



UNIVERSITY OF
TECHNOLOGY SYDNEY

**New team identification:
Sydney FC, a case study**

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**A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(PhD)
February 2009**

Certificate of Originality

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of Student

Acknowledgments

The following page pays a debt of gratitude to the people who have made the completion of this research project possible. First, I would like to thank Associate Professor Aron Murphy - who although not involved in the actual process - gave me a start at UTS. Without your help and guidance Murph, the process for which I am about to thank others would simply not have happened.

The advice, knowledge and unwavering support of my two supervisors, Professor Tracy Taylor and Associate Professor Simon Darcy has been phenomenal. Despite your busy schedules, you have always found time to consult, support and assist me throughout the four years I've been at UTS. Tracy your consultation while in Australia and overseas has been beyond belief at times and is something I am extremely grateful for. Simon, your drop in centre has provided a massive source of help, guidance and comfort – on tap throughout the past four years. I thank you both for your assistance with the conceptual, theoretical, work and personal obstacles occurring throughout this process. Also, a large debt of gratitude goes to Tara Mathey for her excellent and punctual editing services on this thesis.

I would like to thank Rob van den Honert from the Football Federation Australia for providing me with access and support throughout this project. Without your help and guidance this project would have been infinitely more difficult and survey two may not have happened.

To Mum, Dad and Sara, your ongoing support, despite me being located on the other side of the planet has made the tyranny of distance a tad easier to deal with! Thank you for making my soirees back to Dorset so comfortable, enjoyable and amusing. To Piper, thank you for putting up with me and providing me with much needed support on a day-to-day basis during the last four years. You are a saint, a gem and I thank you!

Thanks to my friends in Sydney (Rich, Em, Ads, Rhino, Nige & Beth), UTS (in particular Steve, Watty, Whitt, Piney, Spurrsy, Couttsy, Lee, Katie, B.J, Heck, Nico & Alana for making lunches/evenings out so amusing), Long Reef Golf Club, Manly United Football Club and at home in Dorset (Jogs, Sven Goran, Martyn, Waitey & Maxim). You have all provided me with the distraction, banter and amusement, which has been as damaging as it has been valuable to the completion of this research project. The constant attractions away from the office have provided much needed sanctuary during the last four years.

Finally, I thank all the study respondents that surrendered their own personal time to give their opinions, thoughts and feelings on the central topics of this research project. In the future I hope that Sydney FC provides you with the stable and successful, flagship club for football in Australia that so many of you wished for.

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Publications arising from this project

Journal articles

- Lock, D. (2008). Fan perspectives of change in Australia's A-League. *Soccer & Society*, 10(1), 109-123.
- Lock, D., Taylor, T., & Darcy, S. (2007). Fan identity formation in a new football club and a revamped league: The A-League. *Sport Marketing Europe* (1), 30-35.
- Lock, D., Taylor, T., & Darcy, S. (2008). Starting with a clean slate: An analysis of member identification with a new sports team. *Sport Management Review*, doi:10.1016/j.smr.2008.09.001.

Book chapters

- Lock, D., Taylor, T., & Darcy, S. (2008). Soccer and social capital in Australia: Social networks in transition In M. Nicholson & R. Hoye (Eds.), *Sport and social capital*: Elsevier Butterworth Heinemann.

Conference proceedings

- Lock, D. (2006). *The development of social identity in fans of a new sports team: Sydney FC, a case study*. Paper presented at the International summer school for young researchers: Sport, Globalisation and Cultural Diversity, Copenhagen, Denmark.
- Lock, D., Taylor, T., & Darcy, S. (2006). *Sport fan identity & the new kid on the block*. Paper presented at the European Academy of Sports Management (EASM), Nicosia, Cyprus.
- Lock, D., Taylor, T., & Darcy, S. (2007). *What changed the minds of Australia's football supporters?* Paper presented at the European Academy of Sport Management (EASM), Turin, Italy.
- Lock, D. (2008). *In hope of déjà vu: Validating the sports spectator identity scale with fans of a new sport team*. Paper presented at the Sport Management Association of Australian and New Zealand (SMAANZ) - Raising the Bar: Promoting Excellence in Sports Management, Fremantle, Australia.

Abstract

This thesis explores the team identification of fans of a new sport team, using social identity theory. As there is limited research on fans of new sport teams, this study sought to redress this situation by seeking to *explain and measure new team identification*. Through investigating new team identification, this study extends current applications of social identity theory and understanding of fans of a new sport team. Additionally, by measuring new team identification, this thesis contributes a valid and reliable measure of the construct, and discovery of key themes driving the formation and development of new team identification.

A mixed-method research design was used to investigate the central thesis topic. A case study of members of a new sport team, Sydney FC, provided the sample population. The research design included two surveys, administered at the end of the new team's first and second seasons, respectively, in addition to twenty-one interviews undertaken to deepen understanding of new team identification. The Sports Spectator Identity Scale (SSIS) was used to measure new team identification and test for differences in identity strength based on participant characteristics.

Results indicated that three defining behaviours provided the basis for the formation of new team identification. These were termed: Football first, Origin and Occasion. Measurement of new team identification using the SSIS validated the model in a new team context; however, the value of victory and the identification of rival groupings did not relate strongly to the construct. Member identity strength was significantly influenced by age, salary, membership category and games attended. Five behaviours underpinned the development of new team identification; these were termed: Searching, Expression, Eagerness, Names and Faces, and Spruiking.

Social identity theory provided a useful framework to explore the formation and extent of new team identification. The formation of new team identification was strongly influenced by support of football, in this case. The implementation of the SSIS to measure new team identification extended its previous applications. Participant characteristics exerted a clear influence on the strength of new team identification. Members engaged in additional team-related behaviours as their new team identification increased and they developed multi-faceted and socially important bonds.

Stemming from the key thesis findings, the conceptual outcomes provided a significant contribution to current literature exploring members of new sport teams. Furthermore, the nuanced differences between identification with new and established teams provide a distinct agenda for future research into new sport teams.