home. Lastly, they shared moments of tension and conflict in the host country due to cultural differences.

Nevertheless, informants managed those moments due to their shared passion for football. The diversity of identities explored how transnational female football fans negotiate and maintain multiple identities simultaneously. This finding showed how identity is fluid, constantly changing and evolving as individuals adapt to new environments and ways of living.

5.2 Future research

This research aimed to analyze and explore female fans in juxtaposition to traditional male fans; however, as Connell (1987) argues in their work, male hegemony is not only active when compared to women but also to other men who do not identify themselves as males, e.g. gay and other members of LGBTQ+ community. As this thesis explores and analyses, football fandom is constituted by a male-hegemony culture (Baker, 2020; Chalabaev et al., 2013; Eskandari. 2022). This indicates that an authentic fandom is performed only by traditional straight men who show their masculinity and power over groups such as females and gays (Connell, 1987). Due to the limited scope of the research, this study only analyzed women. However, in subsequent future research, it would be very insightful to explore gender dynamics and football among the queer community and perhaps juxtapose those two groups to understand the dynamics of gender and transnationality.

Furthermore, in addition to exploring the queer community of football fandom, I also aim to research how male fans reflect on female fandom. Due to time constraints and the scope of the research, this study only interviewed female fans; however, in the next project, I aim to interview male fans and juxtapose the experiences of the two groups and how they experience fandom with each other. Lastly, an exciting aspect of this research could be to expand it further to media ethnography and digital research. In future projects, I aim to bring this study further by exploring digital media, its affordances, and how it shapes transnational female fans' experiences, engagement, fandom, and identities. One potential method that could be conducted is semiotics and the power of visuals. I aim to shed light on female fans' fandom as it remains an under researched area in academia, as well as explore other groups and critically analyze how gender plays a crucial role in shaping one's fandom practices and experiences. Hermes (2023) writes that the hope is to create an environment where everyone feels listened to, loved, and belongs. Female fans and other groups should feel free to perform their fandom comfortably. Neither emphasized femininity nor masculine femininity should be condemned or judged. Fandom should never be measured based on one's gender or practices; on the contrary, it should be inclusive to everyone and foster an environment where everyone feels listened to and belongs.

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7. Appendices

7.1 Appendix: Informants

Semi-structures audience interviews

Informants	Nationality	Occupation
Informant no.1	Iceland	Bachelor's student
Informant no.2	Hungary	Bachelor's student
Informant no.3	Argentina	Master's student
Informant no.4	Saudi Arabia	Master's student
Informant no.5	Uganda	Ph.D student
Informant no.6	Bolivia	Ph.D student
Informant no.7	Italy	Master's student
Informant no.8	Greece	Master's student
Informant no.9	China	Master's student
Informant no.10	Spain	Erasmus student
Informant no.11	Sweden	Bachelor's student
Informant no.12	The Netherlands	Master's student

Finding the interviewees was the most challenging part of my thesis because most of my friends in Lund are not fans of football and as a result, they did not have any friends who watched male football or knew someone who did that. I wrote in several Facebook public groups in Lund

where a few people messaged me wanting to be part of my project. They in return knew other female fans of male football whom I was able to interview. The majority of the informants were very eloquent and had many stories to share, whereas a few others had difficulty elaborating on their answers. As a result, I asked many follow-up questions in some interviews to learn more, understand, and explore further their experiences and engagement with football. One informant had difficulty explaining themselves in English and therefore I had to adjust to that and make the questions more feasible for the interviewee. Nevertheless, at the end of each interview, I gained rich and insightful data for which I was very thrilled and curious to unpack and analyze.

Even though this was the most challenging part of my thesis, doing interviews was also my favorite process of this thesis. I enjoyed meeting new people and talking about football. Even though we were strangers, the love and passion for football and the many common experiences made this process very meaningful and enjoyable. I was surprised how many would open up telling their stories and talking about experiences in a way as if we had known each other for a long time. After the interviews, I remained friends with my informants and even discussed of watching matches together at the stadium. During this process I not only learned and gained new insights about my area of interest, but I also realized that even though we all come from different countries and different backgrounds, one thing that unites us as all is the struggle to challenge traditional conventions and the aim to create a more inclusive place for female football fans.

7.2 Appendix: Consent form

Text in brackets is help text to be removed in the final version and yellow highlighted text to be changed.

Consent to participate in a Master Thesis at the Faculty of Social Sciences

I agree to participate in **[Name of thesis]**.

[Option 1: Describe that it is a student project and that you will not collect personal data. It should be described in a way that is easy to understand.]

[Option 2: Describe that it is a student project and why you need to collect personal data. It should be described in a way that is easy to understand.]

Information on the processing of personal data

The following personal data will be processed:

[Describe all personal data to be processed, such as name, address, e-mail address, or other information linked to the individual.]

The following sensitive personal data will be processed:

[If applicatble - describe all sensitive personal data that will be processed in the thesis]

Personal data will be processed in the following ways:

[Describe how the personal data will be processed, including how and how long it will be stored and when it will be deleted]

We do not share your personal data with third parties.

Lund University, Box 117, 221 00 Lund, Sweden, with organisation number 202100-3211 is the controller. You can find Lund University's privacy policy at www.lu.se/integritet

You have the right to receive information about the personal data we process about you. You also have the right to have inaccurate personal data about you corrected. If you have a complaint about our processing of your personal data, you can contact our Data Protection Officer at dataskyddsbud@lu.se. You also have

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he right to lodge a complaint with the supervisory authority (the Data Protection Authority, IMY) if you believe that we are processing your personal data incorrectly.

I agree to participate in *[Name of Thesis.]*

Location	Signature
Date	Name clarification

7.3 Appendix: Interview Guide (first and new version)

Interview Guide (first version)

1. Can you please reflect on the time you started following football?
 - Your passion for football?
 - How did it start?
 - What role does it play in your life?
2. Which team do you support?
 - National event
 - Champions League?
 - (How important is it that you show support to your team? Maybe a follow-up question)
3. How do you watch your national team and other teams during international or national major events?
 - With friends, family, and other groups of people, alone
 - Setting: home, bar, pub, square, live event-stadium, tv
 - Any rituals, traditions
 - How does that differ from when you are alone?
4. How is football as a sport conceptualized in your social circle?
 - Is it considered a male sport?
 - Do your female friends usually watch football? Do they talk about it? Participate in discussions and fan groups.
 - How do these elements shape the way you engage with your fandom?
5. What are some ways you show your support for your team?
 - Post in social media? Can you reflect more about how you support/or not support your team in social media? Do you comment on public posts? Do you engage with other posts? Share, re-post, ect.
 - Go to watch a live match at the stadium?
 - Talk to other people about it?
6. Can you please reflect on times you had to watch football in a male-dominated environment or with your male friends?
 - Are you excluded or included in the conversations about football?
 - Do you notice any sexism or any other forms of gender discrimination when you are watching the game in a room with males?
 - How do your male friends or other men in the room/stand when they see you supporting your favorite team?
 - What are your opinions on gender inequality in sports (football) environments?
 - Gender discrimination?
7. Can you reflect on some activities you engage in before or after the match?
 - Pre-drinking?
 - Watching the game at the pub?

8. Do you prefer to watch games at home or out and can you reflect on that choice?
What are some factors that shape your decision for that?
9. Can you reflect on times you have attended a match in the stadium?
 - What are your thoughts and reflections on your experience watching a game in the stadium?
 - How did you feel about it?
 - How does that change when you are alone or at home?
10. What are your thoughts about the designs of the stadiums?
 - Are they female-friendly?
 - Have there been any moments when you felt unsafe or uncomfortable? Can you reflect on that?
11. What are your thoughts on emphasized femininity (I explain the concept to the interviewee) when it comes to being a female fan?
 - What are some clothes you put on when you watch a match in the stadium or go out with friends in a pub? How does that change when you are alone?
12. What are your thoughts on hegemonic masculinity? (I explain the concept)

Anything that you would like to add?

Interview guide (New and final version)

Fandom/engagement/experiences

1. Could you please introduce yourself a little bit? (work/study, where they live, how long in Sweden?)
2. When and how did you start following football?
 - o Your passion for football? Would you consider yourself as an engaged supporter? a good or a bad fan? A fanatic?
 - o What role does it play in your life?
3. Which team(s) do you support?
 - National event
 - Champions League?
4. How do you support/follow your team? (let the person start telling first, and if they did not mention, setting or media or company then you can ask a specific question from below)
 - Post on social media? Can you reflect more about how you support/or not support? (your team in social media? Do you comment on public posts? Do you engage with other posts? Share, re-post, ect.
5. How do you support your team?

- Any rituals or traditions Can you reflect on some activities you engage in before or after the match? ● Pre-drinking?
 - Watching the game at the pub?
 - How does that differ from when you are alone?
6. Do you support any teams online/or are part of any community online?
7. Setting: home, bar, pub, square, live event-stadium, tv
- o Can you reflect on how you feel/have felt in each setting as a female football supporter of male football? (ask to give an example or anecdote)
 - o What is your favorite setting for watching a football match? WHY? The least preferred? The safest?
 - o Do you prefer to watch games at home or out and can you reflect on that choice? Do women feel safe at the stadium? Any measures taken?
8. What are some clothes you put on when you watch a match in the stadium or go out with friends in a pub? How does that change when you are alone?

Gender

9. I would like to talk a bit more about football fandom and gender. How is football perceived/approached in your social circle?
- o ● Is it considered a male sport?
 - o ● Do your female friends usually watch football? Do they talk about it? Participate in discussions and fan groups.
 - o ● How do these elements shape the way you engage with your fandom?
10. Can you please reflect on times you had to watch football in a male-dominated environment or with your male friends?
- o ● Are you excluded or included in the conversations about football?
 - o ● Do you notice any sexism or any other forms of gender discrimination or male dominance when you are watching the game in a room with males?
 - o ● How do your male friends or other men in the room/stadium react when they see you supporting your favorite team?
11. What are your thoughts on female fans who show up wearing (feminine clothes; e.g. pink, dress, skirt? How do you perceive them and how do others in your circle (including males) perceive them?
12. What are your thoughts/impressions when you see girls who refuse to drink beer, shout, or swear?
12. What are your thoughts when you see girls imitating men's way of doing fandom?

Transnationalism

13. Can you please reflect on the way you support your team back in your home country?
14. Can you please reflect on the way you support your team here in Lund?
15. Do you still watch the game?

- How?
- Do you follow your team?
- Do you keep up with your friends and community there (talking about football; sending reels, etc)

16. Can you please reflect on the role of media in shaping your fandom?

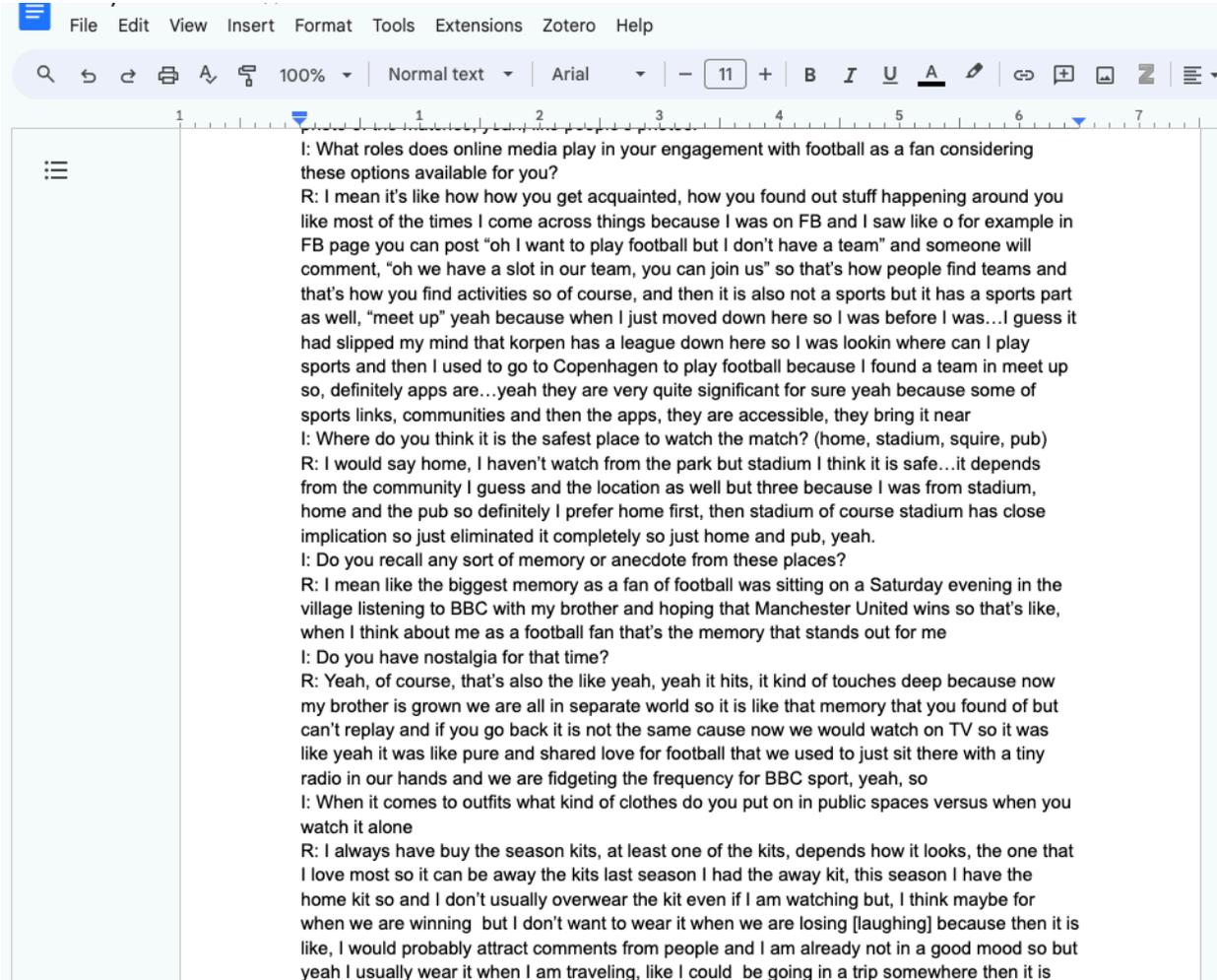
Ending

Do you have any final thoughts? Would you like to add anything else?

After the first pilot, I made some changes to my interview guide by switching, organizing, and revising the questions. After I met with my supervisor we decided to add the transactional element because all informants came from different countries and it would have been interesting to learn more about their fandom practices back home and how they changed or remained the same in Lund. During my first pilot, I realized that the informant was prone to talking about their experiences in their country and I then decided to add the first question when I asked the informant to tell me about themselves, where they come from, what are they studying. For some, it was here that they introduced how their context and where they come from shaped and impacted their fandom today. In addition, in a few interviews, the informants would start talking right away about the male-hegemony nature of football, and in that case, I had to make small adjustments to let informants share their experiences.

7.4 Appendix: coding

Step 1: Transcribing



The screenshot shows a text editor interface with a menu bar (File, Edit, View, Insert, Format, Tools, Extensions, Zotero, Help) and a toolbar with various editing tools. The main text area contains a transcript of a conversation. The transcript is as follows:

I: What roles does online media play in your engagement with football as a fan considering these options available for you?

R: I mean it's like how how you get acquainted, how you found out stuff happening around you like most of the times I come across things because I was on FB and I saw like o for example in FB page you can post "oh I want to play football but I don't have a team" and someone will comment, "oh we have a slot in our team, you can join us" so that's how people find teams and that's how you find activities so of course, and then it is also not a sports but it has a sports part as well, "meet up" yeah because when I just moved down here so I was before I was...I guess it had slipped my mind that korpen has a league down here so I was lookin where can I play sports and then I used to go to Copenhagen to play football because I found a team in meet up so, definitely apps are...yeah they are very quite significant for sure yeah because some of sports links, communities and then the apps, they are accessible, they bring it near

I: Where do you think it is the safest place to watch the match? (home, stadium, squire, pub)

R: I would say home, I haven't watch from the park but stadium I think it is safe...it depends from the community I guess and the location as well but three because I was from stadium, home and the pub so definitely I prefer home first, then stadium of course stadium has close implication so just eliminated it completely so just home and pub, yeah.

I: Do you recall any sort of memory or anecdote from these places?

R: I mean like the biggest memory as a fan of football was sitting on a Saturday evening in the village listening to BBC with my brother and hoping that Manchester United wins so that's like, when I think about me as a football fan that's the memory that stands out for me

I: Do you have nostalgia for that time?

R: Yeah, of course, that's also the like yeah, yeah it hits, it kind of touches deep because now my brother is grown we are all in separate world so it is like that memory that you found of but can't replay and if you go back it is not the same cause now we would watch on TV so it was like yeah it was like pure and shared love for football that we used to just sit there with a tiny radio in our hands and we are fidgeting the frequency for BBC sport, yeah, so

I: When it comes to outfits what kind of clothes do you put on in public spaces versus when you watch it alone

R: I always have buy the season kits, at least one of the kits, depends how it looks, the one that I love most so it can be away the kits last season I had the away kit, this season I have the home kit so and I don't usually overwear the kit even if I am watching but, I think maybe for when we are winning but I don't want to wear it when we are losing [laughing] because then it is like, I would probably attract comments from people and I am already not in a good mood so but yeah I usually wear it when I am traveling, like I could be going in a trip somewhere then it is

Step 2: Description coding

didn't like it so I quit but then I started again when I was eleven cause I had tried most sports and didn't like it so I started football again and then I liked it. So I have been playing for eleven years.

I: What kind of supporter would you consider yourself? Like how engaged are you with watching football or are you like a superfan, a moderate fan, fanatic?

R: I think I watch mostly **when is on TV** at home and when I grew up **my dad took me and my brother alot** to the sports bar. I watched **then** and there is a team in Malmö which is Malmö FF and my dad has and usually buys us **ticket** there. But I wouldn't say I am a super fan, I was a bit more engaged when I was younger in high-school and now is not as big, I watch it sometimes like when it is on TV, but and I also change what I watch because I only used to watch men's football and now I watch more women's football than men's football because it is growing.

I: When you say you watch matches at home, you mean at home in Iceland?

R: **No like** home, house, here, like at home with my family because **my dad watches it like alot** and it is almost always on TV.

I: And what role does football play in your life?

R: I **think, it** helped me a lot when I was younger **cause** just exercising and finding something I really like. I think it helps because I study and I did not take a break after high school so I have been studying a lot of time and I **think getting out and exercising in a fun way and helps a lot** and I think having a team and being able to talk to my other people about sport I think it is fun.

I: What team do you support?

R: I would say Liverpool and I would say Barcelona women's team.

I: And Liverpool men's team?

R: Yeah, **men's** team.

I: And then how do you support your team when **you are let's watching** football, you can also think of the time when you used to do it before and now, it could be in the stadium or at home, how do you follow your team? Like how do you support your team basically.

R: I just watch the games. I have been to one Liverpool men's team game **cause** we flew to England and went to the game which was really **fun and when** we go to bars and staff and

Evianda Noka
4:24 PM Today

I think getting out and exercising in a fun way and helps a lot

Evianda Noka
4:24 PM Today

I have like a shirt and I have a scarf as well with Liverpool.

Evianda Noka
4:25 PM Today

most of my friends don't watch football so I don't post

Evianda Noka
4:25 PM Today

It's a bit boring because I would like it if they could watch it together,

Evianda Noka
4:26 PM Today

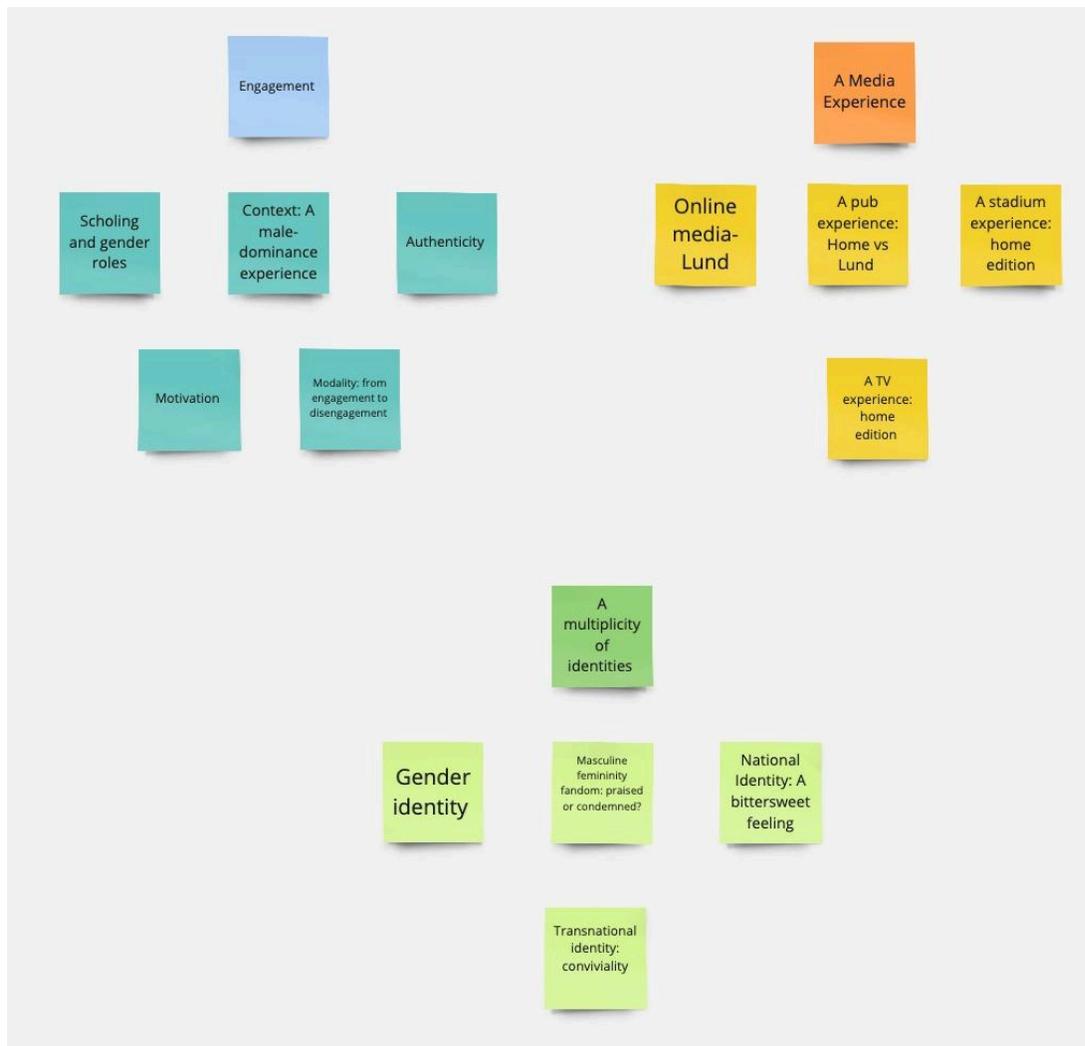
Step 3: Entered the highlighted quotes in an Excel sheet

	Thema	Fanatic	Ference	Code	Devia	Liverpool
2	My dad is a very big football fan	The school had a team but I was the only girl who tried the practices so I stopped playing after a few months (laughing) I think and then football was kind of reintroduced in my life through my grandpa	even though my family is not a big fan of football in general, we always watch the world cup together	my first time living abroad and alot of first time experiences and doing stuff, including watching the World Cup for the first time in a really, like committed way	since I was young because in South America, football is very important culture	I have played foot like 8 or 9 years of hometown in the N
3	grandfather also watches	I did not get any passes from the boys	people are crazy about football so is kind of part of the culture to like football	with all my international friends from the class and we used to watch it together,	my father is very fan of one of the teams in my country and since I was very young he always would got to see the team	the world cup or ei champions league
4	my dad took me and my brother alot to the sports bar.	I had a lot of guy friends and I think that is why I joined the football	I was more how to say it more aware of what was happening and what football meant for the country	my brothers were fanatic	but it was not by myself it was just because I went with him[her dad] but after some time I started to play as well	I might have been something just wat games with my far television
5	my dad has and usually buys us ticket there. But I wouldn't say I am a super fan, I was a bit more engaged when I was younger in high-school and now is not as big,	I think a moderate fan because I enjoy watching the sport but I am not really connected emotionally.	In Argentina when it is the world cup in the school like they put games during the school	but it was not because I liked it, it was just because it was there	In some countries it is not very normal for girls play.	I guess my brother interested
6	like at home with my family because my dad watches it like alot and it is almost always on TV.	since I am from Hungary we have an energetic fan culture and we shout a lot, yeah,	mostly on TV or in those communal events	then with other international friends in my class I thought to join as an activity	but I am a moderate fan now	He also played foc younger brother as
7	I think getting out and exercising in a fun way	so I am really used at shouting from the sideline from my team but it changed a bit with english because communicating in english like in situation which requires instant feedback from my teammates that is a bit harder than in your native language, but I am still trying to	with friends after school, so it was after school I mean it was also during school but mostly after so or in the weekend so we just met with friends most of the times. That was the first time I watched with friends and it was a whole ritual	excited because that is the team of one of our classmates so we would cheer for or against. so it		I didn't, and I gues know a bit more at

Step 4: Analytical coding

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	A masculine influence	Gender Steriotypes	Merchandise	Safety issues	A national experience	Negative eng
2	My dad is a very big football fan	from people that are not my friends and usually people I have met, it is a mix response, sometimes people don't take it seriously like I wouldn't understand it and like my football is not as hard as men's football and I also get a lot of response when I say I cheer for a specific team and mostly men or like only men respond with like asking questions about it, like testing if I really know	I have like a shirt and I have a scarf as well with Liverpool.	I am afraid because I am in a foreign country and I am a woman	I was more how to say it more aware of what was happening and what football meant for the country	of the whole political sit
3	grandfather also watches	what is the player's name and like staff like that to test if I really know what I am talking about which they never do to my male's friends who watch and cheer for their team.	Maybe for national games I do have like a Hungarian shirt I think	no I can't compare that for sure, here I could be a more guaranteed security so I will sit there I will have my phone and I will not lose property, back home I could lose the property but I will have a good time for sure,	I will say that I am very passive with football but when the world cup comes, maybe I am not an expert in football but I get very passionate	it really symbolizes corrup
4	I went with my grandpa.	When I was younger I felt like I have to prove it now I am just like it doesn't really matter if they believe it or not but of course it is not nice to hear.	I have the t-shirt	For sure at home is the safest	I have tried to support a team other than Argentina but you know there are like so many, you know when Argentina is so strong,	I have a very complicated Hungary over all and I think like something is represen about this country, but you maybe you can relate.

Step 4: Themes (subthemes)



7.5 Appendix: Codebook

Themes	Subthemes	Analytical codes	Empirical material
Engagement	<p>Schooling and Gender Roles</p> <p>A male dominance experience</p> <p>Authenticity</p> <p>Motivation</p> <p>Modality: from engagement to disengagement</p>	<p>Negative engagement</p> <p>Decreased engagement</p> <p>Increased engagement</p> <p>Everywhere and anywhere</p> <p>A masculine influence</p>	<p>“I am like engaged, i am competitive so it brings out a different person in me”</p> <p>“I think I completely stopped watching Hungarian games because we are not meeting so frequently with my grandpa”</p>
A Medie Experince	<p>Digital media-Lund</p> <p>A pub experience: Home vs Lund</p> <p>A stadium experience (home edition)</p> <p>A TV experience-home edition</p>	<p>Stadium</p> <p>Pubs</p> <p>Accesibility</p> <p>Social Media Aspect</p>	<p>“I don’t know how because I couldn’t, I promised I tried to change the VPN and also pay some channel to watch but I am never good, so I gave up”.</p> <p>“so the pubs are loud and sometimes people say things that doesn’t make sense”</p>
A multiplicity of identities	<p>Gender identity</p> <p>Masculine femininity fandom: praised or condemned?</p> <p>National vs transnational Identity: bittersweet conviviality</p>	<p>Emphasized femininity</p> <p>Women empowerment</p> <p>Authenticity</p> <p>Cultural differences</p> <p>Male hegemony</p> <p>Hostile environment</p> <p>Gender steriotypes</p> <p>A national experience</p>	<p>“heels and make up and stuff, especially heels, no that is too much, that is attention seeking those people are not here for the games”</p> <p>“I think it is mostly related to kind of a cultural thing</p>

			especially in the last world cup I was outside the country [Sweden] and is kind of you feel like nostalgia”
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7.6 Appendix: Interview sample

Interview

I: Interviewer

R: The informant

I: Can you please tell me about yourself?

R: So, my name is Evelyn and I come from Uganda and which is in the East part of Africa, yeah, I grew up in the countryside in the western part of Uganda and in a family of five kids and two parents

I: and now you are working in Lund?

R: Now I am a PhD student here in Lund University, fire safety division

I: When and how did you start watching football? If you can turn the time back a little bit, when was the first time that you watched football?

R: I have thought about that question before and I can't pinpoint the time but I feel that the time that I ever got to understand, like fully understand, I just started following football and I follow a boy, my brother, so very close and I guess that's where my interest in playing started from because I was always hanging out with my brother and I was always playing football with his friends, the boys who were going to school within the village and then so yeah and then it became, like, the girl who plays football and then it kind of became I think, it so it was always like his friends would always come to pick me home to go beat their team so it kind of became my thing, in terms in watching football I think it grew from playing football myself so I understood the game and I loved it and then at that time I don't think we had a tv or if we had it, it was showing football but they use this if you have heard of BBC british broadcasting corporation, BBC they held this sports program on Saturdays that would air the premier league on radio and I think it was called BBC sport, something like that, but every saturday it was 3 pm Ugandian time, so that would be, now it would be like 1 pm here, we are two hours ahead of Sweden, in the winter two summer in the summer one, but then my brother and I used to listen to that program and we used to support Macherster united, I still support Mancherster United but I don't know if was a support of it or it was just a coincidence, I don't know, but we are both crazy about Manchester United but we used to listen to that BBC radio station every

saturday following the premier league, yeah, that is kind of my obsession about football.

I: Were you guys the only one in the family?

R: No, I have four other siblings but girls but not interested in football, in the beginning, I had like resistance because then times have changed, why would a girl watch football things like that and yeah, my dad at some point beat me for playing football but then gave up after, yeah, but it was that and I played football and I think at some point my brother moved on but I stuck to it, it just stayed my thing and yeah, I support Manchester United. In the Spanish league is Barcelona, these are my two teams and then every other time I just sympathize with some other team but mostly is Manchester United, Barcelona and then in, my country back home there is a club called Sports Club Villa that I love so yeah.

I: What role does play in your life

R: I have also played most sports since then like starting football and I played volleyball and badminton but football in particular is how I met the first friends and stayed close so it has been that icebreaker, like if I go to a community it's like "is there is football team, can I try to join a football team so it's always been like..I think I am a little bit an introvert initially so I need something to break the ice otherwise I stand there like a statue not speaking to everyone but when I am in the sports field, I am not that passive so, I am like engaged, i am competitive so it brings out a different person in me, so I have been told as well, yeah but sports has been central in friendship that is for sure and how I am to integrate in societies, especially since I moved from Uganda to come here, I have always used sports football, volleyball to make friends and somehow get used , settle in a new community, and then for, so back home it is like you are in school and you are comuting and now they give medals, like you win and they give you medals, but when I was growing up when you won they gave you household things, maybe a jericho or a bucket so then you took it home and became part of... so in a sense you were gettign things for home use so your parents didn't need to spend a lot of money because you keep winning, its maybe buckets, pans, bag, so in that sense it was also good, but of course they give those medals, which is like, yeah medal is good but if you are not coming from a wealthy family, family doesn't need a medal, maybe it needs you to get a bag so they don't have to buy a bag, yeah.

I: How do you support your team?

R: I have been to the stadium itself to watch both of them but I always watch on TV yeah, so sports channels are how I watch when I was younger the radios since we didn't have a TV it but not it's, yeah, like yeah, sit, watch and scream, get annoyed in front of the TV, I guess buying clubs merchandise, in that way, you are contributing to the club, I think that's it

I: Do you usually post on social media if Manchester is playing?

R: Oh yes, FB, WhatsApp, I used to do it a lot on FB but now my friends back home don't use FB because of some government restrictions but yeah so I posted a lot in WhatsApp status, all the time [laughing]

I: All the time?

R: Yeah [laughing] when we are playing mostly, now the annoying thing because we lose too much yeah

I: Do you usually comment on these public posts?

R: No, I follow the official pages, I don't comment on the pages, no I try to refrain myself because some comments, some people have nasty comments, and it is just football at the end of the day, we don't have to be that way, but on the Manchester United app I always vote for man of the match?

I: You vote?

R: So on the app, at the end of the game is done they will post who is your man of the match then you would vote so that I vote now.

I: That's interesting

R: Yeah, they have an app, this one... yeah, it's an app they put the latest updates, their next games the youth games and women's games, sometimes they air them so you can watch them live, the lower league so I guess it is not a lot of sponsorship that is used so they air them and then they also air interviews from it's club legends and former players and interviews and players they also do like this pre match analysis with people and they show highlights and yeah then they, there is a link to machines united shop and then they give the team news, the manager things, even for the ladies thing which I also follow, and yeah, and then so when the games and the training sessions, when the sessions... when there is a game and hte game is dosn't they will put a poll who is your man of the match and they list all players and you click and then I think after an hour they will say this

person won based on the votes, so there is like different like the premier league match has its man of the match but also the club has its man of the match who might not necessarily be the same because the man of the match from premier league could be from the other team or could be from our team but different player.

I: Do you use this app mainly to get information and to keep yourself updated?

R: Yeah, that is how I follow the club because I also get a lot of information, you know in social media from their FB page or from BBC Sport their sports page but then a lot of like aren't verified until it appears in the club platform

I: So it is more like a way to verify as well?

R: Yeah, because this is the club app so

I: I think you touched a bit into that, you said that when it comes to supporting your team, you would go to the stadium and scream,

R: Yeah, that was before covid, yeah, I have been to matches of Manchester United, I have been to Barcelona and then I always buy a season t-shirt for Manchester United and then I watch TV of course and then I follow social media platform, yeah

I: What are some rituals that you always do when watching the game?

R: Like things, no I don't think I have one,

I: Like for example pre-drinking if you go to the pub or for example getting some snacks, food...

R: Yeah, yeah, of course, definitely the snacks, so it can be a drink, a cup of tea, popcorn, so yes, I always have food to eat when I am watching and it also depends, if I don't watch it from home, especially back home we like watch as a group and so you go to like any equivalent of a pub and then you have a drink and you eat and then you laugh and stuff but it is always, I try not to have a tense environment even if we are losing because at the end of the day like I am crazy but I am not extremely crazy and it just a game at the end of the day it is just a game and life must go on so.

I: Because I was also gonna ask what kind of fan you consider yourself.

R: I think I am not just any fan because when Manchester loses my mood changes and they want to be quiet but I am not the kind of fan that would go and abuse people because we lost, I am going to show the dissatisfaction with how this player is not doing enough for the team, maybe this player should be sold but it would things that I am not going to go to the

pub and or threaten because I have seen people threaten and be abusive, so I am not that kind of fan so if that is the definition of superfan, then I am not that but I am like yeah, I like, I am crazy about Manchester if they lose my mood is like off [laughing] and it is like don't talk to me about football like leave me in peace and then focus on other things but then I move on very fast so even if we are losing I am always gonna watch the game so not going to say that "oh now I am not going to support", I will still watch the game but I will be like but "ohhh" [winning]

I: How does watching the game in public spaces differ from when you watch it alone?

R: Yes, so the pubs are loud and sometimes people say things that doesn't make sense like everyone has a different take on the game and sometimes you can't agree on who is the problem or like he is not doing enough and this was like "what are you talking about, he is playing well" and he is like, "are we even watching the same game" so it is like when you are in a group there is like all sorts of opinion flying around and yeah but then there is that atmosphere and it is a good atmosphere to watch it with many people so in a way it is both nice and frustrating at the same time, but if you are home alone or with a small group then you are like tough more like analysis, and maybe the person says "oh but he is doing this" and you are like "he is doing this, look at that" and then you can easily agree, oh yeah that I hadn't seen, or if there is a fault, yellow card, but if you are in a group then everyone is talking and you won't even have time to see the replay and agree that was a deserve card but if you are with few people then it is like more intimate and then you are actually following the game

I: What about if you are completely alone?

R: The thing is that if your team is winning then I wanna watch it with the group if the team is winning then it is like I don't care what you say I am in a happy mood, but if we are like losing, which we do a lot now, I kind of like to watch it alone [laughing] but I don't want someone say something that will annoy me, my mood is already not good, I can see that we are playing bad you don't need to tell me [laughing] so mixed feelings when we are winning then sure I don't mind that to watch but when we are losing and everyone is like, oh Manchester United is going to lose then I kind of don't want to watch it in a group.

I: If you had to choose, which setting would you choose?

R: No, so generally I am not good with public spaces, even if it is not football, so I would always prefer to home, to watch it from home, but of course I would prefer to have a couple of friends than to watch it alone.

I: Are there any factors that kind of explain as to why you would want to watch it at home?

R: No it is just because of personality wise and personally I don't drink so it makes the whole pub atmosphere already complicated without football and so yeah, I kind of feel like it is more intimate when we at home and then you can have a snack and stuff then everyone is free who wants to drink can drink and who don't want don't have to drink and you don't have to be worried a fight might break out and whatever.

I: And do you think there is some sort of social pressure when it comes to drinking in pubs?

R: No, personally, but I can see how that can be a pressure but not personally experienced it because I just don't drink beer, I can try a cup of cider but that is if I want mostly, I don't mind ordering non-alcoholic drinks.

I: Are you part of any community online?

R: Yeah, I am part of Helsingrkona, I am part of so many things... so when I was a Master's student here I used to play Volleyball with Lund's Volleyball club, so I also am part of that, I used to play volleyball, and then I played you know korpen, the korpen football league, it is like, it's a football league in sweden that is organized privately it is ont organized by the Swedish sports association so those who want to play football for fun they don't want anything serious they can just join the korpen league, so I joined the korpen league and play football indoor, yeah, it is like this, and they can organize seven matches and they try to make sure that it doesn't collide with the swedish...so for men if you play professionally I think from maybe division three upwards you are not allowed to play in the korpen but for women it is fine, you can play any level you are allowed to play so then I play, I do this in the winter

I: How often do you go there?

R: So, the games are every Sunday so every Sunday I go there.

I: How did you find out about this?

R: I first got to know about it when I started work in Stockholm because our company had registered so they had a cooperate league and had registered to play in the cooperate league

so that's how I joined the korpen league at first by playing with my office mate and then when I came down here I searched around and luckily was also moving down here to Malmo and then she had searched a team to play and it was just yeah, oh let's play with these guys

I: Do you follow them on FB or somewhere else in social media?

R: FB

I: to get information when they play?

R: No, so when you are part of it then you have a page, you log in, so, each city, korpen Malmo I think is called

I: So you have to create an account

R: Yeah, so I have an account, and then when you have this account then you attach to a team and then they will keep so they keep bringing up news and then when your account is up then you sign up to a team for a match so you follow everything and then in their FB page they post a photo of the matches, yeah, like people's photos.

I: What roles does online media play in your engagement with football as a fan considering these options available for you?

R: I mean it's like how you get acquainted, how you find out stuff happening around you like most of the time I come across things because I was on FB and I saw like o for example on FB page you can post "oh I want to play football but I don't have a team" and someone will comment, "oh we have a slot in our team, you can join us" so that's how people find teams and that's how you find activities so of course, and then it is also not a sport but it has a sports part as well, "meet up" yeah because when I just moved down here so I was before I was... I guess it had slipped my mind that korpen has a league down here so I was looking where can I play sports and then I used to go to Copenhagen to play football because I found a team in meet up so, definitely apps are... yeah they are very quite significant for sure yeah because some of sports links, communities and then the apps, they are accessible, they bring it near

I: Where do you think it is the safest place to watch the match? (home, stadium, squire, pub)

R: I would say home, I haven't watched from the park but stadium I think it is safe... it depends on the community I guess, and the location as well but three because I was from

the stadium, home, and the pub so definitely I prefer home first, then stadium of course stadium has close implication so just eliminated it completely so just home and pub, yeah.

I: Do you recall any sort of memory or anecdote from these places?

R: I mean like the biggest memory as a fan of football was sitting on a Saturday evening in the village listening to BBC with my brother and hoping that Manchester United wins so that's like, when I think about me as a football fan that's the memory that stands out for me

I: Do you have nostalgia for that time?

R: Yeah, of course, that's also the like yeah, yeah it hits, it kind of touches deep because now my brother is grown we are all in the separate world so it is like that memory that you found of but can't replay and if you go back it is not the same cause now we would watch on TV so it was like yeah it was like a pure and shared love for football that we used to just sit there with a tiny radio in our hands and we are fidgeting the frequency for BBC sport, yeah, so

I: When it comes to outfits what kind of clothes do you put on in public spaces versus when you watch it alone

R: I always have to buy the season kits, at least one of the kits, depends how it looks, the one that I love most so it can be away the kits last season I had the away kit, this season I have the home kit so and I don't usually overwear the kit even if I am watching but, I think maybe for when we are winning but I don't want to wear it when we are losing [laughing] because then it is like, I would probably attract comments from people and I am already not in a good mood so but yeah I usually wear it when I am traveling, like I could be going in a trip somewhere then it is part of my things I have packed, so maybe one day I wear Manchester United kit in my trip like...so yeah, I tend to travel with my kits for the teams I support

I: So I wonder when you see the match outside and you see these two groups of female fans; one group appears more feminine (dressing up, makeup, etc) and the other appears more masculine (drinking beer, screaming, etc) what would be your reflection towards these two groups?

R: I probably belong to that group who just sits there, maybe not shouting but not doing makeup and stuff so I am like in between somewhere but I mean now I have grown for, my views have a bit changed but I mean growing up I always looked at the... I associated

mostly with the shouting group because I have always grown up like “I can play football, I can do anything I want and I don’t have to be like these girls I can just be anything”, so I could recognize my self in the shouting though I am not a shouting person and I kind of didn’t see myself in like girlie-girlie makeup thing so I guess in the beginning I couldn’t understand when someone would do that...why it seems like too much work like reapplying lipstick, reapplying make-up, why just be you but now, of course, I have grown and I appreciate that we all different and people have to do what they have to do to feel good if having makeup is what makes them feel good then do that, if you don’t want that then don’t do that, be you, like so yeah but definitely I would associate more with the other group

I: What does this communicate about their fandom? (intensity of their support)

R: I think it’s just of wrong to judge someone’s intensity support based on how they act or what they say because at the end of the day there are just some things that are from the inside...like for example I will never abuse someone but that doesn’t mean I am not frustrated and I am not affected with the results that my team like has but another person abusing and trying to kill someone has nothing to do with being a fan of a team because those two are totally different thing, you can take it to be more, having more intense and support for the team so it is easy to misinterpret you know how someone is special about that team because it is kind of individual and it is in the inside, and also like I said growing up at those girl with make up and be like “no she doesn’t love her team, this one shouting is the one who knows like you know how it feels but then I know now that it is not the case and also in the Manchester United women’s team there is a a girl called Ela Tun and she is a very good player and I think it was after the Euros, I think England won the Euros for women I believe and she plays and for the team so now I was listening to her interview and she was saying how she still wants to be a girl even when she plays football, how she does eyelashes on whatever and then they love her she is very good and I can’t kind of relate to what she is saying but I love her football so can look passed that I personally wouldn’t do eyelashes and make up before a game, right, but then that shows that it doesn’t matter, it doesn’t matter, it is the same it doesn’t matter how you dress if you come to work and you are productive that’s what it should matter, right? So it is like football, it doesn’t matter if you put make and you don’t put make up what matters if you are a player, even if

you are a fan you are really passionate about your team, so yea.

I: And now I would like to talk a bit about football and gender. How is football perceived in your circle of friends? You think about the time while growing up but also now as we talk together.

R: Yeah so definitely growing it was like football is a boyish thing and if you are a girl you have no business playing football and I got this from like I don't know, strange thing, I never got it from my mother so I have no clue what she thought, she never supported me, she never stopped me she was neutral so I don't know but my dad for sure he didn't want it at all and then I recall growing up when I would see I would just run, run ahead of him and leave the football pitch so that he finds me home and of course sometime he has already seen me and he is going to punish me, but yeah, and then I grow up with one boy and four girls so then it was like they are the oldest and they always had the responsibility to look after my brother and they used not to like it when I would go to football, I was so like crazy about football that I could put food to cook and I put like sauce and then go out and play and then the next thing I am seeing is like smoke [laughing] I was that bad or I would come and then I know that i have to get water to use for cooking so then I would run to get the water and then just like football is the only thing I was thinking about and then I had my friends... I grew up... I have so many guyfriends becaus all of my girlfriends would never hang out with me because I played football and then they say "what kind of girls play football, you are will never get someone to marry" [laughing] so thing like that so it was really like and I wasn't just playing football in Uganda, I was playing football in a village in Uganda and then as I grew like older went to highschool and then I moved to the capital city and then it was still the same but then in some school they had football teams so I remember when I was in high school in the year three of highschool I registered to women's football team so then I started playing again, but then they were more schools playing women's football in the capital city but even like when you would play you would be like oh man sitting there laughing because you were kicking and you miss the ball and say was more like ok we are just laughing at you because you are so bad, like and then but now it is like at least... maybe not deep, deep down in the villages but many schools now have football and even like the country has a women's national team that travels so a lot has definitely changed, definitely not the same setting as Sweden, Sweden is very

accepting of women's football so yeah it is totally different but I feel like we are getting there because it is like now and some of the girls are being sent in clubs in Europe so it is definitely going to grow and more and more are going to freely play football

I: Have you ever or do you rather have a memory of watching football in a male-dominated space...

R: That's always the case in Uganda... it is always guys

I: Yeah, have you ever felt excluded or included in the conversations, have you heard sexist comments, or how was your experience?

R: Yeah, I think, no like I say when like getting to the sport I am like a totally different person like I am not like bad I am very competitive, then I have always managed to like to say what I want to say, once I stepped up you don't recognize that me but then so back home usually like even if you go like in like pub and stuff then you kind of associate like the immediate surroundings with people you know so I usually watch with friends who know that I can play football, I follow football so then they know I know what I am talking about, but, I think first the one that I can clearly remember is when I had just come here and I like I was...no when I first moved to Stockholm to work they are many people from my country in Stockholm and in the summer we use to like to meet up and play football in one of the pitches and I was meeting so many of them for the first time so I was being introduced by the friends and these were like guys. So there were girls there but girls were not playing football they were just coming along like oh many I come with my boyfriend or whatever, so they were sitting there and they were eating their snacks, but for me, I wanted to play and then I am getting comments like "can you even play like stuff" and then, of course, those are like..." hello, we are in you 21st century, these are not comments you except like" and even if let's say I didn't know, who cares, like we are just here to have fun and then like... so at the beginning, I would play like some of them I would play but they would not pass you the ball because they think you will not score but then like after a couple of rounds they were seeing me scoring so many goals and they were like "oh shit she knows how to play football" so it was like...

I: So you had to kind of prove it?

R: Yeah, I mean that is how it is, if you are getting so such environments at work if you don't prove then it just becomes a thing so then after that it would be like "Oh please

Evelyn that we have football, come” and then it turned around the page

I: The last question is if you can reflect on the way you supported your team in Uganda and now that you are in Sweden. Do you still watch all the matches? Also the teams back home. How has it changed, or has it changed at all?

R: It has changed a lot. I am less of a fan now and not because I am not a fan I am still a fan but then I have no platform to follow the team and it is like now the updates I get are like oh someone has shared the league back home or someone has commented about the club on social media so I know I have no access to it I don't have the platform to watch and also the league in my country are not broadcast very well so then it's difficult to access, so that's the only difference. I still love the team but I don't know how they are doing because I can't watch, I can't even I don't know the players in this season for example because I have not seen any of them.

I: Do you still keep in touch with your people back home?

R: Yeah, yeah,

I: Do you send any sports updates?

R: Yes, so many of them... we support different teams, Chelsea, manchester city, and then it is like post a WhatsApp status and send maybe now the goalkeeper of MU I am like oh then I see it's his reason we are still in this game, if we lost focus we would consider like 100 goals and then one of the friends like laughs back so we have that exchange on social media for sure.

I: If you would watch a game in a public space in Uganda versus here in Sweden, how would you describe that experience? Your reaction?

R: Watching a team in Uganda stadium?

I: Yeah

R: It's like I am free, I am free like and I don't need to know the person next to me to have a good time with them because they are like, they are coming for football, they are coming for fun but it could be also because i have like reservation because this is not a community I grew up with so I am not going to be like totally free and then in terms of like for example Swedes I don't knoe probably you have noticed it is like they are not very friendly to people they don't know, but they could score a goal back home and people hugging strangers and jumping and you know buying each other food so like... no I can't compare

that for sure, here I could be a more guaranteed security so I will sit there I will have my phone and I will not lose property, back home I could lose the property but I will have a good time for sure, like you know like, people on their feet, like you can be in the sitting section but you are on your feet the 90 min, and then I am sure I saw you know these trumpets they blow, the noise is insane

I: Do you miss that?

R: Yeah, yeah, so usually I watched so many games when there was a national team game, and is so easy saying even if we lose it is still insane, people stay long after the match has ended, and like here you could go to malmö stadium 2 hr before the kickoff and no one has appeared and people just come towards the game, there if the game is at 3 pm from like 9 am the stadium is full of people, outside people walking around, blowing music and like yeah, it is totally different.

7.7 Appendix: Personal picture during the project

Diary

Place: O'Learys

Time: Evening.

It is very interesting how the bar is packed with men → I can see only three female fans in total. A few other female fans joined but left soon.

The informant seemed to be very quiet while watching the game, unlike her boyfriend who was swearing and trying to be attentive. When I asked her why she feels this way she said that at home she is more active and free to speak, also she mentioned that this is not her favorite game.

I ~~did~~ see some women who are chatting with each other. They are accompanied with their men. → In fact all of women were escorted by partners, brothers, fathers, etc.

Figure 1.1 A picture taken from my notes during media ethnography



Figure 1.2 a picture captured at the O'Learys with one of the informant during media ethnography

- feel on jersey, even if its in white, says tottenham
 - no t-shirt at home
 Jersey
 - must ppl are in the middle → don't judge,
 - we chat groups + not official. →
 ⊗) Football is boys sport, idk if china is more
 in that / on social media a lot of judging
 female fan appearance → a lot of male think of
 are you in real fans → a lot of posts when girl
 you female girl and you know country or they
 how many ppl in the pitch - distinct in gender
 segregated website → Heip4 they would judge
 - Xiaohongshu → female dominated + more fan
 and so misogynist because a lot of girls -
 because more and more are joining
 - There are a lot of doubts + oh I never see
 who is interested in football but there is a lot

Figure 1.3 A picture taken from my notes during the interview