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'Tribalism', identity fusion and football fandom in Australia: the case of Western Sydney

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ABSTRACT

Processes of group formation and social identity are key to understanding human behaviour in social domains. In football, 'ultras' groups are currently considered the most visible style of fandom across the football world. By binding individuals together, these groups create new social identities that make them an ideal context for understanding how people behave within group contexts. This paper employs identity fusion theory to analyse a one-year study of the Red and Black Bloc (RBB), an ultras formation in Western Sydney, Australia. With data collected using active interviews, online surveys, participant observation in football stadiums and fans' online forums, the paper discusses the set of circumstances that brought the RBB together as a cohesive unit. It concludes with a set of recommendations to Australian football administrators and beyond, offering a comprehensive view of fans' tribal behaviour and how to make the most of these findings for the betterment of their emergent leagues.

Us vs. them

'We are different'. This was the title of the social media post that the Red and Black Bloc (hereafter 'RBB', also known as the 'Western Sydney football ultras'¹), posted prior to the Sydney Derby, one of the most prominent fixtures of the A-League, Australian football's top male league. Football ultras have their roots in European fan practices from the late 20th century, and nowadays are some of the most eye-catching sports fans around the world.² With their chants, visual displays (the tifos), dances and marches, they create a carnivalesque atmosphere in and around football stadia.³ Ultras are also known for challenging the commodification of 'modern football' and for their intense emotional attachment to their groups,⁴ which can lead to protests and even escalate to violent clashes.⁵

Thus, at the time of this social media post, the RBB, Western Sydney's ultras, was working hard to encourage its members to engage in its pre-organized fan activities, including the preparation of banners, pre-drinks in dedicated, pubs and marches through the streets of Western Sydney toward their home, the stadium. These These ritualized events were critical to warming up core fans, the RBB, for the Wanderers' big game. The post also detailed why the RBB were different from 'them', the Sydney FC supporters, whom they mockingly call 'the smurfs', due to their sky blue team colours:

In 3 years we've gained worldwide recognition. [We] Conquered a continent.⁶ [We] Moved masses all over the country. [We have] Been labelled and targeted. Yet [we] still managed to change the face of the game in this

country, on and off the pitch. *We* have set the bar high. *They*'ve had 10 years yet [*they*] still fail to match us. Known as the "bling" club and renowned for their "tough talk" from behind a computer screen. *They* take out their frustrations at rival fans using knives. [*They*] Put more effort into creating memes and taking selfies instead of chanting for 90 minutes.⁷

The 'us vs them' atmosphere painted in the RBB post is a common feature within football derby contexts, and indeed is a trait common to inter-group conflicts beyond sport.⁸ Supporters' groups frequently emulate a battle or war-like atmosphere using chants, incessant drum beats, clear 'uniforms', and intimidating co-ordinated visual displays, sometimes lighting impressive pyrotechnics. These actions serve as a call to arms for fans to flock to the streets and stadia to better defend their teams against rivals – or, on occasion, against 'enemies'.⁹ In Australia, other football derbies have also created a passionate atmosphere.¹⁰ However, the individual call transcribed above is particularly distinctive due to its context: the unique heterogeneity of the Western Sydney region; and the geographical, political, and social context of the RBB and the club they represent.

Known as the 'Australian home of immigrants', Western Sydney is the most culturally diverse region in the country and one of the biggest immigration zones in the world.¹¹ Nearly 60% of its inhabitants are first or second generation migrants.¹² Despite its size and political-economic import for the rest of the country, Western Sydney is not a postcard image of Australia. It is distant from the internationally famous views of the Sydney Opera House and the Sydney Harbour Bridge; it is also far away from the city's celebrated beaches and the costly real estate in Central and Northern Sydney. People from Western Sydney endure daily hardships: lack of employment, high crime rates, and reduced access to high-quality public services. In addition, Western Sydney's diverse populations face bigotry and discrimination from Australia's Anglo-dominated mainstream media.¹³

Racist social media accounts in Sydney and across Australia that target culturally diverse communities are often associated with discriminatory remarks and actions towards football or 'sokkah'.¹⁴ Regarded as an 'ethnic game', the 'round ball code' has still not been adopted by mainstream Anglo communities in Australia; it has actually existed on the social fringes of the country, particularly within Western Sydney's diverse ethnic and cultural groups.¹⁵

This ethnic potluck is the area that the Wanderers represent; this is the region where RBB members were born and have grown up. Being raised within several footballing communities across Western Sydney, the young men who founded the RBB not only witnessed but also felt the pain of this discriminatory context.¹⁶ Western Sydney football fans have resorted to using social media channels to report police intimidation and violence towards football fans during their marches or at the doors of games; videos which have documented terrifying police dogs and heavy-handed body searches, including of young children¹⁷. On the other hand, the RBB's proximity to the game of football has helped them to become familiar with the global culture of the world game¹⁸; their online exchanges via social media have taught them about the ultras movement, the most prominent fandom culture that currently pervades European, South American and Asian terraces.¹⁹ Their determination to fight the prejudice and discrimination they have faced, added to their love of football, led them to form their own ultras group and 'stand atop the crest' to fight for Western Sydney, as this mission is 'more glorious than death'.²⁰

Research has already shown how 'prevalent the ultras style of fandom has become across the globe',²¹ as these formations attract young people who form deep, lasting connections with each other and the group. One particularly potent explanation for this form of bonding comes from identity fusion theory, which is especially relevant to contexts where emotional stakes are high, such as football fandom.²² Fusion theory has already provided new and in-depth insights regarding the intensity of bonding and its outcomes among football supporters.²³ However, the fusion of such culturally diverse cohorts as the Western Sydney ultras in a country where football is not the main sport is yet to be studied. Hence, this paper intends to add to the existing literature regarding the general and specific causes that, once triggered, facilitate some inhabitants of Western Sydney's fusion to a football ultras group.

This paper reports on the qualitative aspects of a one-year study that analysed the ties binding Western Sydney football fans, along with simple survey measures. It is particularly concerned with the psychosocial and cultural reasons that allowed for the creation of the 'us' represented by the RBB in this region. It employs the fusion construct to reveal the intricate mechanisms underlying the robust bonds between RBB members.²⁴

We start by looking at the identity fusion concept²⁵ and its connections to football fans, particularly ultras groups. Next, we detail the methodologies and procedures employed in this paper, with an emphasis on the interview process that was used to collect the data here analysed. Third, we discuss our findings and relate the participants' voices to the expanding literature on identity fusion. From this discussion it will become clear that, under certain circumstances, individuals 'fuse' to one another, incorporating their personal sense of self within their group identity. For emerging groups, this results in the creation of a group that may appear to have similar features to an individual's personal identity. The group, in turn, becomes particularly socially powerful, even fighting to preserve the new fused identities created in these social dynamics. We conclude by providing Australian football administrators with some recommendations that offer a comprehensive view of fans' tribal behaviour, enabling them to make the most of these findings for the betterment of their leagues.

Identity fusion and football fandom

The tendency to form groups is a human universal. From national identities to village communities; from reading groups to sports practice; and from political activism to illegal subcultures. Hence, studying the processes of grouping and how groups delineate their own identities is central to better understanding human behaviour in social domains.²⁶

Identity fusion is one form of group alignment that has a theoretical history in Social Identity Theory along with identification.²⁷ However, identity fusion is distinct from identification in numerous ways. First, a core feature of identification is that one's group identity is made salient in group contexts and, consequently, one's personal sense of self becomes lost in the group, or impersonalized.²⁸ Group and personal identities work in a hydraulic fashion, with one or the other activated according to context.²⁹ With identity fusion, one's sense of self is so completely immersed in the group that the two become fused. Activating a group identity thus activates one's personal agency, and vice versa. Similarly, heightened feelings of personal agency translate to group actions. People who are highly fused report an intense feeling of 'oneness' with the group and, as a result, a threat to their group feels like a personal menace leading to extreme and defensive actions.

Once fused, individuals within a group develop a 'visceral, family-like sense of unity or 'identity fusion'.³⁰ They are more likely to manifest their desire to fight for their group, and some even express that they would die to safeguard the group's ideals and survival. Indeed, frontline soldiers and war veterans report particularly high levels of fusion to their groups. Threats to the group appear to be a powerful trigger for group members to engage in these personally costly, self-sacrificial behaviours, particularly when an individual is highly fused.³¹ This is because, for fused individuals, any threat to the group appears to be a personal threat and the response is one of intense, personal defence.

Identity fusion has been consistently related to intensely committed or extreme pro-group action.³² For instance, among fans of the UK's Premier League or among Brazilian *torcidas organizadas* ('hooligan' groups) fusion predicts lifelong loyalty,³³ physical fighting with rivals,³⁴ a willingness to fight and die for the group, and even a willingness to lay down one's life to save imperilled group members.³⁵ Football ultras in particular stand out for their bonds that lead them to take political and physical risks to fight for their team and group.³⁶ Researchers acknowledge the great heterogeneity among ultras groups around the world; from right-wing politicized clusters to more socially liberal communities, ultras are diverse and not easily defined.³⁷ Whether ultras are seen as the 'star of the show' or just written off by football or national authorities and mainstream

media as violent or irrational groups,³⁸ the fact remains that ultras across the world continue to attract more members who are willing to participate in their vibrant displays of colours and rhythms, their fervent chants, and who engage in their communal fandom activities, such as fund raising for charities or ultras parties at exclusive venues.³⁹

Young people readily see the benefits of joining the tight-knit communities found within ultras groups, yet the shortcoming that is rarely overtly displayed is a propensity to backing intergroup violence – possibly at any price.⁴⁰ Research shows that highly fused people are especially likely to engage in violence to protect and defend their group, often indicating a desire for aggressive retribution against rivals under hostile circumstances.⁴¹ Since the RBB's inception, the group has faced an unprecedented amount of surveillance and intimidation perpetuated by football stakeholders: from private security companies hired by stadium owners and the FFA (Football Federation Australia) to monitor RBB leaders' everyday lives, to police bullying and physical aggression off and inside stadia; all complemented by continued mainstream media profiling the group as criminally violent 'hooligans'.⁴² This hostile environment has interfered with the RBB's ability and freedom to display their joyful but 'tense explosion of desires, meanings, bodies and languages'.⁴³

Next, we detail the methodologies employed in our field work with the Western Sydney ultras. We explain the interview procedures as well as our involvement with fans within stadia and social media platforms that enabled us to understand the mechanisms underlying the bonds tying RBB members together and to the collective. These are mechanisms which, on the one hand show similarity to those already explored in former research,⁴⁴ but on the other hand also demonstrate the particular features that make the RBB a unique case.

Methodology: the fusion scale, active interviews and political narratives

Data for this paper were collected from in-depth interviews and the completion of the verbal fusion scale⁴⁵ with RBB members during the 2016–2017 A-League season. 51 participants completed the verbal fusion scale as part of a bigger study into group identities and behaviours conducted with Western Sydney Wanderers and Sydney FC fans.⁴⁶ The fusion scale allows us to compare, in broad terms, how fused this subculture is compared to other groups, which sets a basis for the interviews that are analysed in this paper. Interviewees included one woman and six men between their early 20s to their early 30s.⁴⁷ Representing the cultural diversity of Western Sydney, participants were second generation Australian migrants with ethnic backgrounds from the UK, Southern Europe, South America, the Middle East and Africa. Participant observation in the stands as well as in the group's social media channels were also used to complement the interviews.

It is important to highlight that during both the conversations and the observations we were dealing with passionate football fans with strong views about their role within their group, their group's role within the club's context and moreover, within the Australian football milieu. Hence, our exchanges with research participants were far from dispassionate conversations where interviewers are discreet and interviewees offer appropriate answers to all questions. On the contrary, the interviews were vibrant processes where all contributors were extremely involved with the topics of the dialogues and their online posts; participants were full of life and neutrality was neither pursued nor agreed.⁴⁸

This discrepancy between the active dialogues discussed here and more homogenous methods of controlled interview processes is critical to this research; the active interviews and participant observations unite the methodology and the theoretical background employed, to analyse the data produced in this field work. Metaphorically, in a similar vein to the research participants who act intensively and come to life while engaging with their group, our data becomes clearer as we relate it to group actions; the evidence starts to make sense as individuals disclose the social processes through which their identities have been fused to the RBB.⁴⁹

Personal and political narratives are the content of this paper. These accounts come from Western Sydney residents, which means first or second generation migrants for whom cultural diversity and football mix as a way of life.⁵⁰ Participants were keen to let us enter their worlds of fandom, sharing with us their personal and social meanings of belonging to the RBB. On the one hand, they disclosed to us their viewpoint of this extreme involvement. On the other hand, we created a space for participants to reinvent their football journey as they were narrating their stories. This interview methodology is applicable due to its ability to provoke self-reflexivity among interview contributors, generating a varied group of narratives that permitted us to not only define their feelings and attachments within their group, but also to draw inferences about the networks among the RBB as a whole.⁵¹

As an energetic and dialogical interview procedure, we have considered the creation of actualities that occurred in the very moments of expressing the stories.⁵² The potential distance that could exist between interviewers and interviewees was lessened via two components of our methodology: first, from the outset we made it clear that we shared the same passion that our participants had for football, which was authentic. We discussed football stories with them beforehand and tried to create a 'ground zero' of communication where the pleasure of the activity was enough on its own.⁵³ Second, we let our participants take ownership of the interview process; we were involved in their accounts and expressed a desire to be part of their football world.⁵⁴

As well as the physical embodiment of RBB identities, the RBB is also socially constructed on the Internet. The group relies on social media: to keep members tied to their core objectives and messages, and also to garner increased cohesion. As online activity proved to be an important part of the RBB's cultural formation, it provided us with a rich source of natural data to analyse. Discourse on these platforms has shown how RBB members, and indeed Western Sydney Wanderers fans, use social media to negotiate their identities and their relationships to their communities.⁵⁵ As we participated in these forums, these discourses in the format of social media posts were collected, categorized and related to fusion theory.

In the next section, we present and discuss the data collected in relation to the development of identity fusion in the context of Western Sydney ultras. We show how the group's activities facilitate fusion in some individuals who, once fused, struggle to keep members of the RBB united at all costs, whilst also staying fused with the group. All voices have been anonymized.⁵⁶

Personal agency: the fused football fan

Of the 51 RBB members who completed the survey, there were 42 men, 7 women, and one participant who preferred not to answer the question. The youngest participants were 18 and the oldest 60 (M age = 28.82, SD = 8.92). As expected, there was a mix of ethnicities represented including Anglo/British (48%), other European (22%), Hispanic/Latino (6%), Arab/Middle Eastern (4%), Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander (4%), East/South East Asian (4%), or mixed cultural heritage (2%). Nonetheless, 94% of participants spoke English as a first language. The participants tended to report relatively high levels of education and social backgrounds; only 18% left school without a certificate or diploma, 36% obtained these qualifications, and 46% had university-level qualifications. Furthermore, 31.4% described themselves as working class, 56% middle class, 4% upper class, and 10% did not answer the question.⁵⁷ Our study may have suffered from self-selection bias whereby more educated and more middle-class fans may have been more willing to engage in the relatively lengthy task of completing an online survey. This could skew results, revealing less about what working class fans feel about the club.

The surveys RBB members completed revealed relatively high levels of fusion to both the subgroup (RBB), M = 4.96, SD = 1.13, and the superordinate club (WSW), M = 5.33, SD = 0.98. Fusion to club was significantly higher, suggesting that subgroup membership may follow passion for the club, rather than the other way around, $t(50) = 2.70$, $p = .009$.

Fusion among RBB ultras was higher than the fusion documented among hardcore Brazilian fangroups (*torcidas organizadas*, $M = 4.23$, $SD = 1.54$),⁵⁸ Indonesian members of 'hooligan' groups ($M = 4.44$, $SD = 1.59$),⁵⁹ or fans of the UK's top two leagues ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 1.38$).⁶⁰

Behaviourally, 52% of participants reported engaging in verbal abuse against their rivals, while 10% reported physical fights. A further 6% reported engaging in football-related vandalism, but none of our participants reported having received banning orders for their football behaviours.

Stories of individuals who are deeply fused to a group usually reveal high levels of personal agency and connection to the group and its activities.⁶¹ Within the football fandom context, the profound personal investment (both socio-emotional and also financial) that fused individuals make to their groups tends to far exceed that of the regular football fan.⁶²

RBB members' accounts corroborate these findings. First, throughout the interviews, they proclaimed their strong emotional connection to the group, and how this both empowers them and makes them feel part of something bigger.

It's a real feeling of comradery, everyone's being provocative, it doesn't matter if you've been to one game or 100 games, just to know that you're ... it kind of feels like you're a part of the team, by being in the RBB. (P1)⁶³

The solid sense of oneness to the group that this participant announces is similar to what has been found in the literature not only within other ultras football fans,⁶⁴ but also among a diverse range of group formations (including martial arts practitioners, baseball fans, and even revolutionary groups in the Middle-East and Muslim extremists⁶⁵). Shared by these groups is an unerring comradery, a deep and lasting fusion. This feeling of heightened personal agency which is elevated by fusion to a group, was evoked by all interviewees in reference to extreme group bonding being the basis that sustains ties between RBB members.

The social movement that initiated the RBB, a group that appeared even before the official existence of the superordinate club itself (the Wanderers),⁶⁶ also helps to explain the creation of 'oneness' in this ultras formation. One participant from the Western Sydney online football forums confirms that the FFA and the management of the future club facilitated a range of community inputs in the creation of the Wanderers that were key to giving them voice and agency:

No other A-league club that follows the franchise model gave potential supporters that sort of input, whether what the club would be named, the colours that would be worn, the preferred betting to be paying out of, they never got that input. And the club in its infancy were holding forums all around Western Sydney, allowing future supporters their input. So it's to me that whole part attracted me, it was definitely appealing ... (P2).⁶⁷

This sense of belonging originates in the club's very inception in the league and adds to the emotions elicited by the club's first successful season. This is described by the participant as '... a complete whirlwind ...', which created ripe conditions for the escalation of bonding between RBB members. Sensing that being part of the RBB is a way to have an input in the team – both on and off the field – largely augmented members' personal agency and feelings of oneness:

supporting Western Sydney 'cos it gives your town, your city, where you're from a voice, and then when you play well on the field ... it's something to be proud about ... and that's why I've always wanted to get into active support, it's like actually I have a literal voice you know, in active support. (P3)⁶⁸

The way that identity fusion acts to create the sort of social identity that simultaneously invests the individual and the group⁶⁹ is positively embodied in these words: the participant feels that his voice is important ('I have a literal voice'). The membership of the group gives him personal agency and he knew this would happen even before joining the group ('I've always wanted to get into active support'), which shows the extent that the RBB's community and sense of oneness appeals to the youth from Western Sydney.

RBB membership and the fused identity that tends to come with it contributes to an elevated sense of personal agency that allows individuals to perform in ways that would have been unthinkable prior to this affiliation. Small, everyday occurrences such as wearing 'a Wanderers jersey out in the city, you know, Sydney FC territory' become symbols of bravery and

accomplishment to RBB members. Visually identifying one's allegiance prompts other Western Sydney fans to 'come out', reveal their own football identities, and show how proud they are: 'I get so many other Westies coming up and going "go the Wanderers"' (P4).⁷⁰ In the following section we explore this mutual power between fused individuals and the group.⁷¹

The 'Westies'

The 'Westies' is a pejorative nickname given to people from Western Sydney by the 'mainstream' communities from the 'East' side of the city. It refers to a stereotypical view of Western Sydney residents as unemployed, lazy, and who depend upon government payments. Compounding this discrimination is the further level of prejudice tied up in attitudes towards the region's culturally diverse populations.⁷²

On the other hand, the strong identification that 'Westies' feel with their region fortifies the psychosocial bonds among them, facilitating the process of fusion.⁷³ The team's name, in clear opposition to the more privileged East of Sydney, has also impacted the way in which the 'Westies' construct their identity within their fan community, and in particular within the RBB. As P4 reveals, before the Wanderers existed, he never witnessed 'anyone ever being proud of openly say, "yeah, I'm from Western Sydney, yeah"'. Nevertheless, once the team appeared and the RBB emerged, his state of mind in relation to the group became a feeling that surpassed everything that he had previously lived. It was, 'a family thing'. This sentiment signposts a sense of psychological kinship,⁷⁴ indicative of high levels of identity fusion not only among football fans but also among many other tightly bonded groups.⁷⁵

For this participant, the group's territory is so acutely relevant to his allegiance with the RBB that, while comparing the group's celebrations after an important victory in the Asian Champions League to some of his international football experiences, he declares:

I'm someone who's travelled to Moscow for a Champions League final between Man U and Chelsea and I got to see my team win in a penalty shootout. But that moment in Parramatta,⁷⁶ in my own community surpasses that moment. That's how much it means to me. (P4)

Yet, geography here does not only mean a place on the Australian map; it carries an identity laden with social implications and cultural values. These are the core elements that help strengthen ties among group members. As such, Western Sydney, more than a large region, becomes a 'potentially vast imagined community'⁷⁷ of similar individuals. As another participant emphasizes, the WSW's name is born of its geographical identity and this 'represents Western Sydney . . . it tells you what the type of people who are supporting this club are.' (P5)⁷⁸

But, what 'type of people' are they? The participant clarifies that they are not like Eastern Sydney people to whom he feels Western people cannot really connect to since 'there is always something about money'; the Westies are the right people to establish a relationship with 'because we're from the working class'. Fusion to the RBB thus reflects a powerful bond⁷⁹ not just to one's sporting group, but to people from the same region and social class. In their idealized community, Western Sydney people are workers who give their lives to the city, as the lyrics of one RBB chant demonstrate:

We are the RBB! Listen to our Call!
Together we are the blood of this city,
Suits will come and go,
But the bloc will never fall,
Now it's time to lose yourself, to West Sydney⁸⁰

In this chant, in addition to the social and geographical identities that are highlighted, the RBB also proclaims itself as invincible: the suits, the club's owners and managers will come and leave, in stark contrast to the Bloc; an unerringly strong entity in which members are so powerfully connected to each other, that it will 'never fall'.

The social bonds that connect RBB members and communities of Westies is manifested in many ways. This is particularly pertinent when the RBB face their main opponents, fans of Sydney FC, who typically come from 'East' Sydney.⁸¹ In the following social media post, it is possible to again see reference to geography and the related class distinction that simultaneously separates the two clubs' fans and appears to strengthen the bond between RBB members.

So to the ESFC⁸² wannabe; After you finish sipping on your soy latte, grabbing money from your daddy, waving goodbye to your goldfish (who is also an ESFC member) and kissing your boyfriend goodbye, remember; you are stepping into Western Sydney, stepping into enemy territory, stepping into hell.

The derogative references to someone who lives in 'daddy's pocket' and has a comfortable life are important signs of the social class bonds that unite RBB members. In addition, the mention of a homosexual relation ('kiss your boyfriend goodbye') reveals a hegemonic, toxic masculinity⁸³ that pervades the group and is a strong ideological cornerstone of the group's identity. Next we discuss how the RBB members relate to their enemies (both real and imagined).⁸⁴

Outgroups and 'modern football'

'Modern football' is a profitable scheme rooted in neoliberal capitalism that, at its core, is intent on transforming the passions of the footballing community into a commercial operation.⁸⁵ Over the past four decades, modern football institutions have pushed for the commodification of all facets of the game. The main doorkeepers of this football corporate – football authorities, first tier clubs, police and mainstream media – enforce a sterilized atmosphere on the terraces, which frequently clashes with ultras' wishes to uphold their own cultural expressions within the stadia.⁸⁶ Ultras across several European, South American and Asian stadia have opposed this 'modern' neoliberal disruption of their traditional footballing communities by creating the 'against modern football' movement⁸⁷: as such, tifos, banners and T-shirts displaying the 'against modern football' slogan have been pictured on ultras' stands around the world since the early 1990s.⁸⁸

As the fusion process intensifies the bond among group members, their group ties not only become as strong, if not stronger, than their family links⁸⁹; they also are driven by 'identity fusion to defend their fellow fans in the face of perceived outgroup threats'.⁹⁰ Our interview participants reported a clear perception of the outgroups that threaten the RBB's existence: the media, the police, and football authorities; or, in other words, the gatekeepers of 'modern football'.

Participants accuse the media of portraying them badly to the 'bulk of the population who still take the words of the news as gospel' (P4). As Australia is a multi-sporting nation where football is not the dominant sport, the participants understand that the media protects the other sporting codes while undermining their beloved football. For instance, one participant complained that:

In last year's Melbourne Cup⁹¹ there were 93 people arrested, something like that, at a Wanderers game one person will be arrested and there'll be a statement from news 'oh no, we've got to crack down on this behaviour blah blah blah' at the Wanderers game, but then they'll phrase the behaviour off the Melbourne Cup, it's always bullshit, it gets spun and then fed into media and then media reports it. (P4)

Another participant believed that the media will never care about the good things that the RBB does, as they just want to exaggerate minor issues to create moral panic⁹² among the majority non-footballing Australian population:

My opinion on how the TV shows us, they just want to tarnish the league, they put a negative spin on active support. Like, you will never ever see a tifo or anything go up on in the news coverage of the city Derby. But if you see a fight outright the city Derby, that will get on the news. And then people think 'all right, football supporters are all thugs' and so the Australian media big that up, and that's how the Australian average person feels. I work with people who have no interest in football, and you talk to them about it and they're like 'oh isn't it dangerous'. (P3)

Whether or not participants' 'conspiracy theories' are grounded in reality is beyond the scope of this paper, but what is clear is how the characterization of the RBB as a persecuted group feeds in to its members' already intense, fused identities. For fused RBB members, threat perception (both real and imagined) boils down to the shared meanings and painful experiences⁹³ of being badly reported in the mainstream media – including members who have lost their jobs for having their pictures portrayed as 'football hooligans' on the front pages of the Sunday edition of a national newspaper. Those who suffer in these acts of public humiliation end up developing a 'robust and enduring state of psychological kinship'⁹⁴ that only strengthens their collective ties. One participant shows an awareness that RBB members are at odds with the norms and expectations of 'modern football': 'Yeah it's a pretty big mentality against modern football, and against all the corporate sponsorship and stuff like that ... that's what we don't want' (P1).

The police are another recurrent theme, presented in a negative fashion in participants' discourse. The adversities that RBB members report when facing the police on the terraces and outside stadia substantiate the notion that intense shared experiences produce fusion.⁹⁵ One participant states that the police have injured him and his friends:

yeah from the police ... like I've been pepper sprayed at, like with friends of mine and they overreact at things, they're the ones that incite us and when some people who can't keep it together react then they make a big deal out of it (P4).

This pepper spray incident happened at the end of the 2014/2015 A-League season (April/2015) and involved the police invading the home terrace to chase one particular fan who allegedly had a minor physical clash with one police officer. The incident caused panic and injuries among fans, as well as intense traffic in the RBB's social media channels. Amidst several claims of people being followed by the police and feeling intimidated by the large law enforcement presence, including riot squads at matches, there were posts that reflected the 'oneness' of the RBB: 'we need to defend ourselves'; 'we are all a family, but RBB is being antagonized by club and police'; 'you back your mates in a fight'. The close kinship of the group is well represented by the following social media post:

The pepper spray episode was but the last straw in a never ending tirade of attacks against not only our freedom as football supporters but as citizens of a country with apparently laws that protect us. I myself have been pepper sprayed by police indiscriminately, my phone searched by police unlawfully etc. If we do not take a stand as one we might as well bend over for the FFA and Police to take away all our freedoms⁹⁶

As the RBB assert that they should 'stand as one' to fight against police violence and injustice, they exemplify the 'family-like sense of unity'⁹⁷ that identity fusion affords their group. In the following, final section, we discuss how this process of cohesion in the face of discrimination via fusion is shaped by the fandom rituals that RBB members perform on and off the terraces.

Collective rituals: emotional arousal and the power of football fandom to 'unite us all'⁹⁸

Football may lack an exegetic dimension and is not a self-conscious ritual⁹⁹ but these points do not diminish the power of the ritual arena to forge social interaction and solidarity.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, football matches constitute secular rituals by transcending the normal to create a liminal space¹⁰¹ within which males hug, kiss,¹⁰² and can enact a range of moods and emotions that are otherwise seen as emotional or irrational.¹⁰³ The *communitas* generated by football crowd rituals allows non-contractual relationships, which can form across time and space and are not constrained by locality.¹⁰⁴ These 'neo-tribes'¹⁰⁵ provide fans with shared, community derived experiences, which are potentially sought through a search for *communitas*.¹⁰⁶

As an authentic ultras formation, the RBB conducts its own unique rituals off and on the terraces. These informal rites come in several forms and shapes. Many of these are exemplified in tifo culture (a football-based cultural identity encompassing hard-core fandom), including

paintings and exhibits, flags, songs, dances, call and response chants,¹⁰⁷ among others – but they serve one main purpose: to configure a ‘unite as one’¹⁰⁸ group formation, binding ritual participants together in a highly emotional tribe-like atmosphere.

When asked for his favourite moment on the terraces, one of our participants describes the RBB chants and rituals that arouse his passions:

Yeah, the one chant that goes – ‘we represent Western City, ahlay ahlay’¹⁰⁹ – and then there’s a split in the middle and it’s a competition between both the sides, who sings the loudest . . . I just love that chant, whenever I hear it my shirt’s off, I just can’t contain it, I love it (P4).

This sort of shared experience is both powerful and unique – it might not be acceptable in any other arena of a fan’s life to take their shirt off in public, sing, weep or kiss other grown men. The extent to which these experiences are perceived to personally transform participants’ identities and are shared with other group members acts as a superglue to fuse fans’ personal and social identities.¹¹⁰ In those highly arousing moments members manifest their group’s core cultural and social values with an intensity that they do not usually experience either in their everyday lives, and maybe not even with their families. This is critical to the uniqueness of the bonds formed on the terraces between fused football ultras in the RBB

Yeah, it’s pretty much one of the main reasons why I come to the games. Match day atmosphere, that’s something you don’t find anywhere else in Australia, it really puts you in the mood when you’re there and everyone’s tight, and the crowd is loud (P6).¹¹¹

Another participant compares the intensity of the mood on the RBB terrace to a psychedelic trip, with the advantage of being shared with friends:

[W]e’ve made so many friends these past few years. You get to sing with them in the terrace, you get to jump with them on the terrace, all that sort of thing. When we score a goal, that euphoric feeling, that’s what drugs must feel like . . . those highs and euphoric moments . . . (P7)¹¹²

The RBB pays homage to these extreme moods in one of the group’s first chants, aptly titled ‘Euphoria’. In this chant, they compare their feelings for the club to a drug journey:

We Crave A Different BuzzOne That Hits Us Like A DrugOh West Sydneyyyyyy (...)

Ohhhhhh Wheyoo WheyooIt’s Our EuphoriaaaaaOhhhhhh Wheyoo WheyooForevermoreeeee (...)

I Knew We Would Never PartThere’s A Fire That Burns Within MeThat Day You Possessed My HeartWas Pure Insanityyyyyy (...)¹¹³

‘Euphoria’ can also be interpreted as a tribute to an intense pair-bonding (‘I knew we would never part’) between the RBB and the Wanderers. The lyrics show that RBB members will always love the Wanderers (and only this club) – in stark contrast to the transient support of other mainstream supporters who may shift teams after a season. The embodied performance of ‘Euphoria’ on the stands evidences this special monogamous relationship between the RBB and the club: while with most of the other RBB chants the group tends to ‘invite’ other non-active parts of the stadium, the mainstream fans, to join in by clapping or simply responding to the RBB’s calls, with ‘Euphoria’ the RBB just ignore the rest of the stadium and performs it among themselves. It is one of the few chants that is sung exclusively by RBB members. For this chant, a declaration of love, the group leader splits RBB members in two halves that will ‘compete’ against each other; at the leader’s command, each half sings a different stanza in a round, trying to make it sound louder and stronger than the other half. It is a particular fandom ritual that lights up emotions on the terraces; it signals a powerful moment when individual and group emotions are particularly closely aligned.¹¹⁴

Pro-communal activities are another opportunity for ritualistic engagement among the RBB. These activities include parties and barbecues to raise funds for local charities and also hands-on help to community groups who cook and deliver food for homeless people in Western Sydney. With

a distinctly pro-community flavour, these behaviours are used by ultras groups around the globe¹¹⁵ as a way to enhance their members' ties beyond the football realm.

The RBB has also been active in terms of its charity work. They proactively engage in fund raising campaigns that benefit Western Sydney based charities, reflecting their geographical and social roots. As one of the RBB's founders recalls, they use part of the money raised with the group's merchandise sales to help others: '[J]ust recently we've donated A\$2,000 to a fellow charity, a sort of Christmas charity' (P2). The group also works to alleviate social issues that affect the region's inhabitants. For instance, when huge bush fires shook communities in the nearby Blue Mountains,¹¹⁶ RBB leaders made deals with a large insurance company (called NRMA), the Wanderers' major sponsor, and the owner of the club's naming rights. The RBB promoted a dollar-match fund raising campaign with the corporate sponsors: RBB members led a campaign among themselves and mainstream Wanderers fans that raised A\$15,000 in total – an amount that was matched by the business company for the benefit of the Blue Mountains groups affected by the fires. The RBB's prosocial activities confirm previous research on pro-group behaviours associated with fusion.¹¹⁷ What is novel is that these behaviours are societally positive, while fusion has often been associated with extreme group behaviours that are not always societally positive (e.g. intergroup violence).¹¹⁸ This confirms reports of food banks and other pro-social fan-led initiatives being run in the UK and Brazil.¹¹⁹ Fused RBB identities are secure enough, strengthened by their emotionally arousing rituals, to extend to wider superordinate identities, including the wider region of Sydney residents.

Fusion on the Australian terraces

The forging of collective identities does not happen in a vacuum. On the contrary, it is implicitly related to the social context in which people live and their relationships to their communities. In this paper, we have discussed how the imaginary idea of a major multicultural site in Western Sydney, with its idiosyncratic features, has influenced and helped to construct powerful, lasting bonds between Australian ultras. As the members of the group have become closer via their shared, emotionally intense experiences, ties within the group have developed into a particularly extreme form of social bonding, termed identity fusion. We observed how our sample of Australian ultras reported higher fusion levels on average than Brazilian *torcidas organizadas*, Indonesian 'hooligans', and fans of the UK's top two leagues.

Many factors contribute to fusion among RBB members. Identifying with a diverse range of migrant groups who suffer similar discrimination in Australian society; the prejudice against these groups' social values, including their beloved football game. In addition, a loose social class and shared identity regarding the social issues faced by the inhabitants of Western Sydney appears to be critical to building the RBB's social identity. Despite being unique to this geographical context, the RBB presents similarities to other fused groups, hence demonstrating the effectiveness of fusion theory not only for understanding the psychosocial characteristics of football fans across the globe but also in predicting their behaviour. This knowledge might be crucial for football authorities, particularly the FFA and the owners of the A-League clubs who currently face a significant reduction in match attendance.

As our participants reported, clashes with the Australian 'modern football' gatekeepers are not uncommon. On the contrary, as our participants emphasized, there is a history of animosity between the RBB, the police, mainstream media, the FFA, and the club itself. RBB ultras complain of heavy handed tactics by the FFA and the police. Yet at the same time, the league and the club accuse fans of antisocial behaviour, specifically the use of incendiary devices (flares) that are forbidden in Australia and accuse.

The RBB believe that they have already proved their value to the A-League. As evidence, they cite that the FFA, their club, and league have been exploiting the sense of carnival generated by the RBB on the terraces to sell their products on TV and via social media advertising campaigns. The

Wanderers' (and by proxy, the league's) selling point is the unique atmosphere created by the ultras that contrasts football and other competitors within the Australian sporting context.

As demonstrated throughout the paper, RBB ultras tend to be highly fused to their football group. Their sense of 'oneness' with the group makes them loyal, not to the football league, but to the individuals who have either directly or indirectly shared in the intense and personally defining experiences unique to their fandom. RBB members' fandom is a defining aspect of their identity, it is effectively never 'switched off'. Fused fans will 'fight and die' to protect their group, even if these attitudes and behaviours are personally costly (e.g. penalties, including football bans from the FFA or the police that keep RBB fans from attending football matches anywhere in the country for several years – a few bans extend into double figures). The RBB core group continue to advocate for a review on the bans affecting devoted members, many of whom maintain their allegiance with the group through their charity or recreational activities.

Conclusions

An important point coming from this paper is that football stakeholders need to understand the roots of extreme fandom that makes groups like the RBB unified and lasting social structures. It is important to realize that RBB fans already recognize their tribal features; they might give up football or the league, but if they were forced to give up their group they would be disenfranchised. This is well captured by one of the RBB founders, who claims that:

That's the thing Australia needs to realise. It is a tribal thing... So I think if [the] FFA don't start pulling their finger out, they will lose what they have. I guess you never see what you had good until you lose it sometimes (P7).

We have also demonstrated that identity fusion means that the group has an enormous potential to contribute to their community via prosocial activities. Cohesion among group members facilitates these actions and is a key feature among ultras around the world. Social cohesion among hard core fans and ultras needs to be better explored by 'modern football' authorities. Instead of banning and penalizing these young people, risking their disenfranchisement to positive social identities, a better call from authorities would be to open up an ongoing dialogue that maintains their involvement with the league and channels behaviours for societal good.

Hence, if football administrators in Australia want to support the group integral to the inception and maintenance of the distinctive cultural identity of Australian ultras and the unique atmosphere they bring to the game; if they are willing to maintain the intense atmosphere conveyed by ultras that helps them to sell their game; they must be open to working with the RBB and similar groups, in order to establish a common agenda for all types of football fans. Not only will this benefit Western Sydney football, but the growth of the game in the country.

The RBB has already proven itself capable of more than just violence and chanting. It is a social group engaged in charity work, immersed in and engaged with its community. We understand that due to the complexity of group behaviour, administrators and regulators might fear that match day could turn nasty once these fans hit the terraces, but have tried to show that ultras are not synonymous with violence. However, appreciating the fused identity of the RBB ultras as a key component of their makeup will help football authorities to negotiate a better approach for the survival of the game in Australia, working with these impassioned fans, rather than against them.

Such measures, though, would require the A-League to refine their existing approach to fan management, particularly with regards to the Western Sydney ultras. As a 'tribe', these fans need to feel less controlled by external agencies, which threatens their group identity, particularly those who are highly fused. Therefore, we call for a renovated and research-based approach for the A-League to deal with ultra fans in the future.

Notes

1. Knijnik, 'Social agency and football fandom: The cultural pedagogies of the Western Sydney ultras'
2. Doidge and Lieser, 'The importance of research on the ultras: introduction.'
3. Knijnik, 'Imagining a multicultural community in an everyday football carnival: Chants, identity and social resistance on Western Sydney terraces.'
4. Numerato, *Football Fans, Activism and Social Change*.
5. Spaaij and Viñas, 'Passion, Politics and Violence: A Socio-Historical Analysis of Spanish Ultras.'
6. Here they refer to the 2014 Asian Champions League title won by the Wanderers the first time they played this Asian competition. It is also the only time that an Australian team has won this title to date.
7. Social media post, Red and Black Bloc.
8. Dmowski, 'Geographical typology of European football rivalries'; Brewer & Schneider. 'Social identity and social dilemmas: A double-edged sword.' Perdue, Gurtman & Tyler. 'Us and them: social categorization and the process of intergroup bias.'
9. Spaaij and Geilenkirchen, 'Ta (l) king sides: ethical and methodological challenges in comparative fieldwork on avid football rivalries'.
10. Hay, 'Instant Rivalry: The Melbourne Victory versus Melbourne Heart derby'.
11. 'Forrest, Poulsen and Johnston, A "multicultural model" of the spatial assimilation of ethnic minority groups in Australia's major immigrant-receiving cities.'
12. Collins, 'The changing political economy of Australian immigration'.
13. Poulsen, Johnston and Forrest, 'Is Sydney a divided city ethnically?'
14. Hay, "'Our wicked foreign game": why has association football (soccer) not become the main code of football in Australia?'; and Syson, *The Game That Never Happened: The Vanishing History of Soccer in Australia*
15. Knijnik and Spaaij, 'No harmony: football fandom and everyday multiculturalism in Western Sydney.'
16. Hay, "Our wicked foreign game"; and Skinner, Dwight and Edwards, 'Coming in from the margins: Ethnicity, community support and the rebranding of Australian soccer'
17. Knijnik, 'Imagining a multicultural community in an everyday football carnival: Chants, identity and social resistance on Western Sydney terraces.'
18. Hallinan and Hughson, 'The beautiful game in Howard's "Brutopia": football, ethnicity and citizenship in Australia'.
19. Doidge and Lieser, 'The importance of research on the ultras: introduction.'
20. Words from 'Glorious', the RBB chant that is considered the unofficial anthem for the Wanderers.
21. Doidge and Lieser, op cit, p. 2
22. Bortolini, Newson, Natividade, Vázquez, and Gómez, 'Identity fusion predicts endorsement of pro-group behaviours targeting nationality, religion, or football in Brazilian samples.'
23. Newson, 'Football, fan violence, and identity fusion.'; and Newson et al 'Brazil's football warriors: Social bonding and inter-group violence'.
24. Paredes, Briñol, and Gómez, 'Identity fusion leads to willingness to fight and die for the group: The moderating impact of being informed of the reasons behind other members' sacrifice.'
25. Newson, Buhrmester and Whitehouse, 'Explaining lifelong loyalty: The role of identity fusion and self-shaping group events.'
26. Halberstadt, Jackson, Bilkey, Jong, Whitehouse, McNaughton and Zollmann, 'Incipient social groups: An analysis via in-vivo behavioral tracking.'
27. Swann, Gómez, Seyle, Morales, & Huici, 'Identity fusion: the interplay of personal and social identities in extreme group behavior.'; and Swann, Jetten, Gómez, Whitehouse, & Bastian. 'When group membership gets personal: A theory of identity fusion.'
28. Swann, Jetten, Gómez, Whitehouse & Bastian, 'When group membership gets personal: A theory of identity fusion'.
29. Whitehouse, Lanman et al, 'The Ties That Bind Us: Ritual, fusion, and identification'.
30. Whitehouse, McQuinn, Buhrmester and Swann, 'Brothers in Arms: Libyan revolutionaries bond like family', 17,783; and see also Whitehouse et al. 'The evolution of extreme cooperation via shared dysphoric experiences.' and Newson, Bortolini, Buhrmester, da Silva et al, 'Brazil's football warriors: Social bonding and inter-group violence'.
31. Fredman, Bastian, and Swann 'God or Country? Fusion With Judaism Predicts Desire for Retaliation Following Palestinian Stabbing Intifada.'; and Newson, Buhrmester, White, Gonsalkorale, Black, Knijnik, Wibisono, Sofianna, and Whitehouse, 'How Perceived Threat and Group Identity Dynamics Help Shape Extreme Intergroup Violence'.
32. Buhrmester, Fraser, Lanman, Whitehouse and Swann, 'When terror hits home: Identity fused Americans who saw Boston bombing victims as "family" provided aid.'
33. Newson, Buhrmester and Whitehouse, 'Explaining lifelong loyalty: The role of identity fusion and self-shaping group events.'

34. Newson, Buhrmester, White, Gonsalkorale, Black, Knijnik, Wibisono, Sofianna, and Whitehouse, 'How Perceived Threat and Group Identity Dynamics Help Shape Extreme Intergroup Violence'.
35. Whitehouse et al. 'The evolution of extreme cooperation via shared dysphoric experiences.'
36. Kennedy, 'A contextual analysis of Europe's ultra football supporters movement.'
37. Doidge and Lieser, 'The importance of research on the ultras'
38. Nuhrat, 'Ultras in Turkey: othering, agency, and culture as a political domain'.
39. Doidge and Lieser, 'The importance of research on the ultras'.
40. Hogg et al, 'Uncertainty, entitativity and group identification'.
41. Swann, Gómez, Dovidio, Hart and Jetten, 'Dying and Killing for One's Group: Identity Fusion Moderates Responses to Intergroup Versions of the Trolley Problem'.
42. There were reports that this has happened to other fan groups in Australia in the past. See Warren and Hay, "'Fencing them in": The A-League, Policing and the Dilemma of Public Order'.
43. Knijnik, 'Social agency and football fandom: The cultural pedagogies of the Western Sydney ultras', 950.
44. Newson, 'Football, fan violence, and identity fusion.'
45. Gómez, Brooks, Buhrmester, Vázquez, Jetten, Swann, 'On the nature of identity fusion: Insights into the construct and a new measure'
46. Quantitative results are reported in a sister, three-study paper: Newson, Buhrmester, White, Gonsalkorale, Black, Knijnik, Wibisono, Sofianna, and Whitehouse, 'How Perceived Threat and Group Identity Dynamics Help Shape Extreme Intergroup Violence' (under review).
47. Interviewees might or might not have responded to the survey.
48. Gubrium and Holstein, *Handbook of interview research: Context and method*.
49. Buhrmester et al, 'When terror hits home'.
50. Hallinan, Hughson and Burke, 'Supporting the "world game" in Australia: A case study of fandom at national and club level.'
51. Gubrium and Holstein, *Handbook of interview research*.
52. Ibid.,
53. de Toledo. 'Torcer: a metafísica do homem comum'
54. Kvale and Brinkmann, *Interviews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing*.
55. Markham, 'Internet research.'
56. Ethics protocol number H1045 obtained from the Human Research Ethics Committee at Western Sydney University
57. To become familiar with the demographics of other Australian football fan cohorts, please see Hay 'Instant Rivalry'.
58. Newson, Bortolini, Buhrmester, da Silva et al, 'Brazil's football warriors: Social bonding and inter-group violence.'
59. Newson, Buhrmester, White, Gonsalkorale, Black, Knijnik, Wibisono, Sofianna, and Whitehouse, 'How Perceived Threat and Group Identity Dynamics Help Shape Extreme Intergroup Violence'.
60. Newson, Buhrmester and Whitehouse, 'Explaining lifelong loyalty: The role of identity fusion and self-shaping group events.'
61. Swann Jr. Jetten, Gómez, Whitehouse and Bastian, 'When group membership gets personal: A theory of identity fusion'.
62. Newson, 'Football, fan violence, and identity fusion.'
63. Research participants are here identified as P and a number in order that they were interviewed. P1 is a 28 years old man of Scottish background.
64. Newson, Bortolini, Buhrmester, da Silva et al, 'Brazil's football warriors: Social bonding and inter-group violence.'
65. Whitehouse, McQuinn, Buhrmester and Swann, 'Brothers in Arms'
66. Knijnik, 'Social agency and football fandom: The cultural pedagogies of the Western Sydney ultras.'
67. P2 is a 26 years old man of Greek background
68. P3 is a 21 years old man of British background
69. Gómez and Vázquez, 'El poder de "sentirse uno" con un grupo: fusión de la identidad y conductas grupales extremas.'
70. P4 is a 30 years old man of South African background
71. Gómez and Vázquez, 'El poder de "sentirse uno" con un grupo: fusión de la identidad y conductas grupales extremas.'
72. Poulsen, Johnston and Forrest, 'Is Sydney a divided city ethnically?'
73. Paredes, Briñol and Gómez, 'Identity fusion leads to willingness to fight and die for the group: The moderating impact of being informed of the reasons behind other members' sacrifice.'
74. Buhrmester et al. 'When terror hits home: Identity fused Americans who saw Boston bombing victims as "family"'.
75. Whitehouse, McQuinn, Buhrmester and Swann, 'Brothers in Arms'

76. The Wanderers play in the Parramatta stadium, located in the Parramatta region, the geographical entry gate for Western Sydney.
77. Whitehouse, Lanman et al, 'The Ties That Bind Us: Ritual, fusion, and identification', 683.
78. P5 is a 28 years old man of British background
79. Newson, Buhrmester and Whitehouse, 'Explaining lifelong loyalty: The role of identity fusion and self-shaping group events.'
80. Lyrics of 'Matador' (Killer), RBB chant.
81. In inverted commas because there is no 'East Sydney' only 'Sydney' and Western Sydney.
82. Here the groups refer to the 'East' Sydney FC supporters; the opponent team's name is just 'Sydney FC' but Wanderers fans add the 'East' to make a clear contrast to the 'West' that they are proud of.
83. Cleland, 'Sexuality, masculinity and homophobia in association football: An empirical overview of a changing cultural context.'
84. Bortolini, Newson, Natividade, Vázquez, and Gómez, 'Identity fusion predicts endorsement of pro-group behaviours targeting nationality, religion, or football in Brazilian samples.'
85. Numerato, *Football Fans, Activism and Social Change*.
86. Kennedy and Kennedy, 'Football Supporters and The Commercialisation of Football: Comparative Responses Across Europe.'
87. Brown, "'Not for sale"? The destruction and reformation of football communities in the Glazer takeover of Manchester United.'
88. Millward, *The global football league: Transnational networks, social movements and sport in the new media age*.
89. Whitehouse, McQuinn, Buhrmester and Swann, 'Brothers in Arms'
90. Newson, Bortolini, Buhrmester, da Silva et al, 'Brazil's football warriors: Social bonding and inter-group violence', 1.
91. Melbourne Cup is the main international annual horse race in Australia.
92. Cohen, Stanley, *Folk devils and moral panics*.
93. Whitehouse, Lanman et al, 'The Ties That Bind Us: Ritual, fusion, and identification'.
94. Whitehouse, Lanman et al, 'The Ties That Bind Us: Ritual, fusion, and identification', 680.
95. Whitehouse, Lanman et al, 'The Ties That Bind Us: Ritual, fusion, and identification'.
96. Facebook comment posted on a closed Wanderers' supporters' page
97. Whitehouse, McQuinn, Buhrmester and Swann, 'Brothers in Arms', 17,783.
98. 'These colours unite us all'. RBB chant
99. Taylor and Taylor, 'Something for the weekend, sir? Leisure, ecstasy and identity in football and contemporary religion
100. King, *The European ritual: Football in the new Europe*.'
101. Harvey, and Piotrowska, 'Intolerance and joy, violence and love among male football fans: towards a psychosocial explanation of "excessive" behaviours'.
102. Harvey and Piotrowska, 'Intolerance and joy, violence and love among male football fans: towards a psychosocial explanation of 'excessive' behaviours.'
103. Taylor and Taylor, 'Something for the weekend, sir? Leisure, ecstasy and identity in football and contemporary religion.'
104. Anderson, *The architecture of cognition*.
105. Maffesoli, *The contemplation of the world: Figures of community style*'
106. Taylor and Taylor, 'Something for the weekend, sir? Leisure, ecstasy and identity in football and contemporary religion
107. Kytö, "We are the rebellious voice of the terraces; we are Çarşı'.
108. 'We unite as one', RBB chant.
109. 'Our lives we give', RBB chant.
110. Whitehouse, Lanman et al. 'The Ties That Bind Us: Ritual, fusion, and identification'. Newson et al., 'Explaining lifelong loyalty: The role of identity fusion and self-shaping group events.' Whitehouse 'Dying for the group: Towards a general theory of extreme self-sacrifice.'
111. P6 is a 26 years old woman of a South American background
112. P7 is a 31 years old man of unknown background
113. Parts of 'Euphoria', RBB chant.
114. Whitehouse, Lanman et al. 'The Ties That Bind Us: Ritual, fusion, and identification'.
115. Newson, 'Football, fan violence, and identity fusion'.
116. The Blue Mountains are a mountainous region located at the edge of Western Sydney. It borders the region with other rural areas in the NSW state.
117. Gómez, Brooks, Buhrmester, Vázquez, Jetten, Swann, 'On the nature of identity fusion: Insights into the construct and a new measure'

118. e.g. Fredman, Bastian, and Swann ‘God or Country? Fusion With Judaism Predicts Desire for Retaliation Following Palestinian Stabbing Intifada.’; Newson, Bortolini, Buhrmester, Silva et al, ‘Brazil’s football warriors: Social bonding and inter-group violence’
119. Newson, ‘Football, fan violence, and identity fusion.’

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