Journeys to the 'Other': England football fans' intergroup contact with Muslims and Islam at the 2022 Qatar FIFA Men's World Cup

THOMAS TAYLOR

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

November 2024

ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates England football fans' reflections on their experiences and contact with Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula at the 2022 FIFA Men's World Cup, Qatar – the first to be staged in a non-secular, Islamic society. In particular, it critically evaluates whether and if so, *how* and *why* experiencing a short-term sporting event can have symbolic or transformational socio-cultural impacts on the fans. Gordon Allport's (1979 [1954]) intergroup contact theory underpins this research. It does so by examining how the fans construct and perceive their interactions with Muslims and a variant of Islamic culture within an under-studied context, notably a sport setting, and in particular a temporary sports mega-event in the Arabian Peninsula. Edward Said's (2003) *Orientalism* is additionally employed to ground the fans' encounters within discourses of the 'Other' and wider relations of power.

A 'pre-during-post' methodological approach - underpinned by semi-structured interviews, audio-visual diaries, and field notes - permitted a deeper understanding on how the fans construct and interpret their contact experiences and allowed for a richer analysis to reveal the complexities and contradictions in the fans' experiences. Consequently, the fans' encounters with Muslims revealed that an 'authentic' Islamic cultural experience was limited by a 'World Cup bubble.' Further, encounters were tempered by the fans' confusion on who the Other was during the tournament. The dichotomy of the Other was blurred as fans revealed they interacted with service/migrant workers who acted as a proxy for contact with people in the Arabian Peninsula. Consequently, this thesis theoretically contributes to the literature on intergroup contact theory by examining it in a sport setting and advances knowledge by integrating Orientalism into the analysis, as well as developing a new conceptual dimension – the notion of 'proxy' contact. Practically, this thesis makes several socio-political and management recommendations for future sporting events staged in the Arabian Peninsula, which include the sovereign states of Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Oman.

CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

PUBLICATIONS AND CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

PUBLICATIONS

Aspects of this thesis, notably the literature review, have been published in two international journals, *Tourism Management Perspective* and the *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*. I present the references below alongside the current number of citations for each.

Jarvis, N., Weeden, C., Ladkin, A., and Taylor, T. (2022). Intergroup contact between front-line cruise staff and LGBT passengers. *Tourism Management Perspective*, 42: 100960.
(Currently this article has been cited by 11 authors)

Taylor, T., Burdsey, D., and Jarvis, N. (2023). A Critical review on sport and the Arabian Peninsula- the current state of play and future directions. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 15(2): 367-383.
(Currently this article has been cited by 13 authors)

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

In addition to publishing in two international journals, I have presented aspects of my thesis at three academic conferences,

May 2024: ‘"*It's just sportswashing isn't it?": Neo-Orientalism, and England Fans' Perceptions of the World Cup, Qatar*.’ Sportswashing: Managing state relations and reputations through associations with sport. Loughborough University (London campus).

July 2023: ‘"*Follow England Away": Fandom, Intergroup Contact, and the Power Politics of the Qatar World Cup.*’ "Re-creating Leisure": Leisure Studies Association Annual Conference 2023. Bournemouth University (Bournemouth).

May 2023: ‘*Journeys to the 'Other': England football fans and the 2022 World Cup.*’ The Future of Sport Series (internal). University of Brighton (Eastbourne campus).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DECLARATION

I declare that the research contained in this thesis, unless otherwise formally indicated within the text, is the original work of the author. The thesis has not been previously submitted to this or any other university for a degree, and does not incorporate any material already submitted for a degree.

Signed: Thomas Taylor

Date: 31st October 2024

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

On the evening of the 25th November 2022, thousands of England football supporters made the 35-kilometre journey from central Doha to the Al Bayt stadium in Al Khor to watch the national team play in their second group stage match of the 2022 FIFA Men's World Cup in Qatar (2022 World Cup) against the USA. The atmosphere was relatively subdued in the cool evening air, everyone cordial. The game itself ended unspectacularly, a dull nil-nil draw which the fans had to endure. All was well, however, as England all but secured a place in the knockout phases. Nonetheless, this tournament was memorable for several reasons. For example, there was an absence of bold shirtless men proudly displaying their beer bellies for the world to see. It was also memorable for the sight of fans sipping on non-alcoholic Budweiser in stadia; no supporters engaged in the ritual of jumping into fountains; alcohol was very much at premium and only available if a person knew where to find it. England fans could be seen wearing themed *thawbs*[1] and drinking tea in *Souq Waqif*[2]. Encounters between England fans, international supporters, migrant/service workers and the host community were convivial and pleasant. These experiences were a far cry from the images and narratives that too often accompanied the fans on their journeys to watch England in the 1980s and 1990s. As Crabbe (2004: 63) described those who followed the national team had long been associated with an "aggressive masculinity, drunkenness, open displays of nationalism, xenophobia and racism [and] an ugly belligerent and unappealing national image."

The England fans' experiences and encounters in Qatar and the Arabian Peninsula[3] were indicative of wider transformations amongst the spectatorship around the England national team. After a reported 800 England fans had been arrested during the 2000 UEFA Men's European Championship co-hosted by the Netherlands and Belgium, politicians and the governing body of football in England, the Football Association (the FA), encouraged by wider transformations in English football more generally, sought to develop and transform the image and reputation of England fans, especially abroad. Two key developments were central to this process. Firstly, Tony Blair's New Labour government introduced the Football (Disorder) Act 2000 to empower

---

[1] A long white garment worn by men across the Arabian Peninsula (Fromherz, 2012).
[2] A *Souq* refers to a market where vendors sell a range of products and produce.
[3] The Arabian Peninsula defined for the purpose of this thesis as encompassing the heterogenous nations of Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Oman - these nation states border the Persian Gulf and are members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (see, for example: Held and Ulrichsen, 2013).

police officers and judges to impose travel banning orders on national supporters who were deemed 'high risk' or who were violent (Crabbe, 2004; Hughson and Poulton, 2008; Perryman, 2008). Secondly, the FA themselves sought to reconfigure an 'official' supporters club, *englandfans*, to encourage followers to become ambassadors for the national team and refrain from violence and other disrespectful behaviour towards others. For Perryman (2008) this restructuring was significant as it provided a space for multiple supporter groups around the country to unite via an official online webpage, and for transparency to emerge between the supporters and those from the FA. Essentially, for the first time the FA were listening to the voices of the supporters who did not partake in violence or seek to cause trouble. Instead, the FA collaborated with them to implement change from below (the fans themselves).

The 2002 FIFA Men's World Cup in Japan and South Korea marked a significant juncture in the appearance of England supporters and, as Perryman (2008) argued, represented a huge break from the past. Those who attended the event were from more diverse backgrounds; the fans were greeted by a friendly reception by the host communities; a celebratory atmosphere was visible; and most of all, no trouble was recorded (Crabbe, 2004, 2008; Perryman, 2008). Since then, England have qualified for five World Cups in Germany, South Africa, Brazil, Russia and Qatar with each acting as a magnet for England supporters traversing across the world and spending vast amounts of money to 'follow England away.' Although violence has still occasionally reared its head, e.g., when hundreds of Russian supporters charged at England fans during a match in Marseille at the 2016 UEFA Men's European Championships in France, England fans have done much to shake off the 'hooligan' image.

The recognition of key shifts in England fandom is significant because this thesis is ultimately about the fans, their journeys, encounters and perceptions towards other people, and places and cultures when they travel away to watch England. In particular, I am concerned with their interactions and perceptions with and towards Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula in the context of the 2022 World Cup. This is significant for two reasons. Firstly, anti-Muslim prejudice within the United Kingdom (UK) has been ever present, especially since it became amplified in the public imagination and media in the 1980s, wherein socio-political discourses of race and an ethnic Other (e.g., 'Asians,' or 'Pakistanis') were displaced by a discernible religious and Muslim

Other (Heath and Richards, 2016). The Honeyford Affair[4] and the Rushdie Affair[5] were pivotal events in distinguishing this shift. More recently, in 2022, a University of Birmingham report entitled *The Dinner Table Prejudice: Islamophobia in Contemporary Britain* reported Muslims are the second least liked group in the UK (Jones and Unsworth, 2022). The report also revealed how people from middle and upper-class occupations were most likely to hold prejudiced views towards Muslims and Islam. Similarly, the anti-fascist organisation Hope Not Hate reported in 2018, 37% of survey respondents believed Muslims and the Islamic way of life were dangerous and incompatible with society and culture in the UK (Hope Not Hate 2018).

Secondly, there is a paucity of scholarship addressing football fans' perceptions, beliefs and experiences towards Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula. In a domestic football context, issues of prejudice towards Muslims and Islam have been explored by Millward (2008), who found rival supporters used Islamophobic slurs to (re)invigorate a sporting rivalry. More recently, Alrababa'h et al. (2021) examined how exposure to Muslim sporting celebrities, notably Mohammed Salah, can reduce prejudiced behaviour towards Muslims. Thus, I argue it is essential to develop an understanding of how football fans construct, (re)produce or challenge discourses on Muslims and Islam to ascertain whether exposure via an international sporting spectacle (the 2022 World Cup) can have symbolic or transformational impacts.

The fandom of the England supporters and their experiences, encounters and reflections of the 2022 World Cup need to be contextualised within the wider social, cultural and political milieu of the event itself. The decision to award Qatar the rights to stage the 2022 edition of the tournament back in 2010 had come as a shock to most football fans and commentators. Qatar had never competed at the event before; most fans would not have even been able to name any of their players and Qatar was by far the smallest state to ever host the tournament (Brannagan and Reiche, 2022). An international spotlight was truly placed on the nation, arguably for the first time. Consequently, in the years leading up to the tournament, media commentaries in Western, liberal and secular societies such as the UK applied a critical lens towards the nation. Attention

---

[4] Between 1982 and 1984, Ray Honeyford, a headteacher in Bradford, wrote several articles in the *Times Higher Education Supplement* (TES) and the *Salisbury Review*, a conservative quarterly magazine, criticising multicultural educational policies and making a series of offensive comments about Muslim children and Muslims more generally. Honeyford's articles received much support from many white people within Bradford, as well as from conservative commentators and the Conservative Party itself.

[5] In 1989, British Muslims took to the streets in protest against the publication of *The Satanic Verses*. The author Salman Rushdie was issued a fatwah - a death sentence - by the Iranian Ayatollah Khomeini for publishing context considered blasphemy against Islam (Saha, 2021).

was brought to accusations of bribery and corruption in the bidding process surrounding the event. Following this, and arguably the most dominant criticism from media networks and international non-governmental organisations, attention concerned Qatar's human rights records, especially as it related to the nation's treatment of migrant workers and the *Kafala* sponsorship system[6] (see, for example, Millward, 2017). From a fan perspective, questions were raised over Qatar's suitability to host an event of such magnitude. These concerns centred upon the weather, accommodation, the lack of alcohol and the perceived restrictive laws in the country (Brannagan and Rookwood, 2016). The decision was also made to move the 2022 World Cup to November and December in a bid to safeguard travelling supporters, athletes and others from the Qatari summer heat. This truly was a World Cup like no other.

Even more significantly, Qatar became the first non-secular Islamic society to host a World Cup. Here I am referring to states that have officially proclaimed Islam as a state religion, and the values and beliefs of Islam are reflected in the social, cultural and political aspects of everyday life within a non-secular Islamic society (Russell et al., 2015). For example, Fromherz (2012) noted in such contexts Islam influences Qatari politics and legislation. Moreover, it was also the first World Cup to be staged within one city - Doha. Figure 1 illustrates the proximity of the stadiums in Doha and visualises a map of Qatar and the Arabian Peninsula. By becoming the first non-secular Islamic society to host a World Cup, I argue this presented a novel opportunity to develop a rich understanding of England football fans' perceptions, experiences and encounters towards Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula and how they had to navigate their experiences within a distinct sport and leisure place. Such an inquiry is significant for analysing whether following England away can have social and cultural ramifications on football fans' perceptions towards Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula beyond the event itself. For example, did attending the 2022 World Cup shape and influence the supporters' perceptions and knowledge in any substantial way?

---

[6] This is a labour and legal framework used across the Arabian Peninsula whereby the local host (sponsor or employer) assumes the responsibility of a migrant worker (e.g., covering travel expenses, housing, visa help etc.). However, this system has been criticised for the exploitation of migrant workers and abuses of power by the host. For example, Millward (2017) noted the *Kafala* system effectively permits the host to have complete control over the mobility and life of a migrant worker by controlling who they can be employed with, and even deciding if they can leave the country of not.

FOOTBALL
FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022 Stadiums

Al Bayt Stadium
Capacity : 60,000

Lusail Stadium
Capacity : 80,000

Education City Stadium
Capacity : 40,000

Khalifa International Stadium
Capacity : 40,000

Ahmed Bin Ali Stadium
Capacity : 40,000

Stadium 974
Capacity : 40,000

Al Thumama Stadium
Capacity : 40,000

Al Janoub Stadium
Capacity : 40,000

Al Shamal

Al Khor

Al Daayen

Umm Salal

Al Shahaniya

Doha

Ar Rayyan

Al Wakrah

QATAR

Source: Qatar2022

@AJLabs ALJAZEERA

Figure 1: A visual representation of the World Cup stadiums, Qatar and the Arabian Peninsula
(source: *Al Jazeera, 2022*)

To place this thesis into the wider context of sport in the Arabian Peninsula, and as I have argued elsewhere (Taylor et al., 2023), the emergence of international sporting spectacles within the region - such as the annual Formula 1 Grands Prix staged in Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the Emirate of Abu Dhabi; the annual Tour of Oman international cycling event; the 2019 World Athletics Championship in Doha; the 2023 FIFA Men's Club World Cup in Saudi Arabia; along with other international events in tennis, golf, basketball and rugby 7s, - has facilitated, and will

arguably continue to facilitate, the contemporary movement of international sports fans, athletes, tourists and other stakeholders to these non-secular, Islamic societies. Many will be travelling to the region for the first time. There is thus a need to understand this form of emerging contact from a myriad of perspectives, for example, developing knowledge on how staging events in the region can influence sport event attendees' motives and behaviours is important for event stakeholders, organisers and managers. However, it is also significant from a sociological perspective: understanding fans' experiences and intergroup encounters could represent a significant turning point in challenging Western scholars' sociological understanding of not only sport events in the region but dominant engagements between the West, Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula more broadly (Taylor et al., 2023).

This thesis is thus timely and pertinent considering the events taking place in the region, and the growing mobility of fans, athletes and others travelling to the Arabian Peninsula to consume and participate in sport. I further argue, there is a need for critical sociological analysis that examines notions of power at a micro/meso level in sporting event spaces within the Arabian Peninsula. By placing the perceptions, experiences, interactions and reflections of sport event attendees, scholars can begin to unearth *meaning* as opposed to purely describing events and the behaviour of those who attend. This can then begin to build a knowledge base on intergroup/intercultural relations (Taylor et al., 2023).

The bulk of academic attention on the 2022 World Cup and indeed sport and the Arabian Peninsula more broadly has focused on top-down processes and utilised concepts such as "soft power," "nation branding" and "nation building" (see, for example, Dun, 2014; Henderson, 2014; Knez et al., 2014; Brannagan and Giulianotti, 2015, 2018; Reiche, 2015; Brannagan and Rookwood, 2016; Griffin, 2017, 2019; Rookwood, 2019; Al Thani, 2022; Brannagan and Reiche, 2022; Hassan and Wang, 2023). Mostly this research was undertaken prior to the 2022 World Cup and produced insightful analysis on why Qatar wanted to stage the tournament. However, the experiences and encounters of sports fans have received much less attention. To note, several recent publications have started to provide a micro/meso analysis on the event itself and its perceived impacts, including a forthcoming edited book entitled, *The 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar: Global and Local Perspectives* (Kozhanov et al., 2025) and a special issue in the *Journal of Arabian Studies* focused on *Qatar's World Cup Goals* (Reiche, 2024). Other scholars have explored fan experiences and impressions of the tournament (Acheampong et al., 2023; Carvache-Franco et al., 2024) and resident and migrant workers attitudes towards the event (Al-

Emadi et al., 2024). While these are important contributions to the literature, they do not address wider socio-cultural issues or issues of power and are limited to the phenomenon of the 2022 World Cup.

This thesis, then, is about England football fans and their intergroup encounters and experiences. Therefore, I draw upon Gordon Allport's (1979 [1954]) intergroup contact theory (as discussed in detail in Chapter Two) as a significant tool to examine how the fans construct and perceive their interactions with Muslims and a variant of Islamic culture to see *how* and *why* travelling to the 2022 World Cup can have symbolic and/or transformational impacts on the supporters. I also adopt Edward Said's (2003 [1978]) *Orientalism* (as discussed in detail in Chapter Two) to ground the fans' encounters within discourses of the 'Other' and wider relations of power. I briefly acknowledge; however, how other scholarly concepts and lenses could equally unearth England fans' experiences, perceptions and reflections such as "destination image," "community" or "soft power." Destination image is useful for helping to understand how fans perceive Qatar, their motives for visiting and their travel behaviours (see, for example, Andersson et al., 2021). Similarly, Cohen's (1985) concept of "community" as a meaningful system of cultural practices, rituals and patterns (e.g., dancing and chanting) could illuminate how supporters, perhaps, felt a sense of belonging and commonality with the local community or other international fans. However, my focus is specifically on intergroup relations *between* diverse groups of people and the power dynamics inherent within these encounters. A focus on "destination image" or "community" would limit the scope of analysis to not only fans' impressions of Qatar as a destination or their experiences but would overlook wider relations of power.

Moreover, to my knowledge, scholars have yet to integrate intergroup contact theory with Orientalism within any context. This thesis thus presents a novel insight into how both can complement each other in a sporting event context within the Arabian Peninsula. In relation to intergroup contact, scholars have long overlooked the role of sport in facilitating positive outcomes towards different groups of people (see, for example, Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006). This is perhaps because sport, despite its structures (e.g., codified rules), often results in unstructured forms of contact that can exacerbate intergroup tension e.g., sports fans enacting deeply held rivalries. Studies that have applied intergroup contact theory have done so by examining and assessing the effectiveness of sport for development programmes in various societies (see, for example, Schulenkorf and Sherry, 2021). Further, scholarship on Orientalism tends to focus on top-down discourses and often ignores how it is reproduced, challenged or contested amongst

general laypersons, such as football fans. Thus, I posit the 2022 World Cup is an under-studied and salient context for developing knowledge on intergroup contact theory and Orientalism, especially as it relates to an everyday setting - interactions that occur in everyday World Cup places (e.g., in shops, on the street, in bars, in restaurants and so forth) and are often spontaneous, as opposed to taking place in a structured, controlled setting (e.g., in a factory or classroom).

As a response to the above arguments, my thesis offers an original and contemporary insight into intergroup contact theory, Orientalism and the 2022 World Cup. Thus far, this introduction has presented the research context for my thesis by locating my approach and rationale within the changing nature of England football fandom, the 2022 World Cup and the Arabian Peninsula. I have argued throughout that there is a need for a greater focus on football fans' experiences, perceptions and encounters towards Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula. This is important because it cannot only illuminate wider social and cultural issues but can begin to help intergroup contact scholars understand how contact functions within a World Cup setting and how encounters reproduce, challenge or contest Oriental discourses. Further, it can build a knowledge base on how sociologists understand sport within the Arabian Peninsula.

Research Aim and Objective:

Given the context and rationale outlined in the previous section, my research aim is to investigate England football fans' perceptions and reflections on their experiences and contact with Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula in the context of the 2022 FIFA Men's World Cup. I adopt a theoretically informed framework drawing on both intergroup contact theory and Orientalism to provide a particular understanding of the social and cultural experiences and encounters of the fans.

To achieve these aims, I set out four research objectives. These are:

1) To analyse how England football fans construct Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula prior to the 2022 World Cup.
2) To analyse England football fans' socio-cultural fandom practices and contact experiences of attending the 2022 World Cup.

3) To critically evaluate whether and if so, *how* and *why,* travelling to the 2022 World Cup had symbolic or transformational impacts on the perceptions of England football fans towards Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula.

4) To contribute to wider theoretical understandings about intergroup contact theory, Orientalism and international sporting spectacles within the Arabian Peninsula.

Thesis Structure

Considering the research aims and objectives, this thesis is split into five chapters. The introduction set out the context, rationale and general parameters of the study. Chapter Two, the literature review, introduces the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of this thesis. In the first part, I discuss the developments of intergroup contact theory since it was first introduced by Gordon Allport in 1954, noting how it came into prominence, its utility and how it has been applied and understood. I also offer a critique of the contact literature before highlighting how it relates to both tourism and sport, and most importantly, this thesis. I draw on tourism scholarship because, as discussed in the introduction, intergroup contact theory has been relatively absent within sociological analysis of sport. The context of tourism also provides a significant lens to explore contact because tourists, like fans, often travel to and explore new people, places and cultures. In the following part of the chapter, I integrate intergroup contact theory with the concept of the Other and Edward Said's Orientalism (2003). This grounds the fans' encounters within wider relations of power and considers the socio-cultural and political context of contact. Like the previous part of the chapter, I also relate the concepts of the Other and Orientalism to both tourism and sport before noting their significance for this thesis. Further, the literature review helps to inform the key research questions underpinning my discussions with England supporters.

Chapter Three, methodology and methods, develops the research questions devised from the literature review by explaining how I intend to answer them alongside the research aims and objectives. In the first part, I analyse various philosophical paradigms and debates surrounding them before outlining and justifying the philosophical and methodological approach that I adopt for this thesis. The second part of the chapter specifically outlines the methods I drew upon, which include semi-structured interviews, audio-visual diaries and semi-structured interviews with photo elicitation. Here I outline the 'pre-during-post' qualitative approach used to investigate the England football fans' perceptions and experiences towards Muslims, Islam and

the Arabian Peninsula. I further address my rationale for travelling to Qatar for 10 days as well as my positionality, reflexivity, the selected sample of this study, the recruitment process, ethics and data analysis.

Chapter Four, findings and discussion, presents, discusses and interprets the findings stemming from the empirical research. The first two sections, *Constructing Intergroup Encounters* and *The Cultural Politics of the 2022 FIFA Men's World Cup*, are presented chronologically; that is, both are the product of the 'pre-event' interviews carried out before the 2022 World Cup. They deal with *how* the fans constructed Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula, what influenced their perceptions, any prior contact they had and the meanings and issues they applied to the World Cup itself. The following section, *England Fans' Socio-Cultural Experiences: Fandom and Intercultural Encounters* specifically deals with the social and cultural experiences of the England fans in the Arabian Peninsula during the 2022 World Cup. Following this, *The Politics of Encounter: England Fans, Muslims and Migrant/Service Workers* explores the fans' reflections of intergroup contact with Muslims and service/migrant workers to examine the outcomes of contact in the context of the 2022 World Cup. Critically, each section contributes towards and informs two final (second order) themes entitled a) *The Challenges of Intergroup Contact in a Temporary Sport Setting* and b) *The Proxy Case of Intergroup Contact Theory.* Both these themes summarise the key findings emanating from the previous themes.

Chapter Five, the conclusion, presents the significant contributions to knowledge of this thesis before summarising how the findings answered the research aims and objectives. Then I briefly discuss future scholarship and wider socio-political and managerial implications resulting from my research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

As introduced within Chapter One, thus far, there has been a limited focus on the effects of intergroup relations in a sporting and indeed a sociological context (see, for example, Hussain and Cunningham, 2022; Taylor et al., 2023). Therefore, in this chapter I review relevant academic literature on intergroup relations from multiple academic disciplines such as social psychology and tourism studies. In particular, I critically examine the theoretical developments associated with the subject and identify how it can be further advanced by applying it to a sporting event setting such as the 2022 World Cup. To complement this body of literature and to support some of the arguments I make, I further integrate and review the literature associated with Othering and Orientalism (Said, 2003). This is significant because it provides a lens into wider issues of power within the context of contact. I argue that concepts of the Other and Orientalism ground encounters within a social, cultural, political and ideological frame that unearths unequal power dynamics between groups. Thus, I present this chapter in two parts. The former acts as a theoretical guide, while the latter seeks to refine how contact is conceptualised to complement the former. In both parts, I present a general discussion before narrowing down the scope of the review to the specific contexts of the study, e.g., touristic elements of fandom and sport.

2.1 Understanding Intergroup Contact Theory

One of the most influential texts for understanding intergroup relations and the effects of contact between groups was introduced by Gordon Allport in *The Nature of Prejudice*. Writing at the start of the Civil Rights movement in the United States (1950s - 1960s), the author built upon a loose body of scholarship interested in intergroup dynamics, notably the effects of racial issues and racial integration (see, for example, Brophy, 1946; Williams, 1947) to formulate the "contact hypothesis." The basic premise of the hypothesis asserts regular contact between diverse groups of people can promote intergroup harmony and develop more positive attitudes between them (Allport, 1979 [1954]). The progressive and pragmatic nature of Allport's hypothesis has helped it remain a crucial and worthy concept for inquiry amongst social scientists; for example, on Google Scholar *the Nature of Prejudice* has been cited over 1,700 times in 2024 alone. As Vezzali and Stathi (2016) argued, it is likely to remain popular given that issues of prejudice and conflict between groups remain deeply rooted across societies, despite the efforts of activists, communities, politicians and other non-governmental organisations to implement social change.

As such, the pragmatic nature of the contact hypothesis serves as an appealing tool for reducing prejudice and intergroup conflict across a myriad of settings.

Despite the simplicity of the solution offered by Allport's contact hypothesis, the author did not reduce it to assuming all types of contact between diverse groups of people would instantly result in the reduction of prejudice or more harmonious relations. Rather, Allport proposed contact alone could not facilitate a reduction in intergroup prejudice, noting in some instances contact could increase prejudice (Allport, 1979). Thus, Allport made a general prediction that under certain conditions, prejudiced attitudes may be reduced between groups. These conditions include: (a) equal status between the majority and minority groups in the contact situation (e.g., through ensuring no group is subordinate to the other); (b) intergroup cooperation; (c) common goals; and (d) institutional support (e.g., by law, custom or local atmosphere) (Allport, 1979). Such conditions have had a lasting influence on the development of intergroup contact theory and are widely cited as significant facilitators for understanding when contact can lead to a reduction in prejudice (Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006).

Early scholars writing on intergroup relations, such as Sumner (1906) and Baker (1934), were sceptical towards the effectiveness of contact. Baker (1934) believed contact between groups leads to further suspicion, fear and conflict between them. Contemporary thinkers such as Kaufman and Goodwin (2018) also share the argument that contact fuels opposition to minority groups even further, as outgroup members are positioned as 'threats' to the majority group. In reference to Sumner (1906) and Baker (1934), Pettigrew and Tropp (2011) argued such opposition to contact served to defend the existing patterns of structural discrimination (e.g., racial segregation in America's Deep South). However, there is now a significant, expanding body of literature that has provided empirical support for the contact hypothesis. For example, Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) comprehensively reviewed 515 studies on intergroup contact, concluding contact is effective in reducing prejudice, especially when Allport's optimal conditions are met. Significantly, Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) highlighted how contact had been applied to and had positive effects on outgroup attitudes across a myriad of populations, situations and outgroup targets such as disabled individuals, older people and across diverse sexualities and sexual orientations, along with race and immigration (see also, Pettigrew and Tropp, 2011). Notably, these effects extend far beyond Allport's original focus on race and racial integration as the contact hypothesis has developed. However, in the review there was a clear absence of contact theory being applied in a sporting context, hence I argue my thesis can theoretically refine and

develop scholarship further through understanding England football fans' contact experiences during the 2022 World Cup.

Nevertheless, scholarship on intergroup contact has significantly expanded beyond the original parameters set by Allport in 1954 to unearth a myriad of emerging conditions of contact to help explain when its effects are likely to be strongest (see, for example, Pettigrew, 1998; Brown and Hewstone, 2005; Pettigrew and Tropp, 2011). However, uncovering emerging conditions of contact is not an essential dimension of the hypothesis. In fact, Pettigrew (1998) argued an ever-expanding list of conditions can do more harm than good, as they can threaten the foundations of the contact hypothesis itself. It can invite criticisms of the literature, notably concerning its validity. Pettigrew and Tropp (2006, 2011) highlighted this further by concluding most conditions of contact are not essential for promoting positive intergroup relations, including Allport's; rather, they can be viewed as facilitators that can support the positive effects of contact (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2011). Thus, in this thesis, I do not seek to find new conditions of contact, rather I am influenced by Brewer and Miller (1984), Hewstone and Brown (1986), Gaertner et al. (1993), Pettigrew (1998) and Dovidio et al. (2003) who sought to extend the contact hypothesis into an integrative theoretical framework to uncover *how* and *why* contact works and how the effects of contact can generalise beyond the initial contact situation. I discuss these developments further in Section 2.1.3.

The contact hypothesis alone is not significant enough to explain *how* and *why* football fans who travelled to Qatar for the World Cup held a more positive, negative or nuanced impression of Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula because of their experiences. For example, it does not deal with issues of power within the contact situation, nor does it focus on how ideologies of a given society or culture may sustain relations of power, whether in a clear or subtle and fluid way. I seek to address this by integrating concepts of the 'Other' and Orientalism (Said, 2003) with contact theory to explore how power dynamics manifest in engagements between England football fans and Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula. The hypothesis, however, does eloquently simplify the basic premise of intergroup relations. Therefore, I additionally draw on and seek to advance recent developments within intergroup scholarship to acquire a deeper understanding of contact in an understudied context, a temporary sport event (e.g., the 2022 World Cup). Before discussing *how* and *why* intergroup contact can be effective, however, it is important to discuss the root causes of prejudice. Developing this understanding is critical because it explains why certain people or groups develop particular perceptions towards others.

2.1.1 The Roots of Prejudice

Prejudice has been understood as an individual or group phenomenon within the social sciences. For example, Adorno et al. (1950), argued prejudice is a personality syndrome developed in childhood and represented by unconscious hostilities and fears. Blumer (1958) identified group threat or group threat theory as a precursor to prejudice. This position states prejudice is a reaction to implicit and explicit challenges to a dominant group's or ingroup's position. For instance, prejudice manifests itself when there is competition for job positions between groups. For Allport (1979: 9), however, prejudice is perceived as "an antipathy based upon a faulty and inflexible generalisation...felt or expressed...toward a group as a whole, or toward an individual." Allport, like Blumer (1958), emphasised prejudice as a social group phenomenon as opposed to individual behaviour.

Allport's conceptualisation of prejudice remains relevant today, especially his focus on prejudice as a social group phenomenon, which laid the foundations for future research on the importance of group membership in reducing prejudice (as discussed in Section 2.1.3). However, his focus on "antipathy" reduces prejudice to negative attitudes towards an outgroup, which may not always be the case. Brewer (1999) argued not all attitudes towards a different group are negative; rather, others are not able to foster positive attitudes. She suggested intergroup conflict arises not from hostility but from membership in one's group, which favours preferential treatment of ingroup members (see also: Eagly and Diekman, 2005). In agreement with Dixon et al. (2012) the normative understanding of prejudice as an antipathy has obscured knowledge on the dynamics of group encounters and concealed the complexities of how prejudice actually functions. For example, Dixon et al. (2012) referred to the paradox of gender relations, where on the one hand, men can be complicit in gender discrimination or are the beneficiaries of gender inequality, but on the other, men often express warm feelings towards women. Prejudice then, is more than just holding a negative or positive perception.

In this thesis, I specifically focus on prejudice towards Muslims and Islam for the reasons discussed within the introduction. However, anti-Muslim prejudice needs to be located within wider discussions of racism. This is because the term racism, as a form of prejudice, unlike the latter explicitly addresses prejudice based upon constructions of 'race' and identifies unequal power dynamics. For example, Garner (2017: 11) argued, any explanation of racism - prejudice based on 'race,' must include three elements; a) historic power relations wherein groups have

become racialised - the act of treating certain characteristics (such as perceived beliefs of culture) as natural and innate to a specific group of people; b) a set of ideas that has separated groups into distinct 'races,' each with perceived natural traits (e.g., skin colour); and c) the act of discrimination such as denying access to resources or even mass murder. I discuss the racialisation of Muslims and Islam in more depth in Section 2.2. Nevertheless, explanations of racism go beyond a faulty perception towards another group by focusing on ideological and systematic process that sustain it (e.g., the *practice* and idea of racism). However, some authors like Eatwell and Goodwin (2018) and Kaufman (2019) all but deny the existence of racial prejudice. In both accounts, the authors insist these forms of prejudice or putting an ingroups' (read White) self-interest first is entirely legitimate and not prejudice. This line of argumentation seeks to reduce racial prejudice, especially towards Muslims and Islam to a faulty individual phenomenon.

Nevertheless, an explanation of racism is significant for helping to conceptualise my understanding of prejudice. Firstly, reinforcing Dixon et al. (2012), I view prejudice as complex, people's perceptions do not neatly fit into a positive or negative dichotomy. Secondly, when prejudice is attached to ideas of 'race,' the normative understanding of prejudice is superseded by forms of racism and racialisation. That is, I agree with Garner (2017) that anti-Muslim prejudice cannot be detached from wider relations of power within the contact situation, likewise it may not always manifest in negative ways. Hence, I sought to provide a particular understanding on how England supporters' constructed Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula to explore how prejudice functions from below and if perceptions can be refined because of intergroup encounters.

Allport attempted to understand the root causes of prejudice to reduce them in society. He stressed the importance of categorisation as a starting point for understanding prejudice. Categorisation is a cognitive process whereby people form concepts and ideas about others based on language, race and ethnicity, nationality, gender and sexuality and other characteristics. Thus, for Allport categories were viewed as a normal function of daily life wherein it is far easier for people to engage with others who are perceived to share the same category traits as themselves than it is to adjust to new traits (e.g., food or language). However, he overlooked the ideological process of how some categories, especially 'race,' are not natural but rather constructed, and how groups can be forcibly, rather than naturally segregated (see for example, Saha, 2021). Nonetheless, Allport's focus on categorisation does provide an anchorage point for understanding how

stereotypes manifest; although it is important to note, stereotypes are not necessarily categories. Rather, a stereotype is a fixed idea that accompanies a category; as Allport (1979: 191) postulated, a stereotype is "an exaggerated belief associated with a category." Its function is to justify and rationalise people's conduct in relation to that category. Stereotypes are sustained in wider society and popular culture, through media constructions, in newspaper articles and on TV shows (as discussed in Section 2.2). Therefore, category formation and subsequent stereotypes can be seen as facilitators of prejudice.

Category formation and stereotypes, however, should not be seen in isolation as the root cause of prejudice. Rather, Allport was assertive in discussing the importance of group membership as a significant determinant (Brown and Zagefka, 2005). Despite admittedly noting the difficulty in adequately defining an ingroup, Allport (1979:31) suggested "an ingroup all use the term 'we' with the same essential significance." Examples of ingroup's include religion, school, sports teams, nation and so forth. This implies group membership is not static, nor are people limited to one group. Ingroup membership should be viewed as context-specific, as people can navigate multiple ingroups at a time depending on their need for self-attachment (Brewer, 1999; Brown and Zagefka, 2005).

Taijfel and Turner (1979) expanded on Allport's emphasis on ingroup membership to formulate Social Identity Theory (SIT). SIT has gained much currency in social psychology and sociology as an explanatory tool of intergroup behaviour (Brown and Zagefka, 2005). It posits that once a person has defined themselves in terms of a category and conceptualised themselves as a member of a group, they then adopt the identity of the group, including conforming to norms and customs of said group (Taijfel and Turner, 1979). Consequently, Taijfel and Turner (1979) argued ingroup members feel the need to positively evaluate the ingroup in comparison to outgroups to differentiate themselves from each other. Thus, "the aim of differentiation is to maintain or achieve superiority over an outgroup" (Taijfel and Turner, 1979: 41), and thereby, ingroup members can boost their self-esteem, elevating ingroup favouritism, bias and prejudice towards an outgroup. Categorisation, stereotypes and group membership are then collectively seen as root causes of prejudice, although this is not to deny other causes exist or Allport himself limited his analyses to these three dimensions. Rather, throughout the literature, these three dimensions appear salient and noteworthy.

Categorisation, stereotypes and the formation of groups succinctly detail the complex nature of group membership and the problematic nature of in and outgroups as a source of differentiation and prejudice. However, as I have noted, the socio-psychological interpretation of prejudice, especially as it relates to racial prejudice towards Muslims and Islam, does not address how wider power dynamics can influence intergroup contact and prejudice itself. This is critical because travelling England fans did not simply categorise others on arrival in Qatar, their thoughts and beliefs were predisposed by discourses on the 2022 World Cup, the hosts and historic power relations. However, the event provided a space where dominant ideologies, stereotypes and prejudices could be reinforced, challenged or remain in a grey area. Thus, my thesis contributes further to the discussions on prejudice by focusing on wider power dynamics in contact. The following section begins to explain *how* and *why* intergroup contact can have transformative impacts on refining people's perceptions towards perceived outgroups.

2.1.2 Processes of Change: Knowledge, Anxiety, Empathy and Cultural Understanding

With Allport's primary focus on when intergroup contact was most likely to be meaningful and thereby most effective in reducing prejudice, he paid little attention to the *process* of intergroup contact - the *how* and *why* intergroup contact is effective for reducing prejudice. For Allport, when the conditions for meaningful contact were met, then new learning (knowledge) about an outgroup would occur, which was assumed to reduce prejudice (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2011). Again, like Allport's 'contact hypothesis,' this is a simple yet plausible assertion that intergroup contact works by enhancing knowledge about outgroup members.

However, Pettigrew (1998) and Pettigrew and Tropp (2006; 2008; 2011) have consistently highlighted intergroup knowledge only has a limited effect on reducing prejudice. With groups learning about how similar they are, the authors note this approach virtually denies actual group difference. Moreover, acquiring knowledge about an outgroup member does not guarantee new knowledge will be embraced or accepted; as Allport himself notes, this knowledge could be "re-fenced." Instead, increased knowledge plays an insignificant role as part of an interrelated process, which mediates the effects of intergroup contact.

The work of Pettigrew (1998) and Pettigrew and Tropp (2006; 2008; 2011) has been influential in exploring the mediating processes of intergroup contact. They consider anxiety and empathy as essential mediators for reducing prejudice. Interestingly, learning about outgroup cultures has

also been added to the discussion as an important mediating effect of intergroup contact (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2011). If a person is anxious about an encounter or even feels threatened by an outgroup member, scholars have shown how this can perpetuate negative attitudes further (Pettigrew, 1998; Dovidio et al., 2003; Hewstone, 2006; Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006, 2008, 2011). However, research has demonstrated how meaningful intergroup contact serves to reduce people's perceptions of anxiety toward an outgroup. For instance, Islam and Hewstone (1993) revealed how a reduction in anxiety between Muslims and Hindus in Bangladesh mediated the effects of a positive intergroup outcome. More recently, Vezzali et al. (2023) found frequent interactions between Italians and immigrant high school students lowered intergroup anxiety between the groups, resulting in more positive attitudes developing. Although, as Pettigrew (1998) warned, contact can increase intergroup anxiety, especially if a person has had a negative experience.

Nevertheless, by reducing intergroup anxiety, empathy can then develop between groups. To show empathy, a person imagines another person's situation and how they might feel because of that situation (Hewstone, 2006). It is about understanding another person, as opposed to dismissing them or stereotyping. In their study on volunteering, Johnston and Glasford (2018) found empathy effectively mediated quality contact between groups and was positively associated with an increase in outgroup volunteering intentions. Quality forms of contact refer to situations wherein any of Allport's optimal conditions of contact are present within an encounter. Similarly, Lo Destro et al. (2024) examined how contact and empathy amongst Italians towards Ukrainian refugees resulted in helping behaviours. Notably, the authors found respondents that had a low identification with a European identity boosted the effects on helping behaviours via empathy development. Empathy then serves to significantly mediate the effects of intergroup contact and can have other positive impacts on how groups see one another, such as feeling more positive about outgroups in general (Dovidio et al., 2003).

Despite the similarity with Allport's original assumption that increased knowledge mediates the effects of contact, learning about diverse cultures is specific. Groups learn cultural information that is relevant to the contact situation to encourage intergroup understanding rather than general knowledge (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2011). For example, Kim (2012) found intergroup contact between South Korean migrants and US citizens in recreational and leisure spaces (such as Taekwondo) provided a space for South Koreans to develop a deeper understanding of American

culture. Consequently, mutual understanding between the groups prospered, enabling the South Koreans to modify negative stereotypes and biases towards American culture.

Some forms of knowledge, however, can have an adverse mediating effect for intergroup contact. Pettigrew and Tropp (2011:90) caution "learning about how your ingroup has harmed and discriminated against an outgroup can backfire... resulting in increased prejudice." Feelings of guilt and anxiety are exacerbated either towards the outgroup a person(s) has just learnt about or toward their own ingroup. Nevertheless, learning about diverse cultures can be an influential step for altering negative attitudes. Although more research is required to comprehensively understand the role of culture learning in a multitude of contexts (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2011).

2.1.3 Looking Beyond Contact

Understanding *how* and *why* intergroup contact is effective in transforming people's attitudes is a critical theoretical step in developing Allport's original contact hypothesis. However, the premise of intergroup contact theory rests heavily upon its ability to generalise beyond the contact situation (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2011). Social psychologists have attempted to address this lacuna to reveal how the effects of intergroup contact are not restricted to the initial contact situation (Brewer and Miller, 1984; Hewstone and Brown, 1986; Gaertner et al., 1993). Rather, the effects of intergroup contact can generalise across multiple situations (e.g., employment, schools, etc.), to an outgroup as a whole and to other perceived outgroups (Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006, 2011).

Three diverging social-psychology strategies have underpinned this theoretical development: (a) de-categorisation, (b) salient categorisation and (c) re-categorisation (Pettigrew, 1998). The basic premise of these strategies is to address the root causes of prejudice by re-imagining and re-constructing how ingroup members perceive their social and cultural group identity. As Putnam (2007) argued, social identity as a social construct can be socially deconstructed and reconstructed, meaning groups can be mobilised to be more inclusive. Reconstructing ingroup membership then, can provide a lens for unlocking prejudices and racism.

The de-categorisation approach, or the De-Categorised Contact Model, developed by Brewer and Miller (1984), posited intergroup contact is most effective when the salience of group membership is reduced to an individual level. Group boundaries are then (temporarily) broken

with group members identifying themselves and members of other groups as individuals. Negative attitudes and prejudices are then reduced or repudiated through a process of personalisation and differentiation; the former encourages interpersonal relations while the latter aims to change how ingroups view outgroup members as more varied than their group membership or stereotype implies (Brewer and Miller, 1984; Dovidio et al., 2003). Through this process, intergroup contact is assumed to generate more positive generalised attitudes from the individual to the whole outgroup (see, for example, Pettigrew, 1998).

However, by reducing intergroup contact to interpersonal relations, a person's attitude may only change towards the individual outgroup member rather than a generalised view toward the outgroup (Gaertner and Dovidio, 2005). In this regard, Hewstone (2006) asserted de-categorisation is limited in its ability to generalise, considering the outgroup member will be viewed as an exception rather than a typical group member. For example, this hypothetical scenario serves to illustrate this point: 'I hate conservatives, but I do know this one Tory, and he's alright, you know, he's different from the others.' Allport (1979:23) coined this psychological process as "re-fencing." This strategy also appears difficult to maintain (Gaertner and Dovidio, 2005). In the context of this research, for example, it would be difficult for England football fans to maintain interpersonal relations with members of the host community, with opportunities for personalisation and differentiation limited.

An alternative approach, salient categorisation, or the Mutual Intergroup Differentiation Model advocated by Brown and Hewstone (1986) and Hewstone (2006) theorises the generalising effects of contact are stronger when group saliency is high. The basic premise of this approach posits that emphasising group membership during the contact situation enables people to be viewed in terms of groups as opposed to individuals; thus, outgroup members are perceived as typical of their group rather than exceptions (Pettigrew, 1998; Hewstone, 2006; Pettigrew and Tropp, 2011). Therefore, outgroup members are seen to be representatives of the outgroup, which increases the likelihood of generalisation to occur and prejudice to be reduced (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006).

Salient categorisation virtually denies the subjectivity of individuals when group saliency is high. Pettigrew (1998) asserted this is problematic as it overlooks the subjective nature of group members, as typical group members are different in many ways. For example, people with similar interests tend to seek each other out, implying that intergroup contact with outgroup members with

similar interests to the ingroup member will not typify their group or resonate with a high group saliency. Moreover, emphasising group saliency and difference could reinforce stereotypes and generalisations about outgroup members, leading to an increase in intergroup tensions and conflict (Brewer and Miller, 1984).

The final strategy, the re-categorisation or Common Ingroup Identity Model formulated by Gaertner et al. (1990), seeks to drastically alter the boundaries of ingroup membership as more inclusive. It is assumed that over a period of time, intergroup contact will enable people to think of themselves in a larger all-encompassing group - a 'superordinate group' (Pettigrew, 1998; Dovidio et al., 2003). The boundaries of the ingroup and outgroup are redrawn as people become aware that outgroup members are like their own group rather than different. This builds upon Allport's (1979: 46) notion of "concentric loyalties," which argues, 'narrow circles [ingroups] can, without conflict, be supplemented by larger circles [a superordinate ingroup] of loyalty.' By thinking in terms of a more inclusive group boundary, the effects of intergroup contact are clear; former outgroup members are perceived more positively as negative attitudes are reduced (Gaertner and Dovidio, 2005; Pettigrew and Tropp, 2011).

A superordinate category is considered to have the strongest effect on prejudice reduction (Pettigrew, 1998). With groups thinking in terms of 'we' rather than 'us' and 'them,' group difference is considered marginal. For example, during a national football team game fans from diverse backgrounds may combine to show support for a nation - the superordinate group. Through re-categorisation, stereotypes and negative attitudes can then be dismantled (Gaertner and Dovidio, 2005). However, a superordinate group is often only ever temporary thus it is difficult to sustain over an extended period. This highlights how difficult it can be to generalise beyond the initial contact situation, inhibiting any long-term social change related to intergroup contact (Pettigrew, 1998; Dovidio et al., 2003).

Despite the practicality of these socio-psychological models as controlled and prescriptive, I argue the salient categorisation and re-categorisation perspectives resonate strongly in a general World Cup context. For example, they provide a space for supporters and the host community to interact with one another, with each displaying distinctive kinds of dress, music and patterns of behaviour based on nationality, culture, language and ethnicity (Giulianotti and Robertson, 2004). Thus, alluding strongly to the salient categorisation perspective. Here group membership is salient, and the effects of intergroup contact could potentially generalise towards the entire

outgroup - in this case, Muslims. Although, in the context of my own study, the nature of the fans themselves needs to be extrapolated to determine not only how they construct Muslims, Islam and the broader Arabian Peninsula, but to see if they strongly associate with their ingroup. Similarly, as noted, there needs to be a recognition of wider social issues around power and the ideologies or discourses the fans bring into contact. This is notable for developing a deeper understanding of how relations of power may be sustained, reproduced or challenged within the contact setting.

Re-categorisation is seemingly a common feature of sports mega-events and the World Cup in particular. Roche (2000) has noted sports mega-events provide opportunities for the creation of a global sense of "co-presence" amongst the world's population. Tomlinson and Young (2006) and Horne and Manzenreiter (2006) went further by suggesting sports mega-events provide an opportunity for participating nations and spectators to take on new identities as global citizens. Indeed, during the 2022 World Cup supporters shared experiences in fan parks, inside stadia and elsewhere with other international fans and the host community. Consequently, it is entirely possible that a (temporary) superordinate group emerged during the event.

By integrating the World Cup into broader discussions of intergroup contact theory, I argue the 2022 World Cup provided an original context for understanding intergroup contact between England fans, Muslims and Islam, and other groups at the event. It additionally highlighted *how* and *why* such a context can have a transformative impact on fans' perceptions. Furthermore, this thesis can provide new empirical insights into intergroup contact theory because, thus far, there has been a limited application of intergroup contact theory in a sports mega-events context and even a general sporting one (see, for example, Schulenkorf and Sherry, 2021; Hussain and Cunningham, 2022; Taylor et al., 2023). The following section, however, reveals the pitfalls and critique of intergroup contact theory.

2.1.4 A Critique of Intergroup Contact Theory

While I have mostly discussed the positive nature of intergroup contact, intergroup contact should not be viewed as a panacea or an instant remedy to alleviate prejudice. Contact does not always lead to positive experiences between groups; it can be unpleasant, unfriendly or discriminatory under certain circumstances (Meleady and Forder, 2019). Negative forms of contact, for example, can serve to enhance intergroup anxiety and perceptions of threat and reduce empathy towards an

outgroup. Allport (1979: 264) himself warned negative contact could 'strengthen the adverse mental associations that we have.' Negative contact encounters can exacerbate and prompt increases in negative attitudes and prejudice (Meleady and Forder, 2019). For example, Guffler and Wagner (2017) found Jewish Israeli students reported having a worse attitude towards Arab Israelis following an intergroup contact intervention. Scholars have further argued negative contact experiences can exacerbate prejudices even further as they manifest as a stronger predictor of prejudice than positive contact (McKeown and Dixon, 2017). This implies the effects associated with negative contact generalise to an outgroup easier than positive contact experiences. The salient categorisation approach partly explains this phenomenon, as discussed. Therefore, it is significant to acknowledge intergroup contact can result in negative encounters that perpetuate negative attitudes far beyond the initial contact situation.

A further criticism discussed in the literature concerns outgroup avoidance (Hewstone, 2006). For instance, people who are prejudiced are less likely to engage in intergroup contact than more tolerant people, thereby inhibiting research on intergroup contact (Pettigrew, 1998). If there is an unavoidable selection bias towards participants who are more tolerant in general, then the results of any academic inquiry are likely to be skewed towards supporting intergroup contact theory. For example, the England supporters I interviewed were all happy to take part in this study and freely travelled to the Arabian Peninsula for the 2022 World Cup, suggesting they may have been open to encounters. However, this points to the problematic nature of using prejudice as a starting point for understanding intergroup relations. Arguably, it ignores or overlooks wider relations of power within positive evaluations of contact, as Dixon et al. (2012) stated. Thus, I argue, understanding the dynamics of interaction between the fans and Muslims - regardless of if they hold deeply prejudiced views or not - is critical for unearthing any unequal power relations within the contact situation.

To return to Allport's original contact hypothesis, he believed structured, non-superficial contact formed the basis for meaningful encounters. Superficial forms of contact, on the other hand, were perceived to reinforce stereotypes between groups, increasing negative attitudes – "the casual contact has left matters worse than before" (Allport, 1979: 264). Pettigrew and Tropp's (2006) meta-analysis comprehensively supported this position, as they found studies that had carefully managed the contact situation to meet Allport's conditions had a greater effect on reducing prejudice than those without. Consequently, the research direction of intergroup contact theory has tended to focus on non-superficial, structured forms of contact and thus overlooks the

everyday nature of intergroup contact in diverse spaces. However, this points to the limitations of the socio-psychological basis of intergroup contact itself, particularly its methodological impetus (see Chapter Three). The focus on the 'optimal conditions' of contact in structured settings measured through surveys, lab-based observations and other quantitative forms of measurement has concealed 'real' everyday contact between different groups (see, for example, Dixon et al., 2005; Jackson and Sheriff, 2013; Paolini et al., 2018). Superficial forms of contact in everyday settings may be approached by people in contact in a myriad of ways and perhaps grounded in a person's subjective socio-cultural history and the ideological context of the contact experience. Hence, I assert everyday encounters, whether temporal or long-lasting, provide a richer ground for demonstrating the effects of intergroup contact, or it can potentially problematise contact. In particular, a sociological focus exploring questions of power in contact could provide a more fruitful analysis in illuminating intergroup relations. Dominant relations of power themselves arguably predispose any form of contact with an outgroup.

Although the context of cultural geography scholarship is detached from my own research, a turn to cultural geography is relevant for illuminating my argument further. For instance, Askins (2015) and Amin (2002), who explored multicultural encounters between different ethnic and religious groups within the UK, revealed how everyday spaces of encounter provide important sites for intercultural engagement and understanding. Askins (2015: 471) argued 'there is a particular quiet politics of encounter, attached to desires to belong.' The author refers to everyday spaces such as shops, parks and high streets where diverse groups share encounters in their quest to belong locally. These encounters extend beyond superficial, or surface-level contacts; they are social relations that require political will to engage, which requires commitment. Similarly, Amin's (2002: 976) focus on living with diversity in multicultural cities posited that 'coming to terms with difference is a matter of everyday practices and strategies of cultural contact and exchange with others who are different from us.' He goes on to note transitory sites or "unstable spaces" are likely to bring people together from diverse backgrounds who are engaged in a common venture and thus are more likely to be receptive to new influences and friendships. However, this research focused on established multicultural urban locales and ignored other sites, such as temporary sport event.

Elsewhere, Spijkers and Loopmans (2020) argue these politics of encounter can stimulate personal learning about outgroups but are also activated as an opportunity to educate others, such as outgroups learning about the ingroup. Learning from everyday encounters, however, never happens in isolation from other encounters, considering experiences are related to earlier

encounters carried across sites and time. Therefore, everyday encounters never occur in isolation from previous experiences; they are inherently subjective to the individual and are far from the objective characteristic of the contact situation itself (Spijkers and Loopmans, 2020).

Integrated with the literature on intergroup contact theory, the critiques from cultural geography rebut some of the central tenets of Allport's original hypothesis. Notably, structured, non-superficial forms of contact are not always necessary for intergroup contact to be meaningful. Likewise, focussing on superficial or temporary forms of contact can illuminate power dynamics in the contact situation that are often concealed in structured, non-superficial forms of contact. In addition, Pettigrew's (1998) assertion that the contact situation should provide opportunities for friendships to develop, while helpful, again would appear unnecessary, particularly in a natural everyday context. These critiques are notable because they suggest focussing on the 2022 World Cup is a highly relevant context for unearthing everyday relations between the England fans and the Muslim communities within the region, including the variants of Islamic culture the supporters experience. For example, World Cup spaces such as fan parks, stadiums, hotels, tourist attractions or other public spaces can foster temporary forms of contact to develop. As a result, these spaces could provide a meaningful environment for intergroup contact and the "quiet politics" of encounter as the fans and host community seek a sense of (temporary) belonging (Askins, 2015). Or in these spaces, the dynamics of contact, e.g., pre-existing ideological functions, could be challenged, reproduced, or remain in a 'grey area.' Furthermore, the 2022 World Cup is an 'unstable space,' it is a temporary experience for England fans and the host community alike.

In summary, despite these criticisms of intergroup contact theory, it provides a powerful and comprehensive explanatory tool for explaining *how* and *why* the effects of intergroup contact can have transformative effects on attitude change. Thus, the theoretical tenets of Allport's conditions, the mediators of contact, the salient categorisation perspective and the re-categorisation approach provide a strong underpinning for my study. It is not my intention, however, to confirm Allport's conditions of optimal contact or 'find' new conditions, as this is not necessary (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006). Instead, this underpinning provides the flexibility to explore, develop and apply elements of intergroup contact theory to generate an understanding on *how* and *why* the 2022 World Cup can have a transformative effect on England fans' attitudes towards Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula. In relation to this point, through introducing a sociological analysis of power and ideological contexts of contact into the analysis, this

framework builds upon the critiques I have outlined in this section. Furthermore, a focus on England fans and the 2022 World Cup additionally provides a justifiable context to address gaps within the literature, notably: (a) how people (football fans) construct their ingroup memberships and attitudes towards an outgroup; (b) utilising salient categorisation and re-categorisation in a natural, 'real life' environment; (c) moving away from non-superficial contacts to explore the effects of the politics of everyday encounters through a qualitative inquiry (as discussed in Chapter Three); and (d) addressing the dearth of studies focused upon temporal, short-term sports mega-events and intergroup contact.

However, travelling to a World Cup does not necessarily correlate to the structured, non-superficial nature of intergroup contact theory. It is a temporary, short-term event where contact between groups is not determined or controlled by a researcher. The intricacies of contact may occur spontaneously or limited to World Cup spaces. Therefore, my attention now turns to exploring scholarship on *tourism* in order to understand *how* and *why* intergroup contact theory has been integrated in a temporary, short-term, unstructured context. Such a focus is also salient for providing a lens on how tourists or football fans interact with local populations and cultures. I also examine the literature on sport that has drawn upon intergroup contact theory. This is critical for highlighting if, and how sport can facilitate encounters between groups.

2.1.5 Travelling Abroad and Intergroup Contact: Can Travel and Sport Facilitate Intergroup Contact?

In 2023, a reported 1.3 billion people embarked on their own tourism experience across the world to engage in a myriad of leisure pursuits and activities, including for sport (UNWTO, 2024). FIFA, for example, reported over 1 million people travelled to Qatar to watch live games during the 2022 World Cup (FIFA, 2022). Today both sport and tourism are global phenomena, agents of the globalisation process and are multifaceted socio-cultural and economic forces that connect people, places and businesses across the globe (Giulianotti and Robertson, 2009; Sharpley and Tefler, 2015; Timothy, 2019). Sport and tourism can engender an environment for people from a variety of cultural, religious, ethnic and national backgrounds to interact and potentially unite with one another; it is an inherently intergroup experience (Weed, 2008; Fan et al., 2017). In this section, I explore the literature on tourism and sport with a particular reference to intergroup contact theory to determine how this scholarship has utilised intergroup contact and if there are

any gaps or limitations within the literature. I also justify the relevance of using intergroup contact theory as a suitable underpinning for my own study.

Since the early 1990's, tourism has been discussed as a possible medium for intergroup contact. Scholars have mostly utilised intergroup contact theory to examine tourist-host encounters and vice versa to ascertain if tourism can influence people's attitudes (see, for example, Anastasopoulos, 1992; Sirakaya-Turk, 2014; Luo et al., 2015; Fan et al., 2017; Celik, 2019; Li and Wang, 2020). The approaches taken and the contexts in which intergroup contact theory has been applied to have permitted a differentiated and varied understanding of intergroup relations in tourism.

Initial research revealed the underwhelming and limited role of both tourism and sport as mediums for intergroup contact. Pettigrew and Tropp's (2006) meta-analysis revealed the dearth of tourism literature, finding only nine articles (out of 515) had integrated contact theory in a tourism context. Their research found tourism could not facilitate meaningful contact, as there was an absence of Allport's conditions present in the studies reviewed. This suggests tourism scholars did not initially value or utilise the theory. In a sport or sport event context, Pettigrew and Tropp's (2006) review highlighted a complete absence of intergroup-related research. Given the almost universalistic and often evangelical rhetoric associated with sport as a force for good that can unite the world by bringing people together, this absence of scholarship is somewhat surprising.

Nevertheless, tourism and sport scholarship has started to apply and utilise intergroup contact theory, with researchers asserting how both can provide a salient context for facilitating meaningful contact between tourists/sports fans and hosts and vice versa, or through sporing interventions (Pizam et al., 2002; Florek et al., 2008; Celik, 2019; Schulenkorf and Sherry, 2021; Jarvis et al., 2022). In a sporting context, however, the bulk of scholarship utilising intergroup contact theory has been applied to the study of sport for development. This is because the explicit aims of sport for development initiatives are to foster unity between disparate groups. As such, the focus on understanding the consumption of, and fan-related experiences of travelling to a sporting event abroad offers an original contribution to researching sport and contact.

Tourism and Intergroup Contact

Tourism scholars have highlighted the salience of quality forms of contact in the contact situation for facilitating intergroup outcomes (Pizam et al., 2002; Celik, 2019; Luo et al., 2019; Li and Wang, 2020). For example, in a post-trip analysis, Li and Wang (2020) begin to unpack how tourism to North Korea - a highly structured and regimented experience - can facilitate attitude change. In particular, Li and Wang (2020) highlight how Chinese nationals who visited North Korea were able to learn about North Korean culture and develop a sense of empathy towards their hosts based on their experiences. However, the highly regimented nature of the tourist experience added a layer of complexity in that it additionally engendered feelings of doubt amongst Chinese tourists, who after the trip began to question China's relationship with North Korea. Nonetheless, tourism can seemingly be an effective context for promoting meaningful conditions, especially if some of Allport's optimal conditions arise throughout the contact situation. This indicates tourism or travelling to another country can result in people refining their perceptions and understandings.

However, it is fair to say in the above tourism context, negative attitudes, or bias between tourist-host and host-tourist, were likely to be low, especially compared to a context where historic animosity and conflict exist between groups. Pizam et al. (2002) provided a stronger argument for the ability of tourism to achieve positive intergroup outcomes. The authors' pre- and post-questionnaires revealed how tourism moderated Israeli eco-tourists' attitudes towards Jordanian people, their politics and institutions. They asserted how relatively intimate interactions with the host and the favourable political climate between Israel and Jordan - with both countries encouraging social contact between citizens - prompted (temporary) favourable contact conditions. Interestingly, Pizam et al. (2002) began to integrate political attitudes in their overall analysis. However, a critical question remains: while tourism can provide an important environment to facilitate intergroup contact, under certain circumstances, *how* and *why* can tourism have a transformative effect on tourists' attitudes?

As a next step, scholars have begun to unpack and deconstruct *how* and *why* tourism can effectively mediate intergroup contact. Aligning to Pettigrew and Tropp's (2011) focus on learning about diverse cultures, scholarship has revealed the significant role of cultural understanding as an effective mediator for intergroup contact in a tourism context. Fan et al.'s (2017) post-trip analysis explored this in relation to Hong Kong tourists travelling to Mainland

China. The authors highlighted how learning about diverse cultures through tourism can lead to a reduction in perceived cultural distance. Crucially, perceived cultural distance has been shown to perpetuate feelings of anxiety and prejudice between groups (Kim, 2012). Therefore, meaningful intergroup contact such as equal status and cooperation as well as quantity of contact (travelling together, visiting homes etc.) can reduce perceived cultural distance. Critically, however, Fan et al. (2017) revealed how socially orientated contacts had a far greater impact on fostering understanding between groups than service-orientated contacts[7]. Service orientated contacts were considered superficial and standardised, leading to an increase in perceived cultural distance. Socially orientated contacts, on the other hand, permitted an intimate and intense context for intergroup contact, allowing for friendships to develop and for Hong Kong tourists to learn about Chinese culture. However, Jarvis et al. (2022) found service orientated contacts can be just as effective in certain contexts (e.g., on a gay-cruise charter).

Similar themes emerged in Yu and Lee's (2014) study, wherein the authors reinforced the importance of learning about diverse cultures amongst Koreans who travelled internationally. They argued that tourists culturally negotiate their experiences in order to adapt to their new surroundings (e.g., finding out shop opening times), while acknowledging their limited role as a tourist. Yu and Lee (2014) referred to this as the 'tourist role conflict.' These findings mostly support Pettigrew and Tropp's (2011) argument that learning about diverse cultures is essential for contact to be effective, particularly in a tourism context. Yu and Lee (2014) also capture how and why consuming tourism can facilitate particular intergroup outcomes (e.g., reducing cultural distance). However, not only is more research required to comprehensively understand how tourists (including sports fans) construct their attitudes towards a host community prior to travelling, but also how these findings translate when applied to sports fans travelling to and consuming a sporting event in another country.

Shepherd and Laven (2020) demonstrate how purposefully designed tourism spaces that aim to actively challenge and improve intergroup relations can be beneficial for achieving positive intergroup outcomes. Here they focus on a specific hostel in Palestine that seeks to counter the narrative on the Israel-Palestine conflict and Palestine as a tourism destination. They argue 'hostels are particularly well-suited tourism spaces for cross-cultural learning... and thus the

---

[7] Service orientated contacts include interactions with service personnel during service encounters, such as dining, shopping and transportation (Fan et al., 2017).

breaking down of prejudices and stereotypes' (Shepherd and Laven, 2020: 867). Here, the hostel purposefully created a forum for 'fact'-based learning to develop between the groups whilst also providing for many of Allport's optimal conditions of contact, e.g., a well-managed and supportive social and physical environment for cross-cultural engagement (institutional support). However, the authors fail to question the influence of power (socio-cultural and political) over the nature of intergroup contact. The hostel decides on what information tourists or guests are receiving and manages the contact situation so that it is favourable towards their objectives.

Sport and Intergroup Contact

In a broader sporting context, the findings of Shepherd and Laven (2020) echo much of the sport for development scholarship as noted earlier (see for example, Brake and Misener, 2020; Schulenkorf and Sherry, 2021). The work of John Sugden (2008) and Football for Peace (F4P) has been foundational in this regard. Although, Sugden (2008) nor F4P explicitly drew upon contact theory, the initiatives bear much resemblance. For example, F4P aims to use values-based football coaching to promote cross-community development in divided societies such as in Northern Ireland and Israel/Palestine (Sugden and Tomlinson, 2018). More recently, Schulenkorf and Sherry (2021) have revealed how intergroup contact theory itself provides a strong framework for designing sports interventions aimed at conflict resolution in divided societies. However, while this work highlights how sport can be used to foster inter community development, the context is far detached from my own study; that is, football fans' encounters and touristic consumption during a sport mega-event (the 2022 World Cup). To my knowledge, there are a limited number of studies that specifically explore intergroup relations in the context of travelling sports fans and their fandom or sport events.

Some scholars have highlighted how travelling to a different country to consume both sport and tourism can be effective in leaving a lasting impression of a place and its people. For example, Florek et al. (2008) explored the attitudes and experiences of travelling New Zealand football fans towards hosts Germany during the 2006 FIFA Men's World Cup. The authors found the supporters held a more favourable attitude towards the host destination, perceiving Germans to be friendlier than first thought and more multicultural, in essence, their study highlights a degree of optimism in the role sports mega-events can potentially play in facilitating intergroup understanding. However, Florek et al.'s (2008), primary focus was on the image perception of a

host country as a sport tourism event destination rather than accounting for the (re)articulation of wider social and cultural issues, such as prejudices or stereotypes towards an outgroup.

Alrababa'h et al. (2021) specifically draws upon intergroup contact theory to understand whether exposure to celebrities, in particular Mohammed Salah, a Muslim professional football player, could reduce intergroup prejudice towards Muslims amongst Liverpool FC supporters. Although their findings are speculative and based on hate crime statistics after Salah joined Liverpool, they suggest the player's arrival positively facilitated fans' attitudes towards Muslims in Britain. This finding is poignant in relation to my own study as it indicates sports fandom, e.g., following the England national team in Qatar can potentially provide a significant lens into understanding how contact functions between the fans, Muslims and Islam and the meanings of said contact.

The small body of scholarship that applies intergroup contact theory to sports events provides further support for this claim. For example, Gelbman (2019) examines the conditions under which a sports tourism event contributed towards the promotion of peace between Israelis and Palestinians in the context of the Bethlehem to Jerusalem Peace Run. Notably, the author highlights how the event allowed for some of Allport's (1979) conditions of contact to permeate, including equal status, shared goals and institutional support. Moreover, Gelbman (2019) shows the participants experience reduced feelings of fear between the groups based on their prior negative images - an important mediator of contact. Clearly, there is scope for sporting events to provide a space for intergroup relations to develop, especially amongst active participants. It is still unclear, however, how sports fandom experiences can contribute to reducing, reinforcing or challenging intergroup prejudice.

The influence of power, whether internal or external, will to some degree determine and shape the nature of contact between groups in a temporary sports event context. It is not surprising that scholars interested in intergroup contact theory have not inquired into wider relations of power. Power is arguably a sociological concept that is sparsely used within social psychology. However, the political, social and cultural context of a tourism and sport event destination undoubtedly influences how groups interact with one another, setting boundaries, providing a particular narrative and can predetermine spaces of encounter. Koch (2018) has argued how encounters between athletes, spectators and the local community at a World Cycle Championship in Doha (Qatar) were shaped in spaces that were not necessarily predetermined by the state; that is, people came to shape their understanding of Qatar through their interactions in mundane spaces (e.g., on

a water taxi). In the context of my study, the Qatari government and FIFA crafted their own images, dictated spaces of encounters and attempted to manage intergroup contact. Thus, capturing the lived experiences of fans permitted an exploration into everyday encounters in predetermined spaces to provide a holistic and rich understanding of intergroup contact theory. The following section seeks to further understand the pitfalls and limitations of applying intergroup contact theory in a temporary, short-term tourism and sport context.

Pitfalls and Critiques of Scholarship on Tourism and Sport

I have mostly discussed how tourism and sport can facilitate intergroup relations, especially as it relates to positive outcomes. However, contact through tourism and sport is inherently complex and can give rise to unfavourable conditions that can increase or reinforce prejudices (Anastasopoulos, 1992; Burdsey, 2008; Uriely et al., 2009; Sirakaya-Turk, 2014; Sterchele and Saint-Blancat, 2015). The situational and temporary characteristics associated with both tourism and sport events serve to highlight the ephemeral nature of contact. Therefore, I turn my attention to outlining scholarship that provides a counterpoint to the literature focusing on the positive effects of contact. This begins to unpack the nuances associated with travelling in general, and to a sport event.

Sheller and Urry (2004: 1) viewed tourism as a powerful mobility tool that involves 'the relational mobilizations of memories and performances, gendered and racialised bodies, emotions and atmospheres.' It is inherently dynamic and ever changing as people's motives to travel are often subjective and based on more than just hedonism e.g., people travel for work, family, religion and so forth (Sheller and Urry, 2004; Urry and Larsen, 2011). The type of tourism and the context can thus determine the level of intergroup contact between tourists and hosts and vice versa. However, some tourist experiences and encounters with host residents can exist in what Cohen (1972: 166-167) conceptualised as an "environmental bubble" - the tourist bubble, which noted how some tourists travel within "protective walls of ... familiar environmental bubbles." The bubble serves to protect certain tourists from risks, but it also builds a wall separating tourists from authentic experiences and the host community (Unger et al., 2020).

The 'environmental bubble' revealed how particular types of tourists voluntarily segregated themselves from the external political, social and cultural dimensions of a destination and its people to avoid intergroup contact. Uriely et al. (2009) conceptualised the 'bubble of serenity'

regarding the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt and argued how the 'bubble' served as a mechanism for Israeli tourists and Egyptian hosts to construct peaceful and harmonious relations based on mutual interests (economic and social), away from external social and political life in Egypt. Despite the geopolitical tensions between the two nations, feelings of animosity or hate were temporarily suspended between the groups during their trip. These findings align with the de-categorisation perspective; however, like the de-categorisation approach, any outcomes were limited to service workers and not to the Egyptian population. This study suggests contact is delicate, considering the Israeli tourists held favourable impressions towards Egyptian service workers within the 'bubble,' but not towards the wider population who they were segregated from.

This complexity was further highlighted in Sirakaya-Turk et al.'s (2014) pre- and post-study that revealed how German all-inclusive tourists who travelled to Turkey held more unfavourable perceptions towards Turkish people after their trip. They argued the nature of the trip gave rise to unfavourable conditions to permeate, including feelings of dissatisfaction with packaged tours and tour guides, as well as feeling pressured to buy locally sourced gifts while being ushered from place to place. In this context, intergroup contact with service workers (tour guides and hotel staff) served to exacerbate negative attitudes. The effects of such contact resulted in generalisation to the whole Turkish population.

Maoz's (2006) study on Israeli backpackers who had travelled to India reveals, through her concept of the "mutual gaze", how the backpackers had fixed stereotypes of their Indian hosts as spiritual and primitive, while the Indian hosts perceived Israelis as shallow and rude. To some extent, the "mutual gaze," as Maoz (2006) asserted, is a sign of resistance from the Indian hosts, who have a sense of power over how they engage and interact with the tourists. However, ultimately, power rests with the Israeli tourists. The "mutual gaze," Maoz (2006: 225) argued, "makes both sides seem like puppets on a string... it results in mutual avoidance, remoteness and negative attitudes and behaviour." This is despite the fact backpacking is considered to provide more opportunities for meaningful contact between groups (Cohen, 1972). In this instance, tourists and hosts voluntarily segregated themselves. As McKeown and Dixon (2017) argued, voluntary segregation exists between groups of people who selectively avoid contact even in contexts where intergroup contact appears natural. Critically, Maoz (2006) noted how there was an absence of moderating conditions to facilitate contact between the groups. In a tourism context, an absence of meaningful conditions has been shown to prompt negative intergroup outcomes (see, for example, Anastaspoulus 1992).

Sporting events like the Summer Olympic Games, have been shown to highlight intergroup tensions and biases. For example, Cheng et al. (2011) found people from Mainland China perceived a wider cultural gap between themselves and Western cultures during the 2008 Beijing Summer Olympic Games. In particular, during the tournament, people from Mainland China identified with a strong sense of ingroup favouritism, as evidenced through their tendency to favour Chinese over American brands. Essentially, this suggests the Olympic Games led to a perceived sense of cultural distance between the hosts and Western nations. Similarly, Kim and Na (2022) coined the phrase "the Olympic Paradox" to argue that rather than promote messages of unity and peace, the 2016 Summer Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro instead temporarily increased intergroup biases and negative stereotypes amongst Koreans towards Southeast Asians (e.g., Vietnamese, Filipinos and Cambodians).

Critically, the studies I have identified reveal three critiques of utilising intergroup contact theory in a tourism or sport context. Firstly, certain tourist activities or destinations can serve to protect tourists from the socio-cultural and political life of a destination and its people, inhibiting the opportunity for intergroup contact and for the effects of contact to generalise. The concept of the 'environmental bubble' is, I argue, salient for understanding England football fans' experiences, as the supporters I spoke to were seemingly shielded from the wider socio-cultural and political life of Qatari people in a 'World Cup bubble.' For example, some fans decided to stay on a cruise ship docked in Doha port, while others attended match fixtures on a daily basis. Secondly, fans might have segregated themselves away from local residents to purposefully avoid intergroup contact, which could perpetuate negative impressions amongst England fans towards Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula. Thirdly, the 2022 World Cup as a short-term sports mega-event might have increased ingroup favouritism and intergroup biases towards Muslims and Islam. However, despite these critiques, I posit intergroup contact is a powerful framework to investigate England fans' encounters, experiences and reflections of the 2022 World Cup. The event itself is an understudied context in contact scholarship and thus, my thesis can help to theoretically refine and develop contact further.

Tourism, Sport and Intergroup Relations in Non-Secular, Islamic Societies

Interestingly, while scholarship has been developing on the effectiveness of tourism and sport as a medium for promoting social change, there is little research on how religion and/or socio-cultural values can affect intergroup relations in a non-secular, Islamic setting (Ghaderi et al.,

2020). Shakeela and Weaver (2018) argue religion and other socio-cultural values should be integrated into studies of resident perceptions of tourism. Equally, this argument can be applied to studying secular tourists' perceptions of non-secular, Islamic hosts, as I have argued elsewhere in relation to travelling sports fans (Taylor et al., 2023). Likewise, Hussain and Cunningham (2022) suggest the World Cup in Qatar offers new avenues to understand intergroup dynamics at sporting events hosted in said societies. The religious and socio-cultural context can have a profound impact on secular tourists' or sports fans' experiences and attitudes. Accordingly, more research is required that integrates tourism, sport, intergroup contact, religion and socio-cultural values to better understand these relations.

Broader tourism scholarship has revealed how travelling to a non-secular, Islamic society from a secular country can have a profound impact on the tourism experience. For example, Brown and Osman (2017) identified how the Islamic socio-cultural context had an impact on the way in which British female tourists were treated and expected to behave while in Egypt, to reflect the position of women in Islamic societies. A "male sexualised gaze" by local Egyptian men prompted the female tourists to feel uneasy and anxious during their travels. This experience could have shaped how British female tourists constructed their attitudes towards Egyptian people more broadly after their trip.

Religious and socio-cultural values potentially act as significant inhibitors for encouraging intergroup contact between secular tourists and non-secular hosts. For instance, Henderson (2015) argued cultural clashes between inbound secular tourists and non-secular, Islamic residents are highly likely in a tourism context. She alluded to the conformity of conservative dress codes and alcohol in Oman and Qatar, respectively, as potential challenges (see also, Dun, 2014). Similarly, from a host perspective, Shakeela and Weaver's (2018) illuminating study on Islamic residents' attitudes towards secular tourists in Malaysia reveals how tourists are perceived as 'evil' and a 'managed evil'. The latter refers to how the host community constructs proactive social exchanges to manage secular tourists' behaviour and conduct, including dress codes and alcohol consumption.

These findings suggest tourism in a non-secular Islamic setting is ineffective for moderating or mediating positive intergroup contact between secular tourists and non-secular hosts. Cultural distance seemingly has a significant role in how secular tourists perceive non-secular, Islamic hosts. Cohen (1972) argued tourists seek change so long as their preferred way of life is not

threatened. If tourists and hosts alike perceive their way of life as threatened, even temporarily, the perceived cultural distance is likely to increase, resulting in greater resistance to understanding or engaging with one another. Paradoxically, however, a non-secular Islamic setting provides a space for salient categories to exist; thus, the possibilities for tourism experiences to have an influential impact on transforming attitudes beyond the initial contact situation could be stronger than tourism experiences with like-minded hosts.

Khodadadi and O'Donnell (2017) provided some optimism for the transformative ability of tourism to facilitate intergroup understanding in a non-secular Islamic setting. While not explicitly drawing on intergroup contact theory, their study revealed how UK tourists returning from Iran were able to provide a counter-discourse of the country via travel blogs and social media in contrast to the British broadsheets and media. Importantly, the tourists commented upon their positive interactions with locals as expressed through this statement: "Everywhere we go, the people are wonderful, usually greeting us with 'Welcome to Iran'" (Khodadadi and O'Donnell, 2017: 60). This Iranian hospitality through everyday encounters - the "quiet politics" - acted as a key facilitator for the tourists to positively change their perceptions of Iran, its people and Islam post-trip. Similarly, Acheampong et al.'s (2023: 12) exploration of the lived experiences of international supporters at the 2022 World Cup in Qatar offers a glimmer of hope. They found many of their respondents described the event as 'amazing,' arguing the tournament "broke cultural and racial bridges" as supporters considered it to be the 'best World Cup ever.'

While the studies outlined above give insight into tourism and sport experiences in a non-secular, Islamic context, there is a significant lack of published research that utilises intergroup contact theory, not only in a tourism context but also in a sport and broader intergroup contact setting. Thus, exploring England football fans' experiences and attitudes towards Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula in the context of the 2022 World Cup seems well placed to address this paucity in research. In summary, tourism and sport scholarship on intergroup contact reveals both are complex and multi-faceted phenomena that are far more nuanced than often assumed. There is a need to develop a richer understanding on how intergroup contact functions within a temporary, short-term context like sports to significantly advance knowledge. Clearly, situational circumstances, along with the type of tourism or sport experience, can profoundly impact the nature of contact, producing a variety of mixed and contradictory outcomes. However, the power of contact is well-established, especially within the academic sphere of social psychology, as I have discussed.

More research is required to ascertain a deeper theoretical understanding of the role of intergroup contact applied to both a tourism and sports setting. Notably, there is an absence of qualitative inquiry in tourism scholarship drawing on contact theory, which could account for some of the contradictions within the literature. Such an inquiry can provide a rich analytical understanding of both the moderators and mediators of intergroup contact theory and the effects of the "quite politics" of encounter. Moreover, published research on temporary sporting events and contact theory is limited; integrating tourism research with the 2022 World Cup serves to address this lacuna. I argue a 'pre-during-post' study on the experiences and attitudes of England football fans towards Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula more broadly, in the context of the 2022 World Cup, provides a novel space to explore and develop theoretical insights into intergroup contact theory in a temporary space. Finally, any analysis needs to consider wider relations of power within the contact dynamic, considering those who travel abroad for sport or leisure will often have preconceptions of the places and people they encounter. Arguably, these preconceptions are influenced by the social, cultural and historical relationships between the groups or dominant ideologies. In consideration of this point, I conclude it is necessary to explore the literature on dominant relations that have characterised the West's, notably the United Kingdom's (UK), encounters with Muslims and Islam. Essentially, this places the England fans' interactions in a wider socio-historic and cultural milieu. Therefore, the following section introduces the key concepts and seeks to develop a deeper understanding of engagements between the two groups.

2.2 The Other, Orientalism and Dominant Encounters between the West, Muslims Islam and the Arabian Peninsula

Following on from my argument above, I examine how engagements between the West, Muslims and Islam have manifest within the context of the UK, in a tourism context and within football fandom. Such an exploration grounds intergroup contact within a socio-historic and contemporary framework: and identifies power dynamics underpinning these encounters. Subsequently, I draw on Edward Said's (2003 [1978]) *Orientalism* and engage with contemporary discussions to note the relevance of utilising the Oriental framework in the context of the 2022 World Cup. However, to begin, I demonstrate my understanding of notions of Otherness.

2.2.1 Notions of the Other

Despite not explicitly drawing on the concept of the Other per se, Allport identified how and why humans categorise and seek to impose boundaries between themselves and those considered different. However, the author overlooked the historical, ideological underpinnings of difference and of Otherness in particular, which is crucial for understanding power dynamics within intergroup encounters. Likewise, he overlooked the fact that ingroup formation does not necessarily lead to prejudice towards outgroups. Consequently, Allport's conceptualisation is only helpful to a point.

Social scientists have provided a deeper reading of intergroup relations to explore and unearth issues of power between perceived in and outgroups. The notion of the Other has been used to encapsulate the practice and process of constructing an outgroup. For instance, scholars have explored the phenomenon of Othering in various contexts with a plethora of perceived outgroups, including African Americans, Muslims, Caribbeans and people from the Indian subcontinent (Spivak, 1988; de Beauvoir, 1997; Said, 2003; Sheller, 2003; hooks [sic], 2015; Hall, 2019). Such scholarship indicates there is no universal Other; rather, within any given society there are various people, places and cultures who are considered different and are thus placed outside of a particular system of normality (Hall, 1997). For example, Irish migrants who moved to the UK in the 19th and 20th centuries were subject to anti-Irish prejudice and were demarcated as Other at various points in time (see, for example, Mac an Ghaill, 2000).

The process of Othering extends beyond Allport's notion of categorisation and the basic need to attach oneself to a group. It entails a process of establishing clear boundaries and meaning between 'us' and 'them'. Hall (1997) commented on how these boundaries give culture meaning and help to maintain a unique identity. Meaning, and therefore culture, becomes unsettled when unwritten rules and codes are out of place; for instance, when a dominant ingroup's culture feels threatened by a minority outgroup. For Hall (1997), this results in the ingroup shoring up its culture and stigmatising and expelling anything that is defined as 'impure' and thereby considered inferior to the ingroup. Dominant groups in society then assign traits (real or imagined), generalise and stereotype a designated Other to sustain control over the dominant system of meaning. Stereotypes represent a cultural process of Othering that maintains social and symbolic order (Hall, 1997). As Pickering (2001: 7) argued, stereotypes construct "difference as deviant for the sake of normative gain" and as Hall (1997) noted, define what is normal, what is not and what

belongs, and what does not, between 'us' and 'them', and what is inferior and Other (Hall, 1997). Stereotypes seek to reduce, essentialise and naturalise a particular group as a "way of warding off any threat of disruption to 'us' as the 'same together' through the generation of the essentialised Otherness" (Pickering, 2001: 48). The process of Othering, including stereotyping, is inherently ideological driven and serves to stigmatise and justify actions between a dominant ingroup and a subjected Other - often when there are gross inequalities of power (Hall, 1997). Therefore, I argue intergroup encounters cannot be seen in isolation from wider issues of power and representation.

Accordingly, the Other often lacks political, social and cultural power within a given society to represent themselves and challenge stereotypes - or, as Spivak (1988) argued, the Other cannot speak. Referring to 'subaltern women,' Spivak (1988) argued even if subaltern women do have their voices heard, they are often mediated through men or Western academics in positions of power who claim to represent their voices. Thus, their voices become meaningless and lost as those in power favour their own interpretations of these voices. Spivak's (1988) foundational argument can be applied to other outgroups. For example, hooks (2015) and Sheller (2003) highlighted unequal power dynamics in different contexts. The former uses the metaphor 'eating the Other' to reveal how White Western culture[8] 'eats' racially marked bodies as an exotic spice to flavour the bland whiteness of mainstream culture. Here Black culture is appropriated via consumer 'cannibalism,' which serves to displace and deny the significance and variability of the Black Other within American culture. Similarly, Sheller (2003) comprehensively highlights how the Caribbean and Caribbean bodies have historically been engaged with, consumed and exploited by the British as a place for food, tourism, medicine, sex, ideas and a place to experience mystery and exoticism. In both cases, the relatively innocent act of consumption acts as a means of control and dominance for the dominant 'ingroup' (White America and Britain).

It is necessary to view intergroup encounters in a historical, contemporary and ideological context as opposed to isolated occurrences. This is particularly important for addressing the shortcomings of intergroup contact theory, considering issues of power undoubtedly affect how particular people, places and cultures are engaged with, understood and subjected as Other. In the context of this thesis, Muslims and the religion of Islam have been framed as the 'ultimate Other,' particularly in Britain and in other countries broadly referred to as the Western world (Said, 2003;

---

[8] hooks (2015) reference of 'White Western culture' refers predominantly to mainstream American culture, which the author considers inherently 'White.'

Sa'di, 2021: 8). They are often stereotyped and reduced to a single monolithic entity within the British print press and media more generally (see, for example, Poole, 2002; Bleich et al., 2015; Kabir et al., 2018) and have relatively little power to represent themselves within the country. Dominant discourses persist and extend to non-secular, Islamic societies in general with the World Cup in Qatar, itself considered a World Cup in the hands of the Other (Griffin, 2017, 2019).

2.2.2 The Muslim and Islamic Other: Orientalism, Neo-Orientalism and Islamophobia

Engagements between the West, notably Britain, and Muslims and Islam has a long history that should not solely be viewed as a modern phenomenon. For example, Selod et al. (2024) notes how encounters date back to the 11th and 13th centuries where the roots of particular stereotypes, impressions and hostilities started to develop towards both Muslims and Islam. However, it is beyond the scope of my research to comprehensively discuss the history of these relations, nor is it necessary. Rather, I am concerned with how contemporary portrayals and stereotypes influence everyday public constructions of Muslims and Islam, especially amongst England football fans.

Edward Said's foundational text *Orientalism* published in 1978 provides a crucial starting point to understand how the West engaged with the 'Orient.' The Orient is used to refer to somewhere East from the particular viewpoint of the West, although Said (2003) specifically focused on the 'Near Orient' (the Arabian Peninsula and Middle East). In particular, the author was extremely critical of British and French literature (academic) published during the age of colonialism, particularly from the 18th century and up until the 20th century that constructed knowledge of and represented the Orient as one monolithic and homogenous entity. Thereby, reducing millions of different people, places and cultures into a single controllable entity. However, for Said (2003: 57), the constructs of the Orient as one homogenous group had little ontological stability; rather, it is an "imaginative geography," an arbitrary line through two continents. Like Allport's (1979) conception of ingroups, the Orient was a social construct used to navigate, to identify and to give meaning to the subjected Other. Nevertheless, as Said (2003) elaborated throughout his critique, the designation of the Orient was underpinned by the ideological framework of Orientalism.

Orientalism encompassed three overlapping and interdependent dimensions, which revealed the scope and reach of the Orientalist endeavour (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia, 2009). These are: (a) as a comprehensive Western discourse (travel writing, literature, journalism), (b) an academic

discipline devoted to Oriental studies; and (c) as a corporate institution. The former two dimensions embody the textual and visual representation of the Orient, which served to establish and essentialise Muslims and Islam as one unwavering, homogenous and monolithic mass (Said, 2003; Milton-Edwards, 2018). The latter illustrates how Orientalist discourse was used to justify political and cultural domination over the Orient. Thus, Orientalism as Lockman (2010) argued, denotes an entire way of thinking based on the dichotomisation of the Orient and the West as fundamentally different civilisations, which has created and perpetuated a certain construction of the Orient.

Inextricably, Orientalism was linked to ideas of 'race' and racial science that were emerging in the West during the colonial period. The West viewed themselves as a dominant and civilised 'race' and inscribed ideas of physical and cultural differences to the Orient as backward and inferior (Said, 2003; Kumar, 2021; Saha, 2021). It is a process of racialisation, as ideas of 'race' are attached to being a Muslim, as Saha (2021) notes. As a concept racialisation permits an analysis into how religious identity can acquire racial meaning without relying on biological factors such as skin colour (Selod et al., 2024). However, the racialisation process of Muslims and Islam has a much longer history proceeding Orientalism. For example, Meer (2013) has comprehensively shown how both religion and biology were deemed co-constitutive as a racial category prior to the colonial period. The author drew on an example of the Prophet Muhammad noting he was perceived as a "dark skinned, satanic menace" (2013: 387) when Islam was first encountered by Europe. Naber (2008) further argued the racialisation of Muslims and Islam is characterised using numerous signifiers such as names (e.g., Mohammed), having dark skin and through particular forms of dress (e.g., wearing a headscarf or having a beard), which are associated with 'being a Muslim.' Racialisation manifests in anti-Muslim prejudice, although, as a process it is not fixed and is constantly in flux. Nonetheless, it represents an exercise in power as the West can define the subject, consolidate their position in the racial hierarchy and rule over, colonise and coerce the Orient (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia, 2009; Milton-Edwards, 2018; Sa'di, 2021).

Since the publication of Orientalism in 1978, a myriad of global and local events has drastically questioned and (re)shaped how scholars, media personnel and the public approach and understand Islam, non-secular societies and Muslims within and outside of Britain (Samiei, 2010; Lockman, 2010). Said (1997 [1981]:10) in *Covering Islam* acknowledged this shift, arguing "at present [1981] 'Islam' and the 'West' have taken a powerful new urgency everywhere." The author notes

the 1973 oil crises, the Iranian revolution in 1979, and the Iranian hostage crises, while Al-Zo'By (2015) adds that the end of the Cold War and the Gulf War in 1991 marked a dramatic shift in framing how the West encountered Muslims and Islam. Similarly, Samiei (2010) and Milton-Edwards (2018) note the unresolved Palestinian question, acts of terrorism by Islamic extremists such as the September 11th destruction of the Twin Towers in New York (9/11) and the subsequent military operations by the West (known as 'the war on terror') in response, have come to reformulate, reimagine and redraw Said's (2003) original critique to fit into a contemporary epoch (Samiei, 2010; Sa'di, 2021; Selod et al., 2024). The Palestine question is especially pertinent today (in 2024), particularly since the Hamas-led attack on Israel on the 6th of October 2023, which resulted in 1,139 innocent people losing their lives while others were taken hostage. Since then, the world has witnessed an outbreak of protests both in support of Israel and in support of Palestine, particularly in response to the Israel government's ongoing military campaign in Gaza and the West Bank, where thousands of people have been killed or displaced.

As a direct consequence of some of these global events, especially since 9/11 a specific anti-Islamic discourse emerged via the widely used term 'Islamophobia' that denotes the hostility, racism and discrimination Muslims experience (Kumar, 2021; Selod et al., 2024). Allen (2020) argues, it is a contemporary phenomenon that has arose over the past two-decades. The author refers to Islamophobia as 'a complex system that informs the social consensus on Muslims and Islam, which is not limited to any specific action, practice of discrimination but is evident through a vast array of social, political and cultural processes wherein Muslims and Islam are problematised as 'Other' without challenge' (Allen, 2020: 35). This serves to inform the exclusionary practices targeted towards Muslim and Islam. Whilst I agree with the author that Muslims and Islam have been problematised as 'Other,' it is critical to locate discourses of Islamophobia or anti-Muslim prejudice within its ever-changing and historic manifestations (e.g., Orientalism and racialisation). Further, unlike Halliday (2003) who posited a distinction must be made between hostility towards Muslims and hostilities towards a religion (Islam), the two are interconnected as processes of racialisation discussed above illustrate. Following Selod et al. (2024) racialisation permits a lens into not only how religion is racialised, but also how it can encompass other identities such as gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation etc. Therefore, anti-Muslim racism and racialisation are well placed to understand contemporary manifestations of not only prejudice towards Muslims and Islam, but how encounters have been constructed.

Islamophobia as a discourse is situated within the neo-Orientalism paradigm. As early as 1993 Sadowski was acutely aware of the changing nature of classical forms of Orientalism and coined this new paradigm. Neo-Orientalism is similar to Said's (2003) original concept as it is characterised by a reliance on binary distinctions and essentialist notions of a monolithic, homogenous and inferior Muslim and Islamic Other and (re)produces complex power structures (Behdad and Williams, 2010). However, there is an inherent focus on Islam and as Selod et al. (2024) note attention is more on the negative dimensions of Islamic theology and Muslim lifestyles - hence the emergence of Islamophobia. In both instances, Islam is conceived to be incompatible with democracy and thus perpetuates notions of the Other, where Muslims and Islam are opposite to the secular, liberal and Western way of life.

Similarly, Tuasted's (2003) illuminating argument associates the emergence of neo-Orientalism with the rise of 'new barbarism'. For the author, 'new barbarism' posits that political violence such as terrorism is a consequence of particular traits and characteristics found within a given society and culture. This position completely ignores the political and economic context in favour of a simple explanation for violence, e.g., "all Muslims are terrorists because they hate the West." Consequently, 'new barbarism' and neo-Orientalism are relational in that they highlight a dichotomy between the West and Muslims and Islam. Hence, Samiei (2010) observes neo-Orientalism represents a hegemonic strategy that produces an image of an enemy (Muslims and Islam). This 'imagined' enemy is used to justify political and economic objectives, such as the continuing Israel-Palestine conflict.

Within Britain, neo-Orientalism and manifestations of anti-Muslim racism or 'Islamophobia' has been evident in debates around the integration of Muslims, which have been sparked by several events, such as the Honeyford Affair in 1985 and Rushdie Affair in 1988. More recently, the Trojan Horse Affair, anti-LGBT protests outside a school in Birmingham, the citizenship of Shamima Begum - the 'ISIS' bride' - and ongoing narratives of 'Muslim grooming gangs' have acted as catalysts in 'race' relations in Britain alongside a questioning of British identity and values (Poole, 2018). Equally, the Manchester Arena Bombings in 2016, and the development of both tourism and sport industries in Arabian Peninsula states, such as the staging of sporting events in the region, have come to shape constructions on Muslims and Islam. For example, in the British press and media more generally, representations of Muslims and Islam are slightly detached from Said's (2003) analysis. Kabir et al. (2018) have shown how the British media and the print press in particular (The Daily Mail and The Telegraph) continue to depict Muslims and

Islam negatively, but as opposed to portraying them as exotic and perhaps backwards, they are now positioned as a *threat* to the British way of life and culture, but also as a physical threat to life itself (e.g., through acts of terrorism). Selod et al. (2024) notes this then shapes public sentiment and give rise to racialised state policies (e.g., the increased surveillance of Muslims) that locate Muslims outside of the nation-states imaginary.

Rather than Muslims and Islam being considered a mysterious and exotic Other, the conversation has thus shifted to construct opposition to and draw a divide between the West and the Other based on cultural, racial, ethnic and religious differences (Samiei, 2010; Sa'di, 2021). They are considered an enemy and incompatible with the Western (or British) way of life, which has undoubtedly fuelled anti-Muslim prejudice castigating Muslims as the "ultimate Other" in the eyes of the West (Said, 2003; Sa'di, 2021: 8). Such a processes highlights how Islam has become a racialised religion, and like most categories based on 'race,' it has become a weapon for discrimination against a wide variety of people with visible signs of Islamic belonging (e.g., beard, veil, mosques) in the West (Najib and Hopkins, 2020; Sa'di, 2021). Neo-Oriental logic is also gendered, as Muslim women are considered oppressed victims of their Islamic faith for wearing a hijab or veil and Muslim men are portrayed as terrorists (Stephenson and Ali, 2010; Najib and Hopkins, 2020). For example, the former British Prime Minister Boris Johnson epitomised this position in 2018 while writing a column for the Telegraph[9], he described veiled Muslim women as 'letterboxes' and 'bank robbers', without facing condemnation from his conservative peers (Sa'di, 2021).

However, Saha (2021) and Poole (2002) note a word of caution that not all images of Muslims and Islam are necessarily negative, nor are media representations interpreted in the same way. Poole (2002) in particular reveals the complexity of how British audiences interpret media views on Muslims and Islam. For the author, it is not the case that the media presents one stereotype; rather, it encompasses a variety of British Muslim experiences and reduces them to a few (neo)Oriental tropes, which are then consumed and interpreted differently. When placed into the context of British-born Muslims, discourses become even more nuanced. For example, in the aftermath of the 7/7 London bombings[10] political and media discourses presented a dualism

---

[9] At the time of publication Boris Johnson was Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. He assumed the office of Prime Minister on the 24th of July 2019.

[10] On July 7th, 2005, a terrorist attack carried out by Islamic extremists occurred in London wherein 56 people were murdered by suicide bombers on different modes of London transport.

between 'good' or 'bad' Muslims, or what Modood (2005) has referred to as 'corporate Muslims' - those who are perceived to represent British values characterised by liberal views, tolerance, and inclusiveness (see also Featherstone et al., 2010). Critically, as Hall (1980) asserted, such cultural messages are subject to interpretation and negotiation, as the general public can accept, oppose or combine dominant discourses with their own experiences. This is salient for my own thesis, as the fans navigate their perceptions of Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula in relation to any prior encounters or friendships they may have had.

Nevertheless, the neo-Oriental framework, while grounded in the foundations of Orientalism, appears to provide a cover for a more 'user-friendly' debate within the realms of academia, in politics and amongst the general population. Sa'di (2021: 7), for example, notes neo-Oriental discourse is "more benign and 'respectable' so that it could be safely used by all sorts of groups, including liberals in the public sphere." In a wider context, the immigration debate in Britain has seen some right-wing commentators and scholars such as Matthew Goodwin and David Goodhart[11] argue that while they are not completely against immigration per se, they believe people are more connected to and feel safer among those who share similar cultural, ethnic and religious beliefs and values as themselves. Their anti-Muslim rhetoric at times appears hidden behind a carefully constructed framework in which it positions their arguments as 'legitimate concerns' of a multi-cultural society, although such rhetoric is not always 'hidden.'

Moreover, Samiei (2010) drew attention to the increased geographic mobility of Muslims and Muslim populations within Western countries such as Britain as a factor for moderating portrayals of Muslims and Islam by painting them in a more nuanced light. This is particularly the case with Muslim professional football players who have played in the Premier League. Players such as Mohamed Salah are often represented by their sporting ability and their philanthropy as opposed to religious beliefs and are perceived as the acceptable face of Islam. Although, as Burdsey (2016:22) has argued in the context of Mo Farah - a Somali-born, black, British Muslim and former long-distance Olympic gold medallist, such rhetoric is far more complex. While the media may present athletes such as Mo Farah as a symbol of British multiculturalism, "broader

---

[11] See for example, David Goodhart's *The Road to Somewhere: The Populist Revolt and Future of Politic (2017).* Throughout the author discusses how 'somewheres' are far more comfortable living with people who have a shared culture, language and ethnicity as themselves. He argues that 'somewheres' are not racist, rather they dislike the speed of change throughout society and are sceptical of people who are perceived to be different

structures of racialised inequality are left intact." Constructions and perceptions of Muslims in Britain are thus complex and arguably not as binary as Said (2003) argued.

However, Orientalism and neo-Orientalism should not be viewed as universally accepted critiques, or as dominant processes for grounding Western engagements with the Orient. By viewing the relationship between the West, Muslims and Islam through an unchanging historic, binary discourse, Said (2003), unwittingly does not account for how the racialisation processes ebbed and flowed. Likewise, Said (2003) essentialised Western scholarship in the same way as Oriental scholars. For instance, Sadiki Jalal al- 'Azm (1981, as cited in Lockman, 2010) noted that by perceiving most scholarship and literary texts produced in the West on the Orient as racist, imperialist and ethnocentric, Said himself located all scholars and writers into a single homogenous entity. Said (2003), to some extent (re)produced a dualism between the West and the Orient, constructing a 'Western Other' in opposition to the Orient. I also argue that both Orientalism and neo-Orientalism often focuses on top-down processes, such as media discourses or literature rather than how Muslims and Islam are constructed from below; that is, how do the general public encode and construct both Muslims and Islam, and does Orientalism and neo-Oriental critiques have any influence on their perceptions? As I explore in Chapter Four, do binary constructions and portrayals have any relevance in fan discourses? Therefore, my thesis contributes towards answering these questions in the specific context of England fans to provide an understanding on how constructions of Muslims and Islam have functioned in practice.

Nevertheless, Said's (2003) critique and neo-Orientalism provide insight into the relationship between the West, Muslims and Islam. When integrated with intergroup contact theory, both serve to underpin the ideological process of Othering, which then grounds England fans' encounters in Qatar and the Arabian Peninsula into a socio-historic context and permits an exploration into the power dynamics that informed their contact experiences. In summary, exploring the notion of Otherness and issues of power within dominant relations provides a comprehensive explanatory tool for understanding how particular engagements are bound within a temporal ideological space. As I have argued, these encounters should not be seen as isolated occurrence, considering intergroup encounters are informed by a range of socio-historical and contemporary factors, which can all influence particular intergroup contacts at any given time. The 2022 World Cup provided a novel space to reconfigure and examine how the West, especially England fans constructed and engaged with Muslims and Islam, while also providing a unique context to challenge said encounters and to see if Orientalism and its neo-orientation resonated

amongst the supporters. The following section examines the literature on tourism and sport to identify how Othering has manifested within these cultural domains.

2.2.3 The Other and Orientalism in Tourism and Sport

As I have observed elsewhere (Taylor et al., 2023), hosting sporting events in the Arabian Peninsula, along with the development of tourism industries in the region, has undoubtedly facilitated the contemporary movement of international sports fans, athletes and tourists to consume sport and tourism. This has prompted new avenues of scholarship to develop, not only on understanding the development of the region in a sport and tourism context (see, for example, Hussain and Cunningham, 2022), but I argue to develop a richer analysis on how the process of Othering manifests itself in practice, especially amongst the England fans who travelled to the region to consume the World Cup. Given the mobilities and interests of the supporters who made the journey to Qatar and the wider region, and the emerging scholarship on international sporting experiences in the Arabian Peninsula (Acheampong et al., 2023; Dun, 2024; Al-Kuwari and Chandra, 2024; Kozhanov et al., 2025), this section begins by locating the Other within a wider tourism context before focussing on sport specifically.

Said's (2003) critique of Orientalism has proven to be a highly durable concept to understand how Western tourists encounter non-secular Islamic societies. For example, tourists' images are often mediated through tourism operators and local tourism boards who seek to construct and represent destinations (Wearing et al., 2010). As Bryce (2007) has argued, tourism spaces and cultures are discursively constructed to sell an 'authentic' tourism experience. In particular, Al-Mahadin and Burns (2007) discussed the role of veiled women in contemporary tourism marketing in the wider Middle East. The authors argued that the veil encapsulates a dominant image of Muslims and Islam as backwards, oppressive and inferior. Paradoxically, the veil is used within tourism marketing as a tool to entice Western tourists who seek an authentic experience and to gaze upon the Muslim and Islamic Other. This suggests stereotypes are nuanced and can take on different meanings in different contexts, as Saha (2021) has argued. Similarly, Gutberlet's (2019: 13) study on German-speaking cruise tourists highlights how cultural brokers, such as cruise ship employees and marketing brochures, depict and commodify an Omani *Souq* as a traditional, authentic and mystical place. This imagery of the *Souq* enables the tourists to discover the exotic in the same way they were instructed to do so by cultural brokers. The *Souq*, however,

as Gutberlet (2019) reveals, is nothing more than a tourist attraction and has little to do with the day-to-day lives of Omanis.

However, while Oriental imageries can be evoked through tourism, as the example of the veil illustrates, not all non-secular Islamic societies and Muslims are consumed with and engaged in the same way. For instance, Govers (2011) revealed how Western tourists have a more nuanced understanding of Dubai. By analysing Dubai's destination image, the author highlighted how Dubai provides a contrasting image of modernity (e.g., shopping, wealth and luxury, golden beaches and 5-star hotels), while simultaneously rooted in Oriental depictions (e.g., colourful *Souqs* and markets, smells of spices and fragrances, camels and deserts). This contrast is exemplified by Western concerns about the position of women in Dubai. For Govers (2011), despite the image of a modern and luxury destination, the perception of Dubai is complex, encompassing both positive and negative perceptions, with the latter relating to the role of women within society.

Referring to Orientalism and neo-Orientalism, it is assumed power is concentrated by the West, especially within the context of tourism. This position, however, overlooks the agency of destinations in how they develop, market and commodify their own tourism industry. For example, the concept of self-Orientalism has been adopted within tourism scholarship, representing a challenge to Orientalism and neo-Orientalism (Bryce, 2007; Yan and Santos, 2009; Feighery, 2012; Causevic and Neal, 2019). Self-Orientalism "...is an outcome of the East's representation and expression of itself from the eyes of the West and with the image which the West has fictionalised for it" (Feighery, 2012: 271). It suggests non-secular Islamic and Muslim destinations actively construct, represent and reinforce dominant stereotypes about themselves to Western consumers - albeit they do so with an ability to have some control over how they are represented.

In the context of Omani tourism development, Feighery (2012) explored self-Orientalism through analysing the promotional film *Welcome to My Country*. The author revealed how the promotional film served to support the Omanis' commercial aspirations within the global tourism industry while providing a space for the Omani authorities to construct a national identity based on a prevalent Western image. This image embodies tradition and heritage of an ancient past that does not necessarily align to the lives of Omani citizens. For Feighery (2012), self-Orientalism could be met with critique and resistance within a broader context of geopolitical change.

Similarly, Causevic and Neal (2019) conceptualise the "exotic veil" about Omani tourism narratives to argue how the Omani authorities and cultural brokers, such as local tour guides, purposefully put a veil over and omit local history (e.g., civil wars, slavery, political conflicts) at key culture sites within the country. The purpose of such "veiling" is to provide an unchanging representation of the country as a place of exoticism and mystery. However, for the authors, such a strategy suppresses the identity of local tour guides and local populations. These studies indicate that while power is maintained within a dominant Western system of knowledge, within this system, there is scope for local actors to counter or negotiate such knowledge. Self-Orientalism can be useful for creating unique and different identities within a globalised world (Yan and Santos, 2009).

By locating the consumption of sporting events by sports fans into a wider tourism context, it is evident that tourism can be an environment through which constructions of Muslims and Islam are imagined, reinforced and challenged, that is; the process of Othering and Orientalism can be negotiated and appear far more nuanced. For example, in a bid to attract tourists, non-secular, Islamic societies via Self-Orientalism strategies promote themselves to Western visitors by effectively Othering themselves. However, within this dominant system of knowledge, tourists or fans in this case, can reinforce, challenge of contradict Self-Orientalism strategies through their experiences, encounters and preconceptions. In the following sub-section, I examine how Othering and Orientalism manifest within a sporting context and note the existing lacunae within research.

The Other and Sport

The relationship between the West, especially Britain, non-secular Islamic societies and Islam in a sporting context is not new: the England Cricket team has hosted and toured Pakistan since the early 1950's. In the context of this thesis, since the 1970's, states from the Arabian Peninsula have used wealth accrued through oil revenues to engage in international sport and relations. For example, from 1986 - 1989, the Emirate of Dubai hosted the Dubai Champions Cup, which was contested between the champions of the English and Scottish professional football leagues (Taylor et al., 2023). However, scholarship as both, Darnell (2014) and Hussain and Cunningham (2022), have observed has paid little attention to how wider relations of power have manifest in a sporting domain, especially as it relates to the process of Othering, Orientalism and neo-Orientalism. Thus, it is necessary to review the literature that has started to pay attention to this

relationship to locate my own study. It is also salient for identifying if wider social issues such as anti-Muslim racism or Islamophobia have been observed within sports fandom. Further, I briefly examine how meaning has been constructed on Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula in sport, especially in the context of the 2022 World Cup to see how top-down discourses influenced the fans' impressions.

With this said, scholarship has acknowledged the presence of anti-Muslim prejudice within English football. In particular, the focus of some of this research has rightly focused on the experiences of British Muslims participating in sport. For example, Kilvington (2016) argued Islamophobic racism can be found within the non-professional and semi-professional spheres of English football. Additional scholarship has centred upon developing an understanding of how British Asians engage with sport within Britain (see, for example, Burdsey, 2010; Ahmad, 2011; Saeed and Kilvington, 2011). Burdsey (2010) examined the experiences of British Muslims in English first-class cricket and how it was influenced by the socio-political climate at the time. The author found incidents of Islamophobic prejudice towards the players by spectators and teammates. Specifically, in the context of football fandom, Millward (2008) explored online fan discussions in relation to the 2007 'Mido affair.' In a game between Middlesbrough FC and rivals Newcastle United FC, fans of the latter could be heard chanting racial abuse towards the formers Egyptian forward, Ahmed Hossam Hussein Abdelhamid (known as Mido), notably referring to the player as a terrorist bomber. In online spaces (e-zine message boards), Millward (2008) argued, particular sections of Middlesbrough FC and Newcastle FC supporters used Islamophobic slurs (terrorist bomber) to (re)invigorate sporting rivalries. Some of the discussions exposed by Millward (2008) further highlighted the racialisation of Muslims within a sporting epoch as Mido was conflated with terrorism. It would be inaccurate to attest prejudice towards Muslims is a widespread phenomenon in sport or indeed if sports fans and more specifically England football fans (re)produce dominant stereotypes about Muslims and Islam; rather, my thesis contributes to this limited discussion by developing an understanding on how England football fans encountered Muslims and Islam.

Moreover, in a general sporting context, some scholars have identified how Muslims have been portrayed through media discourses and discussions. For example, Malcolm et al. (2010) highlighted how Muslims were Othered in the context of the 2007 Men's Cricket World Cup in the West Indies. The authors revealed how British newspapers resorted to cultural stereotyping when covering the death of Pakistan cricket coach Bob Woolmer. They posited British

newspapers (e.g., *The Sun* and *Daily Mail*) depicted Pakistani Muslims and Islam as pre-modern, irrational, unchanging and violent, invoking a dichotomy between the West and Muslims. Similarly, Williams (2020) notes how the Pakistan cricket team was Othered by the English media during the 1980s and 1990s. The author argues, Pakistani players were labelled as cheats, with the country portrayed as a horrible place to visit and backwards. There have also been allegations of racial abuse towards Pakistan cricket supporters at Test grounds within Britain (see, for example, Burdsey, 2010; Williams, 2020). These findings broadly support Said's (2003) original critique and highlight how processes of Othering have been observable in sport.

However, the representation of Muslims and Islam is far more complex, especially in relation to British Muslims as discussed. Burdsey (2007), for example, highlighted the complexities and contradictions of this in the context of media and politicians' constructions and portrayals of British Pakistani boxer Amir Khan. Khan was widely portrayed as a symbol of British multiculturalism after winning a silver medal at the 2004 Summer Olympic Games in Greece. His embrace by the media and politicians, however, was problematic. While Khan was not Othered in a traditional sense, his identity was juxtaposed against an Islamic Other wherein his own religious identity as a Muslim and his ethnicity were significantly downplayed - a process Khan himself also contributed to.

Nevertheless, the above studies are limited in that they do not deal with the 2022 World Cup, thus, it is unclear whether the events discussed above influenced the England fans' perceptions of Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula. For example, in the build-up to the tournament in Qatar, 'sportswashing' emerged as a popular discourse amongst sports journalists to frame the relationship between the West and the Arabian Peninsula more broadly. The term refers to attempts predominantly - but not exclusively - by authoritarian regimes to improve their tarnished international reputations, especially regarding human rights concerns through sport (Lenskyj, 2020; Dubinsky, 2021; Boykoff, 2022; Skey, 2023; Taylor et al., 2023). I have argued elsewhere that the concept perpetuates and reinforces a dichotomy of 'us' and 'them' (Taylor et al., 2023). It is a manifestation of neo-Orientalism as the focus on human rights issues positions Qatar and other Arabian Peninsula states as incompatible with Western, secular and liberal values.

This point was reinforced in Griffin's (2017) aptly entitled article *Football in the Hands of the Other: Qatar's World Cup in the British Broadsheet Press*. The author revealed how the 2022 World Cup had been presented as a product of an Oriental discourse that only exists in the

Western imagination. Qatar was depicted as a rogue state that is extremely willing to breach the parameters of decency and civilisation set by Western society as they use excessive unearned wealth to 'steal' the World Cup. Whether this discourse resonated with England football fans remains to be seen. However, preliminary research by Brannagan and Rookwood (2016) identified how English-speaking fans of international football teams (both male and female) who had experienced at least one World Cup and continental event were extremely critical of Qatari state practices that discriminate against women's rights and the LGBT community. For some female supporters, these practices acted as a deterrent to attending the 2022 World Cup. It is important to note this study illustrated the attitudes and opinions of a specific set of fans; other fans may have had a moral disengagement from such concerns. However, scholarship has illustrated how encountering Arabian Peninsula states can refine, challenge or reinforce football fans' perceptions of the region. For example, Millward (2011) identified how fans of Manchester City embraced and supported investment from an Abu Dhabi-backed consortium to form legitimising identities based on their new owners. In the context of my own thesis, did the act of travelling to and consuming sport and other leisure pursuits in the region during the 2022 World Cup have symbolic or transformation impacts on the fans' perceptions and identities?

As I have identified within this review, there has been a limited discussion on how Orientalism, neo-Orientalism and anti-Muslim racism or Islamophobia manifest within a tourism and sport setting. Scholarship that has focused on these themes demonstrates that both cultural domains are not immune from wider processes and can act as sites that reinforce, challenge or contradict wider issues of power, especially from below. I argue exploring how England fans construct Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula addresses this paucity of research and provides a much-needed bottom-up perspective. Theoretically, this is significant for refining how Orientalism and wider issues such as anti-Muslim racism or prejudice manifests in practice.

In summary, in this part of the review I have shown how Othering is not straightforward; it is complex, nuanced and multifaceted. Representations and constructions of Muslims and Islam are not always negative, but neither are they always positive. At times, the binary presented by Said (2003) can be blurred. I also explored how Orientalism, neo-Orientalism and how dominant engagements between the West, Muslims and Islam have manifested within a variety of contexts, including within a wider socio-cultural and political context and in tourism and sport. I have highlighted how the process of Othering is inextricably linked to intergroup encounters, revealing intergroup contact should not be viewed in isolation from wider socio-historic and contemporary

processes, notably wider issues of power. Orientalism and neo-Orientalism are still ever-present within society and are therefore crucial frameworks to locate how England football fans construct and perceive Muslims and Islam. However, as I have discussed throughout, these concepts should not be viewed as universal; rather, dominant engagements should be seen as far more complex and nuanced, as highlighted through self-Orientalism.

2.4 Concluding Thoughts: Literature Review

I have argued throughout this chapter that integrating both intergroup contact theory and Orientalism provides a significant lens into viewing England football fans' interactions and experiences with Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula during the 2022 World Cup. Notably, I have established how both complement one another: Intergroup contact theory provides a micro/meso framework to understand how Orientalism is constructed, (re)produced or challenged from below, while the latter grounds the former into wider relations of power and contextualises how encounters can be predisposed through socio-cultural and historic group relations. To my knowledge scholarship has yet to explore this intersection and how it can effectively be utilised within a temporary sport setting - the 2022 World Cup.

Overall, this chapter has helped to establish the academic and theoretical context of my thesis. In the first part, I explored and analysed the developments of contact theory, highlighted relevant critiques and placed it in the context of both tourism and sport, before concluding that it permits a significant theoretical framework for understanding England football fans' intergroup encounters with Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula. However, as I have argued, it is not my intention to apply or confirm Allport's (1979) original hypothesis, rather I seek to build upon, refine and advance contact theory further. As I argued, integrating Orientalism with intergroup contact significantly contributes towards developing scholarship further. Thus, in the second part of the chapter I reviewed and critiqued the concept of the Other, Orientalism and neo-Orientalism to illuminate dominant relations between the West (notably Britain), Muslims and Islam in a general socio-cultural context and within tourism and sport. From this review I have identified several gaps where scholarship concerning contact theory, Orientalism and sport can be further developed, which has subsequently informed the following research questions,

A) What were the England football fans' perceptions of Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula before travelling to the 2022 World Cup, and were their perceptions influenced wider ideological discourses?

B) How did they experience and encounter the Other during the 2022 World Cup in the Arabian Peninsula? E.g., what activities did they partake in, who did they have contact with etc.

C) Did attending the 2022 World Cup and having contact with Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula refine or challenge their perceptions in any meaningful way?

To note, these questions complement the overall research aims and objectives of this study (see Chapter One). The following chapter builds upon these questions by focusing on the methodology and methods and my rationale for adopting a particular research approach.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY & METHODS

In the previous chapters, I highlighted the related research areas, academic debates and theoretical considerations underpinning this thesis, namely intergroup contact theory and Orientalism in the context of tourism and sport, I also identified the key research questions that emerged from reviewing relevant literature. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a critical account of the research process and to investigate the questions posed at the end of the Chapter Two. The research design and methodological choices are informed by previous scholarship on the one hand and, on the other, by my own personal assumptions, beliefs, feelings, life story, habitus and approach to the philosophy of science. Therefore, my contribution to knowledge and the path taken to arrive at a sociological understanding of England football fans' attitudes and experiences towards Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula in the context of the 2022 World Cup is both personal and academic.

The lens through which I view the social world is not one-dimensional or rigid. My view of the social world, just like the methodological choices I made throughout this academic journey, can be characterised as fluid and open to refinement. Pragmatism and perseverance, for example, were necessary throughout; decisions were made, refined and revisited. Just like the World Cup itself, this chapter consists of many moving parts, which culminate into a whole (the final spectacle). Thus, this chapter is organised into two parts: 1) Methodology and 2) Methods. The former integrates my own philosophical approach within broader methodological debates concerning philosophy (e.g., research paradigms, ontology, epistemology), intergroup contact theory, Orientalism and, to a lesser extent, sport tourism events. The purpose of this is to develop and support my methodological argument; as will become clear, my approach complements the classic quantitative approach to knowledge development within the contact literature by adopting a qualitative methodology, while it further contributes to Orientalism scholarship through adopting methods that support a bottom-up perspective to emerge. The latter part of the chapter then, provides an in-depth account of the specific methods I used to help interrogate the aims, objectives and key research questions of this inquiry. It also illuminates the politics of 'doing' research with England football fans. Here I present a reflexive account of the research process and note the challenges that emanated from my contact with the supporters.

3.1 Methodology

3.1.1 An Interpretive Understanding of England Fans' Intergroup Experiences

The principles that bind my personal beliefs within academia are referred to as a paradigm (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). A paradigm is "an overarching set of beliefs that provides the parameters... of a given research project" (Markula and Silk 2011: 25). Guba (1990) noted a paradigm is characterised by how social scientists answer three basic questions. These are: (a) ontological, (b) epistemological and (c) methodological. The ontological question relates to the nature of reality itself, requiring scholars to address if they believe a true reality is 'out there' waiting to be discovered or not. For instance, is a tree really a tree, and will it always be a tree regardless of whether the scientist is observing it or not? In relation to society, the ontological question relates to whether one believes a social reality exists and can be considered true knowledge. The epistemological question relates to how we know what we know and the "relationship between the knower [inquirer] and the known [or knowable]" (Guba, 1990: 18); should the researcher interact with a community, person or culture or remain detached from the research process? Providing an answer to this question serves to inform how the final question is answered. Methodology refers to the overall process of inquiry; it asks the question of how one should go about finding out knowledge? (Guba, 1990; Crotty, 1998). These questions all serve as essential building blocks for contemporary social scholarship (Jones, 2022).

Within the English-speaking literature, competing paradigms fill the pages of numerous methodological texts. At the most general level, it is possible to discern four paradigms that have been discussed at length with great frequency. These are positivism, post-positivism, interpretivism and critical theory (for a detailed overview, see Guba, 1990; Crotty, 1998; Markula and Silk, 2011 and Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). Although this list is not exhaustive, paradigms are ever emerging and evolving. For instance, Denzin and Lincoln (2018) refer to several different approaches, including the feminist paradigm, the Indigenous paradigm and Critical Race Theory. Other philosophical positions exist outside of the English-speaking or Western world, such as decolonial sociology and Islamic feminism, much of which has been translated into English (see, for example, Yamani, 1996; Mignolo, 2011). Nevertheless, all paradigms provide different arguments for how knowledge should be shaped and what is deemed knowledge.

In keeping with the purpose of this study - to understand the experiences and reflections of England football fans towards Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula in the context of the 2022 World Cup - and in light of my own personal assumptions, beliefs and values, I considered interpretivism to be the most appropriate philosophical approach. This is a broad approach encompassing various lines of thought that have developed since the beginnings of the 20th century, such as symbolic interactionism, phenomenology and ethnomethodology, which are all unified by an emphasis on individual interaction (Crotty, 1998; Seale, 2018). However, broadly speaking, interpretivism stems from the writings of Max Weber (1864–1921), who introduced the term *Verstehen* (understanding) into sociology (Crotty, 1998; Corbetta, 2003). Crotty (1998: 67) further articulated that interpretivism "looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life world." This is salient for my own study, considering I sought to untangle the specific contexts of the fans' attitudes through their own stories to discern social and cultural meaning, and to understand how dominant relations and interpretations acted as reference points for their constructions, encounters and perceptions of Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula. I acknowledged then, that the 2022 World Cup itself should not be understood in isolation as a single standalone phenomenon; rather, how the fans made sense of their attitudes and experiences was embedded with their daily lives, consumption practices and their individual socio-cultural histories (Bryman, 2016). This point is important because it recognises the individual interpretations the fans bring into contact.

Accordingly, my research purpose is antithetical to the assumptions of the positivist paradigm. Positivism - one of the most enduring research paradigms within the social sciences - argues one must treat knowledge of the social world as the same as knowledge about the natural world (Crotty, 1998). It is the philosophical assumption that traditional scientific methods of experiment and comparison should be used to capture society's essence to uncover new 'laws' or facts (Guba, 1990; Seal, 2018). Describing and reducing the fans' behaviours and their meanings of Muslims and Islam to a set of pre-existing constructs, laws or social facts would have been counterintuitive in this regard (Guba, 1990; Crotty, 1998; Seale, 2018). Instead, it was necessary to permit the fans space to construct their own meanings, within their own language and terms of reference. This was significant for developing knowledge on how Othering and Orientalism are challenged or reinforced. It is not possible then, or necessary to generalise the fans' perceptions.

Ontologically, I am influenced by relativism. Relativism considers the social world as inherently complex and diverse. People and indeed scholars, experience and give meaning to the world

around them differently. Thus, what is considered to be 'true' is subjective, dynamic and relative to each person. Accordingly, relativism is juxtaposed with realism - a positivist ontological belief that there is an objective truth about social phenomena (Guba, 1990; Crotty, 1998). Ontologically, the meanings the fans give to their experiences and opinions are inherently personal. Crotty (1998: 64), for example, noted, what is said to be "the way things are" is just "the sense we make of them." Accordingly, it is difficult to assume a single reality or claim 'all football fans hold negative or positive attitudes towards Muslims, Islam, the Arabian Peninsula and the 2022 World Cup, considering their own constructions are embedded within a web of historic social and cultural fibres that have diverged at various times and various places. Thus, they are relative to the beholder and heterogeneous. Relativism can serve to provide a much lighter, nuanced, tentative and less dogmatic understanding of football fans in general and their intergroup relations as it perceives interpretations as multiple rather than single truths (Crotty, 1998).

To interpret the different emotions, meanings, experiences and actions of the fans and their social worlds, I draw on social constructionism; as I have already acknowledged, this epistemological position recognises knowledge is the product of human interactions between researchers and the participants (me and the fans) (Crotty, 1998; Flick, 2018). This renders the positivist (and post-positivist) epistemological assumption of objectivity untenable as it acknowledges a single reality of the social world is beyond our grasp and unnecessary considering meaning is socially constructed (Lincoln et al., 2018). Scholarship thus cannot be value-free, as knowledge is constantly generated through interactions within specific contexts. Accordingly, meaning is not 'out there' waiting to be discovered; it is constructed between multiple actors, or fans in this case (Guba, 1990). I consider interactions with the fans and interpretations of their own meanings as critical components of this research. While I am a PhD candidate, I am also a football fan, a keen traveller and many other things. Therefore, I am aware my own habitus, and political and ideological inclinations and interests played a role in the construction of knowledge with the fans.

Crotty (1998) referred to the process of social inquiry as a maze in which scholars need to navigate to arrive at a set of clear philosophical principles to guide the research and support an appropriate methodology. Part of this maze also entails navigating the dominant methodological positions associated with the theoretical traditions of this inquiry, e.g., intergroup contact theory and Orientalism. In the following sub-section, then, I further extrapolate the interpretivist position in relation to intergroup contact theory and Orientalism and move towards a coherent research

design. My research approach complements the dominant research traditions of both, thus, I develop the arguments made in Chapter Two further from a theoretical to a methodological level.

3.1.2 A Research Design via an Engagement with the Methodologies of Intergroup Contact Theory and Orientalism

The methodological impetus for understanding intergroup contact theory stems from the original insights shared by Allport (1979) in *The Nature of Prejudice*, although, knowledge on the subject has developed far beyond the author's writings to reveal new layers of inquiry such as intercultural knowledge and 'imagined contact'. Methodologically, Jackson and Sheriff (2013) and McKeown and Dixon (2017) have noted how scholars have predominantly adopted quantitative strategies commonly associated with positivism as the *de facto* framework for developing knowledge on contact. Consequently, research has principally focused on structured intergroup contact and explicit contact experiences using self-administered questionnaires (Christ and Wagner, 2013; McKeown and Dixon, 2017). The former relies on manipulating contact situations across controlled settings like in a factory or classroom e.g., through requiring different groups to work together to complete tasks while being observed.

Quantitative approaches to research have undoubtedly contributed to the generation of knowledge on intergroup contact theory. As McKeown and Dixon (2017: 4) acknowledged, this approach "formed the bedrock of most of what we know." Quantitative-based enquiries have comprehensively been employed to verify, elaborate on and falsify much of Allport's original hypothesis. Pettigrew and Tropp's (2006) meta-analysis sustained this argument, as they noted 81% of reviewed articles employed quantitative methods, notably self-administered questionnaires. However, it is fair to argue intergroup contact theory has lingered in what Kuhn (2012 [1962]) described as a prolonged 'normal science phase.' Within the natural sciences, Kuhn (2012) argued a mature science has two phases: a 'normal science' in which previous scientific endeavours establish a disciplinary foundation and a period of 'crises/revolution' where previous foundational norms are replaced with new foundations. The 'normal science' phase is characterised by an adherence to a single paradigmatic and methodological convention, while the latter denotes its absence.

Thus, since the writings of Allport in 1954, the methodological potential and applicability of contact theory have been limited to their quantitative basis, especially in relation to developing a wider understanding of contact, e.g., regarding wider issues of power. For example, scholars have criticised the literature for obscuring and relegating the lived experience of intergroup encounters from the perspective of the participants and how they construct said encounters to a set of pre-determined concepts/variables that serve as an abstraction from the participants' lives (Dixon et al., 2005; Christ and Wagner, 2013; Jackson and Sheriff, 2013; Paolini et al., 2018). Dixon et al. (2005: 701-706) argued,

> Participants' own concepts of contact are quietly subsumed by concepts grounded in the academic literature on the contact hypothesis...By substituting their own analytic categories for those of their respondents, social psychologists have obscured the fact that lay interpretations of contact may in themselves enable the reproduction of racism...What is required then, is a methodological framework that proceeds not from a top-down imposition of pre-given categories but from a detailed, bottom-up analysis of participants own frameworks of meaning as they are applied within particular social context

Interpretivist scholarship, then, drawing on qualitative methods is, I argue, better placed to tease out England football fans' constructions, interpretations and the meanings they apply to their encounters in everyday World Cup spaces. Not only can this provide a 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973) of their interactions, but it is significant for understanding wider discourses of Othering, particularly how it functions and how it is challenged or reinforced by fans. Understanding contact from their own point of view can potentially reveal the messiness and complexity of their experiences in Qatar. These experiences cannot be fully interpreted by adopting self-administered questionnaires, nor is it achievable or necessary to test contact by controlling encounters between the England fans and Muslims. Adopting a qualitative approach drawing on semi-structured interviews, audio-visual diaries and photo-elicitation interviews to examine everyday encounters can provide a rich ground for providing new insights into intergroup contact theory and Orientalism.

Some scholars have incorporated interpretive research designs coupled with qualitative techniques, including Dixon and Reicher (1997) and Dunne (2013). Yilam et al.'s (2021) study provides an excellent example of how qualitative interviews can give a welcome voice to perceived outgroup members, regarding their experiences of living in a multicultural society (Australia). The authors were able to tease out and capture how Muslim Australians give meaning

to their encounters in everyday spaces. This served to 'demonstrate the heterogeneity of [the] respondents' experiences through discussing several themes that emerged from the interviews,' rather than generalising their experiences as "typical" young Muslim Australians (Yilmaz et al., 2021: 7). Although the authors focus on an outgroup perception, this study resonates strongly with my own, considering it deals with how groups come into contact in natural everyday spaces that are not predetermined by researchers. It also highlights how a greater insight into contact can be achieved through the subjectivity of participants. While limited in number, these studies begin to justify and reveal the scope of embracing methodological diversity via qualitative strategies within contact scholarship. More interpretive approaches, I argue, can bridge the gap between theory and practice, ensuring intergroup contact literature does not appear as an abstraction from those studied. More importantly, such acknowledgement can sustain a broader understanding of intergroup relations for the near future.

There is yet a general acceptance of more interpretative methodologies and qualitative techniques within contact scholarship. However, I am encouraged by and reinforce the arguments made by Dixon et al. (2005), Jackson and Sheriff, (2013), McKeown and Dixon (2017) and Paolini et al. (2018); and other scholars starting to challenge the 'normal science' phase by calling for more interpretive and qualitative approaches. A period of 'revolution' is necessary to avoid the contact literature becoming stagnant and limited in its ability to understand the nature of contact, and *how* and *why* it can be effective. Hence, I contend the traditional and dominant quantitative designs are ill-equipped at providing a deeper understanding of the meanings football fans bring into contact, their attitudes and the socio-cultural influences that underpin them. More qualitative approaches are needed in this period of 'revolution' to theoretically advance the literature. However, I acknowledge the findings from a qualitative approach cannot be generalised to all England fans or the general population. Rather, my focus on developing an in-depth understanding on a particular group of people can provide a lens into both contact and Orientalism because their constructions and experiences may be applicable in other cases, such as upcoming sporting events in the Arabian Peninsula. Further, by adopting a relativist ontology and an epistemology influenced by social constructionism, my own viewpoints support a qualitative approach.

Similar to the developments of intergroup contact theory, the methodological impetus of Orientalism is influenced by Edward Said's (2003) formative text, *Orientalism*. Unlike intergroup contact theory, however, there are no clear or coherent guides. Scholarship is eclectic and focuses

on discourse analysis, which is concerned with analysing texts and the visual representation of the Orient (Said, 2003). Thus, it is difficult and unnecessary to engage with the methodologies associated with Orientalism. Instead, my approach is to disrupt Orientalism. I do so by adopting a methodological approach that is concerned with the voices of football fans as opposed to texts or images. As I have argued, this is critical for identifying how processes of Othering manifest in practice amongst the general population.

Further, I am also influenced by scholarship focused on the social scientific analysis of sport events and tourism - both significant aspects of the fans' experiences. I support the arguments developed by Getz (2007) and Weed (2014). Getz (2007) advocated moving beyond the praxis of merely describing tourist motives, behaviours and profiles towards developing a deep understanding of experiences. Weed (2014: 1-2) meanwhile has noted the importance of capturing sport event tourism experiences, "knowledge about sport tourists' experiences and behaviours is key to understanding the relationship between sport and tourism [and events]." I contend developing an understanding of football fans sport event experiences and tourism within a particular context (the 2022 World Cup) can contribute to a deeper understanding of this relationship and can be used as a context to understand wider social and cultural issues. For example, research adopting qualitative approaches by Green and Chalip (1998), Shipway et al. (2016) and McManus (2020) has all highlighted how interpretive methodologies can provide fresh insight into international sporting spectacles and attendees' tourism experiences by revealing hidden layers of meaning such as sports fan identities and sub-cultural practices.

I argue a qualitative approach then, was seemingly best placed to answer the research aims and objectives of this study. For example, qualitative strategies are often used to capture human emotions, thoughts, feelings and experiences that are not easily quantifiable (Bryman, 2016; Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). Geertz (1973: 6) noted such an approach can provide a "thick description" of the previously unknown. It is this pluralisation of the life world that I sought to capture, as it allowed me to search deep into the minds of the fans' as they expressed themselves as individuals and football fans. Their encounters and socio-cultural experiences are told as it was lived by them, enabling the fans to have ownership over the constructions they used. Furthermore, I contend a qualitative strategy was best placed to advance knowledge on the intergroup contact literature.

3.1.3 A Case Study of the 2022 FIFA Men's World Cup in Qatar

My research design is informed by a qualitative 'pre-during-post' case study that focuses on capturing the fans 'pre-event' perceptions, their 'during-event' lived experiences and encounters and their 'post-event' reflections of Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula. Yin (2014: 2) noted a case study,

> investigates a contemporary phenomenon in its real world-context (the case study), especially when boundaries between phenomenon and context may not clearly be evident; and in which multiple strategies of inquiry are used.

This is an in-depth methodological design that arises out of a desire to retain a holistic perspective of a case, such as studying individual life cycles, small groups or events (Yin, 2014; Bryman, 2016). Jones (2022: 121) states case study scholarship is based on the argument "that developing a rich understanding of an issue requires analysis of both its development over time and the context within which it occurs." Accordingly, this design is particularly salient for exploring and explaining *how* and *why* questions. Case studies have been categorised into descriptive, exploratory and explanatory cases, with the latter permitting a richer level of understanding of phenomena (Yin, 2014; Schwandt and Gates, 2018). They are often inquired about by using multiple research methods, such as interviews, participant observations, archival records, life histories, discourse analysis and diaries. Thus, it is a multi-method design that permits a sense of flexibility to approach the case in numerous ways relevant to the research purpose. Applied to this study, the case study focussed explicitly on England football fans' attitudes and experiences towards Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula in the context of the 2022 World Cup. It is thus both exploratory and explanatory as it explains *how* and *why* fan experiences can potentially change their perceptions of Muslims and Islam post-World Cup (Schwandt and Gates, 2018).

This World Cup was an obvious case to explore England football fans' experiences and attitudes towards Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula, considering the event was the first men's World Cup to be hosted within a non-secular Islamic society. Case study designs, Yin (2014) asserted, are useful for being able to describe and explain a unique or rare situation that has yet to be explored in detail. Moreover, by focussing on England football fans, I recognise the limitations of the specific participants of the study. I am not seeking to provide a generalisation on all England fans or people from England, while I acknowledge England and the wider United Kingdom have been shaped by dominant engagements as discussed earlier, my focus is

specifically on England football fans who travelled to and therefore experienced the various Muslim and Islamic cultures in the Arabian Peninsula. Notably, the study is not limited to Qatar either, considering some participants stayed in other countries within the region throughout the duration of the tournament. I argue this case study can serve as a signpost for future scholars, inquiring into sport tourism events in different non-secular Islamic societies with a myriad of participants. This can help develop a bourgeoning literature base on the wider social and cultural impacts of hosting events in non-secular Islamic societies, such as Qatar.

I further argue a 'pre-during-post' case study design is appropriate for capturing a particular element of the event and intertwining it with wider socio-cultural issues, such as discourses of Otherness and prejudice. The purpose of a 'pre-during-post' case study design is to provide a deeper understanding of the 2022 World Cup that is not limited to the event itself (Getz, 2007). For example, Florek et al. (2008) employed a 'pre-during-post' methodological research design to understand the experiences of New Zealand fans who had travelled to the World Cup in Germany in 2006. The design permitted a lively picture of the fans' image perception of the host country as a tourist destination. Crucially, the authors were able to compare the fans before and after perceptions to determine if attending the event had symbolic and transformational impacts on their attitudes. Qualitative interviews during the event further solidified a holistic picture of the event life cycle. Clearly, inquiring into England football fans' attitudes, encounters and experiences at various stages permits a more in-depth understanding of the *processes* of contact and Othering to develop within a sport tourism event context.

3.1.4 A Note on Reflexivity

How is it that a lad from a small, predominantly white town in the West Midlands ended up writing a PhD thesis on football fans' attitudes towards Muslims and Islam? Indeed, from the outside, it is perhaps a detour from the norm. Nonetheless, to begin answering such a question, particularly within social research, is to acknowledge it is not carried out autonomously and independent from wider society or from the biography of a researcher (Seale, 2016; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2019). Thus, this position acknowledges research is not neutral. I have an active role in generating knowledge and as Seale (2016) noted, how empirical knowledge is collected in response to a research question is open to interpretation. Different scholars bring different beliefs and values, which come to shape the research approach taken, the questions asked and the analysis produced.

Within social inquiry, it is commonplace for scholars to reflect upon this process using 'reflexivity.' However, much confusion exists over the term and how to 'do' reflexivity. Hammersley (2023), for example, highlights the many different interpretations and definitions that exist. Simply put, Denzin and Lincoln (2018: 143) defined 'reflexivity' as 'the process of reflecting critically on the Self as researcher.' Similarly, Henninck et al. (2020:19) notes it is 'a process that involves conscious self-reflection on the part of researchers to make explicit their potential influence on the research process.' It is a researcher's understanding of their place within the social world into which they are inquiring. It addresses the why and how of their position - in this case, why I decided to study football fans and Islam - and how my position can influence the fans' responses and contribution to knowledge. Hence, reflexivity is a process used within interpretive, qualitative inquiry to address questions of validity, authenticity and legitimacy of a study (Seale, 2016; Denzin and Lincoln, 2018; Henninck et al., 2020).

I follow Hammersley's (2023) conceptual overview of 'reflexivity', which acknowledges three practical forms related to undertaking social inquiry. Firstly, *existential reflexivity* recognises researchers are a part of the social world they are inquiring, rather than being separate and distinct from it. Thus, my assumptions, beliefs and values may influence the phenomena under investigation. This is achieved by reflecting upon my own situatedness within the research - that is my 'positionality'. I understand positionality to be distinct but interrelated to reflexivity, with the former used to delineate my position within the study, e.g., what is my personal biography and who am I in relation to the fans'? I reflect on these questions in the sub-section below by providing a reflexive account of my personal journey and subsequent interest in the research purpose. However, throughout the research process, I continuously reflect on my values and beliefs, particularly in relation to my own views on and engagements with Muslims, Islam and the 2022 World Cup. For the most part, they are fluid and developed over the course of this thesis.

Secondly, *practical reflexivity* logically follows on from the above. As Hammersley (2023) explains, it is a normative requirement that requires scholars to continuously monitor themselves and the research process to identify any challenges of a study. I achieved this through documenting analytical memos (see Appendix 1 for an example) throughout the research process, such as making reflections on the research process and the strategies used. This permitted space to identify any inherent shortcomings of my approach and to capture my thoughts and feelings. Further, such an approach permits a deeper lens into my own positionality as it relates to being an England fan in Qatar.

The final form relates to *reporting reflexivity*, which seeks to facilitate the assessment of a research report by the reader. Hence, throughout I reflect and provide information about the research process to assist the reader in understanding the steps I follow and why. Hammersley (2023) notes at this stage it is important to provide a balanced overview of this process, one in which is neither too detailed nor too limited.

From the 'Yard' to Qatar via Southampton, South Korea and Brighton: My Journey

In 2002, the World Cup, jointly hosted by South Korea and Japan, ignited my passion for football. As a 9-year-old, it was the first tournament I truly understood. The event introduced me to new countries, flags and cultures, which sparked curiosity inside of me. I wanted to know more about the teams I was watching, so I would spend hours playing on the official video game and collecting stickers to try and develop a familiarity with the different players, nations and stars of the game. Everything about the tournament captivated me and acted as a catalyst for my desire to one day attend a World Cup.

The following year, my dad started to take me to watch Aston Villa before we became season ticket holders for the 2004/5 and 2005/6 seasons. This is where my interest in all things football and indeed sports was truly cemented. I became a 'fanatic.' My bedroom was adorned in Aston Villa merchandise, and I watched as much football on TV as I could, including the excellent *Futbol Mundial*, which introduced me to footballing cultures across the globe. In school, I competed for every sports team, from football, cricket, basketball, cross-country running - and even rugby, a sport I loathe. On family holidays, my first port of call was finding out who the local football team was and if I could buy a replica shirt or that of the nation.

However, my indoctrination to becoming a regular Aston Villa match-goer also introduced me to wider socio-cultural and political issues and debates on multiculturalism, nationalism, national identity and discrimination, although at the time my comprehension or understanding of these issues was limited. I was born in Hereford, a small city in the West Midlands, and I was raised in Bromyard (known locally as the Yard), a small market town in the county of Herefordshire. Growing up, and to this day the town is predominantly White. So, travelling to Aston - a diverse ward in the city of Birmingham where, according to the latest national census (2021), 69.9% of the inhabitants are broadly described as Asian, with 77.9% of the population describing themselves as Muslim - felt like entering a completely different world.

The streets of the Yard could not have been further apart from Aston. The names of shops in the latter were in a language I could not understand, the streets looked deprived, windows were boarded up, and I can remember one clothing store that had four mannequins in the window advertising women's clothing completely unfamiliar to me. This sense of difference was further explained by my travel companions, who would play a game of "spot the white person" and make other

comments on the perceived deprivation and criminality of the area. A mosque formally known as the "President Saddam Hussein Mosque" was constantly pointed out to me, perhaps as a symbol of anti-Britishness and as a reference to complete religious, socio-cultural and political difference (at this time the UK was at war in Iraq and Afghanistan). As an 11–13-year-old, I did not pay too much attention to these comments; I did not really understand them, but of course, these early memories had a formative role on my perceptions of Asians/Muslims as different from me. I was cautious of them. A point in which cemented itself a few years prior, in 2001, during the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centers in New York on 9/11. Future terror-related events like the 7/7 bombings in July 2005, London added to my insecurity and caution towards Muslims.

Despite my trepidation and suspicion of Muslims I never expressed or held any deeply rooted prejudices. I found it difficult to show sympathy towards them and could not understand why people would kill thousands of innocent people in the name of a religion. Throughout secondary school I was indifferent; for the most part I was insulated living in the Yard, where the only real dividing lines or issues were between different secondary schools or youths from different towns - young rivalries more than anything. Muslims or Islam were simply not a topic of conversation; it was more girls, football, movies and trying to get someone to buy us alcohol. Racial jokes, however, were frequently shared; 'bantering' was common place, and even bullying amongst my friendship group. I engaged in all the above activities, sometimes even instigating them, but to me at the time this was a normality. I do not believe I or any of my friends were hostile or prejudiced towards others.

It was not until 2015, when I started University in Southampton for a degree in Sport Studies, that I developed a passion for academia and became more politically aware of the world around me. I started to challenge my own beliefs and assumptions and those of others. I was still indifferent towards Muslims and Islam, but my interest in politics and usage of Twitter began to shape my political and socio-cultural attitudes. This was also around the time where Brexit and Donald Trump frequently filled discussion shows and framed arguments online between different people (often strangers). The language people would use, the sweeping generalisations made, and the outright xenophobia and racism directed towards minority groups in society - including Muslims - were unsettling to me. I found it difficult to comprehend how certain people could be discriminatory and make generalisations amongst groups of people. Discourses of minority groups as troublemakers and dangerous just didn't make sense to me considering all the troublemakers I knew were white and from my hometown. I found myself vehemently disagreeing with arguments made by Brexiters and Donald Trump, with both seemingly revealing a strong political attitude within me in which I was not aware I even had.

In September 2017, I moved to South Korea to become an English language teacher. Not only did this experience rekindle my love for football, but it was the first time I attended a sports mega-event - the 2018 Winter Olympics. It was also a period of reflection wherein I realised I wanted to pursue a career teaching the social study of sport at a university level. It was also here where I met a person who, for the first time, I felt was genuinely prejudiced towards minority groups, including Muslims.

He was also an English language teacher. We started off as friends, but every interaction we had become political. He was an avid supporter of Nigel Farage; he referred to London as "no-go zone" and believed he would be stabbed by black people if he visited the capital. He spoke of an Islamic invasion taking over the UK, denied that Palestinians had their own land, and at one point he even jokingly referred to me as a "soy boy" for drinking almond milk. Evidently, however, he was incredibly articulate and could express his opinion in academic language. I found his arguments deplorable and could never understand how or why something could hold such views or be so concerned by people he had no contact with.

Nevertheless, my time in South Korea was enriching for numerous reasons, but in 2018 I moved again. I started an MA degree in Sport and International Development at the University of Brighton. It was here where I felt I truly started to enjoy academia and to excel within the subject. It was also here I wanted to pursue a PhD to help me achieve my aspiration of becoming a lecturer. I sought a topic that could integrate my love of sporting events with wider socio-political interests in understanding prejudice. The World Cup in Qatar provided a novel context to do so. From the outset, my position on Qatar has been characterised by an initial period of frustration, considering they were awarded the rights ahead of England, towards an acceptance. Currently I share no strong views either way, perhaps because I am a White, heterosexual male who was unaffected by Qatari laws and customs. My views on Muslims and Islam, however, have considerably shifted, so much so that I get angry when people generalise or pigeonhole them. I actively seek to challenge and understand why people think the way they do. In short, I have sympathy for Muslims and want to develop a deeper appreciation of the various communities and their religion, but also of other people, places and cultures more broadly.

It is hoped this brief reflexivity has illustrated not only my rationale for deciding to develop a PhD thesis on Muslims, Islam and the 2022 World Cup but also how my perceptions have been influenced, developed and evolved over time. Crucially, I acknowledge that my own story influences the entire thesis and influences how I interpret and analyse the findings. I am not a detached observer, rather I am situated within the social world. The following section provides an in-depth account of the proposed strategies of inquiry that rest behind my methodology. I also illuminate the challenges of doing research and the decisions made.

3.2 Methods

In this section, I outline and reflect on the different methods adopted within this study that contributed towards a 'pre-during-post' case study design. As the preceding sections have highlighted, various types of quantitative and qualitative strategies are available to social scholars inquiring into the social world. My arguments on intergroup contact theory and Orientalism, position on the philosophy of science, and personal beliefs have positioned this research within a qualitative approach. Thus, I drew upon multiple methods of inquiry to reach a rich and detailed understanding of England football fans' reflections and experiences of Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula in the context of the 2022 World Cup. Specifically, the methods I drew on were a) semi-structured interviews, b) audio-visual diaries, c) photo-elicitation interviews and d) field notes. Given the 'pre-during-post' emphasis of this study, I initially conducted research in three phases:

- **The 'pre' event phase:** In this phase semi-structured interviews were conducted in the UK to engage the fans in a conversation on their perceptions of Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula, and to identify any socio-cultural frames embedded within their discourses. It also permitted space to discuss the second phase of research.
- **The 'during' event phase:** In this phase fans were asked to keep an audio-visual diary whilst in the Arabian Peninsula for the World Cup, these in-situ diaries were used to capture their lived experiences and to detail their encounters, behaviour and leisure activities. During this stage I also travelled to Qatar for a small-scale participant observation and recorded field notes. The purpose of which was to contextualise the fans experiences and to engage them in a deeper reflective conversation during the 'post-event' phase.
- **The 'post' phase:** In this phase of the research semi-structured interviews were adopted that drew upon photo-elicitation e.g., fans were asked to share images with so I could engage them in a reflexive conversation.

The 'pre-during-post' approach permitted a fluid, dynamic picture to develop on the fans' experiences and perceptions. However, the research process was far from straightforward. At times, complications with sampling, access to fans and other in-situ developments required adapting and progressing the original 'pre-during-post' research design. This reinforced Crotty's (1998) point that qualitative scholarship is a maze that must be navigated, but that it can also be

'messy.' In the following sub-sections then, I provide a reflexive account on my research journey beginning with identifying the England fans, the challenges associated with attempting to recruit them and provide an overview on *who* they are. Following this, I discuss the methods used in this study by addressing the practicalities of each before reflecting on the politics of research throughout the 'pre-during-post' phases.

3.2.1 "Reaching Out" Identifying and Connecting the England Fans

At the very start of my journey as a PhD student at the University of Brighton I decided to focus on inquiring into the 2022 World Cup for the reasons discussed within my reflexivity (see Section 3.1.4). Early meetings with my supervisors solidified my approach and helped narrow the focus and scope of my thesis. Based on the changing culture of England fandom (as discussed in Chapter One), I sought to provide a particular understanding on England fans' perceptions, experiences and reflections of Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula in the context of the 2022 World Cup. This marked a significant milestone in the research process as I identified the sample group of this study. Emmel (2013) noted the logic of purposefully selecting research participants is that it can provide information-rich cases in which participants possess certain characteristics or traits. In this context identifying England fans' who were travelling to, consuming and experiencing the 2022 World Cup was significant. Not only because how they experienced the World Cup and who they encountered was critical for developing a socio-cultural understanding of the impacts related to the event, but they were able to provide a 'thick description' of their interactions and experiences compared fans that stayed at home.

Initially, I considered only recruiting supporters who lived within the UK. It was my belief they would be more familiar with the socio-cultural and historic contexts of relations between Muslim communities and others. However, as I searched for multiple online fan spaces, especially on Facebook and X (formally Twitter) it became increasingly obvious through reading member posts that a significant number of 'ex-pats' were active members of the groups. These supporters frequently commented about following England in major international tournaments, with some even sharing their travel plans for Qatar. Hence, I believed it was unnecessary to exclude these fans, as they could provide valuable comparative insights into their World Cup journeys. Two of the fans I interviewed did live overseas in the USA and Canada, respectively.

Despite identifying the participants based on their attendance at the World Cup, I sought to remain as open as possible to potential supporters. My aim was to encourage participants from a variety of backgrounds, including female fans, LGBT+ fans, supporter clubs, packaged travel groups and/or fans travelling unaccompanied, and fans that had previously travelled to the Arabian Peninsula, but not lived there. My rationale for this was twofold. Firstly, obtaining a range of different voices could have enriched the overall findings by permitting a novel lens into the multiple identities and experiences of England fandom in a non-secular Islamic society. For example, detailing the experiences of women could have illuminated a different understanding of the World Cup and intergroup relations compared to male supporters, especially in the context of the position of women in Qatari society. Similarly, I acknowledged England fans are not a homogenous entity; therefore, my objective was to capture the heterogeneity of England fandom that is often missing in much of the academic literature (other than Perryman, 2008). Secondly, I, perhaps naively assumed it would be easy to reach a sizeable number of fans who would be travelling to the tournament and believed fans from multiple backgrounds would be happy to talk to me - a point I discuss further below. Primarily, this was based on my belief that England always have a substantial following at major international spectacles as seen through mediated images of previous World Cups and in media discourses.

Having identified the participants and obtained ethical approval by the University of Brighton's Tier 2 Ethics Committee, I started to recruit England fans in July 2022. To do so, I shared posts on multiple social media sites, including Facebook, X, the England Supporters Travel Forum blog[12] and BigSoccer.com[13]. On Facebook, I personally joined multiple England supporters' groups and acquired permission from group administrators to share a few posts. On Twitter, I shared a personal tweet using the hashtags #threelions, #englandfans, #WorldCup2022 and #Qatar2022 to generate likes and retweets from other users. Within the first few days of sharing posts, I received some interest from prospective participants either through comments, private messages or via email. In total, I corresponded with 18 people; however, only seven initially agreed to take part in the study.

Once I made initial contact, I believed I could complement my purposeful sampling approach with snowball sampling, a strategy that differs from the former. Noy (2008), referred to the latter

---

[12] To post on the Official England Supporters Away forum I became a paid member of the England Travel Club.
[13] An international online forum focused on football. To share posts on the website one has to sign up and become a member.

as accessing further participants through contact information provided by other participants. I had hoped the fans would be able to help me identify others who were planning to travel to the World Cup and who may have been interested in taking part. However, out of the total number of supporters I spoke to across the whole study (14) only one fan was recruited through this strategy.

As mentioned, I thought that it would be relatively easy to recruit England fans, not only because I believed a large cohort of supporters would make the trip to Qatar, but I genuinely assumed they would want to discuss their perceptions towards the 2022 World Cup. However, recruiting supporters to take part in 'pre-event' interviews proved to be a difficult endeavour. I believe the reason for this was two-fold. Firstly, it was widely reported that only a limited number of England fans would make the journey to Qatar compared with previous tournaments. *The Daily Mail*, for example, reported that only 4,000 fans had travelled to the event (Robinson, 2022). I further observed on Facebook groups and forums fans frequently comment they were going to avoid travelling to the tournament for several reasons, which included the assumed cost of accommodation and the expectation that alcohol consumption would be limited. Secondly, the nature of the study itself could have been a reason, given the recruitment posters specifically advertised that participation would include two interviews and for them to complete audio-visual diaries. Some fans may have also not wanted to discuss topics laden with social, cultural and political sensitivity and instead just wanted to enjoy the festivities. Further, after speaking to one participant, it became apparent that the official supporters' forum was barely used by the fans and that a sizeable number of them travelling to Qatar were members of a WhatsApp group instead. The fan in question did attempt to request my participation in the group but was unsuccessful.

I also attempted to recruit participants throughout the World Cup itself for 'post-event' interviews. I sought to have informal conversations with England fans I met in Qatar anyway as part of my general observations. I had hoped through these conversations I could obtain some contact details and arrange interviews for after the tournament. However, as I elaborated in my research diary (see Appendix 2), this was more difficult than first thought. Despite speaking to several fans throughout and acquiring some basic contact information, I could not arrange any interviews. In two instances, having sent a friendly email, I received no response from the potential participants. Another potential respondent agreed to an interview but cancelled a few days before it was scheduled to take place, and, despite a few attempts to rearrange, did not respond to my request. In another instance, a potential participant responded that they were 'sorry but had too much going on.'

Given the challenges I faced recruiting participants, the recruitment process was ongoing throughout 2023. During this period, I once again shared posts on the official England supporters' forum, advertised my research on my own personal X and Facebook accounts. The nature of these posts was slightly different, and I highlighted the fans experiences as something in which I was interested. Facebook proved to be a valuable tool because I was able to correspond with numerous supporters throughout the year, with an additional seven fans agreeing to interviews - although one of the supporters 'ghosted' me on two occasions by not showing up to a scheduled Microsoft Teams interview. In total 14 people took part in my study, however, given the recruitment challenges not all participants took part in every stage of the research. Overall, the difficulties I faced in recruiting England fans highlighted the challenges of doing qualitative research. It is an inherently complex process that is subject to refinement.

3.2.2 "Follow England Away": Meet the Fans

After I had made initial contact with potential participants and once an interview date had been confirmed, I sent each fan an informed consent form (see Appendix 3) and participant information sheet (see Appendix 4). They were given the option to complete the form electronically or if we were set to meet in person to print a physical copy to sign. I also took my own physical copy to ensure informed consent was signed before the interview commenced. All the fans signed the form, and all were given the option to remain anonymous prior to the first interview. To note, all the fans agreed I could use their first names. As Appendix 3 illustrates, the informed consent form also covered audio-visual diaries, 'post-event' interviews and photo-elicitation. All the interviews were audio-recorded using the Microsoft Teams app or on my smartphone (if in person) with permission from the supporters. Each recording was instantly uploaded to Microsoft OneDrive in accordance with the University of Brighton's research data management policy.

Throughout all my interviews with the fans I asked for some basic demographic information (e.g., age, job, education level), although not all the fans disclosed their age, nor did I consider it important. Their education level and job were a far more important demographic indicator of who they were as fans. For example, their nature of employment or retired status significantly contributed to their fandom and ability to not only follow England around Europe but also to travel to various World Cup tournaments internationally. Subsequently, most fans were well travelled, while some had previously visited Qatar and other non-secular Islamic societies and were thus able to reflect on their experiences. I also asked the supporters about their away travel

experiences and travel experiences in general to get a sense of who they were as people and as fans (see Table 1 on pages 75-78 for a short description on the fans). These introductory questions proved to be fruitful by providing a space for the fans to ease into the interview and allowing them to discuss and reflect on any memories that were important to them. This further helped ease me into the interviews as I was able to draw on my own experiences of the World Cup, football and travel more generally.

Despite my attempt to encourage fans from a myriad of backgrounds, most of the fans who I spoke to were male (one was female) and white. This was unsurprising given much of the research into football fandom has noted how live match-going audiences, particularly within the UK, comprise of white males (see, for example, Gibbons, 2011; Pearson, 2012). Similarly, whilst it is difficult to ascertain the demographics of England fans who had travelled to Qatar for the World Cup and England fans in general, a Football Supporters' Association survey conducted in 2023 revealed how most match going fans in the UK are male (83.8%). In 2008, Perryman, however, noted how the composition of England fans had started to change. To some extent, this was reflected in the profiles of the participants I spoke to, considering five of them had travelled with their spouses; one fan even travelled with his young daughter. My observation was further reinforced by the journalist Sean Ingle who opined in *The Guardian* that the composition of England fans in Qatar was far more diverse than in previous tournaments. Ingle, for example, discusses speaking to second-generation British Indians and Pakistanis who travelled to the event to follow England (Ingle, 2022).

Furthermore, most of the England fans' who took part in this study had attended university and worked in a professional role e.g., nursing, management, the police, IT and general administration roles. A few of them were also retirees. It is my belief that those who attended university were more familiar with the research process, and thus, more willing to take part in a research study. For example, two of the supporters' discussed the nature of their postgraduate dissertations with me - one was even on football hooliganism. All the fans interviewed were not primarily drawn from what could be described as working class in terms of their employment; however, some did explicitly consider their habitus as working class. Several of them considered following England away as a space to assert their difference and resistance towards both the hooligan element of England support (or troublemakers) and the more sanitised atmosphere of home fixture. For example, one fan specifically referred to the appearance of more families attending home fixtures at Wembley and the lack of drinking, singing and dancing in the stands, especially compared to

away fixtures. However, my intention was not to capture or describe their social class, rather, the information was useful for providing a partial understanding of who they were as fans.

During the World Cup itself, a few of the fans decided to stay in Dubai and Saudi Arabia for the World Cup and subsequently flew or drove into Qatar for England games. One fan decided to use a sports tour operator considering he travelled alone. Through this, he spent the group stages of the World Cup in Qatar before relocating to Dubai for the knockout phase of the tournament. Another fan stayed in Saudi Arabia and hired a car to travel between Qatar and Bahrain where some of his friends were located during the event. The fans stayed in the region from 10 to 30 days. In the following section I present a discussion on the 'pre-during-post' research process by discussing the specific methods and the politics of 'doing' research with the fans.

Name:	Place of residence:	Education:	Research involvement:
Todd	Canada	Undergraduate degree	Pre-during-post
Todd (40-45) works in business development, sales and marketing and has lived in various places throughout the course of his life including spending 6 months in Thailand with a host family. He follows football religiously, although mostly consumes it through TV given his current place of residence. He went to his first World Cup in 2010, South Africa with a friend staying for the group stages up to the quarterfinal. He spent 20 days in Qatar and watched 16 games.			
David	East Yorkshire	BTEC qualification	Pre-interview
David (34) works as middle manager for a global pharmaceutical company in the FTSE 500. He has travelled extensively around Europe to follow England away and has rarely missed a home or away game since 2019. His first tournament experience was following England at Euro 2020 (2021). He spent 16 days in Qatar and stayed on a cruise ship. He planned on watching the last 2 England group games and the round of 32.			

Nick	London	Undergraduate degree	Pre-and-during

Nick (38) is a business development manager for a pub company. Originally, from a small town outside of Leeds, he's lived in numerous places including Brighton and has spent two summers in the United States. He has been following England home and away since 2016 when he went to the EURO's (France). His first World Cup was Russia in 2018. In Qatar he watched all England's group games and stayed on a cruise ship.

Stephen	County Durham	Postgraduate degree	Pre-during-post and supplementary

Stephen (28) works in marketing and is a passionate Sunderland supporter following them home and away. His first World Cup was Russia in 2018 and since then has rarely missed an England away game. He travelled to Qatar for 12 days with some friends and stayed in one of the fan villages. He watched England's second and third group games and the round of 32 along with some neutral games.

Ian	Brighton	Postgraduate degree	Pre-during-post

Ian (57) works for a local council and has done so for the previous 20 years. Originally from Leeds, he supports Leeds United and since 2014 has become a passionate England fan, following them home and away. Most of his travel experiences have come through following England around Europe and he attended Euro 2016 (France) and the 2018 World Cup (Russia). For the World Cup in Qatar, he decided to stay in Dubai and flew into Doha to watch all of England's group game matches and the round of 32.

Sarah	Huddersfield	Undergraduate degree	Pre-and-post

Sarah (41) is a nurse who works in the Northwest area. She has travelled internationally to Jamaica, the USA, Egypt and elsewhere in Europe. She has supported England for years and has travelled to Germany and Italy to watch England play away. Sarah also attended Euro 2020 (2021). The World Cup in Qatar was her first major international tournament. She arrived in Qatar in time for England's last group game and stayed until the final of the World Cup.

Terry	Huddersfield	Secondary school qualification	Pre-and-post

Terry (63) is a pub landlord and has a pub company. He describes himself as well-travelled having been to various countries in Europe and internationally. He has followed England for years having attended Euro 2006 in Germany, the 2010 World Cup in South Africa, and Euro 2020 (2021). For the World Cup in Qatar, he stayed for the duration of the tournament.

Ken	East Midlands	Undergraduate degree	Post-interview and supplementary

Ken (65-70) used to work in software development and other internet related stuff before gradually retiring a few years ago. He is a passionate Chesterfield supporter following them both home and away. He is well-travelled and has been to an extensive range of sports mega-events, including the World Cup 1998 in France; 2002 in Japan and South Korea; and 2006 in Germany. He also attended the rugby World Cup in Japan, 2019 as a solo traveller. Ken has also travelled to watch England rugby in Australia and has been to various other football matches around the world, including watching club football in Argentina. In Qatar for the World Cup Ken stayed in Doha, before moving to Dubai for the knockout phase of the tournament. He watched numerous World Cup games including the final.

Peter	Redditch	Undergraduate degree	Post-interview

Peter (60-65) is a retired head teacher. He worked at various secondary schools during his career within the Midlands. He is a passionate Birmingham city fan, following them home and away. Peter describes himself as well-travelled and has been to various countries both through following football and for other touristic reasons. He first went to the World Cup in Brazil 2014, before attending the Euros in France, 2016, and the World Cup in Russia, 2018. For the World Cup in Qatar, Peter stayed in Dubai and flew into Doha to watch all of England's matches.

Vince	Bolton	Unknown	Post-interview

Vince (57) is a retired police officer. He has been retired for 7-years and spends most of his time travelling. Each year he travels to West Africa using a car and a boat only as part of a sporting foundation. Vince is well-travelled and has been to the majority of Euro tournaments since 2000 and has been to the World Cup in France, 1998; Germany 2006; South Africa 2010; and Russia 2018. For the World Cup in Qatar he went out a few weeks prior to the tournament and stayed in Saudi Arabia, before driving to the border to catch a free bus into Doha for each match game. Vince also spent time in Bahrain during the tournament as some friends were based there for the World Cup.

Roger	London	Unknown	Post-interview

Roger (71) is a retired former manager for E-on. He is an avid Millwall but Roger, also watches other local football teams and frequently travels abroad to watch other club football competitions (at the time of the interview he had been to watch 70 games during the 2022-2023 season). He first attended the World Cup in 1966 and watched the final between England and West Germany. From there he has been to various major international football tournaments including to World Cups in South Africa, Japan and South Korea, and Russia. In Qatar he watched 16 games and stayed in the country for over two-weeks.

Tom	London	Unknown	Post-interview

Tom (73) is a retired nurse, who worked in clinical practice, management, and teaching and education. He also worked for a union and is an active member of the Labour Party. Tom is a passionate West Ham supporter at tries to attend most of their games. He has frequently travelled around the world, even attending the 2000 Summer Olympics in Sydney. Prior to Qatar, he and his wife drove from the UK to Russia for the 2018 World Cup. In Qatar, he and his wife travelled for England's final group game match and stayed for the rest of the tournament.

John	East Midlands	Undergraduate degree	Post-interview

John (45) works for a local council within their marketing department, he is also a freelance journalist. He is a passionate Coventry City fan and watches them home and away most weeks. John started attending England matches after the World Cup in Brazil 2014. Since then, he has been to numerous home and away games and travelled to the Euros in France 2016 and to the World Cup in Russia, 2018. John travelled to Qatar for 8 days with his young daughter and wife. They watched 6-games in total.

Declan	Florida, USA	Undergraduate degree	Post-interview

Declan (45-55) has his how IT recruiting company and is based in Florida where he went to college on a football scholarship (soccer). He first went to the World Cup in Mexico 1986 and has been to every event since apart from Italy, 1990. Declan travelled to the World Cup in Qatar with his 3 sons where they stayed in an apartment for the majority of the tournament. In total, Declan watched 19 World Cup games.

Table 1: A Short Description of the Fans.

3.2.3 'Pre-Event' Interviews

What are Semi-Structured Interviews?

I considered the narrative account of individual England fans as a critical element for the 'pre-event' phase of this research. Interviews in general are a popular qualitative research tool employed within the social sciences (Bryman, 2016). Weiss (1995) noted how much we, as people, can learn from conducting qualitative interviews, including people's lived experiences, their perceptions, and how others interpret their thoughts and feelings. This point is salient for advancing contact scholarship as Dixon et al. (2005) noted, there has been a relative scarcity of a bottom-up analysis of intergroup contact that pays attention to people's own concepts of contact and their interpretations of encounters. Thus, it permits a lens into the past of the participants, and

experiences or an event that has occurred. Such a position reinforced my ontological approach as I sought to understand how the supporters gave meaning to their experiences and intergroup relations. Therefore, in-depth interviews were well placed to tease out fans' concepts of contact and their 'pre-event' perceptions.

Specifically, I adopted a semi-structured interview approach during the 'pre-event' phase. A semi-structured interview serves as a useful balance between a structured and unstructured approach (Brinkmann, 2018). In practice, this approach allows respondents much more freedom to answer questions as they see fit and permits space to explore *why* and *how* questions in much more detail. This is important because, on the one hand, I could develop an understanding of the topic at hand and I was able to engage with the fans on a deeper level through probing their responses in more detail (Weiss, 1995), while on the other, the fans were free to talk as openly (or as little) as they wanted or discuss other issues that were important to them. Therefore, my rationale for adopting semi-structured interviews was as follows: a) I sought to develop a detailed description of the fans, including their personal backgrounds, to acquire a rich understanding of their lives; b) I sought to integrate a plurality of perspectives in line with the epistemological and ontological concerns of this thesis; and c) interviews are fundamental for helping establish trust and rapport with England fans, because it provides an opportunity for the fans to discuss particular and significant episodes of their lives with me and for them to enquire into my own lived experiences. To reinforce Randall and Phoenix (2009), this can lead to a relationship to develop - albeit one restricted by the time and context of a study. I considered this critical because I expected to have contact with the supporters over a period of one-year and wanted to encourage them to take part in all phases of this research.

Process and Politics of the 'Pre-Event' Phase

During the pre-event stage, I conducted seven interviews with ethical approval from the University of Brighton's Tier 2 Ethics Committee (as discussed in more detail in Section 3.5). Table 2 (on page 80) provides a brief illustration of who I interviewed during this phase of research, the setting and date of interview. As Table 2 highlights, most discussions (six) were conducted on Microsoft Teams. The other was held in person, in a bar. Meeting online was the preferred choice for the fans; in some instances, it was also the best option for myself considering some of the fans lived quite far away from me. Equally, given the time restraints expressed by some of the supporters, they made it clear that it would be easier to meet online as opposed to in

person. Henninck (2020) outlines the disadvantages of conducting interviews online or by telephone. The author notes it can be more difficult to build trust and rapport or to probe in any depth. The screen can add distance to the interview situation, making it more difficult to read non-verbal cues, e.g., facial expressions or body language. Face-to-face interviews would have been my preferred method, however, Microsoft Teams still proved fruitful for obtaining a depth of information on the fans. Arguably, in a post-COVID world, people have become more familiar with and are used to using online tools such as Teams either for work or to converse with family and friends (Keen et al., 2022). I posit Teams also provided a sense of comfort for the supporters as they were able to speak to me from their own home or from work.

My general approach to each interview centred upon three predetermined themes, which were used to prompt further discussions with the fans (see Appendix 5 for an example of a 'pre-event' interview transcript). This approach reinforced the semi-structured nature of the interviews, permitting a natural flow to the discussions overall, allowing a rich picture to develop on who the fans were, how they constructed Muslims and Islam and their perceptions and expectations of the Arabian Peninsula, the 2022 World Cup and intergroup encounters. To help build trust and rapport, and following Henninck (2020), I did not rush into the interviews; instead, I spent time getting acquainted with the fans to ensure we both felt a sense of comfort - a more structured approach might have hindered this stage. I did so by making small talk (mostly about football) and asking them if they had any questions regarding the study right at the start. Evidently, this helped to ease into the discussions for me and the fans, with most taking a keen interest in my own football fandom and willing to share their personal stories related to following England. Furthermore, in agreement with Alaszewski (2006), building a rapport - albeit in a limited capacity (e.g., I conversed with the fans briefly before the interviews commenced), was salient at this stage so that the fans would remain motivated throughout the study and to prevent them from 'dropping out' after the first interview.

Name of interviewee	Method of interview	Date of Interview
Todd	Microsoft Teams	18th September 2022
Nick	Microsoft Teams	28th September 2022
David	Microsoft Teams	30th September 2022
Stephen	Microsoft Teams	7th October 2022
Ian	In-person (Pub)	24th October 2022
Sarah	Microsoft Teams	25th October 2022
Terry	Microsoft Teams	25th October 2022

Table 2: List of 'Pre-Event' Interviews.

Throughout the interviews I shared certain information about myself (e.g., tourism experiences) and briefly touched upon my personal perceptions, especially towards the World Cup itself. This approach was consistent with my epistemological position as I believe knowledge is socially constructed through shared meanings. For example, for me and most of the fans, this was our first-time visiting Qatar or the Arabian Peninsula, thus throughout our conversations meaning was created on the subject e.g., we discussed the types of leisure pursuits available in Qatar, which could have influenced the fans' experiences. After the research questions had been covered, I finished by discussing the logistics of the audio-visual diaries (the next phase of research), such as clarifying what they needed to do and any questions they may have had. Following this, I once again invited the supporters to ask any further questions they had about myself or the research. In agreement with Weiss (1995), I fully and honestly answered their questions, mostly; however, their questions focused on the World Cup, e.g., what games I was going to, where I was staying, etc.

A key methodological challenge relating to semi-structured interviews and exchanges more broadly concerns the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee. Scholars such as Brinkman (2018) and Henninck (2020) highlight how unequal power relations can be concealed within the interview process, more so than in quantitative research. As Brinkman (2018) acknowledges, the interviewer may (but not always) have more competency or experience within the interview setting, defining the terms of the interview. Although participants are free to evade questions and to end interviews early, there can be an unequal balance of power. Being conscious of this issue, I asked the participants if they had any questions about me or the research before commencing with the interviews and spent the five to ten minutes getting acquainted with them. I believe this highlighted to the fans they I wanted to take an active part in the discussion and was willing to be open with them. It also the parameters of a more conversational style of interview where the fans could instantly acquire a sense of power e.g., dictate what they wanted to ask me. Several of the supporters even remarked that they had enjoyed talking about their experiences. Similarly, Henninck (2020) noted, the silent messages of the interviewer, such as appearance, language and dress can influence the relationship and information the participants are willing to share. Given most the interviews were held virtually from the comfort of my own home, I ensured that my appearance was casual throughout by wearing hoodies, t-shirts and football shirts as opposed to adopting a more professional dress. This was important for reinforcing the casual and conversational style of the interview. Essentially, my approach was to be myself and dress as I normally would.

A further challenged related to discussing 'sensitive' topics that could have posed an 'intrusive threat' to the supporters (Lee, 1993). For example, my aim was to invite fans to discuss their perceptions and knowledge of Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula to bring to light or expose any perceptions and behaviours previously hidden. The fans could have felt a sense of discomfort or awkwardness during the interviews as a result. Similarly, some of the supporters could have self-censored and engaged in selective bias by masking their true feelings in fear of being challenged or scrutinised by myself. Thus, I approached each interview with an 'ethical sensibility' (Bryman, 2016; Cecchini, 2019). Cecchini (2019) notes, this is a researchers' ability to sense when ethics are at play during an interview. It is about identifying an in-situ awareness (such as participants tone of voice, facial expressions etc.) of what is happening and what could potentially be an ethical issue. For example, the fans were made aware they were free to skip questions or end the interview at any point (none did so). Similarly, I tried to ensure any 'sensitive' questions flowed naturally with the conversation, rather than appearing abrupt and out

of place. To do so, I ensured the fans were aware of the specific theme being discussed. As Jones (2022) notes, if the participants can understand why such questions are asked, then they are more likely to give a response. On one occasion, a fan did make a rhetorical statement, noting that he thought the questions were just 'going to be about the football' - although he was still more than happy to discuss at length his thoughts and opinions.

3.2.4 'During the Event': Audio-Visual Diaries & Field Notes

What are Audio-Visual Diaries?

By drawing on semi-structured interviews, my aim was to provide a comprehensive picture of the England fans' perceptions, interpretations and prior experiences of Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula in the context of the 2022 World Cup. However, these interviews could only ever provide a partial representation - that is, their 'pre-event' interpretations. I wanted to provide a more holistic account of the fans' experiences, including capturing their lived socio-cultural experiences alongside any 'pre-event' perceptions and expectations and integrated with their 'post-event' reflections. My rationale for this approach was twofold. Firstly, I understand the fans' perceptions as dynamic and evolving; my aim was to capture any processes of change based on their lived experiences in Qatar in as much detail as possible, as well as their post-reflections and observations. Secondly, given the limited focus on everyday experiences within intergroup contact theory, such an approach was significant for developing knowledge on the literature. Therefore, I turn to the 'during event' phase of this study that drew on audio-visual semi-structured diaries. Notably, I considered this strategy because it permitted the fans to record, listen to and narrate their experiences and encounters during the 2022 World Cup 'in the moment.' Making it possible to begin to understand how they engaged with local Muslim communities and a variant of Islamic culture, as well as which leisure pursuits they took part in.

In general, the use of diaries as a research tool within social inquiry has been marginal. Bartlett and Milligan (2020: 1), argue diaries are the "poor relation" of the social sciences, especially in qualitative research designs. Nevertheless, scholars have argued how solicited diaries - day-by-day accounts people have been asked to keep - are a valuable tool for research (Alaszewski, 2006; Bartlett and Milligan, 2020). They can be used to capture the weight and meanings people give to various experiences, events, issues and activities in their lives without responding to an interviewer's questions. Diaries, then, are well suited to studies seeking to understand the

everyday experiences of participants and for exploring evolving behavioural change. Moreover, diaries are inherently personal, enabling participants like football fans to frame their own narratives in regard to what they see as important. Therefore, solicited diaries are naturalistic and champion participants' points of view (Alaszewski, 2006).

Semi-structured audio-visual diaries was the most suitable approach for achieving the research purpose. Like semi-structured interviews, this diary format helped bridge between both structured and unstructured forms of diary keeping. In practice, participants are provided with a 'diary guide sheet' that contains certain prompts as discussion points. As Bartlett and Milligan (2020) note, this approach permits space for participants to provide a temporal narrative of their experiences but set within the context of a handful of thematic prompts. A more structured approach on the other hand, would not have been conducive to the interpretive nature of this study, considering they require participants to log items regularly against a set of pre-defined measurements (Bartlett and Milligan, 2020).

Beyond the strengths of solicited diaries, semi-structured records were particularly salient for the 'during-event' stage because they captured the emotions, interpretations, actions and experiences of the fans as it was lived or as close to them as was possible (Bartlett and Milligan, 2020). The pre-and-post interviews by comparison often relied on assumptions and participant recall. This ability to record instantaneously afforded a richer understanding to develop on the fans' experiences, mitigating memory vagueness and the need to recall after the event. The fans were able to record relatively mundane activities and their everyday encounters, alongside their touristic and sporting behaviours, as soon as, or a few hours after, they took place, as opposed to a few weeks. For example, one fan recorded an audio-visual the morning after an England game and reflected not only on the match but on his plans for the day.

Process and Politics of the 'During Event' Phase

As noted, the logistics of the audio-visual diaries were discussed at the end of the 'pre-event' interviews. Here, the fans were able to seek clarification on what they needed to do and how to keep their diaries. I also sent them a 'diary guide sheet' that had been discussed with them previously. I suggested the fans record diary entries on their smartphones using capture features such as voice recorders and video cameras. I considered smartphones over handwritten diaries because it provided a simpler and quicker alternative. For example, all the fans had agreed to use

their smartphone and confirmed that they knew how to use the capture features. The advantage of this was that they were able to record a voice note or video diary within minutes and could store it securely on their own device without the risk of their privacy being infringed (Garcia et al., 2016). More importantly, smartphones permitted the supporters to express themselves freely in their own spoken language/dialect without the hinderance of articulating their thoughts onto paper.

The key challenge I faced related to the response rate of the fans. Three of the supporters who had agreed to take part in this aspect of the study did not send me any diary entries, with two of them becoming ill with the dreaded 'red lion flu'[14] during the tournament. The other supporter 'dropped out' of the study. Those who did send diary entries were either sporadic or were short in length (see Appendix 6 for example audio-visual diary transcripts). For example, some fans forwarded me photographs and videos of things they found interesting, while per-entry all audio-visual diaries I received were under two-minutes. Bartlett and Milligan (2020) suggest this could relate to respondent fatigue. This occurs when diary entries become more sporadic and less detailed as a result of the participants becoming tired or too busy to record frequent, in-depth records. Despite my best efforts to send friendly reminders and motivate the fans, I recognise it took a lot of work on the fans' behalf to ensure they kept up with their diary entries, especially during the World Cup wherein they had other concerns, e.g., enjoying football and other leisure pursuits.

Nevertheless, audio-visual diaries proved to be an insightful tool for developing an understanding of the fans lived experiences during the 2022 World Cup. Most diaries I received were illuminating, and, while quite rudimentary, did reveal numerous topics and areas for further inquiry. Perhaps the most significant benefit of using this method was the spontaneity of the material some of the fans captured. For example, one fan recorded an audio-visual diary while in the airport after landing in Doha; in it he discussed his initial impressions of Doha and his interactions at the airport. Thus, while the audio-visual diaries were not as detailed as I had hoped for, they were nonetheless insightful and helped to stimulate further discussions within the next phase of the research process.

---

[14] During the tournament numerous fans commented on social media that they had fallen ill with a significant cold. This cold became known as the 'Red Lion flu' amongst supporters considering most believed they caught it in the Red Lion pub where many England fans congregated.

Field Notes in Qatar

On November 21st, 2022, I travelled to Qatar for the World Cup spending 10 days at the event. The purpose of this was to record my own observations and reflect in-situ on my interpretations and experiences of the World Cup and towards Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula. I was also able to contextualise and understand the experiences of the fans in much more depth. My rationale for adopting this approach was to not only contextualise their experiences, but to engage in a deeper conversation with the fans during the 'post-event' interview phase of research. I was able to develop questions and prompts on things that I had observed and experienced and ask the fans to reflect on them. Epistemologically, then, knowledge was created through interactions between myself and the supporters; I was also a part of the world being studied, reminding me the fans were not objects to be observed but that knowledge was relational.

Throughout my stay, I took field notes using the notebook application on my smartphone before typing the notes up onto Microsoft Word (see Appendix 2). I made observations in most of the spaces or places I visited, including World Cup venues such as the Fan Park and at stadiums. I did this because I did not want to limit my observations to particular places where I thought fans might congregate. I wanted to capture my own spontaneous interactions and observations that might have occurred outside of World Cup venues. I contend my own reflections complemented the 'pre-event' interviews and audio-visual diaries by adding a layer of depth and richness as I was able to understand the fans' experiences more clearly. As discussed, I also used my time in Qatar to interact with other England supporters in an attempt to recruit more participants. From my encounters, I was able to secure several email addresses for new participants; however, I was unsuccessful in speaking to them after the tournament had ended.

3.2.5 'Post-Event' Interviews and Photo-Elicitation

What are Photo-Elicitation Interviews?

In the previous phase of research, my aims were to capture the visual socio-cultural experiences, interpretations and reflections of the fans as they lived them during the 2022 World Cup. Through adopting this strategy alongside 'pre-event' interviews, I was able to shed light on both the fans' perceptions and their lived experiences. However, some diary entries may be laden with highly emotive and ambiguous accounts of experiences. Alaszewski (2006), for example, noted people

need time and space to truly reflect on their experiences, and while both 'pre-event' interviews and 'during' audio-visual diaries are significant methods individually, by adding 'post-event' interviews with photo-elicitation to the analysis, I was able to add another layer of depth to the study. Each phase essentially complemented one another, with each method working in synergy. I argue, this longitudinal rich nature of this approach was a significant feature of the 'pre-during-post' research design, not just for the coverage it achieved but also through revealing the nuances, complexities and processes the fans' go through in constructing their perceptions.

I wanted to encourage the fans to capture photographs or collect any artefacts, such as match programmes, in the hope they would remain motivated to complete diary entries and to feel in greater control of what they recorded (Garcia et al., 2016). Photographs of matches, touristic activities, people and interactions are easy to capture on the go and allowed the fans to express themselves in perhaps a freer way than the spoken word (Bartlett and Milligan, 2020). The fans were free to visualise their experiences, which, I argue, provided a much more dynamic and intimate understanding of their experiences to develop. During the interview I asked the fans to share some photographs or artefacts with me, for example, Ian shared an image of a Christmas tree inside of a shopping mall in Dubai. This spurred a wider conversation on the role of Western tourism in the country and on the commercial elements of celebrating Christmas in a non-secular Islamic society. Therefore, this method enabled me to probe into aspects of the fans' experiences beyond their diary entries, while providing a reflexive account overall. As Phoenix and Rich (2016) suggested, photo-elicitation interviews provide another layer of insight through the participants eyes and provides them a sense of agency. Evidently some of the fans shared images with me of things that were relevant to their own experiences, and they thought were important. Overall, photo-elicitation proved complementary for instigating a broader discussion with the supporters.

Process and Politics of the 'Post-Event' Phase

I discussed the logistics of this research with the fans during the 'pre-event' interviews and spoke to them about sharing images with me during our 'post-event' interviews. I approached the interviews like the 'pre-event' phase by adopting a semi-structured guide based on three determined themes; a) reflections of experiences, b) intergroup encounters, c) perception of the region, local communities, and Islamic culture (see Appendix 7 for an example of a 'post-event' interview transcript). However, during the interviews, I asked the fans to share images with me

if they wanted to and when appropriate. Some fans even sent me images prior to interviews via WhatsApp, which I would then integrate into the conversation to seek clarity and to ask the fans to reflect on the image. In total, I conducted 14 further interviews. Table 3 (on page 88) provides a visual representation on the number of interviews that were conducted, with who, when and the type of interview.

As highlighted, this phase of research was complex and staggered, some participants who took part in 'pre-event' interviews 'dropped out' and I faced considerable issues trying to recruit England fans to take part in this study prior to the World Cup. From the respondents who did take part in the 'pre-event' phase, I believed the analysis was only ever partial. Subsequently, while attempting to conduct 'post-event' interviews with fans who had taken part in the previous phases of this study, I also sought to recruit more participants to the study at various times and carried out interviews at sporadic and available periods. Hence, during this stage I had to change the interview schedule to accommodate supporters recruited after the 2022 World Cup. Although, I still relied upon a semi-structured approach, the pre-determined themes integrated questions from both the 'pre-event' and 'post-event' interview guides. I believed this would provide a degree of consistency in the topics covered and would permit a comparative overview between the fans. Nevertheless, all the 'post-event' interviews lasted between 60 and 150 minutes and as Table 3 illustrates the majority were conducted on Microsoft Teams for similar reasons as the 'pre-event' interviews. The in-person interviews took place in pubs at locations suggested by the participants.

Name of interviewee	Method of interview	Date of interview
Ian	In-person (Pub)	8th March 2023
Ken	Telephone	9th March 2023
Stephen	Microsoft Teams	20th March 2023
Roger	Telephone	5th April 2023
Sarah	Microsoft Teams	6th April 2023
Todd	Microsoft Teams	23rd April 2023
Peter	In-Person (Pub)	27th April 2023
Terry	Microsoft Teams	28th April 2023
Ken	Microsoft Teams (Supplementary Interview)	9th August 2024
Stephen	Microsoft Teams (Supplementary Interview)	25th August 2023
Tom	Microsoft Teams	10th November 2023
Declan	Microsoft Teams	10th November 2023
Vince	Telephone	14th November 2023
John	Microsoft Teams	15th November 2023

Table 3: List of 'Post-Event' Interviews.

My initial aim was to conduct interviews three to four months after the World Cup final. My rationale for this was because I wanted to allow the fans to take a step back and reflect on their experiences. It would have also been difficult to arrange a time to interview the fans over the Christmas and New Year period considering the World Cup final did not conclude until 19th December 2022. It was noticeable during these 'post-event' interviews how most of the participants were more comfortable discussing their perceptions and experiences in more detail

with me, especially compared to the previous phases of research. I believe this was for two reasons. Firstly, from the fans who had taken part from the beginning of the research process I had built a rapport with them - albeit a limited one, and they were also familiar with the interview process. Secondly, all the fans I believe, felt more confident discussing the topic having been to Qatar and the Arabian Peninsula, which significantly contributed to their confidence. They also all seemed to enjoy discussing what was a notable life experience with me.

However, notwithstanding the recruitment issues, two further challenges emerged during the 'post-event' stage of my study. Firstly, I conducted additional supplementary interviews with fans to tease out and discuss certain themes in more depth, especially relating to their intergroup experiences. I did so because after reading through the transcripts, I reflected upon how some supporters had mentioned certain themes without going into detail, and at the time I missed out on probing further. Moreover, one of my supervisors provided feedback on some of the transcripts, offering guidance on how to identify themes and some areas of missed opportunity. We both agreed that some of the data emerging from the transcripts was not helping me achieve the theoretical aims of my thesis. I read through all the transcripts again and selected four that I felt were limited (including the two identified by my supervisor). From here, I sent a request to the selected fans explaining why I wanted to speak with them again. Only two agreed, with the other two politely declining. Again, both were conducted on Teams with each lasting over 90 minutes. I decided to stick with a semi-structured interview approach, but I prepared more prompts to be asked if certain themes were not touched upon or were limited in scope.

Secondly, I spoke to some of the newly recruited supporters almost a year after the World Cup and subsequently they could not remember certain aspects of their experiences, especially as it related to their intergroup interactions. This somewhat juxtaposed my initial approach that I did not want to conduct 'post-event' interviews too close to the tournament, but equally I wanted to avoid meeting fans almost a year after the event because of any memory loss or recall. Similarly, I was not able to instigate a reflective conversation with them based on audio-visual diaries or photo-elicitation considering they did not take part in the research at the time. One participant did, however, show me (unprompted) a room upstairs in his house dedicated to World Cup memorabilia and photographs.

3.3 Reflections of exploratory research with England fans'

Emmel (2013) argued asking how big a sample size should be or how many interviews are enough for qualitative research is to pose the wrong question. All qualitative research takes shape in a variety of ways; no inquiry will ever be the same. A sample, then, is often determined by the nature of research itself, which includes the research purpose and objectives. Thus, a sample size is difficult to determine, with Markula and Silk (2011) suggesting in qualitative research it can range from 1 to 100 participants or interviews. The lack of clarity often causes confusion amongst qualitative inquirers. This contrasts with a quantitative approach wherein the focus of the researcher is to obtain the largest representative sample as possible to collect information from respondents through questionnaires. Instead, qualitative inquiry, like the current study, is more concerned with capturing the complexities, nuances and dynamics of lived experiences - that is, to provide a 'rich' description (Emmel, 2013; Jones, 2022). As Emmel (2013: 139) expanded,

> …seeking these accounts (lived experiences) from a sample in qualitative research means inevitably, that from the smallest to the largest qualitative study the sample can only be a fragment. Each of these fragments is a rich elaboration of experiences collected in research. They are not single data points, but detailed stories that elaborate on experience.

Nevertheless, within the literature, 'data saturation' - the stage where no new information, codes or themes arise from data collection - is considered the 'gold standard' of validating qualitative inquiry (Braun and Clarke, 2021; Jones, 2022). 'Data saturation', as Braun and Clarke (2021) argue, is often taken for granted given it raises more questions than answers. For instance, can one ever truly reach data saturation? Any new participant, interview or other strategy of inquiry can potentially yield theoretical insights into a phenomenon. I agree with Emmel (2013), who further argued it is far more useful to show the ways in which the working and reworking of relationships between ideas and evidence in research are a foundation for the claims made from research. Essentially, this is the purpose of outlining the philosophical assumptions and research process that underpin the inquiry. With this said, I never considered my inquiry closed; instead, I followed Jones' (2022) guidance one should collect as much data as possible within the restraints placed upon them.

At the time of writing, however, I have been in contact with 29 fans that expressed interest in taking part in this study throughout the different phases of the research process. Of those 29, 14 of them contributed to this study. From this, it is my contention my findings display a breadth of

understanding on fans' intergroup experiences during the 2022 World Cup and their perceptions on Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula, which have provided a 'rich' and 'thick' description to develop.

3.4 Analysing and interpreting the 'Data'

To interpret and analyse the vast amount of data collected through 'pre-event' interviews, audio-visual diaries and 'post-event' interviews, I drew upon a thematic analysis underpinned by 'descriptive' and 'In-Vivo' coding approaches (Saldana, 2021). Analysing qualitative data is a complex and 'messy' process, especially when compared with quantitative methods (Jones, 2022). In part, this is due to a lack of a universal or commonly accepted method in qualitative inquiry. Each study inevitably involves multiple analysis techniques and procedures; as Markula and Silk (2011) have argued, qualitative scholars are subjective and thus draw on several paradigmatic orientations and analysis techniques. Nevertheless, the aim of any analysis is to make sense of the data and interpret meaning so that an answer can be provided to a research question (Markula and Silk, 2011; Jones, 2022). Throughout the corpus of methods textbooks, there are several delineated frameworks to assist scholars in achieving their aims. However, I follow the approach advocated by Jones (2022) that consists of five stages: 1) data familiarisation, 2) data reduction, 3) data organisation, 4) data display and 5) conclusion. Although this should not be viewed as a linear process, scholars should constantly reflect throughout.

To begin, after each interview was conducted (pre-post and other supplementary), I saved any audio-visual recordings to my university OneDrive account. For virtual interviews on Microsoft Teams, I downloaded both the recording of the interview and the transcript provided by the software. The three in-person interviews were again audio-recorded and stored on my OneDrive account. To note, I used the same method for the audio-visual diaries the fans had sent to me. I transcribed each document manually on Microsoft Word, although Microsoft Teams provided a transcript of the interview, I found these to be inadequate. A lot of phrases, words and iterations were missed and not always clear. For example, the software was unable to pick up certain words due to my own accent and that of the fans. This process, while time-consuming, permitted me to familiarise myself with the data and identify tentative patterns/themes. Here, I engaged in a form of open coding, which was open and eclectic. Open coding is a natural starting point for scholars; as Saldana (2021) notes it is useful for getting a feel for the data in the initial stages. My analysis

at this stage was 'messy', but fruitful given that I could reflect on the process and get to know the data 'inside-out.'

Initially, I found open coding daunting and overwhelming. I had no clear thought process, as certain words, sentences and phrases were circled or assigned a random code. Despite the natural occurrence of open coding, a lot of research methods textbooks, particularly in sport and in a general context, often fail to discuss coding strategies in any real depth, leaving coding very much open to interpretation (see, for example, Jones, 2022). However, the work of Saldana (2021) helped provide clarity in this regard. It became apparent I needed to have a clear strategy in place that was best suited to helping answer my research questions; hence, 'descriptive' and 'In-Vivo' coding strategies were considered as appropriate responses.

Herein lie the second and third stages advocated by Jones (2022). I reduced the data by discarding any irrelevant information through coding, which was guided by the research questions. For example, in two transcripts, although illuminating, I discarded a large amount of interview text that focused on women's football. Such information was unnecessary in this particular study, and not entirely relevant to the research aims. As noted, I drew upon 'descriptive' and 'In-Vivo' coding simultaneously to organise the data. The former was used to apply codes to certain nouns or phrases. Saldana (2021) asserts this strategy is useful for longitudinal data as it enabled me to analyse the fan's perceptions and experiences across time. With this said, during this stage of data analysis I read through and coded the transcripts chronologically; that is, I coded pre-event interviews first, then the diary entries, followed by the post-event interviews. I believed this approach enabled me to accurately follow the fan's journey to retain a holistic and true account of their attitudes and experiences. To clarify, I coded interviews, which combined 'pre-and-post' elements with the 'post-interviews', although during this stage I constantly compared and reflected on these transcripts with the pre-interviews. 'In-Vivo' coding, on the other hand, records codes grounded in the participant's own voices. Following Saldana (2021), I used this approach to retain the nuances within the fan's responses and to prioritise their own voices. This is consistent with the interpretive assumptions underpinning my methodological choices too. Each code was then placed into a word document with the corresponding extracts.

Descriptive and 'in-Vivo' coding helped to identify key themes across the transcripts (see Appendix 8 for a visual representation of 'in-Vivo' and descriptive codes). I used analytical memos throughout this stage and continuously analysed, compared and reflected on the initial

codes in order to reduce them, first into categories and then themes. Saldana (2021) argues this stage of analysis is necessary to develop a coherent synthesis of the data. To help visualise and map the relationship between codes and themes, I presented the data graphically. This process was continuous as I revisited, replaced and moved certain codes and categories around. The themes identified are critically discussed in Chapter Four.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

All ethical procedures recommended and approved by the University of Brighton's Tier 2 Ethics Committee (April 2022) were followed. All the fans were made aware of the nature of research and that their participation was voluntary. I forwarded any potential participants an informed consent form. They were offered the right to anonymity on the informed consent form; however, all were happy to be named. A Participant Information Sheet (PIS) was also provided to potential participants to provide more information on the study. Three main ethical challenges emerged within the context of my study. Firstly, using social media to recruit participants could have breached the privacy of fans who wanted to participate by making their interest visible (e.g., responding to my Facebook posts). As a precaution, the advertisement politely asked all potential participants to respond to me via my university email address. However, supporters were free to publicly express their interests in taking part in the study via commenting and liking my advertised posts (as many did).

Secondly, as part of the research design, I travelled to Qatar for 10 days unaccompanied. Qatar was deemed a safe country to visit by the British Government's foreign travel advice website (FCDO, 2022). However, I was required to undertake a 'Risk Assessment' form by the University of Brighton, which was approved. As a personal policy, I also sought knowledge on the local laws, customs, culture and practices in Qatar so I could conduct myself in a manner that was respectful. For example, I sought out any signs or advice on taking personal photographs in private spaces, refrained from drinking alcohol and dressed modestly in public (e.g., I wore knee-length shorts) - a core principle of Qatari local culture and life (FCDO, 2022).

Thirdly, by asking the supporters to share photographs and artefacts with me during the 'post-event' phase of research, I relied on them becoming 'ethical mediators' - that is, they had to use their own ethical and moral framework when taking photographs (Cederholm, 2011). Thus, if I choose to publish an image, it is difficult to determine whether the fan has obtained consent from

people that may appear in it. Nonetheless, to mitigate this, not only did I acquire informed consent, but I also only use images within this thesis where harm is unlikely to be caused, e.g., images in public spaces where people (other than the participant) are identifiable. Further, I asked participants during the interview if they were happy to share and reflect on any artefact or image.

3.6 Chapter Conclusion – Methodology and Methods

In this chapter I have discussed the methodological approach of this thesis and have outlined the methods used to achieve a 'pre-during-post' analysis. I identified a relativist ontological position and a social constructionist epistemology to develop knowledge on how England football fans constructed, experienced and reflected on their intergroup encounters with Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula during the 2022 World Cup. I argued that this approach is not only complementary to how knowledge is developed amongst intergroup contact scholars and those researching Orientalism, but it also methodologically refines how both are understood. For example, in the context of intergroup contact theory, my thesis places the participants constructions of contact and the meanings they apply to it at the heart of the inquiry. I also discussed my reflexivity to illustrate how my own personal beliefs and values are infused throughout the study.

Within the second half of the chapter (Section 2.2) I identified the fans and reflected on the recruitment process. From this I learned a valuable lesson; qualitative research is complex and is far from a straightforward process. Purposefully recruiting participants can present numerous challenges that researchers have to overcome. Following on from this discussion I discussed and reflected on the process of using semi-structured interviews, audio-visual diaries, field diaries and semi-structured interviews with photo-elicitation. Again, the research process presented many challenges throughout, but by overcoming these challenges I believe I was able to become a more skilled researcher overall. For example, I learned that I needed to probe more during interviews, which subsequently helped me to ask critical questions on the spot. Further, this part of the chapter presented a discussion on conducting experimental research with fans, highlighted how the data was analysed and outlined the ethical procedure I followed.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

To remind the reader, the overall aim of this PhD is to critically evaluate England fans' experiences and attitudes towards Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula in the context of the 2022 World Cup and to understand whether (and if so, *how* and *why*) experiencing the World Cup in a non-secular, Islamic society can have symbolic and transformative impacts on the fans' interpretations of Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula. The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings and discussions of this study thematically. I do so by drawing on intergroup contact theory and Orientalism, both of which I integrated into discussion and intersected with one another in Chapter Two. This helps to guide the discussion and arrive at answering the research aims, objectives and key questions. The key research questions were:

The four initial themes developed from my findings and discussion are entitled: *Constructing Intergroup Encounters; The Cultural Politics of the 2022 FIFA Men's World Cup*: *England Fan's Socio-Cultural Experiences*: *Fandom and Intercultural Encounters*; *The Politics of Encounter: England Fans, Muslims and Migrant/Service Worker*. To note, the first two themes are presented chronologically as they deal with the fans' 'pre-event' perceptions. Crucially, each theme contributes towards and informs two overarching themes entitled: *The Challenges of Intergroup Contact in a Temporary Sport Setting*: and *The Proxy Case of Intergroup Contact Theory*. Essentially, both of these overarching themes summarise the key findings and mark this thesis' contributions in relation to the literature.

4.1 Constructing Intergroup Encounters

This theme evaluates how England fans construct and reflect their intergroup encounters with Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula in the context of the 2022 World Cup. By construct I am referring to how the fans socially and culturally develop their perceptions, what influences them and the discourses they use to articulate their view. This theme provides a significant socio-historic and cultural context for the reader to understand and locate the England fans' encounters during the World Cup in a wider socio-political and ideological milieu. That is, it reveals the complexities, contradictions and nuances of the supporters' pre-event perceptions and how this then contributes to their intergroup interactions at the World Cup. Hence, I entitled this theme "constructing intergroup encounters" as it incorporates, not only the fans' attitudes and

understandings of the Other but also how this is informed by wider socio-political discourses and their previous encounters.

Fans' Attitudes and Discourses of the Muslim Other

Most England fans that I interviewed were consciously aware the 2022 World Cup was to be staged within a non-secular, Islamic society for the first time. In general, they happily responded to my questions (as outlined in Chapter Three) and often opined, sharing their knowledge and understanding. I felt relatively comfortable conversing with all the participants. After a few introductory questions, I asked them directly, 'Can you share with me any thoughts you might have towards Muslims and Islam?' Their level of knowledge and prior experiences informed their responses and the categories they used to define the Muslim Other. Even the England supporters who claimed to have a limited understanding still proceeded to express an opinion. This, implied they were speaking from a position of 'knowing.' For example, when I asked Todd (who works in business, sales and marketing), the above question, he said,

> I don't know. To be honest with you, I don't know too much, so I'm kinda ignorant. Based on my job right now actually, I've learned a little bit recently. But it's just, you know, the meat they eat, and you know there a little bit more [pause] very conservative. And just the relationship between the men and women in terms of how things are done, and I know from a lot of cultures a lot of women do a lot of the work, so I've experienced that in Thailand[15]. But in terms of specifically Muslim culture, I don't really know first-hand a lot.

Therefore, Todd claimed to be ignorant regarding Muslims and Islam and was rather tentative in answering my question, yet evidently, he was still comfortable to speak from a position of 'knowing', e.g., claiming Muslims are very conservative, coupled with the belief Islamic culture is male dominated. His response reproduces certain stereotypes about Muslims and Islam, such as the assumption Muslim women are oppressed. More significantly, however, Todd essentialises Islamic, or "Muslim culture," as a single monolithic entity. When I asked the same question, Vince (a retired police officer) and David (who works for a global pharmaceutical company) expressed a similar sentiment,

---

[15] Todd is referring to Thai culture, which based on his own experiences (he lived there for 6 months) is also characterised by a patriarchal society. To be clear, he is not referring to Muslims in Thailand, but rather Thai culture more broadly as a comparison to different Muslim cultures.

What do I think of it? [Islamic culture] It is what it is. It's not [pause] I would find it unbelievably boring, but it's the way they choose to live and the way to be— you know, the way they sort of run their families and businesses and all the rest of it! Ugh, it's not for me. (Vince)

I've not got any, what you call bad stereotypes or prejudices against them, and I think you've got to appreciate the way they do things. Yeah, they [sic] might say women shouldn't wear burqas or women shouldn't be allowed to do what they want in public, but I think we've got to look closer to home as well. I mean, you just have to turn on the news, and we've got however many thousands of food banks. And so, that's thousands of English families that we're not feeding because we're prioritising whatever we're prioritising instead. So, is that worse than women not being allowed to drive? I'd probably say yeah. (David)

Todd, Vince and David's accounts are diverse, but by no means unproblematic. For example, their sense of ambivalence simultaneously affirms and denies the importance of 'culture' (see, for example, Van Dijk, 1992). On the one hand, they express some cultural acceptance or awareness to deny any cultural antipathy, but on the other, their perceptions are framed through a discourse of cultural essentialism, which reduces Islamic culture to a single, monolithic entity. Such a process has an ideological function, as the "culture," "the way they do things" and "the way they choose to live" exist within what Modood (2005) called a 'common sense, folk typology' whereby a common culture is assumed and taken for granted as reality and a priori for constructing encounters. Kumar (2021) argues these commonsense assumptions serve to function as the basis of all other 'myths' concerning knowledge of Muslims and Islam. These assumed cultural meanings reproduce dominant ideological functions that have existed for centuries, wherein a dichotomy of 'us' and 'them' is perpetuated or reinforced by the fans (Said, 2003).

In relation to Said's (2003) Orientalism as discussed within the literature review, this knowledge, or discourse, is how power is seemingly maintained over the Other. People claim to know with a sense of confidence and certainty, ultimately controlling how the 'Other' is perceived and engaged with. Consequently, the Other are powerless to represent themselves in society as the discourses of the dominant group is all-encompassing. This is particularly evident in Terry's (a pub landlord) testimony,

The thoughts I have, I mean, I had a pub in Bradford, which obviously is predominantly Asian. There's some great parts about it, there's some not so good, which is everywhere. As I say, I mean, I used to go to curry houses all the time when I was in Bradford [pause] Taxis, we used to use them too; they were great work lads [taxi drivers]. They're absolutely fine. There are some bad people, about

we know that. But its [pause] you just treat them as you want to be treated, smile, yeah. There's nothing wrong with them unless you sometimes call it as, you know, we have that perception that they're all bad, and they're not all bad. Now, the religion is, you know, when they go and pray and stuff like that, you got to let them do it because that's what they've been brought up with.

Terry, who now lives in Huddersfield, instantly refers to Bradford - a place he used to own a pub - as "obviously predominantly Asian." The term "obviously" represents the assumed meaning; it is known, thereby representing a truth. Despite the latest national Census in 2021, 32.1% of the population in Bradford identified as Asian or British Asian. Therefore, it is not "predominantly Asian," as Terry implied. Beyond the problematic of confusing or compressing the identities of all Muslims as part of a larger "Asian" community, evidently Terry implicitly reproduces a power dynamic. While expressing a sense of tolerance, he is emboldened enough to claim control over the religious activities of Muslim communities in Britain ("you got to let them do it"). Hage (2001), who had argued elsewhere, refers to this process as an exercise in power where one group in a given society is in a position to decide whether they are tolerable or not, while the outgroup just endures. It functions to reproduce and disguise relationships of power in society and is a form of domination (see also Said, 2003). Moreover, the excerpt is also quite revealing, as at a micro-level, or community level, within an everyday setting, Terry applies numerous categories, all of which are perceived to have a 'common assumption' (e.g., "we know that"), or assumed meaning. By drawing further on cuisine, religion and employment type, he is further appealing to 'cultural motifs' to make sense of a perceived Other. Not only does he generalise all Asians as Muslims, his discourse is subsequently grounded in 'cultural racism' as Saha (2018) argues, Muslims and indeed Asians are racialised not just by the colour of their skin but also by an assumed culture ("taxi drivers" and "curry houses"), beliefs and religion.

When I asked Sarah (a nurse), 'What are your thoughts on Muslims and Islam?' she responded,

So, obviously, we have a very multicultural society here. In my job, we deal with a lot of different cultures, and we do get a lot of Islams in, well, everyone really. Now the culture: I think you know everyone's got their own culture. [pause] I don't necessarily agree with a lot of things.

Here, Sarah's sense of Self is located in opposition to the Other that serves to justify any indifference. Despite considering Britain to be a multicultural society, "Islams," she suggests, are still perceived as something different and negative ("I don't agree with a lot of things"). Like

David, Vince and Terry, this is a 'colour blind' position. There is a liberal acceptance of "multiculturalism" on the one hand, but on the other, she implies negative intergroup dynamics are perhaps justified through 'cultural motifs.' For example, further on in the conversation, despite expressing she has a limited understanding of Islam, or Islamic cultures, she explained how some of her prior experiences as a nurse led her to believe, "women are very much controlled [in Islamic cultures]" and that they lack the same freedoms as she does: "I'm a woman living in a free culture, and I know what it's like to have rights." This is ultimately an exercise in power, a belief Sarah has that her culture is superior to the Other, or perhaps particular elements of the Other's culture are incompatible with multiculturalism.

Other supporters focused more on the religious aspects of Muslims and Islam as a key source of Otherness. When discussing their attitudes, for example, Ken (a retired software developer), Nick (a business development manager for a pub company) and Stephen (who works in marketing) said,

> I'm not particular for or against. I mean, there has been an anti-Islamic undercurrent in this country, probably since the bombings in London[16]. I worked for an American firm, albeit in this country, when the Twin Towers got done[17]. So clearly, the Americans didn't like Islam very much. Um, then we got the London bombings, so that became [pause] I mean, the country became anti-Islamic, didn't it? Um, you get things like 'oh, Islam is the religion of peace', so why are you putting bombs everywhere? But no, it's never particularly affected me. You know, the IRA used to bomb everywhere, but it didn't make me anti-Irish. So no, I'm [pause] I'm not particular religious, and I suppose I'm Christian, sort of brought up that way, but I don't class myself as particular religious, and I'm certainly not anti-Islamic in any way, not particularly pro-Islam either. (Ken)

> I have no really like polarising views, but I don't have no negative thoughts. To be honest, my opinion of any kind of religion is everybody arguing over whose invisible friend's better than the other. Do you know what I mean? That's kind of my attitude towards all organised religions. I hate religions that make people define their lives by them, and that's whether you're looking at the Mormons or you're looking at the kind of Muslim thing. You know this thing in Iran, the one with the hijab and all that kind of thing…for me as a pragmatist, I find the whole thing quite ridiculous that we all of these people, or these people, allow religions to govern them to such an extent. But specifically, about kind of like Muslimism, I don't have any issues with that per se; it's just any kind of religion that makes people just live ridiculous laws. (Nick)

---

[16] Ken is referring to the terrorist attacks in London on July 7th, 2005, wherein 56 people were murdered by suicide bombers on different modes of London transport.

[17] Here, Ken is referring to the September 11th, 2001, terrorist attack in which members of the terrorist organisation flew two passenger airlines into the World Trade Center in New York killing almost 3,000 people.

I mean, I don't really know a great deal about it. Obviously, I don't know a lot of Muslims, to be fair. Even at Uni, I didn't know a lot of them. And the ones that I have spoken to are completely nice, reasonable people. It's just a different religion [Islam]. I've got nothing negative to say really about the religion, to be honest. I don't really know much about it. [pause] Obviously, people[18] say it's the religion of peace, but they say it like ironically. But you can say that about any religion, every religion has got its absolute nuttas. (Stephen)

Like most of the England fans I interviewed, Ken, Nick and Stephen claimed to be quite cosmopolitan in outlook. All shared travel stories and their interest in exploring new people, places and cultures, and clearly their attitudes towards Muslims and Islam, are constructed in a variety of ways. Evidently, however, their testimonies are full of contradictions. All claim they are not prejudiced, have no "polarising views" or "negative things to say," but then proceed to opine on the contrary. Ken, for instance, claims he was not "anti-Islamic" like others were but then proceeds to associate Islam with violence (e.g., 9/11 and the London bombings). The belief that Islam is a religion of peace is even contested in his account, and Stephen's, for that matter. Nick, who suggests he is not "well versed" in Islam, grounds his attitude within a homogenising discourse and implies all Muslims are governed by the same laws, suggesting Islam, along with religion more generally, is incompatible with the modern world and 'Western' values. Stephen's account, on the other hand, is more complex and abstract; he was cautious to delve into too much detail, and in the context of the World Cup, he acknowledges an Other, but it is evidently unclear who that is. I believed that during the interview his perception existed to convey some sort of meaning to me and was superficial. Nevertheless, it is the contradiction - the 'I don't have a problem but' - that functions to expose their intergroup bias and ingroup favouritism. As Kumar (2021) argues, this sustains a 'myth' of the Other and I posit can result in intergroup tensions, stereotypes and hostility to exist. This can also pre-effect future intergroup encounters.

Moreover, not so subtly hidden within Ken, Nick and Stephen's perceptions is a dichotomy between secular and non-secular (e.g., "it's just a different religion"). In the context of a World Cup in Qatar - a non-secular, Islamic society - and indeed, this research, this dichotomy is significant because it highlights how the supporters prior to the World Cup were perhaps not only conscious that the 2022 World Cup was to be staged in a country where religion organises much of social life, but their thoughts towards the tournament being staged in such a country are inherently perceived through this difference. For example, Ian (a council worker), who happily

---

[18] Stephen is referring to people in the UK.

self-identified himself as a person who likes to engage with difference, specifically related his attitude to the World Cup in Qatar when I asked him what his thoughts were on Muslims and Islam,

> Um, I don't know much about it, so, ugh, I'm ambivalent when it comes to all religions. But I wouldn't dismiss learning more about it while I'm there. The one thing I do know is that Islam is of different [sic] strains, and one of the issues about Qatar is that the strain of Islam [pause] are they Sunni or Shia? I'm not sure which difference it is. But that would dictate certain laws and policies to alcohol, for example, and the role of women and things like that. Which is why, one of the reasons we're going to Dubai because it is a different strain of Islam to Qatar.

> TT (Interviewer): Can you tell me more about the different 'strains' at all?

> So, you've got Sunni and Shia, haven't you? They're different branches, or splits, a bit like Catholicism and Protestantism, the types of Christianity. And certain countries practice Shia Islam and others practice Sunni.

Somewhat submerged in Ian's testimony is the secular versus religious underpinning, but quite clearly, his perception and understanding of Islam influenced his decision to stay in Dubai for the duration of the World Cup. He suggests perhaps Dubai is less religious, or at least society is not dictated by a more stringent version of Islam. When I prompted him further by asking, 'Is it that binary, or are there other versions of Islam?' Ian said,

> I don't know. But that it will definitely have an impact on, so far as going to the World Cup is concerned.

Thus, in this context, the Other is not so much an abstraction but functions as something more meaningful. To elaborate I am referring to how his knowledge and perception had a very tangible influence on his being, e.g., staying in Dubai. Moreover, in terms of categorising the outgroup, like Terry, Ian's boundaries of inclusion and exclusion encompass more than one group, e.g., 'Dubai,' 'Qatar,' and 'Islam' and are informed by a socio-political, theological and media understanding. In contrast, other fans constructed Islam as similar to their own religious and spiritual identities and thus expressed a deeper understanding and perhaps sympathy. For example, Tom (a retired nurse) and Peter (a retired head teacher) said,

> I am a Catholic. So, I've got a bit of a religious background, and therefore comparative religion is there. I don't think I'd pass an exam on Islam, but I have what I think is a nice understanding. (Tom)

TT (Interviewer): Could you elaborate a little bit on your level of understanding?

Right, so, I think I know, I think I understand their structure of theology and Mohammed, and the belief in prophet's right the way through. They count Jesus up in that as well [pause] Jesus as a prophet. So, the prophecy and the prayer applied to that [pause] those prophecies seem to be core. And then there are the teachings that go based on that that vary just like any Christian church or whatever [pause] they're influenced so much by their leaders, you know, whether it's the bishops, or the mullahs, or others. (Tom)

As a head teacher at a school where there's that many sorts of Muslims, you have to develop that knowledge. And you know, I knew a bit of the language, enough to say welcome to [name of school] primary school [pause] but I used to go to the mosques. A head teacher and teachers are highly respected in Islamic culture, more so perhaps than in Christian society. And if there was a death in the family, they would come and ask you to go to the mosque. I'm not a Muslim, but I'd go and sit at the back just to show support for them, so I did know a bit about it, I'm not an expert by any stretch of the imagination. (Peter)

Tom's explanation of the structures of Islamic theology, especially compared to Catholicism, demonstrates his own personal understanding of Islam. His perception of which is grounded in his own religious beliefs (Catholicism) and the similarities and differences inherent. To an extent, Tom expresses a mutual appreciation and sympathy for Muslims and Islam. Similarly, Peter, a former head teacher at an inner-city school in Birmingham where "the vast majority were Muslim children," shared a similar sentiment and understanding with Tom. Despite not considering himself religious nor "an expert on Islam," Peter further said he does "tend to believe that you should live a good and righteous life" and that Islam is a peaceful religion, [and] it's a good religion." I contend their attitudes are characterised by a mutual appreciation of Islam because, unlike the other England fans I spoke to who expressed a form of prejudice and tolerance towards Muslims and Islam, neither Tom, nor Peter engaged in 'Othering.' By that, I mean they did not lean into particular 'cultural motifs' (e.g., stereotypes and generalisations) or express a 'common sense, folk typology' (Modood, 2005). Instead, drawing on the salient categorisation model proposed by Gaertner et al. (1989) and Dovidio et al. (2003) as discussed in Chapter Two, their constructions of the Other were more inclusive as they were able to recognise the similarities between their own group identity, e.g., Catholicism, or 'living a righteous life', and therefore they were able to connect with and understand others.

The 'pre-event' perception of Muslims and Islam are complex, and at times, through their discourses, they reproduce wider ideological frameworks such as Orientalism and Neo-

Orientalism. To reiterate the former refers to the historic depiction of the 'Orient' as it relates to stereotypes, domination, power and Othering, while the latter is characterised by discourses of the Others cultural incompatibility with the West and concerns the increased securitisation of the Other within Western nations (Sadowski, 1993; Sa'di, 2021). The supporters' perceptions do display levels of prejudice, although clearly, they are not as binary. Jackman (1994) argued real everyday relations between groups within an unequal society or at least a society where systems of domination and subordination are apparent (such as through Orientalism or Neo-Orientalism ideologies), are marked by emotional complexity and ambivalence. In this context, the England fans I spoke with displayed both positive (in the form of a general tolerance, although this is not unproblematic as discussed) and negative responses (religious antipathy and cultural essentialism) towards Muslims and Islam. This suggests prejudice itself is not always a useful starting point to explore intergroup relations, as deeply held prejudices are often the exception rather than the rule. Perhaps this is a problematic of Orientalism itself as the binary Said (2003) produced is too simplistic and does not allow for nuance, dominant engagements are messy and far from straightforward. Dixon et al. (2012), in this regard, made an important intervention by questioning whether or not positive evaluations of an outgroup actually entrench rather than disrupt wider patterns of discrimination. As mentioned in my findings, while the fans did not reveal any deeply held prejudices, some of the meanings they attached to Muslims and Islam are by no means unproblematic and unprejudiced. Some of their attitudes exist within a power imbalance, whereby the terms 'Islam' and 'Muslim' are defined by 'common sense' assumptions that exist in social life.

Nevertheless, I argue the fans' perceptions of contact prior to their attendance at the World Cup are complex and characterised by both prejudiced and positive evaluations. This is entrenched within a context of power, dominance and Othering. In terms of intergroup contact theory, no stable categorisation or construction of an Other existed, and by this, I mean all the fans applied multiple labels such as "Qatar," "Asians" and "Muslimism" when describing the Other; hence, it was not always clear *who* or *what* they were discussing. Subsequently, it began to emerge their opinions and sources of knowledge were informed and shaped by different socio-political contexts. Notably, how they constructed Muslims and Islam changed according to different forms of prior contact they had. Previous iterations of mediated contact, for instance, were discussed and challenged by the fans, as discussed below.

> Having worked in that community [Muslim], they get a raw deal. Islam gets a raw deal in the British press. You know, it's a peaceful religion; it's a good religion; it's a religion for good, but that's not the way it's painted in the British press. (Peter)

The supporters that I spoke to discussed various socio-political themes and stereotypes associated with both Muslims and Islam. Peter, for example, responding to a question about his perceptions towards Muslims and Islam without being prompted implies that both Muslims and Islam are painted negatively within the British media; this is particularly evident in his defence of Islam as a "good religion" and a "religion for peace." Similarly, when I asked Nick 'How do you think Muslims and the religion of Islam are portrayed by the British media?' he responded,

> Um, the word immigrant is not a bad word, but it's been made a bad word. The word Muslim is not a bad word, but it's been made a bad word, and that pretty much comes from the media.

Again, the emphasis on Nick's interpretation suggests the word Muslim has been turned into something negative as a result of the mediated forms of contact. 'Mediated' contact is referred to as vicarious contact, whereby ingroup attitudes are shaped by observing perceived ingroup and outgroup relations through mediated channels such as news, television, film and so forth (Allport, 1979; Vezzali and Stathi, 2020). Indeed, it became apparent throughout my conversations with the England fans that their constructions of Muslims and Islam drew upon socio-political discourses seen through mediated forms of contact. Peter and Nick's perceptions support the work of scholars that have explored how Muslims and Islam have been represented within the media (see, for example, Said, 1997; Poole, 2002, 2011; Featherstone et al., 2010; Kumar, 2021; Saha, 2021). These scholars have described a myriad of frames that have dominated how *we* see and understand Muslims and Islam. However, as Poole (2011) effectively illustrated, media coverage, especially in Britain, has ebbed and flowed towards Muslims and Islam prior to and post-9/11. This includes the 'Rushdie Affair' in 1988 (see Chapter Two), wherein, as Nick says, the "word Muslim" started to be associated as incompatible and a threat to British society, as Burdsey (2007) highlighted. The media frames are thus far from static; they are temporal and conceived contextually, both culturally and politically. Nevertheless, there is a general acceptance amongst scholars that media coverage relies on stereotyping Muslim communities and Islam, is generally negative, and has a detrimental

effect on intergroup relations and future contact. As both Peter and Nick have alluded to, mediated contact has a salient role in how Muslims and Islam are understood in Britain. England fans are no exception; mediated forms of contact situate their perceptions into wider socio-political discourses. For example, Peter and Nick respectively rejected the 'encoded' stereotypes and, as Hall (1980) explained, they have taken an 'oppositional reading' to them. Simply put, these issues are relevant in how the fans construct Muslims and Islam. By disagreeing with particular stereotypes or issues, they further seek to justify they are not prejudiced.

When I asked Ian and Sarah a similar question to Nick, they responded,

> The media tends to portray, um, Islam as a rigid idea and concept and doesn't, um, explain that there's, um, freedoms within different types of Islam to do different things. It's like one idea, one concept. You are either a Muslim or you are not. And of course, that's not the case. (Ian)

> Nothing really springs to mind straight away. But I think you've got bad people in every country, but then because you've got mean people in certain places and you've got radicalism and all the rest of it [pause] that's not Islam, and I think that's where it comes from, like Al-Qaeda and all the rest of it. So, every Islams dusted with the same brush, which is wrong. (Sarah)

The underlining argument from Ian and Sarah is dominant discourses present Muslims and Islam in a narrow, stereotypical frame that fails to accommodate differences within that. Kumar (2021) notes this seeks to deny the diversity of Islamic history and practices, characterising it as unchanging and ummutable. Therefore, both Ian and Sarah, to some extent, challenge this 'myth' by noting the inherent diversity within Islam (e.g., recognising the different denominations of Islam, Sunni and Shia). However, Sarah's rebuttal of this discourse is tempered by contradiction; on the one hand, she takes an 'oppositional reading' towards stereotypes, while on the other, she simultaneously reproduces top-down discourses (e.g., associated it with terrorism). Their position seeks to show that they are not prejudice and that 'they know better.' To draw on Said (2003), this again highlights the fans' position of power. By that I mean it is they who seemingly 'pick and choose' which stereotypes they agree or disagree with.

Other England fans that I spoke with recalled certain stereotypes they have observed through mediated contact, some of which relate to historical events, while others are situated within a contemporary epoch. For example, when I asked David, Todd and Stephen about different stereotypes they had noted in the media, they said,

I think the big one is the terrorists. [pause] It might not be explicitly said, but it's the 'terrorists are taking our jobs, persecuting our women, and are backwards' A lot of it seems to be negative. (David)

You know I've watched like an MI5 movie or something like that, and right away the bad guys are the Muslims people. (Todd)

Well, obviously [pause] like how well publicised Al-Qaeda and ISIS and stuff like that [but] where it's like on the other side, when you see Muslims being persecuted in Yemen and Palestine, there isn't really the same sort of social commentary that comes with like Muslims. And obviously, the riots that happened in Leicester[19] and stuff like that […] so obviously the mainstream media doesn't particularly help matters […] obviously these things have got to be reported but they don't really look past that or like it gets a lot more publicity than it would do if it was a white person. (Stephen)

Notably, these fans comment on how 'terrorism' and 'grooming gangs' serve as points of reference for much of the socio-political discourse when portraying and discussing Muslims and Islam. And as David said, this is perceived as a negative construction overall. The discussion around grooming gangs in particular speaks to a very real socio-political issue in contemporary society, where popular discourses by far-right commentaries and in mainstream, liberal discourse tend to generalise Asian culture. While the theme of 'terrorism' as discussed in the literature review has been a dominant lens within the media and amongst general laypersons to frame Muslims and the religion of Islam itself, such discourse speaks to neo-Orientalist frames as discussed within the literature review. In this context, Todd refers to a form of cultural production ("movies") of which Saha (2012) has been critical. The author argued the mainstreaming of cultural diversity, that is, the increased visibility of 'Asians' (including Muslims) on our screens, has had a limited impact on the quality of representation and has accentuated reductive Orientalist images to be produced, such as 'terrorism.'

In relation to 'terrorism' and 'grooming gangs', Peter and Stephen raise two interesting points. Firstly, Stephen observes how particular issues and events, such as the persecution of Muslims in different contexts, are often ignored in Britain and indeed, in liberal, secular and Western societies. This suggests that in this construction of Muslims and Islam, he sympathises with those being persecuted. Indeed, both argue how the mediated contact hinders intergroup relations through an

---

[19] Between August and September 2022 there were ethnic and religious tensions between British Hindus and British Muslims which resulted in a period of unrest, characterised by rioting, protests and clashes with police in the city of Leicester.

inherent 'double standard' (e.g., not reporting terror-related incidents by other religious groups). Herman and Chomsky (2008: 38) referred to this phenomenon as "unworthy and worthy victims." Put simply, the authors explain a bias in media reporting on serious events, like murder. The 'worthy' victims (e.g., victims of enemy states or members of an ingroup) receive far more coverage that seeks to humanise them as victims, whereas the 'unworthy' victim receives far less media coverage and receives far less sympathy. Essentially, it is an exercise in power wherein the Other - those who are different from "us" - are often dehumanised. Secondly, and related to the above, events or incidents where the perpetrators are from Muslim communities appear to receive far more coverage than if the perpetrator was white or Christian. Within the cultural production of media, they are seemingly deemed more 'newsworthy,' or more likely, as Nick puts it bluntly, to "get clicks on a page" and to "drive traffic on digital platforms." More saliently, it serves to sustain historical power imbalances between groups, with ingroup favouritism and bias functioning as a mechanism for prejudice (Allport, 1933: Taijfel and Turner, 1979).

Clearly, the England fans that I spoke with considered the role of socio-political discourses and stereotypes to be influential in informing attitudes towards Muslims and Islam. However, the dominant ideological frameworks used especially by the media are rebutted by the fans as they seek alternative constructions of both the 'Self' and Other; that is, the fans constructions are fluid and mobile; they acknowledge and challenge pre-existing discourses that divide intergroup encounters in favour of their own social categories - although seemingly from a position that 'they know best.' However, as I have highlighted in the previous section, their questioning of socio-political discourses and stereotypes is perhaps contradictory to how they construct their perceptions towards Muslims and Islam before they travelled. For example, Todd and Sarah, on the one hand, challenge discourses, but on the other, they reproduce stereotypes of Muslims and Islam and engage in cultural essentialism. This suggests wider discourses and stereotypes, however, provide a source of information on the Other, especially for those who have had limited interpersonal contact, but being exposed to it or to mediated forms of contact is not always sufficient in shaping people's attitudes. Some fans, for instance, expressed to me they have had personal relationships with Muslims either within their daily lives or while on holiday in a predominantly Islamic society. As discussed below, such contact is arguably more profound in developing the fans' attitudes and constructing their intergroup encounters during the World Cup.

Prior Everyday Contact, Friendship and Travel

Given the nature of this thesis (England fans' encounters with Muslims and Islam in the context of the 2022 World Cup), I asked the fans several questions about their past interactions with Muslims in Britain or elsewhere and if they had ever visited a predominantly non-secular Islamic society before (such as Morocco or the UAE). While most admitted they had contact with Muslims before, only a few (5) acknowledged they had friends who were Muslims or had social relations with Muslims, primarily through their employment. Only seven of the supporters had visited a non-secular, Islamic society for tourism. Although these encounters were tempered by differing degrees of frequency, intensity and relationships, which also include multicultural experiences, as with mediated forms of contact, these everyday interactions serve to mediate and inform their attitudes and perceptions towards the Other. For example, when I spoke to Tom about his intergroup experiences, he said,

> Well, I live amongst a lot of Muslims where I live anyway. We've got the largest mosque [a key Islamic symbol] in Europe, just about two miles away from us. So yeah, there's an Islamic influence, even now in Wimbledon and Tooting.

Thus, Tom believes he lives in a multi-ethnic neighbourhood and is exposed daily to different people, places and cultures in a variety of local spaces. However, the majority of the population of Merton (the London Borough in which Wimbledon is located) is white (60.2%) (National Census, 2021). Tom's reference to a mosque is perhaps a better explanation as to why he believes there is an "Islamic influence" near Wimbledon. Although mosques are well established within Britain, as Saleem (2013) has highlighted, Nasser (2003: 15) noted they are "deployed as symbols of a Muslim presence and space that represents a specific identity"; that is, it is a space constructed and associated with high Muslim populations - or "influence." Nevertheless, he enjoys living in what he considers a multicultural space. Arguably, his perceptions have been influenced not only through his career as a retired nurse, where he met and worked "with loads of Islamic people", but also, he said,

> I'm an active member of the Labour Party, so yeah, there's quite a few there [Muslims] and you know we're social friends and two of them are often guests, come for dinner and go to football or whatever with each other.

This illustrates a more intense intergroup relationship both within public and private spaces in his everyday life. It also provides an explanation as to why Tom's perception of Muslims and Islam

is arguably characterised by mutual respect and sympathy. Evidently, he has had sustained quality forms of contact (friendship) over a period of time that have undoubtedly contributed to and shaped his personal understanding of Muslims and Islam that goes beyond casual generalisations and category formations. This supports previous intergroup scholarship that has identified how prior contact with an outgroup can affect not only a person's perception of that group but can also contribute to how a person constructs their boundaries of belonging, especially in an everyday setting (Paolini et al., 2014; Askins, 2015; Knipprath, 2023). Other fans, Ian and John (a local councillor) noted they had Muslim friends that they met in the workplace.

> Yeah, yeah […] I know people of all different faiths […] but one of the guys I work with, he uses the prayer room at work. And I've talked to him at depth about Islamic culture and about the idea of [pause] what's it called? Ramadan, about Ramadan, and at the end of Ramadan, they give gifts to people to show um, empathy, solidarity with somebody who may need your help and support. So, I've learnt quite a bit. And I know a lot of people who fast every Ramadan.

> A girl I used to work with [name] came from a Muslim family, um, she was pretty confident that they'd do a good job. She'd been to Qatar many times.

Both Ian and John work for their local councils and evidently have had colleagues who are "devoted" Muslims. Ian suggests he has learnt a great deal about an "Islamic culture" through his encounters, while John relates his intergroup experiences with his England fandom. For example, he explicitly draws on the experiences of his contact partner to ground his pre-event perceptions of Qatar; as she noted, "they'd do a good job." Evidently, their constructions of Muslims, Islam, the Arabian Peninsula and indeed, the 2022 World Cup are informed by their previous intergroup relations, which have been frequent, intense, and overall positive. Ian and John's relations seemingly went beyond what Askins (2015) referred to as 'prosaic interactions of the workplace or education' considering each fan had an initial willingness to engage, befriend and seek an understanding that is inherently political and meaningful (Amin, 2002; Askins, 2015). In general, each fan's construction sought to challenge dominant representations of Muslims and Islam, as they did not conform to their own interpretations and experiences. This process is further explained by the 'individualisation' hypothesis, or the de-categorisation model proposed by Brewer and Miller (1984) as introduced in the literature review. They argued intergroup contact is more effective when the salience of group membership is reduced to an individual level. Group boundaries are then temporarily blurred as group members identify themselves and members of other groups as individuals through a process of personalisation and differentiation. For example, Tom, Ian and John all have interpersonal friendships with Muslims and a more varied (but still

limited) perspective of the 'Other' not limited to casual stereotypes. As Knipprath (2023) argues, group boundaries are less definite, allowing some level of movement between ingroups and outgroups in more ambiguous terms. This flexibility is key, because it permits room for meaningful contact to exist in which people simultaneously recognise difference (e.g., cultural and ethnic difference) and similarity (Askins, 2015). Thus, difference is not perceived through purely homogenous frames of interpretation.

David and Sarah provide a more complex account of their previous encounters and everyday relations,

> I do have a couple of Muslim mates and one of them comes from a devout Muslim family, and he says, 'I enjoy pork, I enjoy beer and I enjoy a bacon sarnie', so it's not doing him any harm. I'm not sure his parents will see it that way. (David)

> I know from what I know being involved in situations at work and having friends in that culture…But a lot of the friends I've got they're pretty Westernised, so they don't have strict cultures, and they're not to the letter…That's not because I wouldn't be friends with somebody that lives by the strict culture; it's just that the people that I am friends with are friends from the pub, from work, or from university, and so, there, when they're in those situations, you know there just people that I'm friends with. (Sarah)

David and Sarah claimed they had Muslim friends or knew Muslims, but as their testimonies illustrate, they perceived their friends to be different and distinct from Other Muslims. Notably, their friends do not conform to what they believe is normal religious practice within Islamic teachings. For example, David specifically relates this to eating pork and drinking alcohol, which are deemed haram within the Qur'an. Similarly, Sarah suggests her friends do not strictly follow their presumed and 'known' orthodox religion. As she further comments, the friendships she has developed have come through shared spaces (e.g., "pub,", "work," "university") that have permitted her to go beyond surface-level interactions in spaces of belonging. However, this reveals an inherent power dynamic, wherein the spaces Sarah discusses are arguably nominally white (and Christian), which inexorably frame the parameters of engagement. In this context, it is Sarah's friends who make the effort to integrate into the majority culture, or to 'fit in,' rather than Sarah actively seeking contact.

Similarly, when responding to a question I asked about having any Muslim friends, Nick explained,

> When I was at university, I had a really good friend called [name] she was Muslim,
> but again, she was kind of uh, next generation, so she wasn't fully practicing.

While acknowledging a friendship, Nick's interpretation of his friend's religious adherence is quite problematic. Referring to her as "next generation" and not "fully practicing" suggests his acceptance of her as a friend was intrinsically linked to his perception of her religious identity, which Nick perceived as limited. In private, however, or in different non-white spaces, it is possible she could have maintained her religious identity without Nick being aware. This aligns with Brown and Zagefjka's (2011) research, which found ingroup members often hold more positive perceptions of outgroup members who chose to identify or were assimilated with the ingroup culture (or religion) than those who chose not to. Moreover, from David, Sarah and Nick's accounts, their friendships are multifaceted. As Khuu et al. (2023) argue, friendship is just one dimension of intergroup relations that sits alongside the friend's own attitudes and values. Consequently, they are included within group boundaries and belong, whereas others do not. I am not suggesting here the fans are only friends with particular types of Muslims who they consider similar to themselves. My contention is intergroup encounters and friendships are complex. They are determined by a myriad of socio-historic and cultural factors that all contribute to the fans' intergroup constructions and levels of engagement. Clearly, individual, or 'de-categorised' constructs form the basis of some of the fan's accounts but contact results can also be limited to individuals who are viewed as exceptions, thus pointing to an inherent weakness within the 'de-categorisation approach' (see, for example, Gaertner and Dovidio, 2005; Hewstone, 2006). Perhaps there needs to be a political will to engage with and understand a friend's core beliefs and values, which go beyond the surface of 'friendship.' Nevertheless, all of the above fans expressed having positive intergroup encounters beyond their friendships and in their everyday lives.

Furthermore, some of the supporters that I interviewed reflected on their previous intergroup experiences through tourism and sport. Their experiences related to visiting other non-secular, Islamic societies prior to the World Cup, such as Morocco, Pakistan and the UAE. For example, Ian, who considered himself to be an experienced tourist and who enjoys 'going off the beaten track,' exclusively discussed a trip to Kosovo to watch England play in a European Championship qualifier,

> I've been to Kosovo; uh, I saw England play Kosovo, and that was the first time
> I've actually been into a mosque, and I was really surprised by how many mosques

there was in Kosovo…But yeah, I've never been in a European country where you could hear the call of prayer all across the city and the in the valley.

Through the experience of following England away, Ian visited a 'mosque for the first time.' This limited intercultural encounter conveyed a particular meaning for Ian, as he was able to reflect on and compare his experiences to other trips in Europe. Other fans' experiences fell outside of a sports event tourism context. What was notable within these incidents was how the fans observed the type of Islamic society they visited, which helped to inform their overall perceptions. Notably, most expressed how the countries they visited were either 'Westernised', or not overtly Islamic in their eyes. For instance, Tom had previously visited Morocco and Egypt for a holiday. He observed,

> I found it obviously different, not as by any means as extreme as Qatar; you know, far more accommodating for, uh, different values. And you could, you know, always find bars that will serve drinks at, you know, tourist price [pause] I think they're more secular in a lot of ways…although obviously the Islamic rhythm is there.

Likewise, Peter observed that he has travelled too,

> Turkey, which is very westernised; um, I've been to Dubai before; I've been to Bahrain um, which are not particularly, not some of the strongest Islamic countries.

The above experiences provided a comparative context for understanding the make-up of Qatari society. In each account, the fans recognised the different interpretations of Islam in a myriad of local settings and how it is practiced. Tom suggests the hosts should accommodate difference rather than the guests and based on his prior experiences believes Qatar were less accommodating than Egypt. Nonetheless, these experiences have helped to inform their own 'working models' of contact, as they have been exposed first-hand to prior intercultural experiences. This partly explains why Tom's and Peter's constructions are perhaps more varied and diverse. John, on the other hand, recalled having a negative intercultural experience in Morocco, which he "hated." In particular, he noted, "the cruelty to animals... we were scammed twice, and the treatment of women there is very different." While this did not deter John from visiting Qatar, evidently, he did express a sense of hesitance by believing their cultures could be similar,

> […] maybe that doesn't reflect well on me; maybe I thought to myself, 'Well, [Qatar] is going to be similar to Morocco'. And, of course, they're not anywhere

near each other. They're on different continents, but, um, I shouldn't really have thought that.

TT (Interviewer): So, in terms of your experience in Morocco, do you believe your negative experience was related to Islamic culture or specific to Morocco?

I think it was more the second one; yeah, I don't think it was Islamic culture. I would hope not, because we should have been expecting the difference. Whatever big city you go to, you've always got to be wary of scams, because I've been scammed in Croatia and Prague and other places as well […] I don't think it was anything to do with Muslim culture.

John's honest reflection was purely based on his own subjective experience of visiting a particular locale in Morocco (Marrakesh), and he acknowledges it would not be right to generalise about a whole group of people (Muslims and Islamic culture) based on this one encounter, yet evidently still "hated" his experience. However, there is a slippage in his initial reaction. Despite feeling guilty about his perception, John did essentialise an "Islamic" and "Muslim" culture that initially reduced Qatar and other non-secular Islamic societies as homogeneous. That is, he briefly expected to see "animal cruelty" and be "scammed."

Previous intergroup encounters within everyday settings or through travel are important sites for developing knowledge, friendships and intercultural understanding between an ingroup and a perceived outgroup. These encounters provide important anchor points for the fans as they develop and construct their attitudes towards Muslims and Islam more generally. However, as these findings illustrate, previous and positive intergroup contact is not necessarily a precursor to challenging or breaking down individuals' boundaries of group belonging. They are complex, nuanced and provide an explanation of attitudes.

Summary

Based on my conversations with the England supporters, their perceptions of Muslims and Islam prior to travelling to the World Cup in Qatar were characterised by elements of prejudice and a general tolerance. That is, their constructions encompassed both positive and negative perceptions. As evidenced throughout the fans' accounts, some forms of antipathy or stereotypes were apparent towards Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula. Although not one of them shared any deeply help prejudice; by this I mean not one of them went beyond expressing a mild degree of antipathy or prejudice - or what Allport (1979: 14) referred to as the "Antilocution" phase of prejudice. No

fan for example, opined they purposively avoided Muslims or supported discriminatory policies towards them. Nor did anyone express they have physically attacked Muslims or taking part in protests against them or Islam. This was generally expected, however, considering people who hold deeply held prejudices or hostilities are more likely to avoid intergroup contact with the perceived 'Other,' e.g., avoid travelling to Qatar and are less likely to engage in research that could 'out' them (Pettigrew, 1998; Hewstone, 2006). Likewise, given social expectations, people may be less likely to disclose hostile views in public (the social desirability effect). Nevertheless, the fans' constructions of contact did reveal particular biases and were complex and contradictory. Their attitudes existed within a wider socio-cultural context and the fan's constructions incorporated their knowledge, what they thought of Muslims and Islam, socio-political discourses and stereotypes, everyday encounters and prior travel experiences.

Despite an absence of hostility, other than Tom, Peter and Ian, most of the fans revealed an unconscious subtle bias. These biases or tolerances, as Fiske (2002) highlighted, are a result of ordinary discrimination wherein the fans were comfortable with their own group. For example, all the supporters (apart from the three already mentioned) engaged in what Fiske (2002) referred to as an automatic and unconscious bias. In particular, the categories these fans used, such as "Asians" (Terry), "Islams" (Sarah), or "Muslimism" (Nick), were quite illustrative of automatic bias because by using such terminology they sought to distinguish Muslims and Islam as an outgroup in British society. The fans also activated certain stereotypes about Muslims and Islam, e.g., male dominated culture (Todd, Sarah), female clothing (Todd) and terrorism (Ken and Stephen). These subtle biases are somewhat submerged in the fans' responses, and they function to maintain a particular known discourse about the Other. This process is what Bonilla-Silva (2013) referred to as colour-blind racism, wherein White people often claim to be against racism or view it as isolated occurrences, yet unwittingly reinforce dominant racialised systems and the status quo.

Similarly, Fiske (2002) also referenced an indirect bias occurs when people have unprejudiced excuses. That is, if outgroup members behave poorly or are associated with negative acts, it provides an excuse for forms of prejudice to flourish, resulting in an outgroup member being perceived negatively in comparison to ingroup members who commit similar acts - what Bonilla-Silva (2013) refers to as cultural racism, a central frame of colour-blind racism. To refer back to Ken, Nick and, to some extent, Stephen, while claiming they are not prejudiced, they all drew upon individual and group acts committed by Muslims to justify their indifference, e.g., Ken mentioned

that the whole of America and Britain became hostile towards Muslims and Islam after terror-related incidents.

Related to the above point, the fans' pre-event constructions of contact and their discourses drew upon dominant socio-political, historical and ideological frameworks that effectively Othered Muslims and Islam. However, it was unclear who the 'Other' actually was, considering some fans drew on numerous category constructs fluidly through discourses of religion, culture, employment, nation and belonging. In a media context, representations of Muslims and Islam were even challenged by the majority of the fans, who criticised the media for misrepresenting the Other. Hence, at times, some of the fans' discourses and perceptions appeared contradictory. On the one hand, they sought to challenge discursive ideological frames that conveyed Muslims and Islamic culture as homogenous and unchanging, but on the other, some fans reproduced this discourse. This not only implies that discursive socio-political, historical and ideological processes operate at a micro-level amongst fan discourses, but also suggests how people understand intergroup contact as inherently complex, subjective and context specific.

The findings conveyed in this section have highlighted the subjective nature of the fans themselves, their attitudes and previous experiences of contact. All of which undoubtedly contributed to the parameters of engagement during the 2022 World Cup. Thus, these findings provide a deeper reading of intergroup contact theory and the ideological contexts that underpin encounters. In particular, the terms 'Muslims' and 'Islam' served as abstract concepts in some of the fans' accounts as they merely expressed a set of 'common sense' assumptions. However, when discussed further and in relation to different contexts such as media and intergroup friendships, the meanings the participants attributed to their encounters and perceptions were more complex and multi-layered. As Ian's account detailed, he did not view contact as a dichotomous relationship between Islamic and non-Islamic cultures. Instead, the relationship and Ian's subsequent attitudes were partly defined in terms of state practices and policies that related primarily to his England football fandom. Nick, on the other hand, perceived encounters through a secular and non-secular lens. Nonetheless, many of the participants (including Nick) still constructed their encounters by reproducing a dichotomy between "us" and "them." In this sense, Said's (2003) Orientalism was a useful analytical tool to view this relationship by grounding the fans' previous attitudes and intergroup experiences within an ideological milieu.

Similarly, through understanding *how* fans construct their encounters, it became notable *how* prejudice as a starting point for understanding intergroup relations provides a limited view of how people view one another in contact. In particular, this finding lends support to recent interventions by critical scholars of the contact hypothesis, such as Dixon et al. (2005), Christ and Wagner (2013) and Paolini et al. (2018), who have started to unpick this central problem. They argue the subjective interpretation of contact as experienced by those involved has been subsumed through a process of abstraction and top-down imposition, whereby scholars isolate contact events and uncritically apply a set of pre-determined concepts and terms (e.g., 'Asian', 'immigrants') to explain how participants see one another. As Dixon (2017) argued, this process hides as much as it reveals about group encounters and obfuscates the qualitatively different interpretations and positions of those in contact (e.g., overlooks any unequal power relations). Instead, I agree with the aforementioned scholars and assert closer attention is needed on participants' own 'working models' of contact across different socio-cultural contexts, that is, the meanings they attribute to their lived experiences and interactions with others. Not only will this begin to reveal the complex nature of intergroup contact, but, as my findings highlight, it can additionally provide a useful sociological lens into issues of power and control.

Notwithstanding this ongoing debate, it is evident the impacts of staging a sports mega-event in a non-secular, Islamic society (e.g., the World Cup in Qatar), especially amongst England football fans', can effectively contribute towards influencing how fans construct their 'working models' of contact, arguably more so than other contextual factors, such as the media or past contact experiences. For example, the England supporters were (in some cases) effectively travelling to a new country and meeting a particular Muslim community with a particular interpretation of Islam. Accordingly, the following section focuses on the *Cultural Politics of the 2022 FIFA Men's World Cup* itself; that is, it reveals and considers the mobility and contestations of the supporters' constructions within the specific context of the World Cup and their wider perceptions of the Arabian Peninsula prior to the tournament. All of which contributed towards developing an understanding of their engagements during the tournament.

4.2 The Cultural Politics of the 2022 FIFA Men's World Cup, Qatar

This theme explores the England fans' responses to the decision to award the World Cup to Qatar by capturing their initial perceptions of the tournament. In particular, the supporters presented the event as a threat especially to their fandom e.g., their ability to enjoy the tournament and indulge in certain cultural practices. They also noted the potential opportunities associated with staging the tournament in Qatar and discussed the event in relation to ethical and moral questions that were raised during the build-up to the tournament that sought to challenge their thoughts and identities. It became evident through my conversations with the fans that the cultural politics of the World Cup cannot be detached from the pre-event constructions of their encounters. Thus, this topic supports and contributes to 'The Limits of Intergroup Contact in a Sport Event Setting' and is presented chronologically; that is, the focus is very much on their pre-event beliefs.

Qatar, the Unwanted 'Other'? Intergroup Threat and Opportunity

During all my conversations with the England supporters, I asked them several questions relating to their thoughts and perceptions of Qatar being awarded the rights to stage the World Cup, their concerns and their overall image of Qatar and the region. The responses were varied, but a major focal point discussed amongst the fans was whether Qatar was a suitable host for the World Cup. For example, Todd, David and Declan said,

> Qatar is not viewed as a football nation, so a lot of people aren't happy about Qatar getting the World Cup. (Todd)

> I just see football grounds, football stadiums and fan parks, and I don't really see them as a traditional footballing nation at all […] I don't think they've ever been to a World Cup before, [and] you can't really name any players who have played for them. (David)

> As I said, I mean [pause] sadly, Saudi Arabia probably getting the tournament in 2034 [World Cup] they actually have more of a history from on the field of playing and having a respectful team. You know, when the decision was made back in 2010 […] it was like, 'How the hell have they decided to give the World Cup to Russia and then Qatar' and how corrupt it all was? But you know, it's amazing when you put a big bag of euros and dollars with a whole load of corrupt people what ends up happening. But Qatar didn't really deserve it at all. (Declan)

Notably, these England supporters scrutinised the decision to award Qatar the World Cup because they did not perceive the country as a traditional footballing nation. Indeed, the 2022 iteration of the World Cup was the first time Qatar had qualified for the tournament, as David observed, although as hosts they were automatically awarded a place without needing to qualify. Todd suggests others perceive Qatar as a non-footballing nation, but not him. While Declan compares Qatar's neighbour, Saudi Arabia, who he perceives to have a better claim at becoming a World Cup host based on past experiences, he also expresses a belief Qatar was unfairly awarded the tournament, suggesting bribery and corruption played a role in the decision-making process. However, underlining all these testimonies is a Eurocentric and indeed Western construction of what football culture is or should be. For example, in my conversation with Stephen, he commented he was "angry" about the decision to move the tournament from summer, when it is traditionally held, to winter,

> I remember them finding out pretty quickly that they were going to have to play the World Cup in the winter, and I remember being pretty angry about that. I thought obviously they haven't thought it through, and it is just a case of money [pause] because they haven't even researched when it would be too hot to play the World Cup in the summer […] and the fact that they would have to disrupt the domestic seasons and stuff.
>
> TT (Interviewer): Why did you not like the decision to move it to the winter?
>
> Obviously, you associate World Cups with like having pints in the beer garden in the summer and nice weather. It's still sort of weird to think about when, when we get home, and it's going to be mid-December. It's going to be Christmas time.

Ian shared a similar sentiment during a post-interview,

> I wasn't as excited as I have been before because it's not my first World Cup, and it did feel odd being in the middle of winter.

Thus, for Stephen and Ian, a change to the World Cup calendar represented a threat to their traditional football fandom, solidifying their perception of Qatar as an undeserving intruder. For them, this illustrates a separation between Western and non-Western nations; the Other is a place of 'cheating' bid organisers and blistering heat, and subsequently is incompatible with their footballing culture. Moreover, in relation to a limited 'footballing culture', Lysa has challenged the notion that Qatar lacks a 'footballing culture' - football is considered an integral part of their DNA and localised forms of fandom are strongly influenced by tribal identities within the country

(Lysa, 2020). Clearly, the Eurocentric perceptions of the supporters are problematic because, not only does it illustrate intergroup bias, but it also ignores the global appeal of football and different fandom practices around the world. Likewise, it ignores the plurality of international domestic football, wherein other domestic leagues (including in Europe) are often disrupted to accommodate a summer World Cup, e.g., the South Korean domestic league, the K-League, which begins in March and concludes in October. From the perspective of the fans, however, Qatar is presented as an undeserving intruder because of their marginal international footballing status and perceived lack of (footballing) heritage and perhaps a threat to the white, European hegemony of footballing culture. Evidently, this fed into the fans' constructions of Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula in the context of the 2022 World Cup. In relation to the contact literature, for example, the perception of Qatar as a threat to their fandom or as an unwanted intruder could serve to enhance prejudiced attitudes or hostilities further, as Allport (1979) noted.

Paralleling the England fans' beliefs that a lack of sporting cultures existed in Qatar, the fans made a similar argument in relation to tourism and heritage within the country. For example, David said, "I just worry what to do between games," acknowledging the fact he believed Qatar "had no culture to go and visit." To mitigate this concern, Nick and his travel companions planned to go to a "game a day," considering they "had a look [at tourism activities] and there's not a great deal going on there." Sarah compared the developments of tourism in Dubai with Qatar and expressed, "Well, obviously, Dubai's a big touristy place and I don't think Qatar's really there." She further added, "I can't really find things to do." Sarah is speaking from a position of knowing, despite no prior first-hand experience in Qatar or Dubai. To relate back to the previous section and to Said (2003), this functions as an exercise in power, whereby knowledge of Qatar and the wider Arabian Peninsula is known. The 'Other' is represented as a place of curiosity ("I don't think…"), a place that has limited activities for the modern Western sports fan and the 'Other' is represented through stereotypical perceptions. As Roger (a retired energy company manager) said, he expected to see a "sandy, dusty and warm place" but did not think it would be "anything like Dubai." Peter, who had previously visited Dubai for a holiday and stayed in Dubai for the World Cup, slightly contradicted Sarah by adding,

> Dubai, there's virtually no history in comparison with Bahrain or Qatar, and Qatar haven't got a lot of history either.

These statements further contribute to questioning the legitimacy of Qatar as a World Cup destination, considering supporters held the belief that unlike previous event hosts (e.g., Russia and Brazil), leisure options would be limited. But also, there is a sense of anxiety amongst the fans as they are not sure what they will encounter. More significantly, however, the fans are perhaps purporting the idea that instead of respecting the rights of Qatar to host the World Cup, it is Qatar and, by extension, the local culture that needs to accommodate the fans and their fandom. Again, this represents an unequal power imbalance, whereby the 'Other' is expected to adopt, change and support the dominant ingroup (white, Western football fans) in their leisure pursuits, even at the expense of their own culture.

A further point raised by the supporters I spoke to revolved around cost and concerns that Qatar lacked the requisite infrastructure, notably accommodation, needed to stage the event. As Declan said,

> I was really worried going into the tournament [because] of the horror stories about accommodation and how expensive it was going to be. That we would then get priced out.

Ken echoed this concern, and as a solo traveller, this perception influenced his decision to travel with a sports tour operating company, Sport Options. He said, "We got the impression that accommodation was very much going to be at a premium," and therefore, Ken was more than willing to forego his agency as an independent traveller and spend a little bit more money to ensure he secured accommodation during the tournament. Similarly, the belief that options for accommodation were going to be limited for fans was significant enough for Ian, although not exclusively the only reason, to locate himself in Dubai for the World Cup as opposed to Doha. As he said, "accommodation is not available for everyone to experience, which is why you've got to fly in and out of Dubai." Indeed, in the years and months leading up to the tournament, media commentaries within the UK were speculating on the scarcity of accommodation in Qatar and the cost burden the fans faced. Consequently, a perceived lack of accommodation represented a significant concern for some of the supporters and contributed to the negative scrutiny of the decision to award Qatar the World Cup.

Another point raised by the only female participant in this study, Sarah, focused on the socio-cultural context of Qatar, especially the state's treatment of women. Sarah expressed a deep

concern over how she would be expected to dress and travel with her partner as an unmarried woman. She felt she had to do more research than her partner at the time because of her gender and the perceived cultural norms and behaviour expectations of women in non-secular, Islamic societies. As she said,

> I was worried going with him because we're not married [I thought] 'Am I going to get put in prison [for] staying in the same room?' Obviously, I've looked into it a little more, and it's accepted.
>
> TT (Interviewer): Could you elaborate on what you've looked into?
>
> Well, I've researched all the rules, so certainly the dress wear and things like that [pause] having to cover up your shoulders and stuff. I was like, 'God, I can't walk around in a vest top and a pair of shorts, and that's all I own [I thought] I'm going to have to get a new wardrobe.

Evidently, other than staying at an all-inclusive resort in Egypt, Sarah had not visited a non-secular, Islamic society before travelling to the World Cup; thus, as her comments, while slightly tongue-in-cheek, suggest, she was originally concerned about what she would be allowed to wear without causing offense. As a consequence of this concern, she purposefully researched cultural norms, rules and visitor information sites to acquire a better understanding of Qatari society and culture. Sarah also sought advice from former acquaintances (nurses she used to work with) living in Qatar, which helped to alleviate any concerns before she travelled to the World Cup. When I asked her further if she believed she had to do more research than her partner, she responded,

> Yeah, I mean, he hasn't bothered at all. But I think it's because it's very much women that have to have their shoulders covered and things like that, and that's what they bang on about, and I've really looked into it. Even like the wedlock thing because, like, I didn't think we were going to be able to get a hotel room together, and this, that and the other.

Prior to the 2022 World Cup, questions have been raised by International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) regarding the lack of freedoms women enjoy in Qatar under Sharia law (Human Rights Watch, 2014). And as discussed within the literature review, there is a perception that Muslim women are considered oppressed victims of their Islamic faith, wherein those from Western, liberal and secular societies frequently reference restrictions on clothing and the hijab, in particular, or veil as a symbol of this oppression. The fact Sarah expressed this concern while her partner "was not bothered" suggests an unequal power dynamic amongst travelling England supporters. Indeed, none of the male supporters I spoke to raised any concerns over clothing or

122

discussed issues relating to gender (other than John). It did not affect their fandom or have a tangible impact on their own bodies. Unconsciously, then, most of the male supporters that I spoke to failed to challenge or unsettle the dominant gender hierarchy in football fandom. Their relative silence was perhaps indicative of their unconscious support for the status quo and the gender-based differences in sports fandom experience. Or simply they were not bothered by issues that did not directly affect them.

Moreover, in response to the issues outlined, some of the supporters, including Sarah, mitigated their concerns by claiming the media engaged in scaremongering prior to the 2022 World Cup. For example, Peter reflected,

> There's always criticism of World Cup. You know, in Brazil, they were saying that should be, um, cancelled because of the people protesting. You know, in Russia, they were saying, sort of, after the problems in France, that the Russians should never have the World Cup. There's always people making negative noise, um sells more newspapers than positive noise.

Terry echoed this sentiment by reflecting on his experience attending the 2010 World Cup in South Africa,

> The news and the media put dampeners on most things […] but when you look about the doom and gloom, everybody says, and obviously, they're saying the same about Qatar as well. It's you go, you look, and you make your own opinion.

To refer back to Sarah, she referred to this process as "scaremongering," alluding to her belief that when she arrived in Qatar, everything would be fine. Although, as she discussed in relation to clothing, it is fair to say Sarah was influenced to an extent by the media, regardless of their perceived "scaremongering." Stephen believed that while some of the criticism towards the state was justified, particularly surrounding accommodation and the availability of alcohol, it was "a good example of the media flaring up these issues." Thus, while the supporters that I spoke to sought to contradict, downplay and challenge the negative media scrutiny of Qatar based on their previous tournament experience and shared a general distrust of the media, on the other hand, their perceptions were inconsistent. As I have highlighted, the fans shared genuine concerns with me, such as a lack of alcohol, a footballing culture and clothing, all of which were undoubtedly influenced by the media and things personal to them. This implies a World Cup in Qatar may have presented a novel challenge to their fandom and to their various perceptions of the World Cup.

This point was illustrated further as some of the fans alluded to the allure of attending a World Cup in a new locale and in one city. For example, David and Nick, discussed the potential fandom opportunities in Qatar,

> I'm just really looking forward to it, and if it's a successful trip, I'll look to tick of Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Oman places like that for a football trip later in life […] I have a couple of positives on this World Cup are going to be how close proximity it is, everything is central to Doha; and I think that's going to add so much to the fan experience. (David)

> I think it's going to be one-of-a kind. I don't think there will ever be a World Cup like this one again where it's in one city. (Nick)

The proximity of the stadiums is a particularly significant feature of the 2022 World Cup, and perhaps in the context of intergroup encounters, it could facilitate communication between England supporters and Muslim communities in Qatar. Essentially, as David and Nick note, the event was be staged in one city, Doha, where the vast majority of the population of Qatar lives. To refer back to Stephen, he also considered stadium proximity to be a benefit of the World Cup and the hot climate: "It has the potential to be a good venue; I mean, the temperature will be ideal and the location in terms of proximity to the stadiums will be ideal." Again, there is a contradiction here, considering one of Stephen's core concerns about the World Cup is moving the tournament from the summer to the winter. Todd planned on taking advantage of the proximity between World Cup stadiums by purchasing 16 matchday tickets to different fixtures. Although, given that he had tickets for two separate games on the same day, he was worried about "transport" in that he only "had an hour [to get] between stadiums." This highlights the predominant view amongst the England supporters that, from a purely footballing perspective, there was a great deal of excitement in having the opportunity to engender a novel fan experience often not afforded to them when attending World Cups - the ability to attend multiple games in a single day. In this vein, Peter considered it a positive because he believed, unlike in Brazil, he would not have to travel as far and spend as much money. He said,

> In Brazil, the distances travelled were phenomenal. We went 2000 miles into the rainforest, [so] the idea of having a World Cup in on place [is] absolutely fantastic.

Indeed, Qatar was the smallest country ever to host a World Cup, with all the stadiums within a 21-mile radius of central Doha. In a short documentary on SkySports, ex-professional footballer

and match commentator Gary Neville highlighted the proximity as a key opportunity for Qatar, arguing from a fan perspective that a Qatar World Cup could be the 'best World Cup ever' (Gary Neville in Qatar, 2021). Beyond the pitch, some fans expressed their excitement about visiting a new country, especially a non-secular, Islamic state, for the first time. For instance, Nick commented, "I'm glad the World Cup's there because it will take me somewhere I would not have normally gone." Terry echoed this sentiment, stating that he was "really excited" about visiting a non-secular, Islamic society for the first time. Thus, this briefly highlights that for Nick and Terry, the allure of experiencing a new country further helped them decide to make the journey to Qatar.

What was apparent through my conversations with the fans was the novelty of a World Cup in the Arabian Peninsula clearly sought to challenge and contradict their thoughts, opinions and constructions of their encounters. This was characterised by the inconsistencies in their testimonies, as they were never sure of what they would experience and how it would impact them and their fandom in comparison to previous iterations of the World Cup that they attended.

Questions of Morality

Another challenge to the England football supporters' fandom and perceptions related specifically to the moral and ethical questions that were raised over the decision to award Qatar the World Cup, such as human rights issues and the rights of migrant workers (see Chapter One). The fans I spoke to were all conscious of particular issues and shared some concerns, but ultimately were not deterred from attending the tournament; they even agreed to participate in this study. I asked them about some of the issues and, more importantly, why they still wanted to travel to the 2022 World Cup. For example, Peter, who is a member of Amnesty International, said,

> With regards to human rights issues, which everybody touches on. Yes, there is a problem with human rights there, but there's a problem with human rights in Russia. There's a problem with human rights in Brazil. And I'd strongly argue there's a problem with human rights in Britain […] it [human rights abuses] goes on throughout the world.

Paralleling this critique, Nick focused on the treatment of the LGBT+ community in Britain 40–50 years ago,

> I'm quite a football fan when it comes to this, I separate it [the cultural politics] […] and also it's all well and good for us to point the finger at other people going, 'You don't like LGBT people holding hands, but fucking how long ago was it when it was illegal here [homosexuality] we were castrating people chemically, not that long back.

Tom elaborated on migrant workers deaths in Qatar and compared it with the construction of the 'Old' Wembley Stadium in London,

> The labour laws, you know, that was the other thing there, and the deaths. And I wanted to do it. I wanted to compare the building of the original Wembley stadium with the building of a stadium in Qatar and see how [and] what the injury levels were and how many lives were lost, and where the workers came from. You'd be damn sure a majority of them were from, in those days, were from Ireland and that they were staying in lodges and treated badly and racially abused for being Irish and paid shit money and falling off ladders.

Of course, Peter, Nick and Tom all make substantive points relating to the double standards and hypocrisy inherent in much of the Western media's commentary on the issues discussed. For Peter, human rights abuses are a universal phenomenon rather than a local or regional one. To single out a single country or region serves to perpetuate a power imbalance in the world system, one arguably defined by Western imperialism and Othering. Nick and Tom draw socio-historic comparisons with the development of Britain to support their argument that the Western media's coverage of Qatar has perhaps been steeped in ethnocentrism. Scholars like Griffin (2017) and Grix et al. (2023) have equally demonstrated and sufficiently argued how the media often obfuscate the role of Western actors in contributing towards human rights issues in Qatar (e.g., the treatment of migrant workers) whilst consolidating their position of moral authority.

Yet, arguably, these fans are attempting to deflect criticism away from Qatar to justify their attendance at the World Cup and negotiate their own ethical and moral conduct. Essentially, their identities as fans are threatened by the contradictions and moral questions associated with staging the tournament in Qatar. Jones et al. (2024) share a similar finding in relation to Newcastle United supporters' perceptions of the club's takeover by a Saudi Arabian-led investment fund. The authors discussed the importance of social identity and threat, referencing how supporters engage in socially creative strategies that downplay the importance of negative dimensions or issues (e.g., human rights) or reassign the dimension to a positive value so that their fandom is not threatened. The concepts the authors used are applicable to my own findings. For example, Peter, Nick and

Tom all engage in a socially creative strategy whereby human rights issues, questions around the LGBT+ community and the treatment of migrant workers are reduced to socio-historic comparisons (or 'whataboutism'), particularly in Nick and Tom's account. Such strategies function to maintain the status quo, limit social mobility (e.g., boycotting the event or activism) and legitimise not only their attendance but also the decision to award the World Cup to Qatar.

Echoing the socially creative strategies adopted by Peter, Nick and Tom and other fans like Terry and Ian, the only way to discover the 'truth' and develop a valid opinion about Qatar was to travel to the country to learn first-hand about it,

> The only way you're going to know the truth is by being there […] we can talk about bad things in every country. I mean, when South Africa had the World Cup the people were dying and falling off stadiums because there was no security, no scaffolding, no this, no that. Everything was going wrong. If they protested [construction workers], they'd just disappear [pause]. Is it true? Probably. Do you believe it? Some of it. Until I'm there, you'll get a completely honest opinion of what's going on. (Terry)

> I think that, as an…as an individual, me making a stand against them won't change one thing, yeah. In fact, by going to those places, I'm more likely to, um, to uh, find out more about those places. I can learn more so that maybe I could…could tackle injustices moving forward. (Ian)

The notion they could discover a "truth," while a naïve assumption also points to their belief that there is a singular "truth" out there that exists about the Other. Linking back to the previous section, it again suggests the possibility Terry and Ian could 'know about' these people and speak about them from a position of 'knowing' once they returned. It would have also been highly unlikely for supporters to have been granted access to migrant accommodation and construction sites. Nevertheless, in maintaining their identities as fans and conscious observers of social ills such as human rights abuses in Qatar, the idea of 'learning' functioned as an appropriate mechanism whereby cognitively Terry and Ian could confirm or deny concerns raised by Western media, INGO's and other commentaries - e.g., they could 'know' the Other.

A second 'socially creative' strategy is to emerge (Jones et al., 2024) within the fan discourses related to a perceived lack of power. Here, Stephen and David believed the responsibility to boycott the event was not on them, nor would it make any difference if they did,

I mean, obviously, it's fair play to people like that [boycotters]. I don't think it's on the fans themselves to boycott if it was going to be anything; it was going to be about the countries themselves that boycott because the World Cup is still going ahead. The difference of me not going is somebody else just goes instead of us, so [pause] especially at the age I'm at, because obviously, when I get a house and stuff, you think about, well, how many World Cups am I going to be able to go in the future. It's not something you can [pause] it's not something that I did because I did think about this, like the sort of morality of it. (Stephen)

I'm kind of, um, of the opinion that if everyone was boycotting, I would probably boycott, but if I was to boycott, I'd be the only person I know boycotting them. On ethical grounds, some football teams, some sponsors have made hints that they're going to boycott, but none of them ever have, so why does it matter if I go or not? If I didn't go on that cruise ship, didn't get that flight; if I didn't get that football ticket, someone else would have it in a flash. (David)

Again, echoing the findings of Jones et al. (2024), Stephen and David's comments evidently seek to protect their football fandom and uphold their social identities. In particular, Stephen justifies his attendance at the World Cup by noting the liminal nature of the tournament. He is arguing World Cups are not accessible to everyone, but also that social and cultural factors could prevent him from attending future events, thus making the decision to boycott on ethical grounds a difficult interpersonal dilemma. Equally, Stephen and David held the opinion any personal decision to boycott the event would have a limited impact on the plight of migrant workers in Qatar, or, as Ken put it, "Whether I went or not, was not going to change one iota of that [migrant worker deaths]." Instead, any impact would be confined to them personally, as they would miss out on the 2022 World Cup and potentially regret their decision. Nonetheless, their justifications function to downplay the ethical and moral concerns surrounding the 2022 World Cup, seemingly protecting their identities from the threat of 'missing out' as Sarah commented,

I'm quite excited by it now. I did have concerns initially, and I was like, 'Is this really the World Cup that I want to be going to […] but now I've looked into it more and more, I'm excited. I just need to leave my morals behind about the fact that people have died building the stadiums.

Collectively, the England supporters that I spoke to believed the decision to award the World Cup represented a 'moral ill' as described by Fruh et al. (2023). Most of them were attuned to or demonstrated some knowledge on human rights issues and believed the moral thing to do would be to boycott the event. Thus, to an extent, they sought to justify and maintain their identities as conscious citizens and fans through socially creative strategies, as referred to throughout. To an extent, these findings are also similar to those of Schofield et al. (2018), whose scholarship began

to unpick how the public and spectators of sports mega-events continue to provide support for them despite some of the moral concerns that surround them. Finally, this also suggests the messiness of the fans' attitudes and perceptions in-situ. They are attempting to make sense of a place they have never been to before and how it will affect their fandom and social identity as 'well-behaved' fans. It highlights how prior to the tournament, their constructions of encounters contained a plethora of competing and contradictory views that all served as social, cultural and ideological contact for making sense of contact.

Summary

Through my discussions with the England fans, especially during the pre-event phase of this research, it was evident their perceptions towards the 2022 World Cup formed a significant part of their intergroup constructions. To an extent, their attitudes towards the World Cup itself and the moral questions posed by staging the event in Qatar predisposed how they would engage with the 'Other.' For example, supporters like Ian, Peter and Vince decided to stay in a completely different country for the duration of the tournament based on their ideas of Qatari society and how their fandom would be affected. Consequently, all were likely to have qualitatively different intergroup experiences and cultural exchanges than the fans that chose to stay in Doha. Moreover, it was evident the fans' perceptions of the tournament were mixed. This was characterised by the fans not really knowing how to feel about attending the World Cup, which resulted in contradictory statements.

The England supporters expressed concern in regard to attending the event but were generally excited to travel to the Arabian Peninsula to experience the tournament. Thus, these findings complement Rookwood and Brannagan's (2016) findings revealed international supporters demonstrated both positive and negative perceptions of the World Cup in Qatar. The issues exerted by the media over Qatar's extreme climate or domestic treatment of migrant workers (Rookwood and Brannagan, 2016) was not fully shared by the supporters. In general, the fans were critical of the media's approach and argued it was guilty of "scaremongering" the general public. The supporters themselves were more concerned with issues pertinent to them as individuals and fans, such as accommodation (Declan and Ken) and gender concerns (Sarah). However, in relation to the contact hypothesis, the questions raised by supporters over Qatar's suitability to host a World Cup, I argue, positioned Qatar as a threat to their identities and practices as football fans. In particular, discourses relating to a 'lack of a footballing culture' and switching the tournament

from summer to winter were illustrative of this perceived threat. While these findings support Brannagan and Reiche (2022), who noted international spectators posed similar questions, they also bear resemblance to Millward's (2009) research with Liverpool supporters, who perceived foreign labour or foreign clubs as a distinct cultural threat to their identities as 'scouse' or 'English/British.' In the context of my findings, the fans' perceived Qatar as a potential threat to their long-standing, or 'pure' identities. A World Cup in the winter in a country with a perceived lack of a footballing culture could open the doors for further structural and cultural changes with regards to the tournament.

Furthermore, this section also provided original insights into the moral concerns that were raised over Qatar hosting the World Cup. The fans, for example, while acknowledging the severity of Qatar's treatment of migrant workers as a moral ill, attempted to justify their decision to attend the event. They did so through 'socially creative strategies' (Jones et al., 2024) such as socio-historic comparisons between Qatar and previous events and through a 'perceived lack of power' discourse. These findings are relevant, however, I argue, because they highlight how top-down discourses such as moral concerns raised by the media are challenged, constructed and perceived by fans from below. I have previously argued a bottom-up perspective is important for developing a richer understanding of how top-down discourses can influence, inform and be challenged by supporters and sports fans alike (Taylor et al., 2023).

Finally, while this theme, along with the previous one, 'Constructing Encounters', is grounded within empirical findings and does add original insights into a wider corpus of literature, they overall provide an important context for understanding the subsequent sections and for understanding the general themes, especially '*The Challenges of Intergroup Contact in a Temporary Sport Setting.*' The following section begins to analyse the socio-cultural experiences of the fans during the 2022 World Cup to understand whether their encounters and experiences could have transformational impacts on their pre-event constructions.

4.3 England Fans' Socio-Cultural Experiences: Fandom and Intercultural Encounters

Following on from the England fans' pre-event constructions of their encounters with Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula, this theme evaluates the fans' socio-cultural experiences and encounters in the Arabian Peninsula during the 2022 World Cup. To remind the reader, the focus is very much on the Arabian Peninsula and not just Qatar because several fans stayed in other countries during the tournament. Vince stayed in Saudi Arabia and travelled into Doha to watch England matches; Peter and Ian both stayed in Dubai and flew in to watch England play; and Ken stayed in both Doha and Dubai at different stages during the tournament. When I asked the fans a series of questions concerning their experiences during the tournament and their overall impressions of the country they stayed in during the tournament, two central topics were apparent. In the first instance, it became evident their fandom practices formed a salient part of their socio-cultural experiences and, to an extent, dictated their willingness to engage with the Other. In the second, discourses of authenticity and navigating a sense of 'strangeness' emerged as significant themes in the fans' accounts. Of particular importance is their understanding of authenticity, which seemingly predisposes the supporters intergroup and cultural encounters. As a consequence, both their fandom practices and authenticity are central to the development of this theme. Further, the findings I present here contribute to *'The Challenges of Intergroup Contact in a Temporary Sport Setting.'*

England Fandom and the Consumption of Alcohol

During my discussions with the England supporters after the World Cup, I tried to ask them early on to 'walk me through your first few days.' Not only was this just to build rapport, comfort and ease into our conversation, but also to get them to reflect on their early experiences. It soon became evident early on, however, that the consumption of alcohol functioned as a key activity to understand their socio-cultural experiences and fandom. For example, Declan, recalled feeling a sense of cultural difference,

> The way I've always been brought up, you know, part of the football experience is meeting the lads down the pub beforehand, going to the game and then you know going home and talking about it, or going to the pub and talking about it. You couldn't do that [in Qatar] I mean before we worked out places we could go to. I remember watching a game on TV in the apartment and normally you would just go to the off-license and get some beers in, and everyone has one. My friend from here [USA] had his daughter and son and daughter's boyfriend with him. They were

in an apartment relatively close to us, so they came over and we were all sitting there drinking green tea watching Argentina play someone. So that was culturally very different.

Declan contextualised the above experience explicitly in terms of his football fandom. Initially, before becoming aware of where he could consume alcohol Declan is describing a unique personal experience where to an extent, he had to temporarily navigate his fandom in a distinct sport and leisure space. For example, he was not able to perform his usual socialised ritual of drinking with friends whilst watching football. Terry and Sarah also reflected on their first few days in Qatar and the types of leisure activities they engaged in,

> We went out. Obviously, we went searching for a beer like you would do […] we just headed towards the beach; there was a beach to the front of the sea and a promenade, so we had a wander up and down there before we hit the bars. (Terry)

> So, I arrived. I was pretty shattered, and then we went up [pause] we booked into an apartment; and then a quick change and went out. And we were trying to find somewhere to go for a beer and stuff. I said I've been stuck on a plane all day. I do not want to be going into a bar. So, I didn't want to be in a pub, so we were looking for somewhere outside. We went to the Red Lion because it wasn't far from our apartment. 'Oh god, I'm glad we didn't get in there; there was a queue around the block, and so we ended up at the Radisson Blue, and it was a great atmosphere in there. (Sarah)

These reflections shared by Terry and Sarah culminate in shared memories wherein to perform and enact their identity as football fans, a process of wandering and "searching" for a bar or public house was seemingly requisite of being a fan. Acclimatising to Doha and their new surroundings thus required identifying spaces where they could drink and find a sense of comfort and belonging within a distinct sport and leisure space. The most significant part of their reflections is, arguably, the temporality of this process. Both were reflecting on their experiences just hours after landing in Doha from the UK, and as Sarah alluded to, this was a pretty 'shattering' journey. This was unsurprising considering scholars have previously identified how alcohol is linked to sporting cultures, especially with football fandom and how alcohol at sporting events takes on increasing social significance (Collins and Vamplew, 2002; Dixon, 2014; Dun, 2014; McManus, 2020). Moreover, the salience of searching for spaces to consume alcohol additionally eased Stephens's pre-event concerns, as he discovered quickly that he could purchase alcohol and socialise with others, "we ended up getting into this bar with loads of Welsh fans, so we just had a couple of pints."

Once the fans were assured they could consume alcohol easily, they were all willing to navigate the economic realities to indulge in this fandom practice. In his first diary entry, Nick shared a short video of himself documenting his first couple of days in Doha. He reflected, "the beer is very expensive; we paid 11 pound a pint last night on the cruise ship, plus service charge." Peter, who stayed in Dubai and flew into Doha to attend England games, provided a comparative experience of the two cities,

> We didn't go for a drink much in Qatar because of the price. But incidentally, they had a Birmingham City bar that was owned by a Birmingham City fan. […] they were charging 50 quid entry to some of the hotels and then saying, but you can have drinks until you've used up your 50 quid. But by the time you've had three drinks, you've used up your 50 quid. [In Dubai, a bar] had some deal on with the hotel where they'd sell beer; I think it was £9 a pint instead of £16, so we ended up watching virtually all the game [in there].

The city of Dubai itself is relatively more liberal than Qatar with its alcohol policies, which, while still considered strict in a Western sense, are less restrictive and widely available than in Qatar. In Qatar, purchasing alcohol was subject to a 100% tax increase, fuelling the costs for fans. Prior to the tournament, Rookwood (2019) suggested some fans (like Peter) might decide to stay in Dubai for the World Cup to navigate restrictive and expensive alcohol policies. Nevertheless, fans were prepared and willing to pay a premium for alcohol in Qatar. Tom reflected upon an experience he and his wife shared when looking for a place to drink, noting,

> The expensive prices, which you adjusted to; if I didn't pay £15 for a pint, there was something wrong, you know. I thought I'm not going to drink much tonight, but I'm prepared to have a couple of pints.

Thus, Tom was prepared to pay for a drink and perform his identity as a fan, but within a more limited capacity, e.g., 'only having a few a drinks.' Going to a pub or a bar became a part of Tom's "footballing rhythm," as he commented,

> We'd go down to the fan zone for 3 p.m. or something if we weren't going to a match, and we [pause] there were a few hotels that had mock pubs in, so we started to go into those.

Nick and Todd recorded similar rituals within their audio-visual diaries,

> We're going to England and Iran today, so we're at the Radisson Blue. We've turned up an hour and a half early; they can't serve beer until 11 a.m. [laughs] so we're just killing some time in reception. (Nick)

> Um, you know, you find alcohol where you can if you're going to have a drink. I've had a few beers. I'm probably drinking more than I definitely normally would. (Todd)

Other fans like Roger, Ken, Terry, Steven, Declan and Sarah shared similar experiences and "rhythms" in relation to their leisure practices and rituals on a match day and non-match day. However, the fans did not have the freedoms they usually might have had at previous editions of the World Cup. Their agency as fans and their leisure choices were far more constrained and restricted. Alcohol itself was never publicly advertised and based upon my own observations, neither were bars, pubs, or clubs other than on the cruise ships, which were for guests only. As Ian explained, alcohol was available but only "if you knew where to find it." He further added "the sort of restaurants and bars where you could go were hidden away in hotels, so you couldn't see them." And when the fans identified private spaces where they could consume alcohol, in some instances, they were subjected to not only extortionate costs or entrance fees but also to other restrictions relating to access and security. Tom, for instance, recalled trying to get into an Irish pub inside of a hotel complex, wherein "they wanted our passports; they wanted to know where we were staying and nobody else had asked us that." Terry and Stephen alluded to the need to make a reservation for some places or face a long queue to get in. Todd recalled how most pubs and bars would stop letting patrons in after 12 a.m., so after watching a 10 p.m. game at a stadium, he and his mates would "be racing across Doha just to get to a place." The inability to drink at or around stadiums, especially those located away from hotel bars, also had an impact on the fans' experiences. Stephen, for instance, shared a humorous story in which he and his friends had a "skin full" before a late kick-off at the Al-Bayt stadium,

> It was quite away [the stadium] so by the time we actually got to the ground, the sort of drink had worn off, which was probably one of the reasons why the atmosphere wasn't particularly great [...] like my mate, who ended up in that away day sleepers[20] at the Wales game, he just fell asleep during the match.

---

[20] Away day sleepers is a social media fan page, where fans send in photos or videos of other supporters sleeping during a match, on the way to a game, or on the way back.

Clearly, leisure restrictions were placed on the supporters' experiences, as the consumption of alcohol was limited to certain hotel bars and fan zones, which for the most part were hidden away. Dun (2014) argued Qatar's tightly controlled policies for consuming alcohol in particular spaces were the state's way of keeping those spaces separate from the native population. While this may have been the case, as the examples demonstrably highlight, the England supporters were more than content to indulge in the practice of drinking alcohol. To draw on Maoz's (2006) concept of the 'mutual gaze' as discussed in the literature review, the consumption of alcohol in hidden, private spaces suggests both the host community and fans gazed upon each other from a distance, e.g., the fans' either in hotel bars or in the fan zones were perhaps portrayed as 'typical westerners,' or 'boozy Brits,' while the local Muslim community, as Declan expressed earlier on (see page, 33), were gazed upon as "culturally different." As Maoz's (2006) findings illustrated, a 'mutual gaze' ultimately leads to mutual avoidance between groups.

Although outgroup avoidance generally refers to highly prejudiced people avoiding contact altogether, as Pettigrew (1998) has noted, it can evidently manifest in more subtle articulations. That is, the supporters unconsciously avoided intergroup encounters with the local Muslim communities by pursuing their identities as fans. This does not necessarily suggest the England fans rejected intergroup engagements altogether. Instead, shared public spaces, such as fan parks, shopping malls and so forth, were only ever temporarily inhabited, especially by the supporters. The fans clearly preferred occupying spaces that prioritised a core social and cultural practice of their fandom, e.g., consuming alcohol in bars. Still, this lends weight to McKeown and Dixon's (2017) argument voluntary segregation can exist between different groups of people, even when an opportunity for intergroup engagement is ripe. In this context, it is voluntary because the salience of alcohol consumption suggests the fans chose to pursue pre-existing identities as opposed to engaging in rich cultural activities or intergroup encounters with the Other. Nevertheless, the fans' thirst for alcohol consumption demonstrably acted as an intrapersonal contact barrier.

However, within the hotel bars, there were sporadic manifestations of intergroup encounters between the England supporters and Muslim communities. For example, Sarah was able to make an observation on the religious adherence of Muslims in Qatar,

> They were happy for people to be drinking, but they didn't want people to be
> hammered. Which is fair enough? Why would you want that? They're a dry

country. Well, they're not a dry country. A lot of Qataris were in bars drinking, and you know they'd sit there. James [pseudonym] took so many pictures of people and posted them on his twitter saying, 'These guys don't drink.'

Sarah further reflected on her surprise that in some "dodgy hotel" bars, you could find "brasses" (sex workers). And that, in Doha, "you could find anything you wanted; you just needed to know where and be careful about it." Ian made similar observations about the perceived drinking culture in the Arabian Peninsula, recalling how he went to a bar in Doha where there were "these guys from Saudi Arabia they were all in the bar and had Western clothes on and went to the bar." He further explained, how the consumption of alcohol is,

> Not normal in their cultures, the Saudi's [pause] there were loads of these lads from Saudi Arabia, well one of them was a student in Manchester, so he knew all about England […] and he and his mates were there, and they were definitely pally with lager, and they were going back to Saudi Arabia a couple of days later. And he was saying what they do was, on Friday, after prayers, there would be rings of traffic coming out of Saudi into Qatar for the weekend, and there's working girls there as well.

This interaction sought to challenge Ian's perception of Muslims, although, prior to the event, he expressed the heterogeneity and levels of religious practice amongst the Muslim community. He was nonetheless amazed to observe people from Saudi Arabia openly consuming alcohol in another non-secular, Islamic society. Vince, who stayed in Saudi Arabia during the World Cup, confirmed Ian's observation further. When he visited some friends who were staying in Bahrain for the tournament, he observed, "there's a causeway that goes across the sea into Bahrain from Saudi and it's absolutely rammed with Saudi's going over there for a drink." For Sarah, Ian and Vince, these observations highlighted to them that there are some Muslims who may not strictly follow the religious practices of Islam within Qatar or Saudi Arabia. Perhaps more striking was the fact that Saudis came to Qatar, which, in their view, has strict alcohol policies, to enact their own agency and religious deviation. Dun (2014) and Harkness (2020) have both highlighted how levels of religiosity vary amongst Muslims, with some Muslims being open about the fact they drink alcohol.

These limited examples are notable for illustrating how the socio-cultural and political context of a destination or environment can significantly dictate the nature of intergroup contact. During the previous World Cup, the fans would arguably have expected to see and encounter their Russian counterparts in bars or other spaces where alcohol is consumed. Tom even shared a humorous

story where he and his wife were drinking vodka with some Russians in a hotel bar until the early hours of the morning. In Qatar, however, given the conservative alcohol restrictions, spontaneous opportunities were more limited. Yet, simultaneously, these spaces did provide momentary opportunities for fans to encounter some Muslims, exposing them to a different interpretation of Islamic culture. However, these encounters were evidently limited and superficial in nature. They did not facilitate any meaningful forms of contact, as discussed by Allport (1979) and Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) or lead to any transformational cultural understanding. Rather to refer back to Sarah and Vince in particular, contact seemed to develop in more imagined ways; that is, as Crisp and Turner (2009) have described, whether the people they saw were actually Muslims or not, they developed a particular mental image of them that challenged their initial perception that 'Muslims don't drink.' It is unclear how this influenced their overall perception of Muslim communities in general, or Islam, but this imagined contact temporarily sought to challenge an initial stereotype. Implicitly the supporters also perhaps denied the possibility some of their fellow England fans might have been Muslim too.

"Metro This Way": Comfort, Safety and the World Cup Environment

While the consumption of alcohol effectively acted as a barrier that limited opportunities for intergroup encounters characterised by outgroup avoidance, The "rhythms" the fans' developed and their everyday experiences in Qatar, Dubai and Saudi Arabia sought to reduce any pre-anxieties they might have had towards the Other, providing a temporary sense of (intergroup) comfort and familiarity to develop. The fans mostly expressed this around two discussion points: a) feeling safe and comfortable and b) through the organisation of the tournament and proximity of stadia, each interrelated with their routines and rituals. For example, Roger described he and his wife's daily routine in Qatar in relation to leisure activities,

> Yeah, we could've done more [leisure and tourism] but because we had a game every day and sometimes two games, it just you know [pause] we'd have a bit of breakfast in the morning then nip somewhere, even if it was only to Doha, just to walk about for an hour or two.

Tom and his wife shared a similar routine,

> So, our rhythm would be football, um, shopping in the supermarkets—I think we needed some socks or T-shirts, or something, so we went somewhere for that on one occasion and then it was mostly 'what times the match? And where should we see it?'

As noted in the previous sub-section, other fans had similar but varying daily routines, rituals and habits as Roger and Tom. In each account, football provided a core focal point for their experiences during the tournament. In Roger's case, he had tickets to matches for the duration of his stay in Qatar and thus, he and his wife's routine would start with something relatively mundane: 'having a bit of breakfast'. For Tom, the mundane activity of going to the supermarket was an important ritual, so he and his wife could also enjoy breakfast, or lunch before deciding where to watch World Cup matches. While these routines were important not just for providing space to complete mundane daily tasks such as eating breakfast, they also helped to provide a sense of familiarity and comfort. Comfort, in particular, between groups, especially through intergroup friendships, has been identified as a useful mechanism for reducing barriers between different groups of people (see, for example, Brown et al., 2003; Pettigrew and Tropp, 2011).

Paradoxically, however, while Roger and Tom, felt a sense of (intergroup) comfort through developing daily habits, what these examples demonstrably illustrate is that during the fans' everyday lived experiences, they did not have a great interest in exploring local culture. This considerably contrasts with some of the fans claims of cosmopolitanism and interest in exploring different people, places and cultures. For example, during my interview with Nick, when I asked him 'if he knew much about Qatar,' he responded, "Zero. I'm going there to see and be immersed in it." As the previous section highlighted, Nick's socio-cultural experience was very much centred upon consuming alcohol and watching football, as opposed to being immersed in Qatar's interpretation of Islamic culture. It also reinforces Cohen's (1972) argument tourists, or in this case, travelling football fans, seek the novelty of a new place (their cosmopolitan claims), but from a position of comfort and security. This effectively hampers how far they are willing to diverge from their own fandom practices and norms. In this vein, the 'World Cup bubble' is an imagined fan-creation as much as a structural barrier. This point is further expressed by Declan, who alluded to the process of feeling safe in his new environment. On his first day in Qatar, one of his sons went to find a gym, while Declan went to find a supermarket to get supplies for their apartment,

> Whilst I was walking back with the groceries from the supermarket, I remember looking around and thinking, this is like being in the middle of a film shoot on the news, CNN or BBC news from Afghanistan, Iran, or something like that, because it just looked like that. There were cars everywhere beeping their horns, it wasn't particularly well developed and obviously you had locals there. So, I remember

being a bit uncomfortable that first 24–36 hours. But once we got our bearings, it was completely fine.

A sense of Othering is apparent in Declan's account. There is an inherent assumption that his "undeveloped" surroundings were akin to warzones in different non-secular, Islamic societies. But beyond this, the experience he shared discusses a period of adjustment where some form of effort and 'discomfort' was required not to make the 'strange' familiar but to not engage with the 'strange' at all. Again, this was achieved through imagining a 'World Cup bubble,' or a safe space for Declan to experience his fandom, as he further commented. Developing a habit or routine as mundane as walking to the supermarket helped him become familiar with the place and feel secure; "That was the other thing you actually felt completely safe there the whole time." Other England supporters discussed feeling safe throughout the tournament in Doha, including Todd, who described staying out late until the early hours as the morning as,

> Safe, you know, for the most part. I mean, we had some really late night […] I still sometimes wonder, Am I going to make it home safe? And it still ended up being safe.

For Peter, safety referred to how the local authorities treated the fans; he reflected that the safety at stadiums was,

> Superb, absolutely superb. We've seen places where English fans haven't been treated particularly well […] but at the World Cup, I've got no complaints whatsoever.

Similarly, John referenced how he and his family, "never felt unsafe at any point. It's less safe in Peterborough [where he's from] than it was in Qatar and I mean that 100%." Perhaps this feeling of safety was also an implicit juxtaposition against the Asian Muslim community in his home locale. Nonetheless, it was evident safety was discussed in the above accounts in individual ways. The construction of safety took on different meanings for each fan, was contextual and was based on previous preconceptions that were arguably racialised (e.g., assuming it would be dangerous because Qataris are different from 'us'). Todd referenced his ability to walk 'home' every night while slightly intoxicated. For Peter, safety related to the match day experience at the stadium, wherein the local authorities were not "heavy-handed," whereas for John, it specifically related to his wife and young daughter. He felt comfortable in

the knowledge he could leave them to go shopping while he went to watch a football match. This sense of feeling safe, I argue, did provide a temporary reduction in any anxieties the fans may have had towards their host. But it only existed within the relative 'bubble' of the 2022 World Cup, as opposed to transferring to the local community itself. Therefore, rather than acting as a facilitator for meaningful intergroup relations to develop between the fans and the local Muslim community, feeling safe had an adverse effect on contact as fans were not willing to leave the safe environment of their constructed 'World Cup bubbles.'

Related to the notion of safety and intergroup comfort was the organisation of the tournament itself, which further engendered familiarity. The organisational element was characterised by transport, an army of volunteers, the proximity of stadiums and their accessibility. For example, Sarah commented on the "amazing transport [that was] absolutely fantastic." Another fan, Peter, similarly shared his reflections on Dubai's transport system, noting it was "absolutely amazing." In his first audio-visual diary, Nick discussed how the accessibility from the airport to his hotel was fantastic: "the service was fantastic. Straight in the taxis, and the taxis are nice and cheap, and we got to the cruise ship." Not having to worry about 'getting lost' helped to provide a sense of familiarity for Nick and alleviate any anxiety on arrival. Similarly, Terry expressed how amazed he was by the airport in Doha and how easy it was to get around the city in his first few days. He said, "The airport was fantastic. The transformation from getting off the plane and getting outside [the airport] was so easy." Supporting the fans in helping them navigate the transportation systems and around different areas of the city was the sea of volunteers identifiable from their matching colourful uniforms and hand foams. From my own observations, these volunteers became very much a part of the fabric of the tournament, providing several memorable moments. As the quotes below highlight,

> The people that were helping you with the metro, the people helping in the stadiums. I mean, I just remember this girl should 'metro this way.' (Ken)

> I found that particular good [volunteers]. It seemed to be over the top with how many there was…like every five yards, almost. You know, um, but when you came out of the ground, you know, you never had any trouble finding your coaches or, uh, the underground. Uh, there was somebody pointing you in the right direction every like I say it'd be five, five yards, you know? 'Keep right, keep left, straight on'; you know, it was easier. (Roger)

To what extent positive notions of transport and accessibility during the World Cup in Qatar differed from other sports mega-events is arguably questionable. The majority of tournament hosts invest in transportation infrastructure in and around event venues and host free travel services to and from popular tourist and event sites (e.g., stadiums, fan zones, etc.). What is interesting, however, in the context of the contact hypothesis is Pavoni's (2011: 204) concept of "controlled spacialization, or festivity." The author used this term to refer to securitised mega-event zones (e.g., fan parks) that effectively function as 'safe spaces' providing international spectators with any relief from their preconceived anxieties. While Pavoni (2011) was interested in the World Cup in South Africa, especially fan safety in Johannesburg - a city the author suggested was perceived as dangerous by international spectators - in Doha, constructions of 'controlled festivity' manifested in similar ways. Especially concerning the 'sterilisation' of space away from any frictions or unwanted communications. For example, the infrastructure and transportation systems in and around Doha to and from popular venues, along with an army of volunteers, functioned to create a safe, comfortable and easily accessible urban space for the fans to revel in. To draw on Kirby et al. (2018), the fans were disciplined to move in specific ways across the city. Although the supporters held a positive impression of the transport and the environment they were in, it represented an inconvenient truth for intergroup relations. The mobility choices of the supporters, aided by structural incentives (free, easy transportation), functioned as a barrier for intergroup relations, which co-existed alongside the England supporter's willingness to engage with the Other. To a degree, these findings support Dixon et al.'s (2020) research, which shows high levels of segregation can exist in outgroup areas. Thus, serving as another barrier to contact in a temporary sports setting.

A further point raised by the supporters to support the above argument relates to the proximity of the World Cup venues in Doha. Some fans previously perceived this as a possible positive contribution of hosting the World Cup in Qatar to their fandom. Roger, for example, reflected on how his accommodation was within a short distance of several World Cup venues,

> We had about three or four grounds within about 10 miles from us. So, there was eight grounds out there, and seven of them were really close […] but like I say there was a hundred, if not thousands, of buses at the tournament, all brand new, taking you to the game. So, you'd just jump on the bus. It was unbelievable and well organised.

As discussed, Ken and Peter shared similar sentiments. This further contributed to the fans' feeling of safety and familiarity, as they could stay in one location and easily navigate their way around the city. It also had a symbolic impact on the supporters in that it contributed positively to their memories of the World Cup, considering most commented it was a "well-organised" tournament and perhaps the "best" World Cup in terms of organisation. Nonetheless, this spatial organisation and mobility of the fans sought to concentrate them, or, as Kirby et al. (2018) noted, 'discipline' them into certain spaces that did not or rarely crossed the boundaries of integration with the local Muslim communities. Some fans, for example, did reflect on this perceived sense of control. Ian, for instance, said,

> I did keep saying that they sent you where they wanted you to go. It's almost a bit like, you know, when you go to the theatre or the opera, you show decorum, and you know, you wouldn't dream of sitting in the seat three rows in front of you that you shouldn't be sitting in.

The point I believe Ian is making here is that he felt as though the fans were constantly under the gaze of surveillance, wherein the fans were controlled and their behaviour regulated. He further observed, "It's all about getting you in the ground, getting you out of the way and corralling you." For Ian, the tournament was stage-managed compared to previous editions of the World Cup,

> A big difference um, it was all staged, well put together, but it lacked the spontaneity of the tournaments where you go where you want to go, when you want to go. So, for example, in France at the Euro's, you're in a back of a van, you're camping, you're on the road on the way to St. Étienne, and you don't know where you're going to stop. You don't know where the next town is you're going to. The Qatar World Cup was all managed.

Vince, who travelled to Doha from Saudi Arabia, shared a similar sentiment,

> I mean, it was all like efficient and organised. But yeah, it was all sort of functional in away - get you to the stadium, get the game done, and the off you go […] it wasn't really what I would call independent travelling.

These responses are noteworthy because, despite all considering the tournament to be well organised, they were critical of the 2022 World Cup, especially compared to previous tournaments they have attended. They believed they had less freedom to explore than previous

editions of the tournament. Essential to the argument Ian and Vince are making is that the organising polity, quite like with the alcohol restrictions, could control and manage where the fans went on match days and dictate their behaviour, similar to a theme park, or the "opera," as Ian described it. These are very much perceived structural barriers to contact, and as discussed, they are arguably no different from how other sports mega-events like the Summer Olympic Games are organised. It is not my intention to argue structural barriers to contact existed or not; clearly, some of the fans' perceived there were certain restrictions placed on their ability to be mobile once in Qatar. However, scholarship on voluntary segregation in everyday spaces provides an important analytical lens for understanding the fans' feelings of safety and comfort within the World Cup environment (see, for example, Bettencourt et al., 2019; Dixon et al., 2020). For example, the fans' sense of comfort and familiarity, characterised by their daily routines, rituals and the organisational characteristics of the 2022 World Cup, seemingly derived from the notion that there was no intergroup contact between themselves and the local Muslim communities. That is, they preferred to, and voluntarily stayed within the existing structures of the World Cup environment, as opposed to deviating from the norm or experiencing any feelings of 'strangeness' and hence Otherness.

Hayya Hayya (Better Together): A (Limited) Celebration of Difference.

The official World Cup song for the 2022 tournament in Qatar, *Hayya Hayya* (Better Together), provided the travelling supporters with a celebratory soundtrack for the World Cup. The song was on repeat within the stadium, in the fan parks and around other fan spaces in the city. Originally, the song was performed by three artists from three different continents and was intended to symbolise how culture, especially music and football, can unite the world and bring everybody together. Broadly speaking, this universalist rhetoric, as Tomlinson and Young (2004) have noted, has been a salient characteristic of the World Cup and its promotion. It also underpins the central premise of Allport's (1979) contact hypothesis: when people from different groups come together, togetherness can be facilitated (e.g., through reducing hostilities). It was apparent from speaking to the fans and listening to some of their audio-visual diaries that experiencing the World Cup did provide opportunities for intergroup encounters to develop, especially between international fans. For example, Ian shared an image with me of him and his friends with Iranians supporters before England's opening fixture of the 2022 World Cup. When I asked Ian to reflect on the image, he said,

> What happened with them is what happens when you go away anywhere. You get the England flag, and everybody is around you, and they want the Iranian flag next to yours and the TV cameras are on you and everything's all like this unity thing. You can be brought through football or common interest.

Paralleling this experience, Peter said, "We spoke to a lot of different nationalities and they were all friendly and pleased to see us." When I prompted further and asked him, 'did you feel a sense of unity?' Peter responded,

> Yes, sort of, yeah. We played Senegal; I had photographs taken with the Senegal flag and our Birmingham City flag, and they want photographs of you just as much as you want them; you know, it's just an amazing experience.

Through the mutual love of football, exchanging photographs with fans from other nations represented a visible recognition and celebration of difference with outgroup members (e.g., those wearing flags and replica national team shirts) - a liminal moment of different fan groups and cultures coming together. Ian even held the belief that taking photos with international fans was an expression of how people 'can be brought together through football.' While these examples illustrate there were opportunities for intergroup contact to develop during the tournament, taking a photo before a match can only ever be ephemeral; it is more of a performative act and is fleeting. Nevertheless, Ken, who travelled to the World Cup as a sole traveller, described the atmosphere between groups of fans as,

> It was friendly. Um, you got the impression people were there to enjoy themselves. There was almost camaraderie between the fans. Perhaps that's not quite the right word, but everybody just seemed to get along with everybody else.

The social "camaraderie" amongst all the spectators, in Ken's opinion, positively contributed to the atmosphere of the tournament. He further commented, "Everybody seemed excited" and "everybody was in World Cup mode." This made him feel as though he was "at a major tournament." Similarly, in his second audio-visual diary, Nick recorded his lived experiences of attending the Japan vs. Germany match. He reflected,

> So, we're on day three of our trip out here. Again, lots of positive experiences, especially with all nations. We were at the Japan vs. Germany game today, and the Japanese fans were phenomenal - we even bumped into some Welsh fans and had a good chat there.

Similarly, John, along with his wife and daughter, attended several neutral fixtures and recalled one game in particular where he and his family were seated with a particular set of fans.

> One game that the three of us went to - we did all go to one game - was Ghana, Uruguay, and again, it was just so - I mean, we stood out quite a bit. We were in the middle of the Ghanaian fans, so you can imagine how we looked amongst everybody. It was brilliant, absolutely fantastic.

Attending neutral matches during the World Cup provided a further opportunity for the England fans to meet other international supporters, as Nick and John explained. In my discussion with John, he explained that experiencing a jubilant atmosphere and meeting others was an important element of his fandom, acting as a key motive for his attendance at the World Cup itself. In this example, he was able to actively celebrate and join in with the Ghanaian fans by singing and dancing in the stands, revelling in the shared moment. Echoing this experience, another fan, Todd, also shared in celebrations with opposing fan groups when he attended the Senegal vs. Netherlands group stage match. In the build-up to the game, Todd recorded parts of his journey to the Al Thumama Stadium. In his audio-visual diary, Todd and his friends can be seen talking to Senegalese fans on a bus, sharing jokes, laughing and smiling together before departing. They then took a photo together and walked into the ground as a group. When I asked Todd about this experience during a post-event interview, he briefly stated it was "amazing." He also did not consider or reflect on the possibility that the fans he encountered were likely Muslims considering the majority of the Senegalese population are Muslim. Arguably, however, these experiences provided fleeting and superficial moments of encounter between international fans that England fans interpreted positively. These limited encounters also sought to confirm their pre-conceptions and desires for meeting others.

However, in the context of the contact literature, these examples of contact that the fans are describing are not only ephemeral moments, e.g., taking photographs or watching neutral matches; they pay lip service to the contact hypothesis. Firstly, as Allport (1979) argued, the forms of engagement the fans are describing simply do not facilitate any forms of meaningful contact to exist. While they are useful starting points that could potentially encourage positive contact, as Pettigrew and Tropp (2011) have noted, they are sporadic and transient. They do not develop beyond the immediate contact situation. Any claims to suggest otherwise should be investigated. For example, elements of Allport's (1979) conditions like mutual cooperation (e.g., nations coming together to celebrate football) were a clear possibility during the World

Cup. In my own diary, I observed the jubilation of Saudi Arabians singing and dancing in *Souq Waqif* in the immediate aftermath of their surprise round robin victory against Argentina. Bystanders were keen to join in the celebrations, sharing high-fives and congratulating the Saudi supporters. However, this was not tangible or everlasting; ultimately, the supporters of different national teams went their separate ways to support their own team. Burdsey (2008:271) referred to this as a "billiard ball" effect, wherein different communities temporarily bump up against one another in particular spaces before proceeding off in another direction without sharing any meaningful contact. These moments are also sporadic and not stable. For example, Sarah recalled a moment where she witnessed rivalries being evoked,

> In the game [England vs. Wales], I saw some English people, and they were properly slagging off the Welsh. 'Oh, them Welsh tossers,' whatever. And um, I was like, 'What's your problem with them?' You know we'd had a good laugh with them before the match; I don't have a problem [pause] and to me, that was just prejudice.

This suggests discourses of togetherness, or any celebrations of difference are often temporary and subject to competing discourses, e.g., rivalries can be evoked in celebratory spaces. Secondly, this leads to another point. To refer back to Ian and Peter and even Sarah's experience of rivalry, group saliency was ever present during the tournament. Markers of national identity or national support were clearly visible, as was the case for Ian, who swapped national flags with Iranian supporters, or Peter, who had a photo taken with Senegalese supporters wearing the national team shirt. While the supporters may have interpreted these experiences as evidence of cultural encounters and of their cosmopolitanism, the groups were evidently separated by their nationality. Equally, as Pettigrew (1998) has critiqued in the context of the salient categorisation approach to contact, both the Iranian and Senegalese fans shared a common interest with Ian and Todd (an assumed passion for football), thus being more likely to engage with each other. They were perhaps not representative of their group as a whole, meaning if there were any symbolic impacts, they did not generalise to the whole group.

Furthermore, the fans also spoke about a 'feel good' atmosphere that existed within World Cup spaces, especially between different groups of international supporters. For example, Sarah described the atmosphere as one big party,

> So, there was a lot of friendly banter. There were a lot of Mexicans staying where we were. So even in the apartments, there was an atmosphere like it was a good atmosphere; it was party, party.

Stephen, who stayed in cabin accommodation, spoke about how the atmosphere between the different fan groups at his accommodation was brilliant,

> It was about 1 o'clock in the afternoon by the time we got up and got to the bus, but yeah, the queue from the bus was massive, and there were loads of Ecuadorian fans, Mexicans and Argentinians playing music. Even though the teams weren't playing, they were singing, and this was before they had a drink. I was like, 'Well, if this were England, everyone would be just fucking miserable before they have a drink before football'. Um, but it was buoyant. Yeah, the atmosphere was absolutely brilliant, and I think that was one of the things that made it feel like a proper World Cup in the sense that all the fans were together.

The positive atmosphere that developed throughout the tournament loosely aligns with Cornelissen and Maenning's (2010) conceptualisation of the 'feel good' effects relating to sports mega-events. In particular, a sense of 'feel good' was evoked through the different fan groups who expressed their fandom in more convivial ways. Another fan, Terry, simply stated the "atmosphere was fantastic" throughout the tournament, especially at the "*Souqs*." The event evidently provided a space for people to meet, share memories and revel in a limited expression of communalism. A 'feel good' factor mostly relates to the more emotional aspect of an event to do with socio-cultural experiences both collectively and individually. To an extent, a positive atmosphere helped to dispel any negative sentiments towards the decision to award Qatar the rights to host the World Cup. However, the politics of the 'feel good' factor are complex. The 'feel good' factor manifested primarily between different groups of international fans, the army of volunteers and, to an extent, service workers. While football fans supporting nations from Muslim-majority countries such as Iran, Tunisia and Morocco were included in the creation of the 'feel good' factor, it was evident these impacts did not extend to the Muslim communities in Qatar or Dubai. A sense of social exclusion permeated.

Essentially, celebrations of difference and a 'feel good' factor simply did not allow for any meaningful relations to develop between the England supporters and the local Muslim community. Symbolic gestures (sharing photographs and bantering) and a 'feel good' atmosphere did not "reach below the surface" in order to facilitate positive intergroup outcomes

(Allport, 1979: 276). A lack of meaningful contact was also apparent when the fans' discussed other socio-cultural experiences they had away from a football field. Although this is predominantly related to discourses of authenticity and navigating 'strangeness.'

'The men in thawbs': Authenticity and Self-Orientalism

To briefly refer back to the supporters' pre-event constructions of contact, it was evident their perceptions and beliefs were characterised by a state of uncertainty and contradiction. Muslims, Islam, Qatar and the Arabian Peninsula prior to the tournament were represented as an Other with the caveat that the England supporters lacked clarity on who the Other was, despite speaking from a perceived position of knowing. Beyond the grounds of stadia and fan zones, the 2022 World Cup provided them with a novel opportunity to engage with Muslims and encounter particular forms of Islamic culture. These encounters did not necessarily translate into face-to-face engagements but rather cultural experiences sought to contest, challenge or confirm the fans desires and expectations. In relation to the contact literature, such encounters are crucial for potentially facilitating positive intergroup outcomes (Allport, 1979; Pettigrew and Tropp, 2011). Unsurprisingly, commercial tourism and leisure spaces provided important sites for temporarily fostering intergroup understanding and cultural exchange. For example, John recalled several cultural experiences he shared with his wife and daughter; Tom reflected on visiting the Islamic Museum of Art and a local mosque; and Roger discussed various cultural experiences he had,

> I didn't really think about the cultural element so much, other than we went to the Islamic Museum in Doha, which was fantastic […] my daughter really enjoyed looking around all the you know lifestyle and some of the animals that have been found. The prehistoric animals that have been found in the area, etc. The *Souqs,* that part of Doha was brilliant. There was a little place we stumbled on where all the falcons were. We went on a little camel ride as well. (John)

> One of the things I was impressed with out there was the Islamic art, and we went to the museums and was just wowed by some of the work, which was just amazing […] I was just wowed by the use of angles, and everything was geometric. You just limited yourself to geometric design, and yet you can see the logic of it as well in terms of structure […] we went on a walking tour up West Bay and just beyond, and that was a little bit synthetic in that it was an old fishing village, but it was all built-up [and] there was a small mosque there, and [wife] went in the ladies side, and I went in the gents and experienced it and looked. It was quite nice one. It was a small place. It wasn't a particularly dramatic artistic one. It was one of the more simple buildings. But actually, it gave you that feel, there's a quiet at play, so all that buzz that we've been having just stopped for 10–15 minutes. We were thinking, Oh, that's good for the soul. So that was a good bit of Islamic experience. (Tom)

The Qatari amphitheatre, the Qatari village, which was good. Uh, Daphna Street—you know the shopping place. I didn't go to the Education City Mosque, although we had planned to go, but we never got round to it. Um, we went to the Pearl Boulevard, which was brilliant. (Roger)

In many ways, John, Tom and Roger are all reflecting on visiting particular tourist sites within Doha that are inside the World Cup environment, or 'bubble.' All were well advertised during the tournament and in World Cup marketing materials. For John, gazing through the National Museum and *Souq Waqif,* the central market in Downtown Doha, provided him and his family with an opportunity to learn about Qatar and the region's history. The visual presence of falcons and riding a camel embodied and represented a form of 'Oriental imaginary' to develop in his mind (see, for example, Said, 2003; Gutberlet, 2019). Arguably, Tom was more adventurous, purposefully seeking to go beyond the 'World Cup bubble,' if only for a moment. A small, unassuming mosque in particular provided an important space for him and his wife to engage with a particular iteration of Islamic culture. All the sites Roger visited are popular tourist destinations in Qatar. Pearl Boulevard, for example, is in the heart of Pearl Island, a modern artificial island in West Bay surrounded by various commercial attractions and high-end residential developments. These are spaces that encourage visitors to develop particular imaginaries about Qatar and its culture, from modernity to tradition. Thus, they are sites that have the ability to foster forms of symbolic cultural exchange or even meaningful encounters (e.g., learning and appreciating Qatar's history or artefacts). To note, other than Tom the fans did not discuss having any contact with others at these tourist sites.

Placed in the context of the contact hypothesis, these testimonies clearly demonstrate that there were opportunities for intergroup encounters and cultural exchange to foster during the World Cup. To a degree, these passing moments sought to provide impressions of Doha and, to an extent, the host culture. For example, John's experience sought to confirm his pre-event belief that Qatar would be different from his previous experience in Morocco, tempering his perceptions towards Qatar and its variant of Islamic culture. Any sense of anxiety or cultural distance - the extent to which the culture in question differs from the fans (Fan et al., 2023) - he felt was reduced on his behalf. Both are considered influential for reducing stereotypes and intergroup hostility (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006, 2008, 2011; Fan et al., 2023). Similarly, Tom spoke about his "Islamic experience" in an almost spiritual manner that provided a reflective moment for him to take 'a minute.' These "Islamic experiences," however, such as *Souq Waqif,* as Fromherz (2012:

159) has noted, have been conceptualised to reflect the heritage of Qatar and to preserve "the myth of tradition" and authenticity. This is the socio-cultural and political context that underpinned the fans' cultural encounters.

The notion of authenticity, in particular, evidently played a salient role in how the supporters constructed their in-situ encounters with Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula. Conceptually, authenticity has been a much-debated concept in tourism scholarship to help understand the guest-host relationship (see, for example, MacCannell, 1973; Cohen, 1988; Wang, 1999). MacCannell (1973) coined the term staged authenticity to refer to those experiences that a host culture specifically designs for tourists to enjoy. These cultural experiences, the author argued, are often not representative of everyday local life. In this context, staged authenticity conjures the impression that an authentic encounter is occurring with a host community. For example, the visual presence of falcons and the activity of riding a camel typified a dominant (Western) representation of the Oriental Other, providing John with an aura of a timeless, exotic place. This experience was arguably 'staged' to be consumed by the travelling fans.

However, Cohen (1988) argued authenticity is negotiable and can change over time. It does not possess an ontological reality, as it is subjective. I am influenced by Wang's (1999) interpretation of authenticity, which treats authenticity as something negotiated, determined by social and cultural contexts and subject to power relations. Conceived in this way, I view authenticity as a social construct that refers to the fans' interpretations, previous experiences and preferences for authenticity, but it is also grounded within the relationships between the fans and host communities, both of which determine and mediate intergroup perspectives and encounters. For example, in contradiction to John and Roger, Tom's expectations of 'authenticity' were synonymous with religion, tradition and going 'off the beaten track.' He considered places like the Qatari Cultural Village and West Bay "synthetic" to denote his belief his encounters perhaps lacked the authenticity of a small, quiet local mosque. This space was more attuned to Tom's expectations of life within a non-secular, Islamic society. Nonetheless, in each case, authenticity is constructed through the fans' engagements and encounters at particular sites. If an intercultural contact experience, for example, is believed to be authentic, it can mediate intergroup relations by leading to a positive impression of a destination and its people. It is a mechanism through which contact is constructed. For example, John in a general context John said,

All we found was friendliness, ugh, you know, and the welcoming nature of them. […] everyone we spoke to was great, and very friendly.

Peter and Ian, who both stayed in Dubai throughout the tournament, spoke about some of their cultural experiences too,

We went into the desert; we drove through the desert; we had a photograph taken with the sunset over the desert. We had a meal; we had, um, entertainment, you know, belly dancers and singers. But that was an absolutely fantastic day (Peter)

We went to Sharjah one day, which is one of the Emirates just north of Dubai. Sharjah is completely dry [no alcohol]. There's nowhere where you can get a drink in the whole of Sharjah. (Ian)

Peter's trip provided him with a brief opportunity to understand local life - or at least his perception of it. This sought to provide him with a positive impression of Dubai's interpretation of Islamic culture (e.g., "fantastic day"). Although to what extent such an experience contributed to his perceptions of Muslims and Islam remains unclear. On the one hand, he described Dubai as "having virtually no history" as a place of modernity - even after the trip - but on the other, he is describing a rather traditional experience steeped in the history of nomadic life in the region. Thus, a contradiction exists within his account - one that suggests intergroup experiences are situational, limited and symbolic rather than transformational. The Emirate of Sharjah represented something nostalgic to Ian - it was a place of difference and a place that was more attuned to his Oriental (and authentic) imagery of what an Islamic society was or is meant to be. However, to refer back to Ian's 'pre-event' construction of his encounters (see Section 4.1) his decision to stay in Dubai was because he did not perceive it as a typical 'authentic' Islamic destination. The Other was perhaps to be observed from a safe, comfortable distance but not to be engaged with in any meaningful way. This feeds into Said's (2003) critique of Orientalism, as this distance is characterised by a particular imaginary of the Other as backwards, culturally distinct and timeless. It also demonstrates how contact is predisposed by the fans' beliefs, expectations and desires, considering Ian chose to stay in Dubai based on his perception it was more liberal than Qatar, yet evidently, he still held an expectation of encountering 'strangeness' (e.g., visiting Sharjah).

Another fan, Stephen, shared an image with me (see Figure 2 on page 151) of him sitting in a traditional Bedouin tent in the heart of Doha (permission was obtained to use the below image via the informed consent form),

Figure 2: Stephen sitting inside a Bedouin tent.

When I asked Stephen to reflect on the photo, he said,

> I imagine it was there on purpose because it was in like a sort of metropolitan area where you usually wouldn't find that sort of thing. So, it's probably like symbolic of the culture, encouraging people to get involved with the culture and trying to make it a bit more authentic.

Stephen's interpretation of the visual site of a Bedouin tent is notable, for him it represented something symbolic and "a bit more authentic" to the rest of Doha and its surroundings. Because it represented something more authentic that aligned with his expectations, he was "encouraged" to 'take a photo' inside the Bedouin tent and engage in this symbolic act. It was something different and notable. For Stephen, the Bedouin tent was also an example of how Qatar perhaps actively sought to construct a specific identity of themselves that met the expectations of the supporters. This interpretation illustrates the role of self-Orientalism in how authenticity is negotiated and constructed between the hosts and the fans. As introduced in the literature review, self-Orientalism refers to a process in which the Other actively constructs an image of themselves that represents and reinforces dominant Western stereotypes about them to Western consumers— or in this case, football fans (Bryce, 2007), albeit from a position of control. A Bedouin tent, peculiarly situated amongst modern skyscrapers, presented a stereotype to the fans that signalled

to them to 'come and engage' with the country's history and culture, as Stephen said. In contact, self-Orientalism, perhaps illustrates how Qatar attempted to control or dictate the nature of intergroup and cultural encounters in specific 'authentic' spaces where opportunities for spontaneity, miscommunication, or negative encounters could be mitigated.

Another example of self-Orientalism was even more evident throughout the tournament, as I observed, was the sale of customised traditional Islamic *thawbs*, a long white garment worn by men across the Arabian Peninsula. Football fans from different nationalities could be seen in the stadiums, in the fan parks and on the streets wearing them. Each is designed with a competing national team flag on the back. Fromherz (2012) noted *thawbs* was the most visible way in which Qataris asserted their historic identities. To refer to Stephen once more, he recalled one of his friends purchasing an England themed one,

> I think he'd [his friend] seen it the night before, and um, so we knew he was eying it up [themed *thawb*]. And he wore it for the Wales game, actually. To be fair, it was one of the only times we interacted with like proper local Qataris [pause] He [a Qatari] came and fixed the thing they tie around the head, which was kind of funny, but aye I think there was quite a few people wearing them.
>
> TT (Interviewer): Was it taken in good spirits?
>
> Aye, yeah. I think they took it well because I don't think it's a religious thing—the *thawb*. It stems from them trying to protect themselves from the heat and stuff […] I think they'd of been please by it because it shows sort of Qatari culture.
>
> TT (Interviewer): I did notice quite a lot of them, to be fair; do you think it was representative of their culture?
>
> Yeah, a little bit […] I mean, to be fair, I've seen loads of these *thawb* shops in the local areas. So, I think they were trying to sort of cash in on it.

Todd also bought one for himself and Sarah observed the appearance of themed *thawbs* around Doha.

> I think it's cool. Your kind of fitting in, but you're still representing your country, so to me, I thought it was kickass. I found a bodysuit [*thawb*] but I had to barter with the guy. I think I still spent a little bit too much, but I got a decent price. (Todd)
>
> I loved it [the *thawbs*] I said to my friend, you'll have to buy one of them and go home in it. No one seemed to be really bothered [by fans wearing them], you know, because they're making money off it. (Sarah)

The themed *thawbs* were a salient expression of Qatar's attempt at reconstructing the relationship between host and fan. It helped to determine the level of engagement from the supporters, considering they evidently perceived these *thawbs* as representative of an 'authentic' Islamic culture. Accordingly, Stephen, Todd and Sarah were happy to indulge, or at least observe, this form of cultural engagement grounded within the host communities' own framework of how they wanted to be represented, or at least engaged with, even if adoring a themed *thawb* is a more performative act or a way to generate income from tourists. Todd even held the belief he was "fitting in" with the local culture by wearing one. While themed clothing, or stereotypes around clothing, was perhaps not exclusive to a World Cup in Qatar (for example, Mexican fans could be seen wearing wrestling masks and sombreros), this self-Orientalist strategy is limited in relation to the contact hypothesis. It reduces a particular literature of Islamic culture to a commoditised form for touristic consumption. Thus, the nuances of how people dress within and between Muslim communities are overlooked, producing simplistic representations. Like the findings of Wei et al. (2018), self-Orientalism in this context, based on superficial forms of contact, did little to improve the fans' cultural understanding of the Other; rather, those selling the *thawbs* were able to financially capitalise on the fans' pre-conceptions and Oriental imaginaries.

In the context of Dubai, Ian also reflected on the *thawbs*. During our discussion, I asked Ian a question on modesty and whether or not he believed he had to alter the way he dressed. He responded,

> No, no. The only thing I did, I bought [pause] I'll show you the pictures [proceeds to show me his phone]. I bought one of the Arab head things in Dubai.
>
> TT (Interviewer): I did see them in Qatar; they were themed with national team flags or badges on, like St. George's Cross.
>
> Yeah, you could do that, but this was an authentic, proper one. Where is it [proceeds to show me his phone]? So, I asked this couple in a café: Was I being offensive by wearing that? And they said, 'no, it's perfectly fine. So, I could wear that, which is a piece of traditional Arabic clothing, and it wasn't offensive.

Because Ian had a stereotypical idea of how people lived and what people wore in the Arabian Peninsula, he evidently decided to buy a *Keffiyeh*, or "one of those Arab head things," to engage in a symbolic form of cultural exchange once again. He even asked, what he assumed were a Muslim couple if it was acceptable to wear one. Despite conveying a lack of knowledge on what

a *Keffiyeh* actually is, Ian is speaking from a position of authority and knowing the Other without understanding the irony in his comment. Buying a *Keffiyeh*, while perhaps a spontaneous act, was predisposed through his desire and perception of what was and was not 'authentic,' which was defined by Ian himself. Therefore, he was happy to engage with the host's culture in this context because it satisfied his desire. I argue self-Orientalist strategies served to reproduce a dichotomy between the West and East. As opposed to learning about different iterations of Islamic culture and Muslims, fans from Western liberal and secular societies were seen to represent modernity by wearing western style clothing, while the *thawb* represented notions of tradition from the Orient, with a slight tinge of the exotic as something different. Consequently, this dichotomy and position of power determined the boundaries of what the fans were willing to engage in culturally. The fans were seemingly comfortable engaging in the performative act of wearing a *thawb* over human contact.

Although self-Orientalism strategies were useful in temporarily reducing any perceived sense of cultural distance and presenting an opportunity for England fans to engage in a symbolic form of cultural exchange, I argue instead such contact enhanced and reproduced already preconceived ideas about Muslims and variants of Islamic culture (e.g., non-Western and exotic). Superficial engagements with tourism experiences and notions of authenticity that evoked the fans' 'Oriental imaginaries,' and self-Orientalism approaches characterised by themed *thawbs* simply did not allow and inhibited for the types of optimal contact to develop between the England fans and hosts (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006). For example, the England fans with whom I spoke rarely mentioned developing any in-depth cultural understanding about the Other or expressing any empathy towards the host culture. Thus, rather than reducing stereotypes, they were instead fostered, suggesting opportunities for contact do not always lead to favourable outcomes, as Allport (1979) implied.

Nandos and Shawarma: Questions of Authenticity

The fans' constructed their socio-cultural experiences in the Arabian Peninsula and their reflections were reflective of their subjective interpretations of what they experienced versus what they expected to experience. By asking the England supporters various questions about what types of tourism in which they engaged and their image of Doha and Dubai, it was evident throughout their testimonies that perhaps, what they actually experienced differed from their prior beliefs, expectations and desires. For example, the fans contested notions of authenticity, which to a

degree manifested in them expressing an unsatisfactory experience, which gave rise to unfavourable contact conditions to permeate. Ken was discussing his experiences in Doha and Dubai and Tom said,

> The impression I got was that this looks okay. Um, it wasn't as Arabic—or what I thought Arabic was in my head, if you know what I mean. Because I thought it might be more Arabic, but no, it was fine. (Ken)

> I don't think I'd label it as Islamic culture, but maybe that's what it was. I suppose I'm sitting here talking about geometric design and how things fit together, so that fits with logistics, etc…so maybe that was the tangential influence there. (Tom)

Ken and Tom offer similar reflections on their experiences in Qatar and the UAE. Both are honest in admitting they did not really know what to expect, but neither could articulate their expectations sufficiently. Although they evidently convey that they expected to encounter difference, it manifests through their perceptions of what "Arabic," or "Islamic culture" is or should be. Thus, not only do Ken and Tom inadvertently believe an "Arabic" or "Islamic culture" exists as a single entity that can be experienced, consumed and understood, they also highlight the contested nature of 'authenticity' itself. Undoubtedly, their pre-dispositions shaped their perceptions of the host cultures (Ken stayed in both Qatar and Dubai). This affected how they engaged with and interacted with the cultures. Even when their in-situ experiences contested their expectations, there was a reluctance to accept this new information. To a degree, Ken and Tom were defining the parameters of authenticity as opposed to allowing the local community to do so.

Moreover, discourses of authenticity relate to the overall image of Doha and Dubai as modern. For example, several fans, including Tom, held the impression both cities were "very modern." As Tom further explained, Doha is "just a new city[21]." It's like building Milton Keynes or something in the 1950's." He also observed the "wonderful" new metro system, the roads and big supermarkets - all examples of Qatar's turn to modernity - impressed him. Speaking in his audio-visual diary, Nick was initially impressed with how clean Doha was: "It's the cleanest city that I've ever seen." However, while most of the fans were impressed with the infrastructure in and around Doha, the overarching impression, as Tom alluded to, was that it did not represent an authentic culture. Declan, for example, simply referred to Doha as "plasticky." Based on his prior

---

[21] Doha has been the central power base in Qatar since the 1820's when the capital moved from the western city of Zubara to Doha in the east (Kamrava, 2015). Thus, it is far from 'a new city.'

experiences in cities he considered similar, such as "Shanghai and New York," he felt as though Doha lacked the energy and verve of those cities. The notion of "plasticky" was used here to denote the highly standardised cityscape of skyscrapers and eclectic buildings as a façade - or something artificial with little sign of meaning (or culture) existing. Acuto (2010:282) described Dubai in a similar light as "lacking any sense of urban cohesion and vitality, which is usually fundamental in creating attachment to places." Based on his previous experiences of visiting Dubai and Bahrain Peter had already mobilised his 'tourist gaze' and had cultural expectations for what he would encounter,

> What I saw of Qatar is more or less what I expected. They're very modern, um…Dubai I thought, was slightly more Westernised though.

To refer back to how Peter constructed his encounters (see Section 4.1), based on his prior experiences, there was a refusal to accept that Dubai and indeed Qatar could possibly have any history because of its modernity and his belief that it was "westernised." For Peter, authenticity is seemingly synonymous with underdevelopment or tradition, such as his trip to a Bedouin tent in the desert. To refer back to Tom and Declan, there is a similar refusal to let the Arabian Peninsula and its iterations of Islamic culture be modern. Modernity, via glitzy skyscrapers and shopping malls, poses a challenge to dominant Western discourses and stereotypes of the Other. Their reluctance, however, to accept this new information demonstrates the unequal power dynamics in contact and in discourses of authenticity. The fans exert a sense of control and authority over the representation of Islamic cultures and the Arabian Peninsula. Thus, as Said (2003) argued, it renders the 'Orient' powerless, inferior, backwards and pre-modern.

In relation to the contact literature, this demonstrates a perceived lack of authenticity perhaps acts as a mechanism through which suspicion, or at least an unsatisfactory experience with the Other is raised. This is because the fans' pre-expectations and ideas of the Other were not representative of their experience. Their cultural experiences then, however willing they were to explore or go beyond the self-imposed World Cup 'bubble,' were perceived as unfavourable, which underscored the extent of their attitudes and determination to engage with the host communities. As a result, the fans held indifferent attitudes towards the host country and the local people. Indifference predisposed by ideas of authenticity can have an adverse effect on encounters by strengthening perceived stereotypes and attitudes. For example, Declan and Sarah said,

> As I said, I'm happy I went. I had a fantastic experience because all my boys were there, but I'm definitely [pause] unless someone decided to pay for me to go back there. I'm not going to pay any money to rush back to either Doha or that part of the world. (Declan)

> I wouldn't rush back. It's not the sort of place that I would rush back to. (Sarah)

Although these examples do not represent all attitudes, as discussed later, they demonstrably illustrate how these fans held a negative impression of Qatar and the region post-contact. Allport (1979) and Meleady and Forder (2018) warned negative contact experiences are a far stronger indicator of intergroup hostility than positive contact because the effects can generalise much easier. Declan's comment illustrates this clearly, considering he said he would not go back to "that part of the world"; thus, Qatar was not singled out. He has no intention of visiting any non-secular, Islamic society. To a degree, this finding also supports Sirakaya-Turk et al.'s (2014) finding that unsatisfactory experiences that do not live up to tourists' expectations - or in this case, football fans, expectations - can lead to a negative perception of a host country, including its residents. There is somewhat of a contradiction here, however, as most of the supporters I spoke to enjoyed their overall World Cup experiences. Additionally, it was evident that they did not know what to expect, nor did they express a genuine willingness to engage in tourism pursuits like Stephen and Declan suggested earlier. Yet, they were still left unsatisfied. These findings suggest contact is quite delicate and is predicated on people's expectations of authenticity as much as the contact situation itself.

Similarly, when I spoke to Ian a few months after the World Cup, he shared some reflections with me that he made inside the hyper modern shopping malls, noting, "There's a big shopping culture there and a lot of well-to-do people in Dubai who were very westernised." The impression Ian had was that in Dubai, especially considering the World Cup was perhaps understandably not as well advertised as Doha, he "could have been anywhere" in the world based on the homogeneity of the 'global' city. Steiner (2010) referred to tourism spaces in Dubai as 'hyper-real.' The author argued Dubai focused on developing a tourism industry that did not rely on cultural capital to attract post-modern citizens. As Ian suggested further, Dubai is tailored for a "higher-end tourism market and the celebrity lifestyle." Indeed, Yeoman (2008) described Dubai as the 'crème de la crème of luxury' and thus, the state is not interested in being authentic. Qatar, in comparison, while still projecting an image of modernity, as Peter observed, was 'less Westernised.' This is a result of Qatar's approach to tourism development, which, as Henderson (2014) observed,

focused on cultural elements such as investing in the Qatar Cultural Village, *Souqs* and museums. Accordingly, there did appear to be a slight difference in intercultural experiences between those supporters who stayed in Dubai for the tournament compared to Doha. However, from speaking to the fans, it was evident they perceived both places to be standardised, homogenous places that did not provide them with a strong sense of intercultural engagement with differing interpretations of Islamic culture. To refer back to the contact literature, particularly Pettigrew's (2008) call for a better understanding of negative interactions, an unsatisfaction with the authenticity of a cultural environment can act as a facilitator for unfavourable conditions to arise in the contact situation.

Furthermore, during my discussions with the fans, discourses of authenticity were broached when I asked them to reflect on their day-to-day activities. The fans' interpretations of local cuisine in particular challenged the supporter's perceptions of the hosts. In both World Cup venues and other spaces around Doha and even Dubai, the cuisine did not align with their 'exotic' expectations or provide them with an opportunity to immerse themselves in the culture. Stephen, for example, reflected,

> The food was absolutely spot on, I thought. I had a lot of shawarma…there was like a noodle place near ours as well. We went to a couple of places in the mall, which probably weren't like authentic, but relatively cheap. We went to Qatari Pizza Hut and McDonald's so all the traditional Qatari food [sarcastic laugh].

While seemingly happy with the food options in Doha, Stephen recognised that what he had was far from "authentic," other than the shawarma. He further said, "I wouldn't say it was immersive, I think it's pretty like sort of standard Asian food." This is interesting because Stephen did not believe the cuisine facilitated a positive opportunity to engage in cultural exchange. The food was familiar to him and not representative of his Oriental imagination. However, there was no suggestion from Stephen that he attempted to 'seek out' local cuisine. There was also clear confusion over what local cuisine consisted of or what national dishes were in different non-secular, Islamic societies,

> There wasn't particularly a lot; there wasn't really a lot advertised in terms of what Qatari food even is and how we could get it. Even in the shopping malls, it was all sort of your franchises, there was even a Nando's […] it was a bit too Americanised to really get like an authentic sort of experience.

Not only does this highlight Stephens's perceived lack of clarity, but it also demonstrates the modernity of Qatar as a place wherein homogenous global consumer flows such as fast-food restaurants can be experienced, perhaps to the detriment of local foods and traditions. Indeed, McDonald's and Starbucks, along with other globally recognised chains, could be recognised all over Doha as the authorities sought to appeal to international consumerism and commercialism. Todd claimed that he did try some local cuisine, although, like Stephen, he was unsure if what he experienced was authentic. This was seen in his comments, as he used multiple categories to explain what he had,

> What I had was, I did have some South Indian food it might have been. It might have had a local flavour. But I did try stuff people would have eaten there […] I met some locals that worked there. They're not originally from there. They're from India or something, but they work there. They took me to a shawarma place in Al Wakra, it's actually a Turkish place, but it's run by locals.

From this experience, Todd is unclear on what food he tried; he believed he tried local cuisine but cannot be sure. This is further confounded by his use of categories, with Todd first suggesting it was South Indian in origin and then Turkish. Othering undoubtedly fed into the perception of his experience here, as for Todd, whether the food was of South Indian origin or Turkish, it represented something 'exotic' but not necessarily authentic. He further added the food options were "a little bit more international.' Another fan, Ian, described a couple of experiences he had prior to watching England games in Doha. On the first occasion, he explained,

> Oh, the food was a bit shitty. Especially at the stadiums. I wanted to have more authentic food, and it was all Nando's and Burger King.

Arguably, the food within the stadiums was similar to the previous World Cup due to the nature of sports mega-event sponsorship, commercialisation and commodification. On the second occasion, he discussed visiting the Saudi Arabian fan zone, where he expected his Oriental imagination to be evoked and experienced,

> We went to the fan park, and there's different countries. We went to the Saudi Arabian fan park, and there weren't many people there…it was early evening, and we went up to the like café thing. We asked if we could order some Arabic coffee, and they said no, we've only got flat white. Yeah, then they put some music on and it was like some sort of hip hop or something, like Arabic hip hop, you know, so it was…you were going there for the authentic thing, yeah, and it wasn't like that.

There is some irony in the above excerpt in that for Ian, he interpreted his experiences as inauthentic as he opposed the standardisation of food and drink (mass consumerism), yet he sought an 'authentic' experience he could easily consume (e.g., buying an "Arabic" coffee from a fan zone painting itself as 'authentic'). Arguably, questioning the 'authenticity' of intercultural experiences is a further manifestation of Orientalism (Said, 2003), considering some of the fans, like Ian, held a certain 'gaze' or expectation of what people eat and drink and how they behave in public spaces. In short, some of the fans' expected to see and experience difference and the 'exotic' and were disappointed when it did not manifest, thus leading to a sense of dissatisfaction. And as argued, it facilitated a negative impression of the hosts and their culture.

Vince constructed a polemic critique to argue the 2022 World Cup was not representative of the Middle East at all,

> A lot of it was chain stuff, American chains, TGI's and all the rest of it. There's nothing authentic about it. It's very Westernised and it's all Tex-Mex and all the rest it. It just wasn't really a World Cup in the Middle East. It was just like a gilded cage. Dubai and places like that are just a gilded cage, there's no soul about it.

Referring back to Stephen, he described something similar to the "gilded cage,"

> You're sort of like cocooned in these areas, where it's probably not like the sort of authentic Qatar in a sense.

In Vince's quest for authenticity, he believed he was greeted with homogenised urban spaces and globalised American fast-food restaurants. His description of Doha and Dubai as "gilded cages" indicated that perhaps he believed the glitzy skyscrapers, fast-food chains and visions of modernity shielded him and others from a 'genuine authentic' experience. Stephen's interpretation of feeling cocooned in Doha has a similar meaning; he too felt as though the 'strangeness' was out of sight. Perhaps Doha and Dubai were just not as 'strange' as they believed or wanted it (to an extent) to be and that their desire or need to construct an ultimately, undefinable 'strangeness' simply highlights their sense of authority and control over the Other. To draw on Said (2003), Vince and Stephen's representation of an unfindable 'strangeness' functions to keep the Other subordinate and inferior. Consequently, as their beliefs, desires and expectations are never met, conditions for contact are built on unstable foundations, e.g., it is the fans that determine what is and is not an authentic encounter.

Moreover, Vince and Stephen's belief that there was a sense of cultural separation at the 2022 World Cup corresponds with Cohen's (1972) environmental bubble (see Chapter Two). The World Cup represented a 'bubble' of its own in Qatar, as Vince and Stephen were clearly under the impression the environment they were ensconced in limited their opportunities for intergroup and intercultural contact. Thus, further contributing to a feeling amongst the fans that their expectations were perhaps detached from the realities of consuming the World Cup in Qatar. Stephen further commented,

> They had like little pockets of the culture and obviously you could go to the *Souq,* which was on the metro line. I don't think necessarily think it was hidden away. I think the way the country operates it was never going to be, because obviously you had like sort of nods to the culture in the way the stadiums were built [...] I don't think the culture was hidden away. I just think it's impossible for a country like that to host a World Cup whilst also showcasing the culture [...] I think it's very difficult for any World Cup to fully embrace the culture.

Similarly, John and Tom said,

> Maybe what I saw was sort of a sanitised version of it [Qatar's variant of Islamic culture] you know I didn't go out into the dessert or anything like that and I didn't leave Doha, so I guess I never saw what other parts of Qatar would have been like. (John)
>
> [During] the World Cup, they closed the schools and everything, you know, so it was a distorted view of, of Doha, which itself is a different view of, of Qatar in this. So, it's like comparing London with Northumbria, or something, you know, just different. (Tom)

As these fans allude to the environment of the World Cup as a temporary, short-term event, perhaps it made it difficult to engage in deep, meaningful experiences associated with a particular iteration of Islamic culture. Perhaps, fans also just want to enjoy the football or lack confidence to do tourist activities in place they are unfamiliar with. Further, Duignan et al. (2022) discuss in the context of the summer Olympic Games, the nature of sports mega-events and the 'bubble' that they inevitably create restricts wider cultural engagements between the fans and the host destination. Similarly, fans are mostly concerned with attending matches and performing their fandom as opposed to sharing in intergroup encounters and cultural engagements. Other intrapersonal constraints also made it difficult for some of the England fans to break through the perceived 'World Cup bubble' to experience what they considered to be 'authenticity.' To draw

back on John and Ken briefly, they both discussed several constraints they faced in Qatar with regards to tourism and intercultural encounters. For instance, both reflected on the commercialised and market-orientated constraints of 'doing tourism' during a World Cup. John simply recalled how he was put off by consuming the desert experience in Doha because it,

> Was just ridiculously expensive and ramped up [for the World Cup]. You know they were charging £3–400 per person, and yet, look, you know a month after in January, February and they're like £50 or something, but that isn't really Qatar's fault.

John alluded to the inflation of certain touristic and leisure activities during the World Cup, which resulted in a socio-economic impact on some of the fans, who had to negotiate their personal finances with their experiences. In Dubai, the fans were not affected by price increases; as Peter reflected, "we paid £55 for it [desert safari]. I think they were asking over £200 quid for it in Qatar." Thus, this was perceived as a benefit of staying in Dubai and travelling into Qatar for World Cup matches. Declan and Sarah also reflected on why they did not really engage in any cultural activities,

> To be honest with you, I've done a lot of travelling in different cities in the world because I've always loved to travel. You know, I'll do a lot of the token tourism stuff with my wife and my family when that's what you need to do. But when you can just go and do two World Cup games every day, especially in the early stages, I certainly wasn't going to go off and ride a camel or go in the bay and so some sailing or whatever. (Declan)

> I think it was awkward, and we were on the cruise ship for three days, so I said, Once I'm on that ship, I'm not leaving, [but] I wanted to go to the other *Souqs* and see where they were and stuff like that, but they just didn't want to travel. They didn't want to do stuff. I thought well I had to separate myself and just go by myself, and I would have done that, but with game days in-between and then you were just tired the next day and stuff, so it never really happened. (Sarah)

Evidently, on Declan's behalf, there was an unwillingness to revel in any cultural engagement or intergroup encounter. Sarah shared a similar sentiment; she mentioned how her choice of accommodation (a cruise ship) dictated her travel intentions. Here, the cruise ship represented a mini break for her during the tournament as a space for relaxation. However, off the cruise ship, Sarah was motivated to pursue leisure activities, but her travel companions were less willing to do so. Despite these intrapersonal constraints, a paradox existed among the England fans' beliefs and experiences. On the one hand, while the fans contested notions of authenticity that evidently

facilitated dissatisfaction and negative forms of contact to permeate, and while the World Cup did represent a 'bubble' to some extent, the fans themselves were seemingly unwilling to accept their experiences as 'authentic' and did not actively seek intergroup encounters and cultural engagement were just not as 'strange' as they believed and that their desire, or need to construct an ultimately, undefinable 'strangeness' simply highlights their sense of authority and control over the Other. Consequently, as their beliefs, desires and expectations are never met, conditions for contact are built on unstable foundations e.g., it is the fans that determine what is and is not an authentic encounter.

Interpreting Culture

Despite the argument the World Cup represented a 'bubble' that ensconced the fans from experiencing what they considered an 'authentic' Islamic culture, several of the supporters I spoke to made observations and interpreted particular cultural issues and differences between themselves and elements of perceived Islamic culture. While only a handful of the fans made observations and attempted to interpret the cultures they encountered, in part due to the 'bubble' and other constraints discussed earlier, I considered their interpretations to be significant. This is because, in contrast to the previous discussions on cuisine, tourism and leisure in the context of authenticity, the fans' interpretations in this sub-theme specifically address the more mundane, everyday politics of encounter within the 'World Cup bubble' (Askins, 2015). It was these observations that sought to challenge, educate or (re)confirm their perceptions of Islamic cultures.

One cultural observation and interpretation focused upon the role of gender in Qatar and Dubai, a topic that only Sarah raised during the pre-event interviews (see Section 4.2). When I spoke to Sarah a few months after the World Cup and asked her to reflect on her experiences, most of her pre-event concerns were dispelled within 24 hours of arriving in the country. For example, her first thoughts while in Qatar were,

> There were a lot of women with a lot of kids hanging of their arms and stuff in national dress. I saw more women than men initially um, which I thought was unusual because they kept telling me you shouldn't be on your own […] I was happy to walk out by myself. I walked. I went for a run.

Seeing women and children in what she termed "national dress" helped to dispel her initial concerns, considering she believed if women were on their own, they would have been subjected to an unruly 'male gaze' and possibly shunned. Of course, her prior research on gender differences also helped in this regard, but her lived reality of everyday encounters certainly eased any anxiety she had. As she further mentioned, Sarah was more than happy to participate in other leisure activities such as running on her own and did not experience the similar type of 'male gaze' as British female tourists in Egypt (see, for example, Brown and Osman, 2017). However, simultaneously, particular stereotypes were reinforced as Sarah went on to explain that despite finding Qatar welcoming,

> You know it was the men that spoke…if you were just walking down the street, it's the men asking, 'how you finding the competition, how we finding Qatar?' The women didn't speak; I couldn't say, 'Oh, what do you do about childcare? You couldn't have those conversations.

This experience confirmed some of her pre-event perceptions of Islamic cultures as male dominated. Sarah did not believe she could have conversations with women who were wearing a veil because of the male-dominated society. Although, as her experience of going for a run illustrated, she was not intimidated or anxious about the nature of society and was able to adapt, Sarah nonetheless did not feel comfortable talking to women in "Islamic dress," perhaps because of her perceptions or a lack of opportunity. Ian shared a similar observation with Sarah and reflected on a few encounters he had in Dubai,

> We were told it was offensive to speak to somebody without a man being present. We were talking to a woman in the bar who was Westernised and she said they may find it offensive, or awkward if you spoke to a woman in full Islamic dress. And I found that when I was in the hotel lift when it was just me, and there was a woman in full Islamic dress waiting with a little boy. She wouldn't get in the lift with me; she waited for the next lift.

Ian further said,

> When you were on the tube, people were keen to talk to you, but it was only the men, not women. Women would only talk to you if they were with a man.

When I asked Ian how he felt about this, he responded, "Well, it's their cultural way, isn't it, but it didn't stop me from getting in the lift; it was only her." While both Sarah and Ian were able to

adapt to their cultural environments, although Ian did share some regret about not respecting the women and children, he encountered by letting them use the lift instead, their observations and interpretations nonetheless confirmed and challenged particular stereotypes that Islamic cultures are male dominated. On the one hand, it was evident they perceived women to be oppressed and controlled by men because of the belief that the women they encountered were not allowed to talk. On the other hand, the fact Sarah could visibly see women and children simultaneously made her feel comfortable and safe in the knowledge she too would be afforded such freedoms (e.g., going for a run). As discussed within the literature review, Brown and Osman (2017) identified how female travellers to Egypt considered its culture and society to be male-dominated, a finding that was further supported by Garrod and Nicholls (2022) across various 'Muslim-majority' countries. However, among the England fans' I spoke to, gender observations were limited. Beyond the 'bubble', this could also be explained by the fact that I only spoke to one female fan, Sarah. The male supporters may not have noticed as much or felt comfortable expressing their opinions.

Interrelated to the fans' observations and interpretations of gender, some of the supporters, including Sarah and Ian, discussed their interpretations and understandings of clothing. For example, when discussing the weather, Sarah developed a more nuanced understanding of why men wear *thawbs* and women dress in an *abayha* in certain Islamic societies,

> When you step outside, and you start sweating straight away if you're not in appropriate attire. You can see why those blokes wear what they wear and the women wear the dress because it's very like cooling.

Thus, for Sarah, it is not necessarily to do with religion, but the practice of wearing a *thawb*, or *abayha*, is cultural as well as practical to protect against the extreme heats experienced in the Arabian Peninsula. She also considered *thawbs* in particular to be associated with prestige,

> When you went past some of the shops, you know where they were selling all the cuffs and collars and the different cottons…That's expensive, the different cuffs and stuff was different class and it was all very 'look at what I've got' […] very elegant.

Terry also considered them to be quite prestigious; he said they looked "absolutely immaculate." Echoing Sarah and Terry's observations, Ian also considered the thawbs and *abayha's* to be "very

elegant." However, Ian referenced clothing in relation to class hierarchies. In his interpretation, the elegantly presented clothing is a microcosm of prestige and social class.

> I asked one of them why they're always pristine. Well, these guys like that; they're obviously very rich. They're sort of elite and they've got maids at home. So, they're cleaning, pressing and ironing three or four of them every day. So, they might even go home and change. They're not doing it themselves. The wife's not doing it; it's the maid and the maid may be male. And there's absolutely no way, unless you're born into that, that you're going there. You can't climb the ladder. So, when we went to the races at Maydown, you went to where all the horses were in the paddock and they're all there wearing that [elegant *thawbs*]. You go to the bit where it's cheap, and you get people from the Indian subcontinent going there.

Thus, in Ian's opinion, wearing traditional clothing is an emblem of their status within their countries, and again, it is not necessarily a religious symbol. When I asked some of the supporters explicitly if they noted any religious observations during the World Cup, quite a few of them spoke about hearing the call to prayer and seeing prayer rooms within stadia and other public spaces. For example, Terry said,

> The wailing started about four o'clock in the morning, which was quite interesting […] I think the biggest issue was obviously the difference in religion. And they seem to pray quite a lot every day. Um, so the world would stop spinning for quite a bit. There were lots of places where they could pray, even in the grounds.

Overall, these experiences provided a more nuanced interpretation of Islam and the region for the selected fans and provided minimal cultural learning to develop. In doing so, the supporters were accepting of the cultural and religious practices they observed and interpreted. This finding is similar to Garrod and Nicholl's (2020) study, which found some tourists to Muslim-majority countries accept and even conform to the cultural norms and expectations of a society as an adjustment tool. To enable them to feel 'culturally safe' and, I add, to preserve their identity and experience; that is, most of the fans expressed that they enjoyed the tournament; thus, by drawing on cultural relativism, the supporters were able to downplay and ignore particular socio-cultural and religious norms and practices, such as a male-dominated society, that would not be acceptable in their own countries.

Summary

Based on the testimonies of the England fans, I argue the findings of this study revealed how the fans' socio-cultural experiences and encounters in the Arabian Peninsula were conceptualised within a 'World Cup bubble' that served to segregate them from Islamic culture and the host populations. This bubble, I argue, corresponds with Cohen's (1972: 166) formative concept of the "environmental bubble" - the tourist bubble. Cohen (1972) conceptualised the tourist bubble to identify how tourists, whilst seeking the novelty and 'strangeness' of visiting new places, people and cultures like to do so from the security and comfort of a familiar microenvironment similar to their home environment. Uriely et al. (2009) further noted the bubble protects both tourists - in this case, football fans - and hosts from any hostilities and tensions that exist between their nations, cultures and religions. Unlike Cohen's (1972) focus on the tourist, my findings highlight how the 'bubble' was self-identified by the fans and, to a degree, sustained by the organising polity of the World Cup. Vince, for instance, compared the World Cup to being in an all-inclusive hotel,

> In a sense, it was like an all-inclusive holiday without the free booze in a way. Everything was there provided for you, uh, but there wasn't really any scope to step outside of that.

During the 2022 World Cup, I argue this bubble was constructed in several ways that were specific to both football fandom and leisure. Firstly, in considering the socio-cultural practices of fans related to alcohol consumption and its availability, the supporters were happy to consume it in hotel bars that were out-of-sight or in fan zones where access was tightly restricted, as Tom alluded to earlier. Thus, the 'bubble' existed as a psychological boundary as much as a physical one. This temporary 'World Cup bubble' was reminiscent of what Duignan et al. (2022) refer to as a 'double bubble' in that these private spaces were already part of Qatar's existing tourist bubble. In this context, to appeal to the tastes of Western liberal and secular tourists, the bubble provided designated enclosed enclaves so that fans and tourists alike could perform their embodied experiences of consuming alcohol. As the findings revealed, 'searching' for bars and consuming alcohol provided an important ritual for most of the supporters interviewed during the World Cup. Thus, once they became familiar with certain spaces, they were unlikely to explore new areas or unwilling to diverge from their matchday rituals. In doing so, the novelty of the 'World Cup bubble' acted as a self-imposed barrier to intergroup engagements and encounters

with Muslims and particular iterations of Islamic culture. Consequently, this engendered a sense of intergroup avoidance and did not facilitate any meaningful forms of contact recommended for positive intergroup outcomes (see, for example, Allport, 1979; Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006).

Secondly, the 'bubble', real or imagined, seemingly protected the supporters from encountering any strangeness. Although there were opportunities for temporary intergroup encounters and cultural exchange, as John, Tom and Roger alluded to, and in some ways, Qatar did attempt to dictate the nature of cultural exchange and intergroup relations via self-Orientalism strategies such as selling *thawbs*. These opportunities unwittingly reproduced a dichotomy between the West and East, with the former being perceived as modern and the latter as primitive and exotic. However, fans like John, Ian, Vince, Stephen, Tom, Declan and Ken also sought to question the authenticity of their socio-cultural experiences and in the case of Ken, Tom and Vince, to suggest their experiences were not representative of Islamic or local culture. Authenticity in particular seemingly acted as a mechanism that facilitated dissatisfaction with their experience, which led to negative forms of contact to permeate. The belief here, amongst the supporters was that by feeling as though Qatar or Dubai was modern and by eating standardised Western food such as "Nando's," their experiences did not meet their own desires or expectations of what an Islamic culture should or should not be.

The sociological significance of the 'World Cup bubble' lies in its ability to explain the social and cultural barriers of intergroup contact within a temporary sports setting. Ultimately, the 'bubble', whether real, or imagined, was used by the supporters to justify a lack of intergroup engagements and cultural exchange with Qatar's variant of Islamic culture and the local Muslim communities. This finding, thus, complements the critiques of the contact literature by McKeown and Dixon (2017), who argued members of different in-and-outgroups often segregate themselves within everyday desegregated spaces, such as the World Cup. Therefore, despite the opportunities for contact, Allport (1979) suggested optimal conditions for positive outcomes do not always permeate in contact.

In summary, this theme focused on the lived socio-cultural experiences of England football fans during the World Cup in Qatar. I have highlighted how the supporters' navigated their experiences within a distinct sport and leisure space - Qatar and its variant of Islamic culture. Through maintaining their identities as fans by consuming alcohol in enclaved spaces and, to a degree, avoiding intergroup and cultural engagements, I have also identified the fans' perceptions

of the World Cup in-situ as related to feelings of safety and comfort, which again seemingly derived from the fact that there were limited opportunities for cultural exchange during the tournament. Furthermore, the findings of this chapter identified the intercultural encounters of the supporters, their constraints and the role of authenticity within their event experiences. Said's (2003) Orientalism was a useful and significant concept to interpret this finding and to integrate alongside intergroup contact theory because it was evident that the fans' 'Oriental imaginaries' were invoked prior to making their journeys to the Arabian Peninsula. Once, in the region, the fans believed their experiences were not authentic, considering the 'Oriental imaginary' did not align with reality. However, the fans questioned the discourse of authenticity, which represented a further manifestation of Orientalism and grounded their intergroup encounters within an unequal power dynamic. Thus, Orientalism can significantly complement and support intergroup contact theory scholarship.

Nevertheless, based on the socio-cultural experiences of the fans, the World Cup in Qatar engendered a very specific 'World Cup bubble' that led to intergroup avoidance and did not facilitate opportunities for meaningful contact to exist. However, these findings primarily related to the role of fandom and cultural exchange and did not deal with the face-to-face encounters between the supporters and the local Muslim community in any real depth. Rather, it focused on their cultural encounters, which provides an important site for understanding how the fans experiences and predispositions to contact effected or mediated their face-to-face relations. Accordingly, the following topic deals with '*The Politics of Encounter: England Fans, Muslims and Migrant/Service Workers,*' that is the fans' reflections of intergroup contact during the World Cup.

4.4 The Politics of Encounter: England Fans, Muslims and Migrant/Service Workers

The focus of the previous theme was concerned with the socio-cultural experiences of the England supporters, characterised by their fandom and non-face-to-face cultural exchanges. This theme evaluates the fans' reflections of their intergroup encounters during the 2022 World Cup in the Arabian Peninsula. The findings mostly stem from a series of questions I asked the supporters regarding their intergroup encounters which included asking them about the nature of their conversations (e.g., frequency, place, topics of conversation etc.). It was evident the supporters had limited contact with the local Muslim communities. Most of them attempted to offer an explanation as to why this was; for example, some supporters referred to the behaviour of the

local Muslim community and described them as distant. However, through my discussions with the supporters, it emerged that the fans had an abundance of contact with a new contact partner, notably migrant workers working within the service industry. Therefore, two topics relate to this theme. These are the fans' reflections of the local Muslim communities and their reflections of encountering migrant or service workers, both of which significantly contribute to the two overarching themes of this thesis, *'The Challenges of Intergroup Contact in a Temporary Sport Setting'* and *'The Proxy Case of Contact of Intergroup Contact Theory.'*

Identifying the Other

Given the emphasis of this thesis - the impacts of intergroup contact in a temporal sport setting - I asked all the participants various questions relating to their interactions during the World Cup with Muslim communities and the nature of such contact (e.g., frequency, place, topics of conversation). Some fans also documented their reflections in-situ by recording entries into their audio-visual diaries. Based on the pre-event interviews, I anticipated a mixed and nuanced response to their encounters, with perhaps some fans having more contact than others. Indeed, most of the supporters acknowledged that the people they interacted with were "friendly," "welcoming," and "hospitable." For example, when I asked some of the fans, "Did you have much opportunity to interact with the Muslim community?" a few fans responded,

> Well, lots, you know. Like I say, we went in the shops and the people were very friendly. People were friendly on the streets when we spoke to people. The shop guys were great because they delivered our goods to us, and they were trying to tell us what recipes would go well together with food that we didn't know what it was. The people who ran our hotel and flats were really nice as well, because they were all Qataris; obviously, they're at the door. All we found was friendliness and you know the welcoming nature of them. (John)

> Um, yeah. Often, if you were out, we'd be having dinner and there would be locals eating and then they'd say, you know, where do you come from and that type of thing [...] so yeah, I thought the people were friendly, uh, courteous. If you were on the train, you know, they'd say, 'Would you like a seat?". And I'd say, 'No, I'm fine.' So, yeah, I thought most people were good. (Roger)

> Yeah. Good, welcoming, smiling people. They were fine. Absolutely fine. The local community [pause] because when we stopped in the apartment, that was just a ten-minute walk from the *Souq* [*Souq Waqif*, in central Doha], so it was where the locals lived [...] they were out all night, the locals were brilliant. They loved it [...] the locals they seemed to keep themselves [pause] as in the ones that weren't working

in the *Souq* kept themselves in their own areas. But they were very approachable. They were fantastic people, in the hotels and stuff, they were brilliant. (Terry)

These examples demonstrably show that during the World Cup, England fans did have ample opportunities to encounter the host community. All speak favourably with regards to their contact partners and share numerous interactions in different public and private spaces. For example, John, shared a story of an encounter he had with shop workers who provided him and his family with advice on how to cook certain foods. Roger discussed meeting "locals" in restaurants and on the metro in Doha. However, inscribed within these examples is a sense of doubt. All identified their contact partners as "Qataris," or "locals," yet, it is not clear if those who they spoke to were from the local Muslim community. This is most evident in Terry's testimony, where, in the space of a few lines, he describes the local community in the *Souq* as brilliant, before noting they kept themselves to themselves. Given the inconsistency in Terry's remark and my quest to confirm whom the supporters were in contact with, I prompted them by asking, 'Are you referring to service workers or the Muslim community?' John and Terry responded,

> Yep, both. A blend, a mix - I mean, obviously, I don't always know what nationality they were from, but it seemed like a mix. I certainly spoke to some guys from, like, Africa; I remember that. (John)

> No, local ones. The traditional Qataris. Because where we were staying in, as I say, the apartment, we mingled with a lot. We ate in the little areas they were eating in and stuff. They were good. Smiling, wanting pictures [...] the people who were local were fantastic. Most of the people who were like telling you where to go on the trains and that weren't local people. Um, they were just brought in and hired to guide us around, really. I thought the locals were great. (Terry)

Similarly, Ken, who stayed in both Dubai and Doha during the tournament, reflected on numerous positive encounters with people. He claimed some of them were local, so I asked him, 'How did you know they were local?' he responded,

> Well, in some cases, they were wearing those white Arab robes. But that's a bit of a giveaway [...] I mean, a lot of the people I assumed to be local. They might not have been Arab, but they might have been. I mean, I believe about half the population of Qatar isn't Qatari by birth, probably more. But they seemed to support the Arab teams; they had seemingly very large followings Tunisia, Morocco and Saudi.

Another fan, Todd, also used the term "locals" as a convenient point of reference to navigate a positive encounter he had during the tournament,

> I met some locals that worked there. They're not originally from there. They're from India or something, but they work there.

Evidently, these examples are full of inconsistencies; John, Terry, Ken and Todd all seemed to be unclear with who they were in contact. It is highly unlikely the shop workers and the hotel staff that John referred to as "Qataris" were actually "Qataris," considering most of the Qatari born citizens work within the public sector and are directly employed by the state, as McManus (2022) observes. Terry similarly identifies workers at the *Souq* as "locals" too. Whereas Ken switches between a variety of labels based on his perceptions of locality ("locals"), nationality (Qatari) and ethnicity (Arabs) to understand his contact partners. Clothing, in particular, provides a visible frame of identification for Ken to confirm who he actually encountered. Todd used the term "locals" but acknowledged his contact partners were most likely from India. It is not necessary in this space to draw on discourses or debates of national identity or 'locality' but clearly there is an implicit racialisation of who is or can be a "Qatari" national - a key process of Othering.

Service workers and migrant workers who work, eat, sleep and dedicate years of their life to the local economy in Qatar, or the wider region do form part of the local community. But in the specific context of intergroup contact theory, the inability to differentiate and identify those in contact, in this case Muslim communities - the outgroup of concern for this thesis - is problematic. It suggests any positive impressions or outcomes of intergroup engagements are contentious and perhaps meaningless. By compressing groups of different people (service workers, migrant workers, Arabs, Qataris and non-Qataris) under one label, "locals," and distinguishing them from travelling international fans, these England supporters were unable to identify the outgroup status of those they encountered in any meaningful or generalised way (Gaertner et al., 1989). According to Brown and Hewstone's (1986) and Hewstone's (2006) salient categorisation approach to contact, the ability to identify outgroup members is critical for reducing prejudice and mitigating stereotypes between in- and outgroups. The inability to do so hampers the potential for attitude change to occur towards Muslims and Islam. Instead, John, Terry, Ken and Todd are left with a general impression of people living in Qatar who are by no means 'typical' members of the outgroup of concern for this thesis.

Other fans were arguably much clearer in identifying the Muslim Other during the tournament. Although their reflections were less favourable, indicating that contact between the England fans and the Muslim community within Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE was limited, especially in comparison to migrant and service workers. For example, responding to a prompt from the audio-visual diary guide Nick and Stephen observed,

> With regards to the Muslim community, we've not really had much interaction with the locals. (Nick Diary 1)

> There's something I've noticed while we've been here, and that is that there aren't many Qataris to interact with [...] so there is a serious lack of interaction there. (Nick Diary 3)

> In terms of speaking to the locals, I haven't really interacted with many of them, but I've spoken to a lot of migrant workers. (Stephen Diary 1)

These in-situ observations, whilst not delving into any depth, were supported in the post-interviews by Peter and Sarah, who made similar comments when I asked them, 'did you manage to interact with the Muslim community during the tournament?,'

> There weren't many local people [in Dubai] [pause] especially in the bars because the local people don't drink, so the bars were full of Europeans. (Peter)

> There weren't that many Qatari people; you didn't see lots of them, like in the *Souqs* and stuff. (Sarah)

Despite a seemingly salient context for contact opportunities between the England supporters and local Muslim communities, these testimonies suggest contact encounters between the two groups throughout the tournament were actually limited. Nick's excerpt captures the development of this process over a period of five days, from his first audio-visual diary entry to his last. Stephen simply observed that he had not interacted with any "locals" in his first two days in Qatar, while both Peter and Sarah, like Nick, briefly discussed their perception that there were not that many Muslims or Qataris to interact with. Given that Nick did not participate in a post-interview, I was unable to explore why he believed 'there was a serious lack of interaction.' However, Stephen did opine a possible explanation when I asked him in a post-event discussion: 'You said in your

diary that you didn't really interact with many people from the Muslim community, or, as you noted, the locals. Why was that?' he explained,

> They seemed really standoffish to me. You would often see them on the public [pause] you'd sometimes see them during the quiet times on the public transport because obviously the metro was free, so we used that quite a lot. Um, they just seemed to be really like [pause] when you went to Russia. You had like people coming up to you if you were wearing an England top wanting pictures and stuff, then you'd be like chatting to people, and they'd be really friendly. Didn't get that at all [in Qatar]. They were all really standoffish. It was sort of like they didn't want us there. And obviously, with the whole thing with the alcohol, like being cut 48 hours before the tournament started and obviously the LGBT stuff going on as well, it felt like there was a bit of resentment towards the West there.

Later in the conversation, I asked Stephen what he meant by stand-offish by asking, 'How would you describe or explain their behaviour?,'

> It was more like their body language. Like when you see someone sitting on something like a train or the tube and they really seemed sort of tensed up and they might be holding a bag or something. Or they might just have a complete look of disdain on their face.

Stephen's perception of Muslims in Qatar (the "locals") was quite straightforward. For him, there was a feeling - real or imagined - that the Other was avoiding contact and was disinterested in speaking to him. While this is not problematic in itself, his perception places blame on the Other based on the premise of some fleeting encounters in public spaces and his observations of body language. Further, his observations were informed by his previous tournament experience in Russia. As a pre-condition of contact, he expected the "Qatari locals" would be just as engaging and welcoming as the Russian people were during the 2018 edition of the World Cup. However, this revealed a power dynamic in the contact situation. As hosts, there was an expectation from Stephen that it was their responsibility to 'make the first move' of contact, not his. Not only did this shift the emphasis of contact to the Muslim community, or locals, it also served to dismiss his own responsibility by providing a useful defensive mechanism to justify why there was an absence of any real contact during the tournament. Moreover, by further claiming that he believed the "local's" resentment was socially and culturally motivated, e.g., a clash of belief systems, Stephen implied there was a sense of cultural distance between himself and the Muslim

community in Qatar. Sarah and Ken shared this perception that the local Muslim community was "standoffish,"

> TT (Interviewer): So, you didn't feel like you could interact with any Muslims; it was just service workers?
>
> Yeah, pretty much [pause] and football fans. A lot of Indians rather than Qatari people in the national dress. […] there weren't that many Qatari people there. Um, even in that area [Msheireb] there was a few that walked around the streets and stuff, but I didn't see many in national dress. […] as much as they were welcoming, and you know some people wanted to talk to you. There were a lot of people that didn't […] people looked busy. (Sarah)
>
> TT (Interviewer): Can you remember any interactions you had with anyone?
>
> I would struggle to be honest. Obviously, I think you're there for the football, and very few people seemed to want to talk about football. Whereas when I've been to other countries watching England, you know there's always somebody. People were a bit, if I say, standoffish, that's probably giving the wrong impression. Ugh, a little distant. I mean, most people they spoke English, so I don't think there's a language problem […] I've not made any lifelong friends with people in Qatar and Dubai. (Ken)

In the first example, Sarah contradicts her previous reflections (on the visibility of Muslim women) and explained her perception through the perceived lack of visibility of Muslims in public spaces. She specifically references the lack of people wearing traditional clothing. As a result, she believed there were limited opportunities to engage the Other. When she did have contact, she perceived the Other to be disinterested in engaging because they looked busy and did not want to converse on a deeper level. It is fair to argue, however, that there was also an unwillingness on Sarah's behalf to go out of her way to encounter Muslims during the tournament, as evidenced by her socio-cultural experiences (see Section 4.3). Similar to Stephen, Ken's willingness to engage in intergroup contact was predisposed by his belief the host community would 'make the first move,' when this did not happen, he seemingly lacked confidence to do so himself. But evidently, he also perceived a lack of contact stemming from cultural differences, e.g., a lack of interest in football. Perhaps, in this case, Ken did not feel as though he shared anything in common with the Other. Declan simply reflected that the Muslim community in Qatar "was definitely stand-offish."

In relation to the contact hypothesis, these examples illustrate that even when favourable conditions for intergroup encounters appear prominent, e.g., England fans travelling and staying

in a non-secular Islamic society, opportunities for contact do not always lead to an increase in contact. This supports critical intergroup contact scholarship that has highlighted how individuals, when faced with contact, do not take up the opportunities provided or actively seek to avoid encountering Others. As discussed throughout, such scholarship mostly focuses on 'self-segregation' and intergroup avoidance (see, for example, McKeown and Dixon, 2017; Bettencourt et al., 2019). From the explanations of the fans, they perceived their outgroup partners to be distant and standoffish, it suggests the supporters may have been anxious to engage. For example, Stephen and Sarah's comments on the body language of the Other perhaps created a feeling of discomfort, wherein any approaches to contact may have been met with humiliation, e.g., having an awkward exchange, or being politely rejected. Feelings of anxiety in particular have been shown to reinforce intergroup distance and negative feelings towards an outgroup (Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006; 2008; 2011). This could also explain why the supporters decided to segregate themselves in the 'World Cup bubble' as they prioritised feeling safe and comfortable. Simultaneously, however, their comments are not unproblematic. As discussed in Section 4.3, there was also a clear unwillingness on their behalf to engage in experiences that could have led to meaningful intergroup encounters. Being a fan seemingly set precedents during the World Cup. This supports Kauff et al.'s (2021) suggestion the tendency for people to not engage in contact with an outgroup does not necessarily reflect active avoidance or segregation but rather stems from a lack of interest in outgroup members. This is evident in Ken's example (e.g., his belief that the Other was disinterested in football). Similarly, when I asked Tom about his encounters, he said,

> I think in the fan zone, in the sort of eating area, we were joined a few times by locals, or Islamic people, but locals, I think. And yeah, we had chats and it was mostly at the superficial level of, Where are you from? What's it like there? Is it cold? And does it rain a lot? And vice versa, and then football. It was mostly that. I don't think there was any deep kind of conversation.

> TT (Interviewer): Did you feel as though you had a lot of opportunity to speak to Muslim communities in Qatar?

> I don't know; it's hard to answer that. Well, I suppose I'd say no, but there was nothing to stop me. So maybe I didn't, but equally, I wasn't particularly [pause] apart from the, the people in the mosque who come to see how we were doing; there was nobody saying, 'Come and have a chat; you know, we like football.' We went to a little café at the station for a cup of coffee every time we headed off to go places, so they got to know us, and um, yeah, I'm trying to think whether they were local; they were certainly Muslim, and ugh [pause] but you know, we'd be there

> 10-15 or 20 minutes using the Wi-Fi, drinking coffee and then they'd have a little chat [the workers]. But it wasn't it wasn't anything significant there.

Here, Tom acknowledges that talking about topics such as the weather and other pleasantries did not facilitate any deep, or meaningful encounters to develop and were only ever fleeting. He was also honest in admitting that he did not particularly go out of his way to meet and speak with Muslims for the duration of the tournament. This does not necessarily imply that Tom had any animosity towards the outgroup; on the contrary, his pre-constructions of encounters suggest he has favourable views towards Muslims. However, his avoidance or indifference towards contact might be based on his ingroup preferences, e.g., enjoying his fandom with other like-minded people. This supports the findings of Al Ramiah et al. (2015), who found white students in a school cafeteria explained their avoidance of Asian students based on a lack of interest in the outgroup. I also argue the novelty of the World Cup could have further facilitated a lack of interest in intergroup relations. There are limits to what can be achieved when contact is in competition with other experiences - in this case, the supporters wanting to enact their England fandom in a temporary sporting setting. Intergroup contact in everyday settings is then complex, multifaceted and situational.

Contrastingly, Vince, who stayed in Saudi Arabia during the World Cup, held a more favourable impression towards his hosts than towards "Qataris." Unsurprisingly, he noted having more interactions with people from Saudi Arabia, whom he perceived to be more engaging; "they were okay on the Qatar side, but the Saudis' were far friendlier and more talkative." The "Qataris" were "more aloof" and they "just didn't engage like the Saudi's." When I asked him why he believed they were more engaging Vince said,

> Well, Newcastle United, apart from anything else, ugh [pause] because they're quite a friendly bunch of people and they're all football mad, and we saw them crossing the borders all the time to sort of watch Saudi Arabia. I think they bought the most tickets of any nation. And they're all an ultra-young population; they all speak excellent English and, dare I say it, are particularly – in appearance anyway, Islamic. They all seem pretty young and tech savvy and ugh they know everything about the West. Most of them travel too.

> […]

> They were all reasonable people to talk to; they all speak good English. But it was; they all wanted to know where we came from, which team we supported, where we lived etc... I mean I said they've all travelled, but they probably haven't stopped an

seen many people sort of like white English football guys travelling around Saudi too often.

By staying in Saudi Arabia and travelling through the border crossing on a regular basis, Vince had ample opportunities for transient, spontaneous and quality forms of contact. This was helped by the sheer quantity of Saudi Arabian citizens using the border crossing between Qatar and Bahrain. Unlike the local Muslims in Qatar, this example suggests that the Saudis were happy to engage and 'make the first move' with Vince and in return, Vince was more than happy to reciprocate. He further suggests they were interested in 'football talk', which facilitated the nature of contact, e.g., Vince and his contact partners shared a commonality - a love for football. Hence, this acted as a motive for contact. As Ron and Moaz (2013) found in their study, intentions for intergroup encounters can increase when people believe they can learn about the outgroup. In this case, the outgroup was arguably Vince considering he was travelling through Saudi Arabia, but nonetheless, there was a motivation on both sides to learn about the perceived Other.

However, while Vince held a positive impression of Saudi Arabia, a possible explanation for this was because they 'weren't particularly Islamic.' Although I am not quite sure what he meant by this comment, it is quite a problematic frame of reference. Firstly, he suggests that because they were young, interested in football, tech savvy and spoke good English, they were not like the Other Muslims he has met, even though he claimed his best friend was a Muslim from Somalia. This is reductionist in the sense that it unwittingly stereotypes all Muslims based on their predispositions. Secondly, in relation to the contact literature, this confirms the critiques of the de-categorisation approach of Brewer and Miller (1984). Vince evidently perceived his contact partners as exceptions rather than the rule. Thus, the ability of his contact to generalise towards all Muslims is limited, as Hewstone (2006) has argued.

Nevertheless, what was demonstrably apparent from speaking to the England fans was they had limited interactions with the Other throughout the World Cup. For contact theory to be effective, there must be a clear contact partner or outgroup with which to have face-to-face contact, as Allport (1979) argued. Without such contact, or if opportunities for contact do not translate into intergroup encounters, the ability of social interaction to reduce intergroup prejudice or for intergroup understanding to develop is extremely limited. While the explanations by the fans mostly suggest they did not necessarily seek contact, preferring to revel in the novelty of the World Cup instead, there was also an unequal power dynamic submerged within their accounts.

For example, fans like Stephen, Ken and Declan were clearly under the impression that the Other as hosts of the World Cup should be the ones to show interest and 'make the first move' of contact. When this did not happen, the fans evidently resorted to Othering the outgroup by suggesting they were 'distant,' 'culturally incompatible,' and had no interest in intergroup relations.

The Presence of Migrant Workers

In the absence of intergroup contact between the travelling England fans and Muslims - the perceived outgroup of concern for this thesis - during the World Cup, an emerging opportunity for contact permeated in its place. For example, throughout my discussions with the fans, it became evident contact with the migrant population in Qatar was prominent. The migrant population provided the supporters with service, hospitality and a general point of reference throughout the tournament. It was within this context that Allport's (1979) conditions for contact were facilitated, alongside the processes of change (e.g., why and how contact can be effective). All of the supporters spoke positively about their interactions with migrant workers whom they described as friendly, hospitable and energetic. Nick, for example, recorded in his first audio-visual diary,

> Everybody [contact partners] seems to be from Africa, India, Pakistan, or Bangladesh. But again, anybody that we have had interactions with, we can't speak highly enough.

In his second diary entry, Nick briefly discussed developing a relationship with one of the porters on board the cruise ship that he stayed on for the World Cup, docked in Doha port,

> The guy who looks after our room is Tunisian, we have a great relationship with him. Really friendly guy.

Similarly, during my second conversation with Ken some months after the World Cup, I asked him to elaborate on a point he made during the first interview. This was in reference to a comment he made about the dominance of service-orientated interactions he had in Dubai. I asked if he made a similar observation when he relocated to Qatar,

> The only people I was really interacting with were the staff in the hotel and people in the bars and restaurants […] it was pretty much the same in Qatar.

Ken reiterated this point several times throughout our second conversation together. He especially noted the frequency and quantity of the encounters he had with service workers in particular places. Although Ken did not go into any depth about his interactions, he did say he found all the service staff to be incredibly friendly. On the other hand, Sarah shared a brief story with me about the people who worked in one of the apartment complexes she stayed in, in Doha,

> The service workers in the apartment were like the nicest people. You know, they couldn't do enough for you. There were fresh towels whenever you wanted them, and they'd come in and clean it [the room] whenever. And when you were leaving the building, we left the keys with them. They were on the desk 24-hours a day.

The majority (12) of the England fans expressed similar sentiments to the examples above, demonstrating that migrant-orientated interactions were a key finding that emerged from my conversations with the fans. For example, the supporters were able to engage in quality forms of contact with the migrant population in Qatar and, to an extent, the UAE compared to Muslims, permitting them to develop a deeper form of understanding; in effect, migrant workers played the role of the host, acting as a proxy by mediating the fans' impressions of Qatar, the wider Arabian Peninsula, and, to some extent, Muslims and Islam. However, as Nick's testimony began to speculate, it was entirely possible that some of the migrant workers the fans encountered were Muslims themselves from either non-secular or secular societies outside of the Arabian Peninsula, e.g., Pakistan. However, the religious beliefs of their contact partners were not a salient topic of conversation; fans like Nick and others identified them first and foremost as migrants or service workers, e.g., taxi drivers, security officers, hosts and hostesses and business employees. Through their interactions, they were able to develop an understanding of their contact partners and some fans expressed a sense of empathy towards them.

Developing Understanding and Empathy

Given the unique context of Qatari society and indeed the UAE, it was not overly surprising that the fans had more migrant-orientated contact, especially in their hotels, in restaurants, in taxis and in the stadia. One of the supporters, Todd, even reflected on the unique demographics of the country. For instance, when I asked Todd an unrelated question, in his response he recalled that there were,

A lot of Indians that work there [pause] what did they say to me? I think they said there was like 200,000 locals, but there was 1.5 million internationals.

Although Todd's estimation of the population was not quite accurate, for context, Qatar is characterised by a high migrant population, as he observed. In 2021, for instance, one year prior to the 2022 World Cup, Qatar had an estimated population of 2.8 million people, with only 3 - 350,000 believed to be Qatari nationals (Harkness, 2020; McManus, 2022). In the UAE, the landscape is very similar; the Migration Report documented the migrant population, which makes up 83.5% of the country. From my own experiences in Qatar, too, it was evident that the emphasis on service and hospitality was a defining feature of the tournament. However, the opportunity and salience of the fans' encounters provided a platform for the supporters to engage in in-depth conversations with migrant workers that sometimes went beyond the superficial. John, who spoke about being an incredibly open and friendly person through my discussion with him, reflected on some of his interactions and the nature of such interactions,

We found the taxi drivers to be very friendly. A lot of them were immigrants, and they thought the World Cup was tremendous because it had given them the opportunity to get money that they wouldn't normally get. So, they would just send the money straight back to their family in Africa or wherever they were from.

TT (Interviewer): Did you have much of an opportunity to speak to them?

I tried to speak to them every time I went in an Uber [pause] because to get to that, you know, Al Bayt Stadium was quite a trek. So, we were having long conversations, and they said they'd been planning for it for a long time and they knew what the media was saying. They wanted people to ignore it, and that it was an inclusive country in their eyes. So, um, certainly, it gave me the impression that they've been prepared for a long time, and they were really enjoying the opportunity to do it [stage the World Cup].

Ian shared a similar reflection when speaking about his encounters with migrant workers in the UAE,

They [migrant workers] felt that they had a better quality of life there than they did at home. For the taxi driver, he said, he'd work seven days a week for six months, and there would be five or six people - taxi drivers - living in a one-bedroom flat, and they're saving money to take home.

TT (Interviewer): Did they elaborate on any issues or anything like that?

No, they're just happy to be there [pause] and we were talking about their rights as employees, and they said they felt like they were protected, but in the Western world they had very little protection. But they felt like they had more protection than they would have done in the Indian subcontinent. […] you hear all this stuff about migrant workers being oppressed. I didn't see that at all. They were clinging on. They were having the rind of the pork chop for want of a better word, you know what I mean? And that was worth having because they wouldn't have been able to make what they were making in their home country, but the end goal was to return home.

It was worth representing John and Ian's reflections in depth not only because they revealed the extent of the contact they had with migrant workers in Qatar and the UAE, but also because it offered an insight into some of the topics of conversation and their understanding of their contact partners. Taxi journeys in particular, while momentary and fleeting provided important sites for them to converse with and probe the drivers about their being in Qatar and the UAE. Evidently, providing them with an alternative and, in their opinion, a first-hand account of what the conditions were actually like for migrant workers living in the country. Especially in comparison to the perceived media narratives, e.g., the reported human rights concerns over the working conditions and treatment of migrant workers, as I argued in the literature review these everyday spaces (a taxi ride) provided a formative setting to understand the effects of contact. This refers to the everyday, mundane elements of belonging. It is an example of how the supporters, and perhaps the migrant worker's desire to belong in the World Cup environment. Through these encounters, as Spjkers and Loopman's (2020) have found elsewhere, the fans were able to stimulate personal learning about the perceived outgroup and develop new knowledge about them.

As a consequence of their encounters, John and Ian generalised their perceptions towards all migrant workers in the region. Thus, this lends support to the salient categorisation approach proposed by Brown and Hewstone (1986) and Hewstone (2006). Both fans viewed their contact partners as typical of a homogenous migrant population in Qatar and the UAE and did not seek to challenge their working conditions, despite both admitting the conditions were far from acceptable in the Western world. John even admitted he did not manage to speak to others who may have had a different lived experience, but still believed what he uncovered was a relative truth. Arguably, this also highlighted a problematic aspect of the salient categorisation approach, with both John and Ian overlooking the plurality and subjectivity of migrant-worker lived experiences in Qatar and the UAE that could have contradicted their learnt understanding. Placing their encounters within a social and cultural context further reveals the complexity of John and

Ian's interactions. For example, throughout my conversations with John and Ian, they expressed criticism and a deep mistrust of the media. John told me he got into a "twitter row" with a journalist over her negative coverage of the 2022 World Cup, while in a pre-event discussion with Ian, he justified his attendance at the tournament to "find out about" certain issues like human rights and "learn more" rather than be a "passive" bystander. This context, I argue, shaped their understanding of their encounters, as they readily accepted and sought information that was consistent with their beliefs, e.g., confirmation bias. This enabled them to justify and not feel guilt over enjoying the World Cup in spite of evidence suggesting the myriad of negative experiences of migrant workers (see, for example, Harkness, 2020; McManus, 2022).

Roger shared a similar position and, like John and Ian, expressed a form of confirmation bias, again suggesting his impression of migrant workers - their living conditions and treatment "wasn't as bad as the press had made out." However, Roger's encounter with migrant workers in Qatar was qualitatively different from John and Ian's. For example, he recalled interacting with some architects who had been in the country for 10 years and a Moroccan family who lived there. Unlike the taxi drivers John and Ian spoke to, architects are part of the professional class, while the Moroccan family, from an Arab country, as McManus (2022) has observed, would both enjoy a higher standard of living compared to taxi drivers. What Roger encoded from his conversations with them was that Qatar offers people an opportunity "for a better life." Of course, this is not too dissimilar from what John and Ian understood about their encounters with taxi drivers. However, what this highlighted further were the complexities and contradictions of the salient categorisation approach. Clearly, as Harkness (2020) argues, social stratification exists among the heterogeneous migrant population. The architects and taxi drivers cannot be typical members of the migrant population as a whole (although they could be typical members of their profession). By generalising the migrant experience and holding a positive perception of Qatar and the Arabian Peninsula based on such encounters, I argue the fans are perhaps guilty of omitting information that contradicts their newly learnt understanding. The role of salient categorisation in this context thus functioned as a convenient tool for the fans to abscond Qatar and the UAE from criticism and engage in confirmation bias. Nevertheless, these encounters acted as a mechanism for the supporters to provide a positive impression of both Doha and Dubai.

Other England supporters that took part in this study, however, developed a more critical understanding of their contact partner's lives (migrant workers) based on their own experiences during the tournament. For example, when I asked the fans questions such as "Can you recall any

interactions you had with any service/migrant workers?" Sarah, Peter and Declan shared brief stories of their encounters, expressing a level of empathy towards their contact partners and a degree of criticism towards Qatar and the UAE's treatment of migrant workers, contradicting John, Ian and Roger's own reflections,

> We were in this real dodgy pub on a high floor [of a building], an Irish bar. And there were these toilet attendants, and there was a little Indian guy, probably getting paid the smallest pittance [pause] and this bar was absolutely packed, and they were charging high-end prices. It was a smoky, horrible place. And this guy was literally twisting his gloves that much and didn't do anything, he literally just stood there, and then his mate—well, it wasn't his mate [pause] it was this other guy doing all the work and they [Qatar] just drafted people in, and I felt really sorry for him, it broke my heart. (Sarah)

> We hired a taxi driver for the day, and he works seven days a week. He works 11 months a year. [pause] They take his passport of him so he can't go home. He doesn't see his family and he's got a wife and kids and they see each other maybe for a month each year, and then he's back for another 11 months. What sort of life is that? (Peter)

> They would tell different stories [migrant workers] about what life was like there. I mean, they had to go there because of income, and what have you? But they would send money back to their respective countries. But a lot of them knew people who had come over from their respective countries who were living in terrible conditions and who were involved in the construction of the stadiums, hotels and anything else that was built. Including, you know, people that were friends of theirs that had died in the construction, that was all sort of pushed under the carpet. (Declan)

> [..]

> You could tell that they [Qataris] weren't respectful of all the guest workers they brought into the country. I remember one particular instance where we were driving in an Uber and two Arab guys in full regalia were walking across the street and they just took their time on purpose and were very rude to this poor little Uber driver. (Declan)

Empathy has been discussed within the contact literature as a possible mediator for *how* and *why* contact can reduce prejudice between groups (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2011). Although, in the context of the excerpts above, it would be unfair to suggest Sarah, Peter and Declan held any prejudices towards migrant workers in the first place, especially considering migrant workers were not the outgroup I originally focused on in this thesis. What was apparent, however, is how contact between these fans and migrant workers in multiple settings contributed to the fans understanding and ability to empathise with their contact partners. For example, in Sarah's attempt to speak with a toilet attendant in a bar, she felt "heartbroken" because she believed he

had to work long unnecessary hours. Peter implied that the life and labour conditions of a taxi driver he encountered in Dubai were not the sort of lifestyle anybody should be subjected to. Both statements are consistent with the idea that contact can lead to positive intergroup outcomes (see, for example, Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006). However, whether this level of empathy is transformational or symbolic is unclear. When Sarah and Peter's encounters are socially and culturally grounded, their positions appear far more complex. Yes, Sarah was consistent in her criticism of human rights both prior to and after the World Cup, but she also admitted, as a whole, the tournament "was a lot better than I was expecting." Her perceptions were mixed as she was trying to make sense of her experiences. Peter, on the other hand, dealt with issues of human rights by adopting a cultural relativist position (as discussed in Section 4.2), thus, somewhat contradicting the nature of empathy he developed and appearing more symbolic in relation to the taxi driver, as opposed to the migrant community as a whole.

As a positive outcome of contact, developing empathy should not necessarily be viewed as a panacea. Declan's experience briefly highlighted how contact with one group, e.g., migrant workers, could potentially impact how another outgroup is perceived. Although Declan does not go into any real depth and I did not ask him if his experiences affected his perceptions of Muslims and Islam he did refer to "Qataris" as rude. As discussed in Chapter Three, Pettigrew and Tropp (2011) cautioned learning certain information about an outgroup can have an adverse effect and lead to further stereotyping and discrimination, either towards the outgroup or a person's ingroup. In this context, Declan's experience led him to believe "Qataris" are rude, especially towards migrant workers. His interactions and experiences with an Uber driver then effectively mediated his attitude towards the local Muslim community, or "Qataris."

In my two conversations with Stephen some months after the World Cup, he also emphasised migrant workers and discussed having more in common with them than Muslims from the Arabian Peninsula. For example, when I asked him to elaborate on a diary entry he made about having more interactions with the migrant population than Muslims, he said,

> I think it was really, really sad. Because obviously these people are paid absolute peanuts, and um, when they are charging 12-quid a pint, or something like that in the bar and the hospitality worker on the other side is probably getting not even a quarter of that an hour [...] they were all like really enthusiastic, and really like, it was a service with a smile type thing […] so, I really enjoyed interacting with them and they would talk about [pause] I talked to a bouncer about like, 'what team do you support' and 'who you thought was going to win the World Cup.' They'd

comment just as the Russians did in Russia, like normal people. If you were wearing an England shirt, they'd come and try talk to you about your team, um your thoughts on Messi, or Ronaldo too […] but again, it was really sad that they had to be there in the first place to earn absolute pennies.

Evidently, a source of Stephen's empathy stems from his belief that service workers are paid relatively little for the work they do in comparison to the income they help to generate. There is also a sense that Stephen perceives that he shares things in common with his contact partners, most notably an interest in football, which is a key cultural practice for him. Not only did this make Stephen feel comfortable during his encounters, but to an extent, he became aware that the outgroup (migrant workers) was similar to his own group. Thus, drawing on the re-categorisation approach of contact as developed by Gaertner et al. (1989), the boundaries of group inclusion for Stephen during the World Cup included migrant workers. As a result, he developed a sense of empathy towards them and perceived migrant workers more positively, especially compared to the Muslim population in Qatar. Glasford and Calcagno (2012) have previously highlighted the blurring of group boundaries via a feeling of commonality can lead to solidarity between minority groups. In Stephen's and indeed, Sarah, Peter and Declan's accounts, it can also lead to feelings of empathy and solidarity between majority ingroups and minority outgroups. However, to refer back to Declan, Stephen's empathy towards migrant workers increased his hostility towards Qatar and its Muslim population. As Stephen said,

> TT (Interviewer): You mentioned Pakistani workers; did they represent an image of Islam or the region to you? Or did you see them as individuals?
>
> Individuals. I mean, I think it's after my experiences speaking to Muslims from India, or Pakistan, or Bangladesh, it's a completely different kettle of fish. It's not just sort of appearance-wise to the Arab world, but it seems like a completely different culture. The former is sort of not more Westernised, but more accepting of Western people. Whether that is because, um, the Arab nations have always been sort of, authoritarian regimes with like a sort of head of state at the top […] so I've always found interacting with people from those sorts of countries easier to interact with anyway. […] Um, so yeah, they are very much a separate entity to me, and I know the values of Islam are like the same across. And I've got no problem with the values of Islam, but yeah, I've always felt more comfortable interacting with people from sort of Pakistan, India, Bangladesh etc… and Muslims from that area than Arabs.
>
> TT (Interviewer): So, you believed you had more in common with the migrant population?

Yeah, uh, 100% […] And I think that probably comes down as well to being a bit humble, and obviously [they] come from poor backgrounds. And then coming to Qatar for a better life or to try and make money to send back home, whereas the Arabs have lived, you know, pretty entitled lifestyles. They work two days a week, don't pay any tax, it's pretty comfortable um, so I think the attitudes are very, very different as well.

This example suggests categories in contact are complex and multifaceted. Stephen, for example, draws on multiple labels to define migrant workers and an Other but evidently distinguishes between different nationalities and groups of Muslims. It is not Muslims he claims to hold a negative impression of, but "Arabs," or Muslims who live in the Arabian Peninsula. They are perceived as 'rich', and through the authoritarian dictum of the states in the region, they are perhaps 'incompatible with the West.' Muslims from Pakistan, or Bangladesh, he insists, share more in common with one another, and himself than Muslims from the Arabian Peninsula. To a degree, a paradox appears within this context. On the one hand, contact can positively contribute to developing an understanding and a sense of empathy towards another group, but on the other hand, in the specific context of this study, it can lead to negative feelings towards another group, e.g., the Muslim community in the Arabian Peninsula. However, as Stephens's constructions of contact and his socio-cultural experiences illustrate (see, sections 4.1 and 4.3), his beliefs are fairly anecdotal and contentious. Prior to attending the World Cup, he acknowledged that he had, had limited encounters with Muslims in general. And then, during the tournament, he seemed to avoid contact with Muslims, or Qatar's interpretation of Islamic culture.

When I asked Tom about his intergroup encounters, especially with migrant workers, he offered a very detailed response,

The closest I got to, um, what was happening with the construction workers? [pause] There was a guy who was fitting aluminium glazing frames to the big tower blocks and putting the glass in them. We met him in the fan zone, and we were chatting, and he said he was from Ghana, and he was sending money home and all that. And he said, 'I haven't been paid since we had to stop work, and we will start work when you all go and we haven't had any pay in all that time. So, no money to send to my family, which is why I'm here.' And then we talked about safety and he said, 'We don't get any risk pay' and so on. And health and safety issues were of concern, he said. But he said, 'What I think is happening is that mostly it's European and Indian construction companies, or investors, and if you get a European company and your working for them, you get European health and safety standards. But if you get an Indian one, you get Indian health and safety standards' and he said, 'I would rather work for a European one, and we'll leave it at that.'

TT (Interviewer): How did you feel about these interactions?

The purpose of going there was to meet people. Um, how did I feel about it? I felt like I do for any overseas worker who's earning money just to send home. A lot of nurses, for example, you know, the African nurses in particular that I worked with, would be working their butts off and doing all the overtime they could just so they could send the money to the whole family. It wasn't just, you know, my husband or my wife, it was feeding a whole village. Um, and the pressures on them and the loneliness of them. And I discussed loneliness with a security guard, he raised it, so he obviously was lonely […] so, there's some sadness to be exposed as well. So, I felt sad about it, but powerless as well. Powerless, that there's nothing I can do about it.

I have presented this example unabridged and in full so the reader can appreciate the level of engagement that Tom had with migrant workers in Qatar. Even though he believed these examples were representative of "fleeting" encounters, they evidently show how Tom was able to form close interpersonal relations with his contact partners, even if they were just fleeting moments of interaction. The stories that the migrant workers shared with him were personal, delicate and sombre. The idea that people were without pay, missing their families and feeling lonely because they felt as though they had no choice but to move abroad and make a living to support their families from Qatar made Tom feel "sad" and "powerless." To a degree, this led to him feeling sympathetic towards his contact partners. This also supports the findings of Li and Wang (2020), who found Chinese tourists developed a sense of empathy towards their North Korean counterparts because they believed the North Koreans had a poor quality of life in comparison to themselves. Tom's example additionally provides a counterpoint to Allport's (1979) original assumption that for contact to generate positive outcomes, it must go beyond a fleeting, superficial interaction. Evidently, Tom's self-described "fleeting" experiences can be considered meaningful. However, when I further prompted Tom, asking him if he had learnt anything from his encounters, he said,

It would be unfair to say that I didn't learn anything because obviously I learnt intimate things like 'I'm lonely,' 'I'm missing my wife.' I didn't hear anything unexpected that I probably hadn't heard before, here, where I am now […] So, I suppose that is the answer. I didn't learn; prejudices were reinforced, I think yeah.

TT (Interviewer): Prejudices were reinforced?

I think in that whole context, it is that these Islamic states are very dictatorial in how there run. They don't want you to particularly think in a different way, and certainly they want you to conform to every jot and title of the law that they decide. Just like any dictatorship, not just Islamic.

This is a significant illustration of the complex nature of intergroup contact because, while Tom's experiences with migrant workers engendered a positive outcome (empathy), they had an adverse effect on his attitudes towards Muslims and Islam - although this experience still led to a positive encounter, especially in the context of Qatar. As he noted, "prejudices were reinforced" towards the outgroup of concern for this study. His encounters with migrant workers effectively acted as a proxy, leading to the development or reinforcement of particular negative beliefs. This is similar to the secondary transfer effect of contact, which elaborates attitudes towards one group that can also be transferred to a second group that is not directly involved in the contact situation (Pettigrew, 2009; Taush et al., 2010). Although this example is more complicated, considering the secondary transfer effect, it has often been studied in relation to the primary outgroup - the outgroup of concern (Muslims and Islam in the context of this study) - to a second group. In Tom's case, there was limited contact with the outgroup of concern, but in its absence, he interacted with migrant workers (the secondary group). Through these interactions, while positive, it was evident that the secondary transfer effects of contact were negative. In this context, based on the fans responses and interpretations migrant workers acted as a proxy on behalf of the local Muslim communities, which then led to some negative perceptions towards the latter (the primary outgroup). As noted already, negative forms of contact are a much stronger outcome of contact because the outcomes tend to generalise to a whole group more easily (see, for example, Pettigrew; Paolini et al., 2010; Paolini et al., 2024). This is not to suggest Tom has a negative impression of all Muslims; rather, like Stephen, prejudices towards states specifically from the Arabian Peninsula are reinforced. Still, the outcome from this particular contact did lead to a negative attitude change.

Summary

Intergroup contact between different groups of people can be an effective tool in reducing group prejudices and stereotyping and for developing a better understanding of an outgroup, as scholarship has consistently shown (Allport, 1979; Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006). However, based on my conversations with the England supporters, it emerged that despite the opportunities the World Cup presented for intergroup and intercultural engagements, it did not translate into any meaningful contact to develop between the fans and the local Muslim communities. That is, limited intergroup contact was recorded between the primary groups of concern for this thesis during the duration of the World Cup. Prior to the research, this was fairly unexpected considering

the novelty and perhaps uniqueness of the 2022 World Cup, which was characterised by all of the stadiums located within a 38-km radius of central Doha. This context appeared ripe for contact because fans, the local Muslim community and others alike were all set to congregate in the city of Doha, suggesting contact would have perhaps been unavoidable. Clearly, however, based on the testimonies of the supporters' intergroup encounters, they did not manifest.

Although most of the supporters I spoke to referenced the "friendly" nature of the people they did encounter, and while some held a positive impression of their contact partners based on said encounters, e.g., John, Roger, Todd and Terry, it was unclear to whom these supporters were actually referring. The fans that I mentioned found it difficult to comprehensively identify their contact partners. They used multiple labels, such as "Qataris" or "locals," as a way to understand their interactions. In the contact literature, as I have noted, any positive outcomes of contact are likely limited if a contact partner cannot be identified as an outgroup member (see, for example, Brown and Hewstone, 1986; Hewstone, 2006). It also suggests contact in everyday spaces is more complex and multifaceted. For example, because the fans were in Qatar, there was an inherent assumption that the people they encountered were from the local Muslim community. In contact, this assumption is problematic because it can have an adverse effect on how people see each other. For example, if the people John spoke to in the hotel were not friendly, would he have held a negative impression of "Qataris" or Qatar in return? Equally, it overlooks significant socio-cultural and political contexts related to the environment in which contact takes place. As Todd alluded to later, the demographic context of Qatar is unique. The large majority of the population (the assumed outgroup) are actually migrant workers from multiple countries; the local Muslim population, instead, is much lower in number and is arguably a minority group within the country. These contextual factors related to everyday encounters need to be fully understood, in particular how they can impact the outcomes of contact.

Notwithstanding the fans' who held a positive impression of Qatar following their encounters with "locals," the rest of the supporters I spoke to had a negative perception of the local Muslim community. This was based on the perceived distance of the Other and an overall lack of interest in contact. Intergroup avoidance was the primary explanation as to why the 2022 World Cup failed to facilitate positive intergroup encounters. For example, Stephen and Declan noted the perceived 'standoffishness' of the hosts in wanting to engage. Although their accounts were not unproblematic, as already discussed, in relation to the contact literature, it is evident that motivation, or a person's willingness to make contact with an outgroup, is complex and based on

situational and environmental factors (e.g., the novelty of the World Cup). This perceived sense avoidance, or segregation, however, can result in negative intergroup outcomes because evidently the fans perceived their contact partners to a) 'not want to engage' and b) as a 'distant Other.'

Furthermore, the findings conveyed in this section have highlighted how contact outcomes can be transferred from a primary outgroup (e.g., Muslims) to a secondary outgroup (migrant/service workers). For example, a key finding from this study is that in the absence of limited contact encounters with the local Muslim communities in Doha or even Dubai, migrant or service workers served as a proxy – to my knowledge this has not been found in the literature before. That is, the supporters discussed having a plethora of contact with people who worked within the service industry, who provided them with support, service and a general point of reference throughout the World Cup. In relation to the contact hypothesis, the fans discussed being able to learn about the conditions of the workers and their being in Doha or Dubai and they developed feelings of empathy towards their new contact partners. But most importantly, based on these encounters, while positive, the positive effects did not transfer over to the local Muslim community. Instead, the fans held a more negative belief in them, primarily because of the labour conditions in which they worked.

4.5 The Challenges of Intergroup Contact in a Temporary Sport Setting

Throughout this research, I drew on intergroup contact theory as a theoretical framework to help guide, interpret, problematise and analyse the findings that emerged from my discussions with the 14 England supporters (Allport, 1979; Pettigrew and Tropp, 2011). Intergroup contact theory has sparsely been used within the sociology of sport, but in recent years there has been a growing application of the framework within tourism studies. Mostly, as discussed within the literature review, travelling to new destinations, meeting new people and engaging with different cultures has been shown to reduce intergroup hostilities and create a better understanding between groups (see, for example, Anastasopoulos, 1992; Sirakaya-Turk, 2014; Luo et al., 2015; Fan et al., 2017; Celik, 2019; Li and Wang, 2020). These studies are relevant for understanding the journeys of England football fans, considering they all travelled to the Arabian Peninsula for the 2022 World Cup. The majority of them (10) had never been to a non-secular, Islamic society before, thus, the World Cup presented a novel context to understand the dynamics of intergroup contact theory.

However, based on my discussions with the supporters I argue that depending on the context of encounters, intergroup contact theory can be limited in its ability to create transformational social change, especially concerning people's attitudes towards perceived outgroup members, such as Muslims. This is especially pertinent in a temporary sport setting like the World Cup, as discussed within Section 4.1, fans constructed their encounters prior to making their journeys to the World Cup, and the nature of their fandom was complex and contradictory. Some fans expressed certain prejudices, but none shared any deeply held prejudice, so any impacts resulting from contact were likely to be minimal or result in a prejudice forming. Of course, the fan discourses of the 'Other' was not unproblematic, as I have shown; they held automatic and unconscious biases (Fiske, 2002) and clearly dominant Oriental discourses were reproduced throughout their accounts (Said, 2003). By focussing on prejudiced people or imposing abstract categorisations on groups of people, how people actually view each other in contact is often overlooked; that is, the subjective nature of contact, the categories people bring into contact and the meanings they bring into contact need to be better understood in order to provide a much richer view of the literature (see, for example, Dixon et al., 2005; Christ and Wagner, 2013; Jackson and Sheriff, 2013; Paolini et al., 2018). For example, as my findings illustrate in the specific context of the 2022 World Cup and England fandom, the England fans constructed their encounters in various ways, held conflicting and contradictory viewpoints, and were influenced by different socio-cultural and ideological factors (such as their attitude towards awarding the World Cup to Qatar).

Moreover, it became evident that, even though the 2022 World Cup seemingly provided a unique and important context for promoting intergroup contact opportunities, contact does not always materialise in any tangible ways. This is evident in Section 4.3, where the supporters were seemingly unwilling to engage with the Other or to take part in cultural activities in any meaningful way. In the section, I drew on Cohen's (1972) 'environmental bubble' - the tourist bubble - to help conceptualise the fans' experiences. This has been an important concept to help understand the relationship between hosts and guests in a variety of settings. In the context of this study, a self-imposed 'World Cup bubble' existed amongst the supporters, who, rather than step beyond this imaginary bubble, were all too comfortable engendering and performing their identities as England fans. For example, most of the participants spoke about 'searching for bars' to consume alcohol and discussed various routines and rituals that seemingly influenced the types of activities they were willing to indulge in, and by extension, dictating the nature of their contact. This, acting as a clear barrier to intergroup relations. Through this 'bubble', manifested on two levels: firstly, I argue the supporters engaged in a form of voluntary segregation because, as

discussed, they preferred to stay within the existing structures of the World Cup environment. Secondly, the 'bubble' was also enforced by the organising polity e.g., restrictions of where alcohol could be consumed. The fans comfort seemingly derives from not having contact with the Muslim Other. To a degree, their unwillingness to explore 'strangeness' countered their cosmopolitan claims.

Paradoxically, however, as noted in Section 4.3, their experiences were also predisposed through their ideas and beliefs of what is an authentic Islamic culture. Despite making little attempt at meeting Muslims in the Arabian Peninsula, or engaging in cultural exchange, as evidenced through their fandom practices, the supporters held unfavourable attitudes towards their hosts because they were unsatisfied with the inauthentic nature of their trip. In this section, a power dynamic was inherent, one in which it was highlighted how, as a perceived ingroup, the England supporters claimed authority over defining authenticity. This then acted as a mechanism that dictated their level of engagement with both tourism and cultural exchange and influenced their overall perceptions of the Arabian Peninsula. Notably, the socio-cultural experiences of the fans during the 2022 World Cup simply did not engender the types of conditions (see, for example, Allport, 1979; Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006) for contact to produce positive intergroup outcomes.

Within the *'The Politics of Encounter England fans, Muslims and Migrant/Service Workers,'* the majority of the fans (10) acknowledged they had little-to-no interaction with the local Muslim community, despite considering their hosts to be "friendly." While they offered various explanations, some of which were problematic and critiqued, it was evident how the fans engaged in intergroup avoidance (see, Section 4.4). This was primarily based, I argue, on having a limited interest overall, considering the fans were more concerned with the novelty of the World Cup. However, this finding contributes to this theme because it further illustrates how different groups of people within a sport setting engage in avoidance rather than contact with others and instead prefer to interact with people from their own perceived ingroup (e.g., football fans). This limited the opportunities for contact.

When analysing all of the topics discussed, it was evident depending on the context of encounters, intergroup contact theory can be limited in application, especially within a temporary sport event like the 2022 World Cup. Notably, this is partly because of the transient and ephemeral nature of the tournament and the machinations of corporatism. People, or football fans, are negotiating numerous identities and positions. They want to experience the World Cup first, and foremost,

anything else is somewhat perceived as a bonus. It is also difficult to truly revel in deep and meaningful engagements with 'Others' that seemingly go beyond the superficial or symbolic. Any impacts are most likely to be symbolic rather than transformational. For example, in the context of this study, several supporters (7) said that they wanted to return to the region and that they would recommend friends or family visit. One fan, Ken, based on his experiences in Doha and Dubai, decided to travel to Saudi Arabia for the FIFA Men's Club World Cup in December 2023. But visitation as an impact can only ever exist at the symbolic level; will they all return? And if so, when will they return to the region? Furthermore, as was evident throughout, their perceptions towards Muslims and Islam itself did not improve; if anything, some of the supporters held less favourable attitudes towards the hosts than before the trip. The following section introduces the second overall theme that emerged from my findings.

4.6 The Proxy Case of Intergroup Contact Theory

In general, scholarship that has explored intergroup contact with migrant or service workers has often found that contact effects are mixed, especially within a temporary setting such as tourism. For example, Jarvis et al. (2022) explored service interactions between assumed straight cruise employees and LGBT passengers on a gay cruise charter. The authors found the staff held favourable impressions of their contact partners, which helped to diminish negative attitudes towards LGBT passengers. In contrast, Sirakaya - Turk et al. (2014) found German all-inclusive tourists who travelled to Turkey held more unfavourable attitudes towards Turkish people based on their interactions with service workers. The finding from this study adds to the debate by arguing, in the context of Qatar and the World Cup, the England supporters held a positive attitude towards migrant workers within the country, characterised by acquiring an understanding of their being in Qatar and through developing a sense of empathy towards their working conditions.

However, what differentiates this study is the generalising effects of direct contact with migrant workers, who evidently were not the primary outgroup of concern for this study. As briefly discussed in Section 4.4, scholarship on intergroup context theory that has explored how the effects of direct contact with one group can extend to other groups not directly involved in the contact situation is referred to as the secondary transfer effect (Pettigrew, 2009). This line of inquiry, while still in its relative infancy, is exciting for scholars interested in contact because it illuminates the generalising possibilities of contact across a range of potential 'proxies' that is not limited to the desired contact situation. For example, Marrow et al. (2019) found the more

interactions White Americans had with Black Americans, the more receptive they were towards Mexican and South Asian Indians. The scholarship has also demonstrated how negative forms of contact can extend to a secondary outgroup. For example, Meleady and Forder's (2019) study found negative contact with Muslim immigrants in the UK was related to a lower interest in future contact with other secondary outgroups such as Eastern European immigrants, Indian immigrants and Black African immigrants. Thus, previous scholarship has focused on both the positive and negative outcomes of the secondary transfer effect.

The findings from this study, however, extend beyond the positive versus negative dictum of the secondary transfer effect. As I have already stated, in the context of the 2022 World Cup, positive outcomes towards one group (migrant workers) negatively extended to another group (Muslims). This suggests moving beyond the praxis of focussing on purely positive or negative outcomes and to consider more complicated secondary transfer dynamics. To my knowledge, no studies have revealed similar findings. However, these findings are further complicated by the nature of the encounters in Qatar and the wider Arabian Peninsula. My original research focus was on contact between England fans and Muslims, the primary outgroup, yet evidently contact between the two groups was limited, and thus migrant workers seemingly filled the void and acted as a proxy for the local Muslim community on behalf of both Qatar and the wider Arabian Peninsula. As a result of these encounters, the England fans held a more favourable impression towards the migrant workers, and some also acquired a positive image of Qatar and the region too. But the majority of the fans formed a less than favourable opinion towards the local Muslim communities in Qatar - the perceived Muslim Other based on their interactions. Perhaps this indicates the unintentional consequences related to understanding intergroup relations.

In the context of this study, two dimensions were evident in this proxy case of contact. Firstly, some of the fans, like Stephen and Ken, spoke of the similarities between themselves and the migrant population (e.g., an interest in football), which contributed to a positive impression of migrant workers. However, through stressing such similarities with the secondary group, the fans noted the differences, or perceptions, between them and the migrant workers. For example, Declan and Sarah noted the local Muslim community seemed rather 'standoffish' and distant in comparison to the migrant workers - a negative outcome. Secondly, through interacting with different migrant workers and having liminal social relations either in taxis or elsewhere, some of the fans developed a deeper understanding of their existence and their role in Qatari society, while others expressed a sense of empathy and sadness towards the secondary group. Through

feelings of empathy in particular, as Tom said, negative stereotypes of the local Muslim community and the Arabian Peninsula were reinforced, notably through the notion that they do not look after the migrant workforce. Both of these dimensions, or processes, contributed to the outcomes related to the proxy case study. Ultimately, this represented a challenge to Qatar in that migrant workers acting as a voluntary proxy did not serve to dismantle criticisms of the country in relation to human rights abuses and the working conditions of the labour force. Instead, criticisms were reinforced. Although, to caveat this, a minority of fans (4) did suggest they knew more about the plight of migrant workers, and it 'wasn't as bad as the media made out.' As I have already critiqued, these fans evidently, held a relativist position.

Moreover, to paint an even more complex picture, a central criticism of the secondary transfer effect focuses on scholarship overlooking direct or previous direct contact with the secondary outgroup - the secondary contact problem (Pettigrew, 2009; Vezzali et al., 2018). In relation to the findings of this study and as I have demonstrated throughout, the England fans that I spoke to did have some contact with the local Muslim community (e.g., Vince's encounters with Saudi Arabians and Stephen's brief encounter) and some of them engaged in limited cultural activities. The issue of concern here is that this contact with the primary outgroup might have already shaped the fans' perceptions of them. Thus, any contact with the secondary outgroup just sought to confirm the fans' original perceptions. While this may have been the case, I argue, migrant workers, as a proxy, provided a strong indicator of fans' attitudes towards the local Muslim community.

Overall, these findings contribute knowledge to intergroup contact theory through underpinning the England fans encounters with Orientalism, and thus, locating their perceptions, experiences and reflections within wider issues of power. This reveals how top-down discourses and power dynamics can predispose the meanings people bring into their intergroup relations. These findings also progress contact theory by revealing how encounters can be influenced by a 'proxy.' The following chapter discusses my contributions to the literature further and presents the overall conclusion for this thesis.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

5.1 Understanding Intergroup Contact Theory in a Temporary Sport Setting

This thesis has presented a qualitative 'pre-during-post' analysis of England football fans' perceptions, experiences and reflections of intergroup contact in an understudied context - the 2022 World Cup in the Arabian Peninsula. In doing so, this thesis has contributed an original and pioneering approach to the literature through retheorising both Gordon Allport's (1979) intergroup contact theory and Edward Said's (2003) Orientalism. To my knowledge this is the first study to integrate the two, and as I have argued throughout, both approaches are complementary. Contact theory explains *how* and *why* intergroup engagements can lead to symbolic or transformational socio-cultural impacts on fans perceptions towards Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula, whilst Orientalism, especially discourses of the Other, facilitated a deeper understanding on the power dynamics that underpin contact between groups. However, my findings highlight how the World Cup was limited in its ability to foster intergroup contact and lead to wider social and cultural impacts. This was evidenced through my findings and conceptualisation of the 'World Cup bubble' that served as a physical and psychological barrier to contact. My analysis further revealed, how contact is inherently complex and nuanced in a transient space like the World Cup. It also challenges the binary assumptions that are prevalent in Orientalism as the supporters' discourses were fluid and more dynamic in-situ. Consequently, my empirical findings contribute original knowledge on intergroup contact theory, Orientalism, the 2022 World Cup and sport and the Arabian Peninsula. Specifically, these contributions are:

1) The thesis offers a pioneering approach that reconceptualises intergroup contact theory with Orientalism.
2) The thesis highlights the complexity of intergroup contact within an understudied context - a temporary sport setting.
3) The thesis highlights how the 'blurring' of group boundaries and the uncertainties within contact problematises the dichotomies associated with Othering.
4) The thesis introduces the 'proxy' case of contact to literature on the secondary transfer effect.
5) The thesis provides a novel methodological approach that retheorises how contact is understood and inquired into.

First, this thesis offered an original contribution to knowledge for both intergroup contact theory and Orientalism through an in-depth bottom-up analysis on how dominant discourses of the Other are constructed, challenged, or (re)produced at a micro/meso level within an everyday setting (fan discourses). Moreover, I established the affect this can have on intergroup processes and outcomes, such as how Othering and unequal power dynamics between groups can predispose contact. Essentially, my analysis reveals that bringing together a socio-psychological approach with a sociological one can shed new light on how contact is understood and conceptualised.

Second, my thesis advances the social scientific understanding of intergroup contact theory in an understudied context. I assert the outcomes related to contact are far more complex, especially in its ability to create transformational social change, particularly concerning people's attitudes towards perceived outgroup members such as Muslims. This is especially pertinent in a temporary sport setting like the 2022 World Cup. I further identify scholarship claiming positive outcomes of contact either in a sport or tourism setting is perhaps guilty of overclaiming. This is significant because the specific setting of contact like the 2022 World Cup did not facilitate meaningful contact to develop between the groups of concern in this study, even though the context seemingly provided a unique opportunity to do so. The setting is far more complex, messy and transient. As I have established, the fans had competing interests, wanted to explore the novelty of the event and navigated their experiences and identities as fans whilst contact was simply not a priority. Attention must be paid towards the setting within which contact takes place itself to consider how it can temper, dictate and influence how contact is experienced and the outcomes associated with it.

Third, the specific setting of the 2022 World Cup 'blurred' the boundaries of inclusion or exclusion. The fans, for example, had encounters with different groups of people and were unsure of who and what they were encountering e.g., they could not discern ethnic groups. It was not simply a case of 'us' and 'them' as in other temporary contexts such as a gay chartered cruise ship (Jarvis et al., 2022) or an all-inclusive holiday resort (Uriely et al., 2009; Sirakaya-Turk et al., 2014). The presence of migrant/service workers in Qatari society and in other Arabian Peninsula states such as the UAE, added to the fans' sense of confusing and the 'blurring' of categories. For example, some may or may not have been Muslims. Encounters with fans from other non-secular Islamic societies further added to their confusion. In doing so, my analysis has problematised the dichotomies often associated with Othering.

Fourth, by developing an understanding of the everyday nature and messiness of the contact setting, this thesis further contributes to the secondary transfer effect of contact (Pettigrew 2009, Pettigrew and Tropp, 2011) and contact theory in general by adding a significant new dimension - the 'proxy' case of contact - to the contact situation. The proxy case of contact, I posit, occurs in specific socio-cultural and political contexts where face-to-face encounters with a primary outgroup are effectively replaced or superseded by a secondary outgroup (the proxy), i.e., the migrant/service workers. Outcomes emerging from these new encounters are then transferred from the secondary outgroup to the initial primary outgroup of concern. These outcomes can be both positive-to-positive and negative-to-negative, or they can be more complex and nuanced, like the findings of this study, e.g., positive-to-negative and vice versa. I further propose that proxy contact and its effects are most prevalent in unique contexts, like during sports mega-events, or in countries like Qatar and other Arabian Peninsula states that are characterised by high migrant populations in comparison to the native-born populations. But equally, this proxy form of contact could be viewed in a myriad of settings, e.g., if a British person went on holiday to Thailand and spent the entire trip encountering Russians, the person may develop a positive perception of Russians but may subsequently hold an unfavourable opinion of people from Thailand (primary outgroup). Essentially, the 'proxy' case of contact can help examine the complexity of engagements, the setting of encounters and the potential outcomes of contact beyond just the outgroup of concern. It acknowledges the inherent messiness of intergroup engagements by expanding beyond the positive-positive or negative-negative paradigm of the secondary transfer effect and supersedes not only the dichotomies associated with Othering, but also those that are produced by contact scholars themselves.

Finally, the contributions stemming from my thesis are all underpinned by the methodological approach I adopted (a 'pre-during-post' qualitative analysis), which in itself adds original insights into how contact theory is theorised, understood and inquired into. In particular, my thesis contributes and addresses some of the criticisms outlined by Dixon et al. (2005), Christ and Wagner (2013), Jackson and Sheriff (2013) and Paolini et al. (2018) that contact scholarship, despite strong empirical support, needs to go beyond abstraction to ground the participants lived experiences of intergroup relations in how they themselves construct and understand contact. Existing scholarship drawing on qualitative frameworks has thus far been limited. As I have shown throughout, a qualitative inquiry can illuminate the complexities of encounters, the setting itself and can begin to reveal how people themselves interpret contact experiences, the language they use, the categories they apply to others and the meanings they derive from contact. This is

essential for bridging the gap between theoretical abstraction and reality, as it considers the relevance of intergroup contact as it is lived and experienced by people.

5.2 Addressing the Research Aim and Objectives

The research aim and objectives of this study set the parameters and scope of this. In particular, the aim sought to examine England football fans' perceptions, experiences and reflections of contact with Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula in the context of the 2022 FIFA Men's World Cup, Qatar. Based on this aim, I developed four research objectives to narrow the scope of the thesis even further (see below). In the following, I address each objective by summarising the findings in relation to the research objectives.

1) To analyse how England football fans construct Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula prior to the 2022 World Cup.
2) To analyse England football fans' socio-cultural fandom practices and contact experiences of attending the 2022 World Cup.
3) To critically evaluate whether and if so, *how* and *why,* travelling to the 2022 World Cup had symbolic or transformational impacts on the perceptions of England football fans towards Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula.
4) To contribute to wider theoretical understandings about intergroup contact theory, Orientalism and international sporting spectacles within the Arabian Peninsula

I addressed the first objective in the findings and discussion sections 4.1 and 4.2. In the former, I identified how the supporters' constructions and perceptions were characterised by elements of prejudice and tolerance. However, their accounts were contradictory and bound within wider relations of power as they often spoke from an assumed position of knowing, which effectively Othered Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula. Previous contact experiences within the UK and abroad and various socio-cultural and political issues, and stereotypes also contributed to the fans' constructions. In Section 4.2, the analysis was broadened even further to focus on the specific context of the 2022 World Cup itself. Evidently, their accounts were full of tensions as they were still working out in-situ how to respond to the event in relation to socio-cultural and political concerns and how to justify attending it. Nevertheless, their perceptions and concerns ultimately predisposed their encounters, considering a few supporters decided to stay in Dubai and Saudi Arabia considering they perceived it as more liberal.

Section 4.3, and, to an extent, Section 4.4 comprehensively addressed the second research objective. Specifically, in the first part of 4.3, I dealt with fandom practices and how they contributed (or not) to their willingness to engage in intergroup contact. I conceptualised their socio-cultural experiences within a 'World Cup bubble.' The novelty and significance of this 'bubble' acted as a psychological barrier to intergroup and intercultural encounters with the local Muslim community and variant of Islamic culture. The fans were more than happy, for example, to explore existing tourism spaces in the city and to enact elements of their fandom, such as consuming alcohol, as opposed to interacting with the Other. In the second part of Section 4.3, I developed this argument further by showing how the 'bubble' sought to protect the fans from experiencing any 'strangeness.' However, revealing this, I critically identified how their socio-cultural experiences were predisposed through discourses of authenticity and self-Orientalism, which ultimately influenced their overall perceptions. In relation to Section 4.4, I further highlighted the fans' socio-cultural experiences as they specifically related to intergroup contact. Evidently, their experiences led them to perceive that they actually had limited contact with Muslims and Islam, especially compared to migrant/service workers.

The third objective was mostly addressed across sections 4.3 and 4.4. Overarchingly, the World Cup did not lead to any transformational impacts, although some symbolic effects, such as the fans' intention to revisit the region, were apparent. I addressed *how* and *why* contact was perhaps limited between the groups of concern. For example, I identified how the fans considered the hosts - local Muslim communities - as distant and not wanting to engage based on various, subjective observations such as body language. They were also hesitant to 'make the first move' of contact but expected the Other to do so. Overall, there was a sense of intergroup avoidance and distance. Most significantly, however, I showed that by attending the 2022 World Cup, the supporters developed feelings of empathy towards the migrant/service workers, who mostly provided them with hospitality and guidance throughout the tournament.

The final objective concerned the overall contributions of this study to wider theoretical debates and understandings on intergroup contact theory, Orientalism and the sports event tourism industry. As I have shown, this thesis reconceptualises how contact is understood by integrating it with Orientalism to ground the fans' encounters within wider power dynamics in an understudied context. In the following section, I introduce future research recommendations that emerged from this thesis before discussing some tentative socio-political and management recommendations for future sporting events staged in the Arabian Peninsula.

5.3 Looking Beyond Qatar 2022: Scholarship and Implications

One of the challenges of adopting a pioneering approach to research - such as underpinning intergroup contact theory with Orientalism to explore and address wider relations of power, was associated with the limited amount of prior scholarship. I had no coherent guide to assist the research process. However, I believe that the comprehensive nature of this thesis can provide a significant frame of reference for scholars to address further avenues of inquiry. For example, there is a need for further critical socio-psychological inquiry that integrates sociological approaches to examine contact at a micro/meso level in a temporary sport setting within the Arabian Peninsula. As I have highlighted throughout sport as an understudied context in relation to intergroup contact, can illuminate contact dynamics in new compelling ways. This presents ample opportunities for scholars interested in both intergroup contact theory and sport to explore the different constructions, processes and outcomes of contact in a multitude of settings between different groups of people. This can help to further establish the effectiveness of contact on multiple actors' attitudes towards Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula beyond a sporting context itself.

Second, I recommend more innovative methodologies and diverse epistemologies should be incorporated into scholarship on intergroup contact theory, Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula. For example, although my methodological approach considered the life cycle of contact, e.g., 'pre-during-post,' the 'during' phase of this research could be built upon further by using in-depth audio-visual diary research to provide a compelling insight into fans and other actors' in-situ experiences and encounters with Muslims and Islam in the region. Likewise, ethnography or autoethnographic approaches could provide edifying and novel ways for understanding how a perceived in or outgroup encounters the Other. In general, these approaches could help to integrate more situated knowledge and insights unearthing issues of power, politics and positionalities across a wide range of temporary sporting events within the Arabian Peninsula and between multiple groups. More significantly, qualitative approaches provide scope for scholars to dive beneath the surface to reveal how sports fans construct their encounters prior to attending a temporary sporting event in the Arabian Peninsula.

Third, I encourage scholars to build upon and develop the 'proxy' case of contact. While this was an unintended outcome of staging a sports event within a particular context (Qatar), it would be useful to examine how this concept manifests and functions across a myriad of different societies

within the Arabian Peninsula and elsewhere, especially as it relates to temporary sporting events and travel. This would permit a richer and comparable lens to develop how sports fans' or other actors' perceptions of a place, people, or culture are facilitated by a 'proxy' rather than by direct contact with a primary outgroup. Essentially, this approach can be useful to examine the complexity of contact, the setting of contact and the potential outcomes of intergroup relations beyond just the outgroup of concern.

Fourth, further analysis is needed that integrates intergroup contact theory with Orientalism or more internationally situated frameworks as they relate to Muslims, Islam and the Arabian Peninsula. Not only do theories such as Orientalism illuminate and analyse power relations that frame intergroup relations and experiences, but they can also contribute to a much wider theoretical debate on the nature of intergroup contact theory itself. For example, scholarship often focuses on how contact can be effective for mitigating prejudices and stereotypes towards a minority group such as Muslims in Britain. An edifying approach drawing on internationally situated frameworks could focus on how perceived Others encounter dominant or Western groups of people. In the context of this thesis, it could have been valuable to understand the perceptions of local Muslim communities or Qataris towards contact with England football fans.

Finally, more general questions and further approaches could be taken to address various questions like; how can intergroup contact challenge top-down Western discourses (e.g., 'sportswashing') and stereotypes in the region? Can intergroup and cultural experiences of sports fans travelling to the Arabian Peninsula be effective in mitigating social issues such as racial prejudice? And if so, what role does the organising polity (e.g., local organising committee) of an event, the local community and local government play in facilitating meaningful contact? How do England fans or sports fans more broadly that identify as Muslim perceive their experiences and encounters at a sports event in the Arabian Peninsula? Similarly, what are the experiences of women sports fans who travel to the region for sport? And how do they construct Muslims and Islam? Do different types of sporting events staged in the region foster different types of intergroup/cultural outcomes (e.g., does hosting the Formula 1 Grand Prix in Doha, Bahrain, Dubai or Saudi Arabia foster different intergroup outcomes?). While these questions are not intended to be prescriptive, they underscore the requisite scope, breadth and depth of any critical investigation on intergroup contact theory, Orientalism and sport in the Arabian Peninsula.

Furthermore, as I have argued elsewhere, the states from the Arabian Peninsula will likely exhibit greater authority within the international sporting arena as more sporting events are staged within and outside the region (Taylor et al., 2023). The mobility of sports fans and other actors to the region to consume these events will continue, as will the development of relationships between supporters and sports teams or competitions that are sponsored or owned by consortiums from Arabian Peninsula states (e.g., a Saudi-led consortium holds a majority stake in Newcastle United). To reinforce this point, one supporter I spoke to informed me he was attending the 2023 FIFA Men's Club World Cup in Saudi Arabia. Thus, the theoretical contributions of this thesis and its findings could tentatively provide a useful insight for sport event organisers or stakeholders within the region. Generally, the findings of my thesis revealed contact between local Muslim communities and England fans was limited throughout the duration of the tournament. For event organisers, stakeholders or politicians interested in developing a social and cultural legacy from a sporting event, this finding raises questions regarding how they can promote intergroup contact between hosts and fans that can facilitate meaningful outcomes. Some fans, for example, expressed they would have liked contact with local Muslims, but did not have much opportunity to do so. Sport event organisers, stakeholders, politicians and tournament hosts should consider how they can successfully implement or develop intergroup or intercultural activities and experiences that can facilitate some form of contact, whether it is symbolic (e.g., a fan-host football tournament) or more meaningful (e.g., a home stay). This can be beneficial for providing sport event attendees with a more holistic and memorable experience.

Also, I revealed how there was a sense of confusion amongst the fans on what they were expecting in Qatar and the wider Arabian Peninsula. They did not fully know what they were going to encounter, how they would be treated, or what the rules and regulations were within the region. They also did not believe the region offered much by way of leisure or tourism. For future events such as the likely 2034 FIFA Men's World Cup in Saudi Arabia, it would be beneficial for event organisers and stakeholders to specifically tailor and market a destination to sport event attendees by providing them with enough information so that they are prepared and know what activities are available and what the socio-cultural norms of a destination are.

5.4 Concluding Remarks

At the start of my research journey, I perhaps naively expected attending a football tournament within a non-secular Islamic society could be a powerful tool to mitigate prejudices and stereotypes towards Muslims and Islam or at least reconfirm positive perceptions. Sports mega-events like the World Cup have significantly contributed to my understanding of the world around me and undoubtedly, based on my own experiences in Qatar and my own journey, I do believe they can be a force for good. My position however, as explained in Chapter Three, is perhaps bias. I travelled to Qatar with excitement and an open mind. I accepted the World Cup and wanted to learn more about Muslims and a particular variant of Islamic culture hence I made the effort to visit tourism spaces such as the Islamic Museum of Art. These experiences seemingly confirmed to me the utility of sport in helping to develop an understanding towards others.

However, based on my discussions with the England fans, and whilst I still believe sports mega-events can be useful for promoting intergroup relations, I also acknowledge the complexities inherent. My thesis has revealed that even when conditions for positive encounters appear ripe, such as at the 2022 World Cup, contact does not always manifest in positive or negative ways. There is nothing inherently wrong with this; as humans, we have different interests, tastes, styles of communication, desires and so forth. And as fans, *we* are not always concerned with developing *our* knowledge or understanding towards Others. Some want to explore the novelty of a tournament as significant as the World Cup, consume alcohol with friends and enjoy time off from life and work. Fans are not necessarily concerned with other issues and again, that is normal. As scholars, do *we* sometimes ask too much of football fans or sports fans more generally? Further, *our* encounters with others I argue, are most effective when they do occur naturally, but also when *we* do travel and explore new people, places and cultures. Contact, is a simple, yet powerful, tool that can bring people together. Admittedly, however it is a process. Each person is different, and this process works in a myriad of ways. Therefore, in closing I stress intergroup contact is a wonderful feature of the human experience and is something that needs to be developed and understood more in settings that have relevance for people (such as a World Cup).

Reference List

Acheampong, E., Akwaa-Sekyi, E., and Peprah-Yeboah, A. (2023). Investments in sport: fans' impressions of Qatar 2022. *Journal of Sport and Tourism*, 28(1-2): 1-18.

Acuto, M. (2010). High-rise Dubai urban entrepreneurialism and the technology of symbolic power. *Cities* 27(4): 272-284.

Adorno, T., Frenkel-Brunswik, E., Levinson, D., and Sanford, R. (1950). *The authoritarian personality.* New York: Harper and Row.

Al-Emadi, A., Sellami, A., Al Marri, S., El Madad, J., Alazaizeh, M., Fadlalla, A., and Almekaimi, H. (2024). The 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar: resident interests and attitudes. *Soccer and Society.* Available at: https://doi.org/10.1080/14660970.2024.2384907.

Al-Jazeera. (2022). 'Qatar World Cup Explained.' *Al-Jazeera*, 21st June. Available at: https://www.aljazeera.com/sports/2022/6/21/world-cup-qatar-2022-in-maps-and-charts.

Al-Kuwari, A., and Chandra, U. (2024). From the Furjan to the stadiums: Examining Qatari football fandom and migrant experiences before and during the World Cup. *Journal of Arabian Studies*, 13(1): 176-194.

Al- Mahadin, S. and Burns, P. (2007). 'Visitors, visions and veils: The portrayal of the arab world in tourism advertising, in R. Daher (eds.) *Tourism in the Middle East: Continuity, Change and Transformation* (pp. 137-161). Buffalo: Channel View Publications.

Al-Ramiah, A., Schmid, K., Hewstone, M., and Floe, C. (2015). Why are all the white (Asian) kids sitting together in the cafeteria? Resegregation and the role of intergroup attributions and norms. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 54(1): 100-124.

Al-Thani, M. (2022). Channelling soft power: the Qatar 2022 World Cup, migrant workers, and international image. *The International Journal of the History of Sport,* 38(17): 1729-1752.

Al-Zo'By, M. (2015). Representing Islam in the age of neo-orientalism: Media, politics and identity. *Journal of Arab and Muslim Research*, 8(3): 217-238.

Alaszewski, A. (2006). *Using Diaries for Social Research*. London. SAGE Publications.

Allan, C. (2020). *Reconfiguring Islamophobia: A Radical Rethinking of a Contested Concept*. Leicester: Palgrave Macmillan.

Allport, G. (1979). *The Nature of Prejudice: 25th Anniversary Edition*. New York: Perseus Publishing.

Alrababa'h, A. Marble, W. Mousa, S. and Siegel, A. (2021). Can exposure to celebrities reduce prejudice? The effect of Mohamed Salah on Islamophobic behaviors and attitudes. *American Political Science Review*, 115(4): 1111-1128.

Amin, A. (2002). Ethnicity and the multicultural city: living with diversity. *Environment and Planning*, 34: 959-980.

Anastasopoulos, P. (1992). Tourism and attitude change: Greek tourists visiting Turkey. *Annals of Tourism Research,* 19(4): 629-642.

Andersson, S., Bengtsson, L., and Svensson, A. (2021). Mega-sport football events' influence on destination images: A study of the 2016 UEFA European Football Championship in France, the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia, and the 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 19: 100536.

Ashcroft, B. and Ahluwalia, D. (2009). *Edward Said*. 2nd edn. London: Routledge.

Askins, K. (2015). Being together: Everyday geographies and the quiet politics of belonging. *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies*, 14(2): 470-478.

Baker, E. (1934). *Negro–White adjustment*. New York: Association Press.

Bartlett, R. and Milligan, C. (2020). *Diary Method: Research Methods*. London: Bloomsbury.

Behdad, A., and Williams, J. (2010). 'On neo-orientalism' in B.Edwards and D. Gaonkar (eds.) *Globalizing American Studies* (pp. 283-300). Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Bettencourt, L., Dixon, J., and Castro, P. (2019). Understanding how and why spatial segregation endures: A systematic review of recent research on intergroup relations at a micro-ecological scale. *Social Psychological Bulletin*, 14(2): e33482.

Bleich, E., Stonebraker, H., Nisar, H., and Abdelhamid, R. (2015). Media portrayals of minorities: Muslims in British newspaper headlines, 2001–2012. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies,* 41(6: 942-962.

Blumer, H. (1958). Race prejudice as a sense of group position. *The Pacific Sociological Review,* 1(1): 3-7.

Bonilla-Silva, E. (2013). '"New racism," Color-blind racism, and the future of whiteness in America', in W. Doane, and E. Bonilla-Silva (eds.), *White Out: The Continuing Significance of Racism* (pp. 271-285). York: Routledge.

Boykoff, J. (2022). Toward a theory of Sportswashing: Mega-Events, soft power, and political conflict. *Sociology of Sport Journal,* 39(4), 342-351.

Brake, J., and Misener, K. (2020). "It's a ripple effect": The role of intergroup contact within an inner-city youth sport for development and peace program. *Managing Sport and Leisure*, 25(3): 203-219.

Brannagan, P., and Giulianotti, R., (2015). Soft Power and soft Disempowerment: Qatar, global sport and football's 2022 World Cup Finals. *Leisure Studies,* 34(6): 703-719.

Brannagan, P., and Rookwood, J. (2016). Sports mega-events, soft Power and soft Disempowerment: International supporters' perspectives on Qatar's acquisition of the 2022 FIFA World Cup finals. *Journal of Sport Policy and Politics,* 8(2):173-188.

Brannagan, P., and Giulianotti, R., (2018). The soft power- soft disempowerment nexus: The case of Qatar. *International Affairs*, 94(5): 1139-1157.

Brannagan, P., and Reiche, D. (2022). *Qatar and the 2022 FIFA World Cup*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Braun, V., and Clarke, V. (2022). *Thematic analysis: A practical guide*. SAGE Publications.

Brewer, M. (1999). The psychology of prejudice: Ingroup love or outgroup hate? *Journal of Social Issues,* 55(3): 429-444.

Brewer, M., and Miller, N. (1984). 'Beyond the contact hypothesis: Theoretical perspectives on desegregation' in N. Miller and M. Brewer (eds.) *Groups in contact: The psychology of desegregation* (pp. 281-300). Orlando: Academic Press.

Brewer, M. (1999). The psychology of prejudice: Ingroup love or outgroup hate? *Journal of Social Issues*, 55(3): 429-444.

Brinkman, S. (2018). 'The Interview', in N. Denzin. and Y. Lincoln (eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 576-599). London: SAGE Publications.

Brophy, I. (1946). The luxury of anti-Negro prejudice. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 9:456–466.

Brown, L. and Osman, H. (2017). The female tourist experience in Egypt as an Islamic destination. *Annals of Tourism Research,* 68, 12-22.

Brown, R., and Zagefka, H. (2005). Ingroup affiliations and prejudice, in J. Dovidio, P. Glick. and A. Rudman (eds.) *On the nature of prejudice: Fifty years after Allport* (pp. 54-70). Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

Brown, R., and Zagefka, H. (2011). The dynamics of acculturation: An intergroup perspective. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology,* 44(11): 129-184.

Brown, R., and Hewstone, M. (2005). An integrative theory of intergroup contact. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 37: 255–343.

Bryce, D. (2007). Repackaging Orientalism, discourses on Egypt and Turkey in British outbound tourism. *Tourist Studies,* 7(2): 165-191.

Bryman, A. (2016). *Social Research Methods*. 5th edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Burdsey, D. (2007). Role with the punches: the construction and representation of Amir Khan as a role model for multiethnic Britain. *The Sociological Review*, 55(3): 611-631.

Burdsey, D. (2008). Contested conceptions of identity, community and multiculturalism in the staging of alternative sport events: a case study of the Amsterdam World Cup football tournament. *Leisure Studies.* 27(3): 259-277.

Burdsey, D. (2010). British Muslim experience in English first-class cricket. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 45(3): 315-334.

Burdsey, D. (2016). One guy named Mo: Race, nation and the London 2012 Olympic Games. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 33(1): 14-25.

Burdsey, D. (2010). British Muslim experiences in English first-class cricket. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport,* 45(3), 315-334.

Causevic, S., and Neal, M. (2019). The exotic veil: Managing tourist perceptions of national history and statehood in Oman. *Tourism Management*, 71: 504-517.

Cecchini, M. (2019). Reinforcing and reproducing stereotypes? Ethical considerations when doing research on stereotypes and stereotyped reasoning. *Societies*, 9(4). Available at: http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/soc9040079.

Cederholm, E. (2011). 'Photo-elicitation and the construction of tourism experiences,' in T. Rakic and D. Chambers (eds.) *An Introduction to Visual Research Methods in Tourism* (pp. 92-107). Oxon: Routledge.

Celik, S. (2019). Does tourism change tourist Attitudes (prejudice and stereotype) towards local people? *Journal of Tourism and Services,* 10(18)*:* 35-46.

Carvache-Franco, M., Hassan, T., Orden-Mejia, M., Carvache-Franco, O., and Carvache-Franco, W. (2024). Motivations and satisfaction of sports tourists during the FIFA World Cup in Qatar 2022. *Heliyon*, 10(15): e26682.

Cheng, S., Rosner, J., Manchi Chao, M., Peng, S., Chen, X., Li, Y., Kwong, J., Hong, Y., and Chiu, C. (2011). One world, one dream? Intergroup consequences of the 2008 Beijing Olympics. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 35(3): 296-306.

Christ, O., and Wagner, U. (2012). 'Methodological issues in the study of intergroup contact: Towards a new wave of research, in G. Hodson. and M. Hewstone (eds.) *Advances in Intergroup Contact.* New York: Psychological Press.

Cohen, E. (1972). Towards a sociology of international tourism. *Social Research,* 39(1): 164-182.

Cohen, E. (1988). Authenticity and commoditization in tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 15(3): 371-386.

Cohen, A. (1985). *The Symbolic Construction of Community.* London: Routledge.

Collins, T., and Vamplew, W. (2002). *Mud, Sweat and Beers: A Cultural History of Sport and Alcohol.* Oxford: Berg Publishing.

Corbetta, P. (2003). *Social Research: Theory, Methods and Techniques.* London: SAGE Publications.

Cornellisen, S., and Maenning, W., (2010). On the political economy of "feel-good" effects at sport mega-events: Experiences from FIFA Germany 2006 and prospects for South Africa 2010. *Alternation*, 17: 96-120.

Crabbe, T. (2004). Englandfans - 'A new club for a new England? Social inclusion, authenticity and the performance of Englishness, at 'home' and 'away.' *Leisure Studies*, 23(1): 63 – 78.

Crisp, R., and Turner, R. (2009). Can imagined interactions produce positive perceptions?: Reducing prejudice through simulated social contact. *American Psychologist*, 64(4): 231-240.

Crotty, M. (1998). *The Foundations of Social Research*. London: SAGE Publications.

Darnell, S. (2014). Orientalism through sport: Towards a Saidian analysis of Imperialism and 'Sport for Development and Peace'. *Sport in Society,* 17(8): 1000-1014.

de Beauvoir, S. (1997). *The Second Sex.* London: Vintage.

Denzin, N., and Lincoln, Y. (2018). *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research.* 5th edn. London: SAGE Publications.

Dixon, J., and Reicher, S. (1997). Intergroup contact and desegregation in the new South Africa. *British Journal of Social Psychology,* 36: 361-381.

Dixon, J., Durrheim, K., and Tredoux, C. (2005). Beyond the optimal contact strategy: A reality check for the contact hypothesis. *American Psychologist,* 60(7): 697-711.

Dixon, J., Levine, M., Reicher, S., and Durrheim, K. (2012). Beyond prejudice: are negative evaluations the problem and is getting us to like one another more the solution? *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 35(6): 411-425.

Dixon, J. (2017). 'Thinking ill of others without sufficient warrant?' Transcending the accuracy-inaccuracy dualism in prejudice and stereotyping research. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 56(1): 4-27.

Dixon, J., Tredoux, C., Davies, G., Huck, J., Hocking, B., Sturgeon, B. Whyatt, D., Jarman, N., Jarman., and Bryan, D. (2020). Parrellel lives: Intergroup contact, threat and the segregation of everyday activity spaces. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 118(3): 457-480.

Dixon, K. (2014). The football fan and the pub: An enduring relationship. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport,* 49(3-4): 382-399.

Dovidio, J., Gaertner, S., and Kawakami, K. (2003). Intergroup contact: The past, present and the future. *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations*, 6(1): 5-21.

Dubinsky, Y. (2021). People to people sports diplomacy: Israel start up nation in the 2020 Tour de France. *Journal of Global Sport Management*: 1-21.

Duignan, M., Pappalepore, I., Smith, A., and Ivanescu, Y. (2022). Tourists' experiences of mega-event cities: Rio's Olympic 'double bubbles.' *Annals of Leisure Research,* 25(1): 71-92.

Dun, S. (2014). No beer, no way! Football fan identity enactment won't mix with Muslim beliefs in the Qatar 2022 World Cup. *Journal of Policy Research in Tourism, Leisure and Events*, 6(2): 186-199.

Dun, S. (2024). The game is still beautiful without Beer: Qatar 2022's new model for alcohol availability at the FIFA World Cup. *Journal of Arabian Studies*, 13(1): 195-218.

Dunne, C. (2013). Exploring motivations for intercultural contact Among host country university students: An Irish case study. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations,* 37(5): 567-578.

Eagly, A., and Diekman, A. (2005). 'What is the problem? Prejudice as an attitude-in-context', in J. Dovidio, P. Glick. and A. Rudman (eds) *On the nature of prejudice: Fifty years after Allport* (pp. 17-35). Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

Eatwell, R., and Goodwin, M. (2018). *National populism: the revolt against liberal democracy.* London: Pelican.

Emmel, N. (2013). *Sampling and Choosing Cases in Qualitative Research: A Realist Approach.* London, SAGE Publications.

Fan. D., Zhang, H., Jenkins, C., and Lin. P. (2017). Does tourist-host social contact reduce perceived cultural distance? *Journal of Travel Research*, 56(8): 998-1010.

Fan, D., Qiu, H., Jenkins, C., and Lau, C. (2023). Towards a better tourist-host relationship: The role of social contact between perceived cultural distance and travel attitude. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 31(2): 204-228.

Featherstone, M., Holohan, S., and Poole, E. (2010). Discourses of the War on Terror: constructions of the Islamic other after 7/7. *International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics*, 6(2): 169-186.

Feighery, W. (2012). Tourism and self-Orientalism in Oman: A critical discourse analysis. *Critical Discourse Studies,* 9(3): 269-284.

Federation Internationale de Football Association [FIFA]. (2022). *Football unites the world: Annual report 2022*. Available at: https://digitalhub.fifa.com/m/2252cd6dfdadad73/original/FIFA-Annual-Report-2022-Football-Unites-The-World.pdf [Accessed September 9th 2023].

Fiske, S. (2002). What we know now about bias and intergroup conflict, the problem of the century. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 11(4): 115-149.

Flick, U. (2018). *An Introduction to Qualitative Research.* 6th edn. London: SAGE Publications.

Florek, M., Breitbarth, T., and Conejo, F. (2008). Mega event = mega impact? Traveling fans' experience and perceptions of the 2006 FIFA World Cup host nation. *Journal of Sport Tourism,* 13(3), 199-219.

Football Supporters' Association. (2023). *National supporters survey 2023.*Available at: https://thefsa.org.uk/news/national-supporters-survey-2023-more-stats/ [Accessed March 6th 2024].

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, UK (FCDO). (2022). *Foreign Travel Advice: Qatar.* Available at*:* https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/qatar [Accessed December 2nd 2021].

Fromherz, A. (2012). *Qatar: A Modern History.* Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.

Fruh, K., Archer, A., and Wojtowicz, J. (2023). Sportswshing: complicity and corruption. S*port, Ethics and Philosophy,* 17(1): 101-118.

Gaertner, S., Mann, J., Dovidio, J., Murrell, A., and Pomare, M. (1990). How does cooperation reduce intergroup bias? *Journal of Social Psychology*, 59(4): 692-704.

Gaertner, S., Dovidio, J., Anastasio, P., Bachman, B., and Rust, M. (1993). The contact hypothesis: The role of a common ingroup identity on reducing intergroup bias. *Small Groups Research*, 25: 224–249.

Gaertner, S., and Dovidio, J. (2005). 'Categorization, recategorization, and intergroup bias,' in J. Dovidio, P. Glick. and A. Rudman (edn.) *On the Nature of Prejudice: Fifty years after Allport* (pp. 71-88). Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

Garcia, B., Welford, J., and Smith, B. (2016). Using a smartphone app in qualitative research: the good the bad the ugly. *Qualitative Research,* 16(5): 508-525.

Garner, S. (2017). *Racisms: An introduction.* 2nd edn. London: Sage.

Garrod, B., and Nicholls, S. (2022). British tourists' adjustment to cultural expectations in Muslim-majority countries. *Tourism Management*, 91: 104500

Gary Neville in Qatar. (2019). SkySports, 18th December.

Geertz, C. (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays.* New York: Basic Books.

Gelbman, A. (2019). Sport tourism and peace: Crossing the contested wall. *Tourism Geographies.* 21(1): 163-189.

Getz, D. (2007). *Event studies: Theory, Research and Policy for Planned Events.* Oxford: Elsevier.

Gibbons, T. (20211). English national identity and the national football team view of contemporary English fans. *Soccer & Society*, 12(6): 865-879.

Giulianotti, R., and Robertson, R. (2004). The globalization of football: a study in the glocalization of the 'serious life'. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 55(4): 545-568.

Giulianotti, R., and Robertson, R., (2009). *Globalization and football*. London: SAGE Publication.

Glasford, D., and Calcagno, J. (2012). The conflict of harmony: Intergroup contact, commonality and political solidarity between minority groups. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology,* 48(1): 323-328.

Goodhart, D. (2017). *The Road to Somewhere: The Populist Revolt and the Future of Politics*. London: C.Hurst & Co.

Govers, R. (2011). Brand Dubai and its competitors in the Middle East; An image and reputation analysis. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy,* 8(1): 48-57.

Green, B., and Chalip, L. (1998). Sport tourism as a celebration of subculture. *Annals of Tourism Research,* 25(2): 275-291.

Griffin, T. (2017). Football in the Hands of the Other: Qatar's World Cup in the British Broadsheet Press. *The Arab World Geographer*, 20(2-3): 170-182.

Griffin, T. (2019). National identity, Social Legacy and Qatar 2022: The Cultural Ramifications of FIFA's First Arab World Cup. *Soccer & Society*, 20(7-8): 1000-1013.

Grix, J., Dinsmore, A., and Brannagan, P. (2023). Unpacking the politics of 'sportswashing': It takes two to tango. *Politics*. Available at: https://.org/10.1177/02633957231207387.

Guba, E. (1990). *The Paradigm Dialog.* London: SAGE Publications.

Guffler, K., and Wagner, U. (2017). Backfire of good intentions: Unexpected long-term contact intervention effects in an intractable conflict area. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 23(4): 383-391.

Gutberlet, M. (2019). Staging the oriental Other: Imageries and performances of German-speaking cruise tourists. *Tourist Studies*, 19(1): 110-137.

Hage, G. (2001). *White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in Multicultural Society*. London: Routledge.

Hall, S. (1980). 'Encoding/Decoding,' in S. Hall. D. Dobson. A. Lowe. and P. Willis, (eds.) *Culture, Media, Language* (pp. 51-62). London: Routledge.

Hall, S. (1997). 'The Spectacle of the 'Other'' in S.Hall (eds) *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (pp. 223-291). London: SAGE Publications.

Hall, S. (2019). *Essential Essays, Volume 2.* Durham: Duke University Press.

Halliday, F. (2003). *Islam and the Myth of Confrontation: Religion and Politics in the Middle East*, 2nd edn. London: Tauris.

Hammersley., M. and Atkinson., P. (2019). *Ethnography: Principles and practice*, 4th edn. London: Routledge.

Hammersley, M. (2023). *Methodological concepts: A critical guide.* London: Routledge.

Harkness, G. (2020). *Changing Qatar: Culture, Citizenship, and Rapid Modernization.* New York: New York University Press.

Hassan, A., and Wang, J. (2023). The Qatar World Cup and Twitter sentiment: Unraveling the interplay of soft power, public opinion, and media scrutiny. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport,* 59(5): 679-704.

Heath, A. and Richards, L. (2016). Attitudes towards immigration and their antecedents: Topline results from round 7 of the European social survey. London: European Social Survey. Available at:https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/findings/ESS77_toplines_issue_7_immmigration.pdf. [Accessed June 9th 2020].

Held, D., and Ulrichsen, K. (2013). *The transformation of the Gulf: Politics, Economic and the global order.* Oxon: Routledge.

Henderson, J. (2014). Hosting the 2022 FIFA World Cup: Opportunities and Challenges for Qatar. *Journal of Sport and Tourism*, 19(3), 281-298.

Henderson, J. (2015). The development of tourist destinations in the Gulf: Oman and Qatar compared. *Tourism Planning & Development*, 12(3), 350-361.

Hennink, M., Hutter, I., and Bailey, A. (2020). *Qualitative Research Methods*. 2nd edn. London: SAGE Publications.

Herman, E., and Chomsky, N. (2008). *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. London: The Bodley Head.

Hewstone, M., and Brown, R. (1986). *Contact and Conflict in Intergroup Encounters.* Oxford: Blackwell

Hewstone, M. (2006). Living apart, living together? The role of intergroup contact in social integration. *Proceedings of the British Academy,* 162: 243-299.

hooks, b. (2015). *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Oxon: Routledge.

Hope Not Hate. (2018). *Britain Divided.* London. Available at: https://www.hopenothate.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Britain-Divided-50-years-on.pdf [Accessed 5th February 2021].

Horne, J., and Manzenreiter, W. (2006). An introduction to the sociology of sports mega-events. *The Sociological Review*, 54: 1–24.

Hughson, J., and Poulton, E. (2008). 'This is England': sanitized fandom and the national soccer team. *Soccer & Society*, 9(4): 509-519.

Human Rights Watch. (2014). World Report 2014: Qatar. Available at: https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2014/country-chapters/qatar#87aacb.

Hussain, U., and Cunningham, G. (2022). The Muslim community and sport scholarship: a scoping review to advance sport management research. *European Sport Management Quarterly,* 24(2): 536-538.

Ingle, S. (2022). 'Fan culture is changing': How England cheered by diverse crowds in Qatar.' *The Guardian*, 2nd December. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/football/2022/dec/02/safe-and-welcoming-england-fan-culture-diversifying-in-qatar.

Islam, M., and Hewstone, M. (1993). Dimensions of contact as predictors of intergroup anxiety, perceived outgroup variability, and outgroup attitude: an integrative model. *Personality and Social Psychology,* 19: 700-710.

Jackman, M. (1994). *The Velvet Glove: Paternalism and Conflict in Gender, Class and Race Relations*. Berkely: University of California Press.

Jackson, C., and Sherriff, N. (2013). A qualitative approach to intergroup relations: Exploring the applicability of the social identity approach to "messy" school contexts. *Qualitative Research in Psychology,* 10(3): 259-273.

Johnston, B., and Glasford, D. (2018). Intergroup contact and helping: How quality contact and empathy shape outgroup helping. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations,* 21(8): 1185-1201.

Jones, I. (2022). *Research Methods for Sports Studies*. 4th edn. Oxon: Routledge.

Jones, I., Adams, A., and Mayoh, J. (2024). Fan responses to ownership change in the English Premier League: Motivated ignorance, social creativity and social competition at Newcastle United. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 59(1): 101-118.

Jones, S. and Unsworth, A. (2022). *The Dinner Table Prejudice: Islamophobia in Contemporary Britain*. Birmingham: University of Birmingham. Available at: https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/documents/college-artslaw/ptr/90172-univ73-islamophobia-in-the-uk-report-final.pdf [Accessed 4th December 2022].

Kabir, SN., Huda Alkaff, SN., and Bourk, M. (2018). Iconizing "Muslim Terrorism" in a British newspaper and public perception. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 38(2): 179-197.

Kamrava, M., (2015). *Qatar: small state, big politics*. London: Cornell University Press.

Kauff, M., Beneda, M., Paolini, S., Bilewicz, M., Kotzur, P., O'Donnell, A., Stevenson, C., Wagner, U., and Christ, O. (2021). How do we get people into contact? Predictors of intergroup contact and drivers of contact seeking. *Journal of Social Issues*, 77(1): 38-63.

Kaufman, E., and Goodwin, M. (2018). The diversity wave: A meta-analysis of the native-born white response to ethnic diversity. *Social Science Research*, 76: 120-131.

Kaufman, E. (2019). *Whiteshift: Populism, immigration, and the future of white majorities*. United Kingdom: Penguin.

Keen, S., Lomeli-Rodriguez., and Joffe, H. (2022). From challenge to opportunity: Virtual qualitative research during COVID-19 and beyond. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods,* 21: Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/16094069221105075.

Khodadadi, M., and O'Donnell, H. (2017). UK press and tourist discourses of Iran: a study of multiple realities. *Leisure Studies,* 36(1): 53-64.

Khuu, T., Schaefer, D., Umana-Taylor, A., and Ryan, A. (2023). The limitations of intergroup friendship: Using social network analysis to test the pathways linking contact and intergroup attitudes in a multigroup context. *Socius*, 9. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1177/23780231231161048.

Kilvington, D. (2016). *British Asians, Exclusion, and the Football Industry.* Oxon: Routledge.

Kim, J. (2012). Exploring the experience of intergroup contact and the value of recreation activities in facilitating positive intergroup interactions of immigrants. *Leisure Sciences*, 34(1): 72-87.

Kim., Y. and Na, J. (2022). The Olympic paradox: The Olympics and intergroup biases. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations,* 25(1): 26-43.

Kirby, S., Duignann, M., and McGillivraym D. (2018). Mega-sport events, micro and small business leveraging. *Event Management*, 22(6): 917-931.

Knez, K., Benn, T., and Alkhaldi, S., (2014). World Cup as a Catalyst for Change: Exploring the Lives of Women in Qatar's First National Football Team - A Case Study. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 31(14): 1755-1773.

Knipprath, K. (2023). From culturalization to individuation: The role of urban spaces in shaping intergroup contacts and symbolic boundary perceptions. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 49(8): 2014-2033.

Koch, N. (2018). The geopolitics of sport beyond soft power: event ethnography and the 2016 cycling world championships in Qatar. *Sport in Society*. 21(12): 2010-2031.

Kozhanov, N., Amara, M., and Zweiri, M. (2025). *The 2022 FIFA World Cup in Qatar: Global and Local Perspectives.* Oxon: Routledge.

Kuhn, T. (2012). *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, 50th Anniversary Edition.* 4th edn. London: The University of Chicago Press.

Kumar, D. (2021). *Islamophobia and the Politics of Empire: 20 years after 9/11.* 2nd edn. London: Verson Books.

Lee, R. (1993). *Doing Research on Sensitive Topics.* London: SAGE Publications.

Lenskyj, H. (2020). *The Olympic Games: A Critical Approach*, Bingley: Emerald.

Li, F., and Wang, B. (2020). Social contact theory and attitude change through tourism: Researching Chinese visitors to North Korea. *Tourism Management Perspective,* 36:100743.

Lincoln, Y., Lynham, S., and Guba, E. (2018). 'Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences, revisited,' in N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln (eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 213-263). London: SAGE.

Lo Destro, C., Rullo, M., Telesca, G., and Visintin, E. (2024). Supporting Ukrainian refugees: Examining intergroup contact, empathy and European identity in promoting helping behaviours. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology,* 34(5): e2869.

Lockman, Z. (2012). *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism*, 2nd edn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Luo, X., Brown, G., and Huang, S. (2015). Host perceptions of backpackers: Examining the influence of intergroup contact. *Tourism Management*, 50: 292-305.

Lysa, C., (2020). Globalized, yet local: football fandom in Qatar. *Soccer & Society*, 22(7), 744-756.

Mac an Ghaill, M., (2000). The Irish in Britain: The invisibility of ethnicity and anti-Irish racism. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 26(1): 137-147.

MacCannell, D. (1973). Staged Authenticity: Arrangements of Social Space in Tourist Settings. *American Journal of Sociology*, 79 (3), 589-603.

Malcolm, D., Bairner, A., and Curry, G. (2010). "Woolmergate": Cricket and the representation of Islam and Muslims in the British Press. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 34(2): 215-235.

Markula, P., and Silk, M. (2011). *Qualitative Research for Physical Culture.* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

McKeown, S., and Dixon, J. (2017). The "contact hypothesis": Critical reflections and future directions. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass,* 11: 1-3.

McManus, J. (2020). Football tourist trips: A new analytical for tourism studies. *Annals of Tourism Research,* 84: 1-13.

McManus, J. (2022). *Inside Qatar: Hidden Stories from One of the Richest Nations on Earth.* London: Icon Books.

Meer, N. (2013). Racialization and religion: Race, culture and difference in the study of antisemitism and Islamophobia. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 36(3): 385-398.

Meleady, R., and Forder, L. (2019). When contact goes wrong: Negative intergroup contact promotes generalized outgroup avoidance. *Group Process and Intergroup Relations,* 22(5): 688-707.

Mignolo, W. (2011). *The Darker Side of Western Modernity, Global Futures, Decolonial Options*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Millward, P. (2008). Rivalries and racisms: 'Closed' and 'open' Islamophobic dispositions amongst football supporters. *Sociological research online,* 13(6): 14-30.

Millward, P. (2009). *Getting into Europe: Identification, Prejudice and Politics in English Football Culture.* United Kingdom: VDM Verlag.

Millward, P. (2011). *The Global Football League*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Millward, P. (2017). World Cup 2022 and Qatar's Construction Projects: Relational Power in Networks and Relational Possibilities to Migrant Workers. *Current Sociology*, 65(5): 756-776.

Milton-Edwards, B. (2018). *Contemporary Politics in the Middle East*, 4th edn. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Maoz, D. (2006). The mutual gaze. *Annals of Tourism Research.* 33(1): 221-239.

Marrow, H., Tropp, L., van der Linden, M., Okamoto, D., and Jones-Correa, M. (2019). How does interracial contact among the U.S.-born shape white and black receptivity toward immigrants? *Du Bois Review: Social Science Research on Race*, 16(2): 385-416.

Meleady, R., and Forder, L. (2019). When contact goes wrong: Negative intergroup contact generalized outgroup avoidance. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 22(5): 688-707.

Modood, T. (2005). *Multicultural Politics: Racism, Ethnicity, and Muslims in Britain*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Naber, N. (2008). '"Look, Mohammed the terrorist is coming!" Cultural racism, nation-based racism, and the intersectionality of oppressions after 9/11.' in A. Jamel and N. Naber, (eds.) *Race and Arab Americans Before and After 9/11: From Invisible Citizens to Visible Subjects* (pp. 276-305). New York: Syracuse University Press.

Najib, K., and Hopkins, C. (2020). Geographies of Islamophobia. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 21(4): 449-457.

Nasser, N. (2003). The space of displacement: Making Muslim South Asian Place in British Neighbourhoods. *Traditional Dwellings and Settlements Review*, 15(1): 7-21.

Noy, C. (2008). Sampling knowledge: The hermeneutics of snowball sampling in qualitative research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 11(4): 327-344.

Office for National Statistics [OFNS]. (2021). *Profile Preview, Aston: Census 2021*. Available at: https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/customprofiles/build/. [accessed 8th February 2024]

Office for National Statistics [OFNS]. (2021). *Merton Local Authority: 2021 Census Area Profile.* Available at: https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/sources/census_2021/report?compare=E09000024#section_4. [Accessed 21st May 2024].

Paolini, S., Harwood, J., and Rubin, M. (2010). Negative intergroup contact makes group memberships salient: Explaining why intergroup conflict endures. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 36(12): 1591-1743.

Paolini, S., Harwood, J., Rubin, M., Husnu, S., Joyce, N., and Hewstone, M. (2014). Positive and extensive intergroup contact in the past buffers against the disproportionate impact of negative contact in the present. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 44(6): 548-562.

Paolini, S., Harwood, J., Hewstone, M., and Neumann, D. (2018). Seeking and avoiding intergroup contact: Future frontiers of research on building social integration. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass.* 12(12): e12422.

Paolini, S., Gibbs, M., Sales, B., Anderson, D., and Mcintyre, K. (2024). Negativity bias in intergroup contact: Meta-analytical evidence that bad is stronger than good, especially when people have the opportunity and motivation to opt out of contact. *Psychological Bulletin,* 150(8): 921-964.

Pavoni, A. (2011). Tuning the city: Johannesburg and the 2010 World Cup. *Urbe. Revista de Gestao Urbana,* 3(2):191-209.

Pearson., G. (2012). *An Ethnography of English Football Fans: Cans, Cops and Carnivals.* Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Perryman, M. (2008). *Ingerland: Travels with a football nation.* London: Pocket.

Pettigrew, T. (1998). Intergroup Contact Theory. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 49: 65-85.

Pettigrew, T., and Tropp, L. (2006). A Meta-Analytical Test of Intergroup Contact Theory. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 90(5): 751-783.

Pettigrew, T., and Tropp, L. (2008). How does intergroup contact reduce prejudice? Meta-analytic test of three mediators. *European Journal of Social Psychology,* 38: 922-934.

Pettigrew, T. (2009). Secondary transfer effect of contact: Do intergroup contact effects spread to noncontacted outgroups? *Social Psychology*, 40(2): 55-65.

Pettigrew, T., and Tropp, L. (2011). *When Groups Meet: The Dynamics of Intergroup Contact.* Psychology Press: Hove.

Phoenix, C., and Riche, E. (2016). 'Visual research methods,' in B. Smith and A. Sparkes (eds.) *Routledge Handbook of Qualitative Research in Sport and Exercise* (pp. 139-152). Oxon: Routledge.

Pickering, M. (2001). *Stereotyping: The Politics of Representation*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Pizam, A., Fleischer, A., and Mansfeld, Y. (2002). Tourism and social change: The case of Israeli ecotourists visiting Jordan. *Journal of Travel Research,* 41: 177-184.

Poole, E. (2002). *Reporting Islam: Media Representation of British Muslims.* London: I.B.Tauris.

Poole, E. (2011). Change and continuity in the representation of British Muslims before and after 9/11: The UK context. *Global Media Journal - Canadian Edition*, 4(2): 49-62.

Putnam, R. (2007). *E Pluribus Unum*: Diversity and community in the twenty-first century. The 2006 Johan Skytte Prize Lecture. *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 30(2): 137-174.

Randall, W., and Phoenix, C. (2009). The problem with truth in qualitative interviews: Reflections from a narrative perspective. *Qualitative Research in Sport and Exercise*,1(2): 125-140.

Reiche, D. (2015). Investing in Sporting Success as a Domestic and Foreign Policy Tool: The Case of Qatar. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 7(4): 489-504.

Reiche, D. (2024). Introduction: Qatar's World Cup goals-domestic development and global influence. *Journal of Arabian Studies,* 13(1): 1-11.

Robinson, M. (2022). 'British couple who spent £50,000 to travel to Qatar join England fans hunting for a £12 pint ahead of first match at farcical World Cup as criticism grows over empty seats and lack of crowds before kick-off against Iran,' *The Daily Mail*, November 21. Available at: https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-11451721/England-fans-arrive-Qatar-hunt-12-pints-ahead-Iran-match.html.

Roche, M. (2000) *Mega-Events & Modernity: Olympics and Expos in the Growth of Global Cultural.* London: Routledge.

Rookwood, J. (2019). Access, Security and Diplomacy. *Sport, Business and Management: An International Journal,* 9(1): 26-44.

Ron, Y., Maoz, I. (2013): Peacemaking through dialogue? Effects of intergroup dialogue on perceptions regarding the resolution on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict*, 6(1-3): 75-89.

Russel, K., O'Connor, N., Dashper, K., and Fletcher, T. (2015). "Sports Mega-Events and Islam: An Introduction," in K. Dashper., Fletcher, T., and McCullough, N (Eds.), *Sports Events, Society and Culture* (pp. 189-205). Oxon: Routledge.

Sa'di, A. (2021). Orientalism in a globalised world: Said in the twenty-first century. *Third World Quarterly*, 42(11): 2505-2520.

Sadowski, Y. (1993). The new orientalism and the democracy debate. *Middle East Report:* 14-21.

Saeed, A., and Kilvington, D. (2011). British-Asians and racism within contemporary English football. *Soccer & Society,* 12(5): 602-612.

Saha, A. (2018). *Race and the Cultural Industries.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Saha, A. (2012). 'Beards, scarves, halal meat, terrorists, forced marriage': Television industries and the production of 'race.' *Media, Culture & Society*, 34(4): 424-438.

Saha, A. (2021). *Race, Cultural and Media.* London: SAGE Publications.

Said, E. (1997). *Covering Islam: How the Media and Experts Determine How we see the Rest of the World.* London: Vintage.

Said, E. (2003). *Orientalism.* London: Penguin Books.

Saldana, J. (2021). *The Coding Manuel for Qualitative Researchers*. 4th edn. London: Sage.

Saleem, S. (2013). 'The Mosques in Britain Finding its Place: Anthropological Perspectives.' in O. Verkaaik (eds.), *Religious Architecture: Anthropological Perspectives* (pp. 185-204). Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Samiei, M. (2010). Neo-Orientalism? The relationship between the West and Islam in our globalised world. *Third World Quarterly*, 31(7): 1145-1160.

Schofield, E., Rhind, D., and Blair, R. (2018). Human rights and sports mega-events: The role of moral disengagement in spectators. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues,* 42(1): 3-22.

Schulenkorf, N., and Sherry, E. (2021). Applying intergroup contact theory to sport-for-development. *Sport Management Review*, 24(2): 250-270.

Schwandt, T., and Gates, E. (2018). 'Case study methodology,' in N. Denzin. and Y. Lincoln (eds.) *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 600-630). London: SAGE Publications.

Seale, C. (2018). *Researching Society and Culture*. 4th edn. London: SAGE Publications.

Selod, S., Islam, I., and Garner, S. (2024). *A Global Racial Enemy: Muslims and 21st- Century Racism.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Shakeela, A., and Weaver, D. (2018). "Managed evils" of hedonistic tourism in the Maldives: Islamic social representations and their mediation of local social exchange. *Annals of Tourism Research,* 71, 13-24.

Sharpley, R., and Telfer, D. (2015). *Tourism and Development: Concepts and Issues*. 2nd edn. Bristol: Channel View Publications.

Sheller, M. (2003). *Consuming the Caribbean: From Arawak's and Zombies*. Oxon: Routledge.

Sheller, M., and Urry, J. (2004). *Tourism Mobilities: Places to Play, Places in Play*. London: Routledge.

Shepherd, J., and Laven, D. (2020). Providing counter-narratives: the positive role of hostels in the Israeli-Palestinian context. *Tourism Geographies,* 22(4-5): 848- 871.

Shipway, R., King, K., Lee, I., and Brown, G. (2016). Understanding cycle tourism experiences at the Tour Down Under. *Journal of Sport & Tourism.* 20(1): 21-39.

Sirakaya-Turk, E., Nyaupane, G., and Uysal, M. (2014). Guests and hosts revisited: Prejudicial attitudes of guests toward the host population. *Journal of Travel Research,* 53(3): 336-352.

Skey, M., (2023). Sportswashing: Media headline or analytic concept? *International Review for the Sociology of Sport,* 58(5):794-764.

Spijkers, F., and Loopmans, M. (2020). Meaningful intercultural contact: how different places pave the way for learning to live together in diversity. *Social & Cultural Geography,* 21(8): 1146-1167.

Spivak, G. (1988). 'Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: Can the subaltern speak?' in P.Williams and L. Chrisman (eds.), *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (pp. 66-111). Oxon: Routledge.

Steiner, C. (2010). From heritage to hyper-reality? Tourism destination development in the Middle East between Petra and the Palm. *Journal of Tourism and Cultural Change*, 8(4): 240-253.

Stephenson, M., and Ali, N. (2010). 'Tourism and Islamophobia: Muslims in non-Muslim states,' in N. Scott and J. Jafari (eds.) *Tourism in the Muslim World*. Bingley: Emerald.

Sterchele, D., and Saint-Blancat, C. (2015) Keeping it liminal. The Mondiali Antirazzisti (anti-racist World Cup) as a multifocal interaction ritual. *Leisure Studies*, 34(2): 182-196.

Sugden, J. (2008). Anyone for Football for Peace? The challenges of using sport in the service of co-existence in Israel. *Soccer & Society*, 9(3): 405-415.

Sugden, J., and Tomlinson, A. (2018). *Sport and Peace-Building in Divided Societies: Playing with Enemies.* Oxon: Routledge.

Sumner, W. G. (1906). *Folkways*. New York: Ginn.

Taijfel, H., and Turner, J. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict, in W. Austin, and S. Worchel (Eds.), *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*. Monterey: Brooks/Cole.

Tausch, N., Hewstone, M., and Roy, R. (2010). The relationship between contact, status and prejudice: An integrated theory analysis of Hindu-Muslim relations in India. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology,* 19(2): 83- 94.

Taylor, T., Burdsey, D., and Jarvis, N. (2023). A Critical Review on Sport and the Arabian Peninsula - the Current State of Play and Future Directions. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics,* 15(2): 367-383.

Timothy, D. (2019). *Handbook of Globalisation and Tourism*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Tomlinson, A., and Young, C. (2006) *National Identity and Global Sports Events.* Albany: State University of New York Press.

Tuastad, D. (2003). Neo-orientalism and the new barbarism thesis: Aspects of symbolic violence in the Middle East conflict(s). *Third World Quarterly,* 24(4): 591-599.

Unger, O., Fuchs, G., and Uriely, N. (2020). Beyond the "tourist environmental bubble": Encounters with locals and destination experiences of business totally. *Journal of Travel Research,* 59(8): 1493-150.

UNWTO. (2024). *International Tourism to Reach Pre-Pandemic Levels in 2024*. Available at: https://www.unwto.org/news/international-tourism-to-reach-pre-pandemic-levels-in-2024 [Accessed 23rd March 2024].

Uriely, N., Maoz, D., and Recihel, A. (2009). Israeli guests and Egyptian hosts in Sinai: A bubble of serenity. *Journal of Travel Research,* 47(4): 508-522.

Urry, J., and Larsen, J. (2011). *The Tourist Gaze 3.0.* London: Sage.

Van Dijk, T. (1992). 'Racism and argumentation: Race rhetoric in tabloid editorials,' in F. van Eemeren, R. Grootendoorst, J. Blair, and C. Willard (eds.) *Argumentation Illuminated* (pp. 242-259). Amsterdam: International Centre for the Study of Argumentation.

Vezzali, L., and Stathi, S. (2016). *Intergroup Contact Theory: Recent developments and future directions*. Oxon: Routledge.

Vezzali, L., Di Bernardo, G., Stathi, S., Cadamuri, A., Lasticova, B., and Andrascikova, S. (2018). Secondary transfer effect among children: The role of social dominance orientation and outgroup attitudes. *British Journal of Social Psychology,* 57(3): 547-566.

Vezzali, L., and Stathi, S. (2020). *Using Intergroup Contact to Fight Prejudice and Negative Evaluations: Psychological Perspectives*. Oxon: Routledge.

Vezzali, L., Lolliot, S., Trfiletti, E., Cocco, V., Rae, J., Capozza, D., and Hewstone, M. (2023). Effects of intergroup contact on explicit and implicit outgroup attitudes: A longitudinal field study with majority and minority group members. *British Journal of Social Psychology,* 62(1): 215-240.

Wang, N. (1999). Rethinking authenticity in tourism experiences. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 44: 74-87.

Wearing, S., Stevenson, D., and Young, T. (2010). *Tourist Cultures: Identity, Place and the Traveller.* London: Sage.

Weed, M. (2008). *Sport & Tourism: A Reader.* Oxon: Routledge.

Weed, M. (2014) After 20 years, what are the big questions for sports tourism research? *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, 19(1): 1-4.

Wei, L., Qian, J, and Sun, J. (2018). Self-orientalism, joke-work and host-tourist relation. *Annals of Tourism Research,* 68: 89-99.

Weiss, R. (1995). *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies.* New York: The Free Press.

Williams, J. (2020). ''Paki Cheats!' Postcolonial tensions in England-Pakistan cricket,' in, J. Bale and M. Cronin (eds.) *Sport and Postcolonialism* (pp. 91-107). Oxon: Routledge.

Williams, R. M., Jr. (1947). *The reduction of intergroup tensions*. New York: Social Science Research Council.

Yamani, M. (1996). *Feminism and Islam, Legal and Literary Perspectives.* New York: New York University Press.

Yan, G., and Santos, C. (2009). "CHINA, FOREVER" Tourism discourse and self-Orientalism. *Annals of Tourism Research,* 36(2): 295-315.

Yeoman, I. (2008). *Tomorrow's Tourist, Scenarios and Trends*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Yilmaz, I., Bliuc, A.M., Mansouri, F., and Bashirov, G. (2021). Young Muslim Australians' experiences of intergroup contact and its implications for intercultural relations. *Ethnic & Racial Studies,* 44(15): 2772-2793.

Yin, R. (2014). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods.* 5th edn. London; SAGE Publications.

Yu, J., and Lee, J. (2014). Impact of tourists' intercultural interactions. *Journal of Travel Research*, 53(2): 225-238.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Reflective Analytical Memo on a 'pre-event' Interview

<u>Terry Interview Analysis Notes:</u>

Summary:

- World Cup 2010 and various England away games.
- Quite popular with England fans, gets in newspapers and on media a lot.
- Pushed for time a little bit, only had an hour as Terry was working.
- Naïve view of treating people how he would like to be treated.
- No real opinions on the World Cup.
- Got a sense he was perhaps wasn't being honest with his perceptions on Muslims and Islam.

P2: Refers to British Indians as 'them' – and notes how he does not have a problem because he likes curry. Very odd comparison, Othering?

P9: Views towards Muslims and Islam, keeps referring to curries – confusion assumes their Indian?

P9: Terry does seem to other Muslims a lot, using terms such as "them" or "these people" and seriously conflates Muslims with other South Asians homogenising.

P10: Somewhat naïve in his understanding of media perspectives.

P13: Some naivety there in terms of deaths reported and how the media had reported the WC – doesn't delve into too much information.

Terry is an experienced England fan having travelled away to several England games and attended 2 World Cups. He was very confident and chatty throughout the interview and was happy to answer any questions. The important thing for this interview was to build a profile on Terry to get a sense of his travel experience and his attitudes towards the World Cup, Muslims and Islam. In this regard, a rich picture has started to develop on who Terry is, and what he likes to do, and his opinions. Terry likes to interact people and have a good time, he believes interactions and treating people well is the key to learning and understanding. At times, this underlining belief is naïve and problematic. Terry does Other Muslims and homogenizes Asians especially Indians, Pakistanis and Muslims – I do get a sense, perhaps he's not being completely honest in his views. He does not have any major concerns regarding the World Cup and just wants to get out there to experience it, he prefers spontaneity and wants to explore the unknown. Overall, his knowledge on Qatar and Islamic culture is not great as he did not go into too much depth – I should have pressed him more; however, I was cautious of time, Terry only committed to an hour as he was at work. Because of how long we had I failed to really get any depth from Terry and the interview felt rushed in one sense with a lot of his answers superficial although when talking about his own experiences he did go into great detail. I do believe I have built up a sense of rapport with Terry and it will be interesting to hear all about his experiences.

Moving forward, I need to try press the participants more on their answers. For example, instead of accepting "I'm excited" I should then as "why are you excited" or "what are you looking forward to most?" I do believe I have developed and refined my interviewing skills though, especially compared to my first interview with Todd. I've grown more confident and have been prompting more and learning to think on the spot. In this interview I also tried not to converse as much, predominantly because of the time, but I did interrupt when I felt as though Terry was going off on a bit of a tangent. It is interesting though that most of the fans I have spoken too during this phase of research have seemingly enjoyed talking about their experiences following England away and are clearly passionate about it. Most have tried to get a positive image of the fans across and challenged media discourses.

Appendix 2: Field Note 24th November 2022 #3

Summary:

Met a colleague from the University of Brighton for a coffee in Msheirab downtown Doha, and then went to the Museum of Islamic art before watching Portugal vs Ghana at Stadium 974 7pm kick off time.

Activity: Coffee with a colleague

Today, I met my colleague from University who is also doing a PhD on the Qatar World Cup. We found a nice, modern and quite coffee shop in the downtown Msheirab area just past Souq Waqif. My colleague explained to me that this is where the press centre for the tournament is located, where all of the beat reporters and journalists can access a shared space to send of their reports etc. The area itself is very modern, with some high-rise building and apartment blocks with restaurants and coffee shops dotted underneath. There were some food vendors to, and it was also where the CONMEBOL fan area was located which consisted of a small sized football pitch and goal and some interactive displays. I could see some fans wearing Argentinian football shirts using the facilities and playing football. To be honest, this area is very much places, I felt like I could have been anywhere in the world. But it was nice to take a short break and to catch up with my colleague.

Activity: The Museum of Islamic Art

After coffee, I decided to make may back through the Souq and onto the Museum of Islamic art. The Souq always seems full of life and it has been great seeing so many different people wearing different national team football shirts and sitting outside eating and drinking. It is odd though, I haven't really bumped into that many England fans or seen that many people wearing England shirts so it has been difficult trying to engage and speak with them. I'm hoping the game tomorrow will change things. The Museum is a beautiful building made from limestone and is architecturally designed to represent an old Arab structure. It really was something to behold and a nice change from the skyscrapers of West Bay. The exhibits were interesting and took me on a whistlestop tour of the Arabic world from the 7th to 19th century. It was noticeable however, that the focus of the gallery was very much on Islamic and Arabic culture as opposed to Qatari with barely any exhibits or artefacts discussing Qatar at all – I thought at least one of the rooms may have focused on Qatar's influence in Islamic history at least. Nevertheless, it was nice to browse around the museum and to try get a sense of the cultural and history of Qatar and the wider region. The museum wasn't too busy either, I certainly didn't see any people wearing football shirts, yet alone England shirts.

The Museum was a about a 45-minute walk from the cruise ship I'm staying on, so I decided to walk just on the off chance I could spot anyone wearing England shirts. It is strange because so far since I've been in Qatar, I have only managed to speak to one England fan and that was when I was queuing up for a bus to take me to town from the cruise ship. It was only a brief interaction as I noted down yesterday. But even walking back to the cruise ship I couldn't see anyone wearing England shirts, I saw a fair few Welsh fans though with their bucket hats on. Once I got back to the cruise ship I decided to chill out for a bit before heading off to the Portugal vs Ghana game.

Activity: Portugal vs Ghana, Kick Off Time 7pm

As I approached the stadium for a second time, I felt a lot more familiar with the place and where I needed to go. The atmosphere, however, was more subdued, I couldn't see as many replica jerseys being worn by fans and overall, there seemed to be less fans outside the stadium. I didn't think Ghana would have big support, but I thought Portugal might have brought a fair few fans. It was a little bit disappointing really. Like the other day I was sat in the nose bleeds amongst all of the neutral supporters. Interestingly, there were quite a lot of Saudi Arabia fans in my block wearing white thobes with a Saudi Arabia flagged wrapped around them. To my annoyance everyone seemed to be a Ronaldo fan a lot of people sat next to me had their phones out and were clearly zooming in to take pictures of him, the person in front of me was even on facetime and speaking in Arabic with a friend showing him Ronaldo. Every time Ronaldo touched the ball people were loudly cheering. He did fuck all during, as usual, yet still ended up with a man of the match reward. What a bizarre footballing experience that was. Overall, the game was very entertaining though, Portugal eventually ended up winning 3-2, although Ghana had an excellent chance in the final minute to equalise. Easily the best game of football I've seen so far at the tournament anyway. Once the game ended, I walked the hour long journey back to the Cruise Ship, busy busies and metros are not for me and I liked the fresh air.

When I got back to the cruise ship I was quite tired, but thought I'd best chill out in one of the seating areas and type up these notes. I've been sat here for about 30-minutes in the hope of trying to catch an England fan, or group of them. I'm not sure how comfortable I'd feel approaching a group to be honest it'd be nice to get a fan or two on their own, especially as I'm trying to recruit a few more participants I'm not sure how they'd respond. Hopefully, they don't think I'm a journalist. The only interaction I've had since I've been sat here has been with a Portuguese fan who thought I was Portuguese, and a waiter trying to get me to buy a drink. I think I'll call it a night and try again tomorrow.

Overall Reflections:

- Islamic Museum of Art is impressive, but it is interesting how hardly any artefacts or exhibits relate to Qatar.
- Very few football fans visiting the museum are they not interested in exploring the museum and other tourism spots?
- The overall atmosphere was friendly especially at the game, but people especially neutral fans seemed to be at the game for the prestige of the event and for singular players e.g., to watch Ronaldo play. A lot of neutrals at the game illustrates how some teams have a limited following in Qatar.
- I'm not sure where all the England fans are, I thought I'd have at least seen groups of them around central Doha. At least I'll see some tomorrow (I hope).
- From an organisational perspective the tournament and matches are well organised, the stadium is easy to get to go and there is a sea of volunteers ready to help you out - perhaps too many volunteers.

Appendix 3: Participant Informed Consent Form

University of Brighton

Participant Informed Consent Form

Title of Project: Journeys to the 'Other': English Football Fans and the 2022 World Cup

Name of Researcher: Tom Taylor

Please initial or tick box

1. I have been informed of the purpose of this research and have read and understood the participant information sheet for the above study and had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions.

2. The researcher of this study has explained to my satisfaction the procedures of the study and any possible risks, or benefits involved.

3. I am aware that I will be required to take part in (a) an interview prior to the World Cup, (b) to record an audio-visual diary while in Qatar, and (c) an interview after the World Cup.

4. For face-to-face interviews the researcher has explained to me the measures that will be in place to reduce the risks associated with COVID-19 and I agree to follow these.

5. I understand that if face-to-face interviews cannot take place, then Microsoft Teams or a phone call may take place instead. I have been informed video calls will be audio-recorded only.

6. I consent to sharing audio-visual diaries with the researcher and understand these files will only be transcribed for publication. The audio and videos will not be published or accessed by any person other than the researcher.

7. I consent that my photographs may be published by the researcher if I chose to share them with him.

8. I understand that the result of this study will be published in the researcher's PhD thesis and thereafter other publications e.g., peer-reviewed journals or academic books, but my personal information will remain anonymised.

9. I understand that any personal information (e.g., name) or data I give will be used by the researcher and will not be private. (If you would like to remain anonymous please speak with the researcher to arrange this and leave this box blank)

10. I have been informed that I will not be compensated for my participation.

11. I agree to take part in the above study.

....
Name of Participant, Date, Signature

....
Name of Researcher, Date, Signature

Appendix 4: Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet

Title of Study: Journeys to the 'Other': English Football fans and the 2022 World Cup.

You are invited to participate in this research entitled – *Journeys to the 'Other': English football fans and the 2022 World Cup*. Tom Taylor, a postgraduate student at the University of Brighton is conducting this research for his PhD thesis. This study represents Tom's passion for football, sports mega-events and academia.

Before you decide on participating in this research, please read through this document to understand why the research is taking place and what it will involve for you – the participants. I am more than happy to discuss this document with you, answering any questions or concerns you may have. So please take your time to think about whether you wish to take part or not, and please feel free to discuss this research with others. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you seek further guidance.

What is the purpose of this study?

As you may be aware Qatar will become the first country from the Arabian Peninsula, and first Islamic country to stage the World Cup in the tournament's history. The research then, aims to gain an in-depth understanding on English football fans experiences and attitudes towards Muslims, Islam, and the Arabian Peninsula. This includes developing knowledge on the fans social and cultural experiences of travelling to Qatar for the World Cup and evaluating any impacts it may have on the fans.

Why have you been invited to participate?

You have been invited to take part because the researcher wants to attract a diverse group of English football supporters who are travelling to and consuming the World Cup in Qatar. Your experiences can help to develop a better understanding of the wider impacts of hosting events in Islamic societies, and the Arabian Peninsula in particular. Therefore, English football fans travelling to Qatar are considered critical for this study compared to fans who will not be travelling to the World Cup.

However, you will not be considered for this research if:

- Under 18
- Do not have a smartphone.
- You do not have flights, hotels, or match tickets reserved for the World Cup and are not travelling to Qatar.

Your participation in this research will be much appreciated.

Do you have to take part?

Participation is purely voluntary, you will be free to withdraw at any time, at any point during the research without giving a reason. There is no disadvantage should you decide to withdraw. Your trip to Qatar will not be impacted in any way.

What is expected from you – the participants?

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be invited to participate in all stages of the research, including;

Stage 1: A face-to-face interview 1 – 24 weeks prior to the World Cup in Qatar. You will be asked questions about your perceptions and expectations of the World Cup in Qatar, and your knowledge on the Muslim community in the UK, or abroad. Audio-video diary logistics will also be discussed (see stage 2).

If for whatever reason face-to-face interviews cannot take place such as COVID-19 restrictions, then interviews can be held through Microsoft Teams, or by telephone if necessary. Interviews will take place at a date, time, and location that is convenient for you.

Stage 2: You will be asked to keep an audio-visual diary on your smartphone documenting your day-to-day activities, experiences, and perceptions during your stay in Qatar. You will be asked to record these once every two days in the morning e.g., 5-day travel = 3 diary entries. You will also be in control of what information you record although a diary sheet guide will be supplied to assist you. You are free to record as many diary entries as you like during your stay, once every two days is a minimum expectation.

S**tage 3:** A face-to-face interview 8 – 24 weeks after you return from Qatar. You will be asked to show the researcher an artefact (e.g., ticket, programme, business card) or photo you took during the World Cup so that you can reflect on your experience (this is voluntary). Further questions will discuss any thoughts, perceptions, and feelings you have towards the World Cup and towards Muslims and Islam.

Will I be paid for taking part?

Participation is purely voluntary, and you will not be paid for taking part in this research. During the interview stages breaks will be scheduled in (if required) and refreshments such as a drink, or small meal will be catered for.

What are the potential disadvantages or risks of taking part?

It is not expected that you - the participant, will be at a disadvantage by taking part in this study. However, by taking photographs or videos for the purpose of this research there may

be a minimal risk to your safety. Please visit gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/Qatar to familiarise yourself with local laws and customs in Qatar – especially regarding photography and videos.

What are the potential benefits of taking part?

By participating in this research, your insights will be of great benefit by helping to develop knowledge on staging sports events in Islamic societies. Your participation may also provide an opportunity for the researcher and participant to learn from one another on the subject. Keeping an audio-visual diary could be a therapeutic experience helping to alleviate any stress or making you aware of positive things in your life. This research will also provide the participant, and England football fans with a voice to share their own lived experiences. However, you may not benefit directly from participating in this study.

By taking part in the study will my information be kept confidential?

As per the informed consent form you will have the option to remain anonymous or not. If you choose to remain anonymous every effort will be made to ensure any personal information you share (e.g., name and hometown) will be kept confidential and private. However, while the raw data/compiled information resulting from the interviews and audio- visual diaries will be private and confidential, selected quotes will be published and shared as part of the final write-up but anonymised using pseudonyms - removing any possible identification indicators – if you chose to remain anonymous. Access to any personal information regardless of whether you waived your right to privacy will be limited to the researcher only.

In accordance with the University of Brighton's data storage policy, any data resulting from the research will be kept on the researcher's password protected Microsoft OneDrive account and may be stored for up to 10 years. Anonymised data may be stored indefinitely. Audio and visual files will be deleted securely as soon as the researcher has transcribed them, and no personal information will be stored on a personal computer, laptop, or mobile device.

What will happen if you don't want to carry on with the study?

You will be free to withdraw at any time for any reason. However, once any data has been collected, transcribed, and anonymised it may not be possible to withdraw data resulting from any interviews, or audio-visual diaries.

What will happen to the results of this research?

The results of this research will be published in the researcher's doctoral thesis which will be held by the University of Brighton and in the UK PhD database. The results may also be used and published in peer-reviewed academic journals, used for academic conferences, book chapters, and books. If you would like to know the results of the study, please let the researcher know and you will be provided with information at the conclusion of the study by email.

Who is organising and funding the research?

This research is organised by the University of Brighton under the School of Sport and Health Sciences for the purpose of researcher to be used for a PhD thesis. No funding has been received for this research.

What about COVID-19?

If there are COVID-19 regulations in place face-to-face interviews will adhere to these regulations and any University of Brighton guidelines e.g., wear a face covering indoors, or socially distance. If for whatever reason it becomes impossible to maintain any COVID-19 measures, then the interview will be stopped and re-planned as necessary. In the event of a nationwide lockdown interviews will be moved online, or via telephone with your permission.

What If there is a problem?

If you are unhappy or have concerns with how the research was conducted, please contact the researcher or the lead supervisor as listed below.

If I have some more questions; who should I contact?

Tom Taylor, School of Sport and Health Sciences, University of Brighton
Email: t.taylor13@uni.brighton.ac.uk

Dr Daniel Burdsey, School of Sport and Health Sciences, University of Brighton
Email: d.c.burdsey@brighton.ac.uk

Who has reviewed the study?

This study will be reviewed by the University of Brighton Research Ethics Committee.

Cross-School Research Ethics Committee A, Chair, Dr. Lucy Redhead

Appendix 5: 'Pre-event' Interview Transcript

Ian Pre-Event Interview (in-person, Brighton)

Right. Um, so anyway, um, so yeah, like I said, these are just some introductory questions. No. Uh, could you just tell me a bit about your personal history and background, such as your age?

Oh, not…not to do with football. Just me, yeah?

Yeah just you…

So, my name's Ian Garnett I'm 57 on the 30th of November when I'm in..uh, Qatar. So, uh, you can buy me a beer for my birthday. Um…I'm a Leeds United supporter. Um, born and bred in Leeds and my first game was when I went into Ellen Road at three quarters time, um, when the gate opened to let the supporters out when I was age about four. And I stood on a fruit box box with my dad. I went to all Leeds games from early seventies to early eighties, um, and saw some sight at Leeds games…particularly when the Bradford City, uh, tip Burger van got set on fire that was right in front of me when they played at Austil Stadium. A year after the Bradford Fire. Um, uh…I've been, uh, supporting England as a travel club member since 2014. My first away game was in Kiev, uh, against Ukraine, which was the best place I've been to, um, out about all my travels…um…um I went to Russia in the World Cup, um, even though I was in Marsaille in the port area, um, in the European championships when the Russians…a small group of Russians, not all of them by any means, decided to kick off. Um, uh, went to, um…we tour the games in Russia with England supporters, got tickets for all the games as I'll have in Dubai. Um, I go with a group of other England fans who support various different teams, and we all meet up, particularly a large number of them support Birmingham City….and you might see their flags at all the England Games…Redditch Blues, which is the, the main flag for that. Um…and I watch quite a lot of grassroot football. Um…but really low league stuff like southern counties…combination and things like that.

Do you get involved in like coaching and stuff like that?

No…no. I ain't got time to do that sort of thing, but I…I'd like to, I know people who do…do scouting…um, and if I had more time, I'd be interested in doing scouting, but it's hard work doing scouting. You gotta be out in the rain that places like Crawly Town on a cold wet Tuesday evening…not even Crawley Town first team…Crawley Town Reserves and Juniors…it's the nature of scouting.

Um…so what do you do for work?

Well, I work for Brighton and Hove City Council in their housing options department…um, I worked there for 20 years. Uh, before that I worked as a housing officer and dealt with all matters of housing and tenancy issues, including anti-social behaviour, street homelessness. Um, so that ties in with dealing in difficult and awkward situations.

Definitely…um you mentioned about your Masters degree, could you just elaborate on your educational background?

Yeah, well I did…I did my first degree of BA honours in public policy at Leister in the mid to late eighties. And I did my thesis on football hooliganism working with John…uh, John Williams and…um, Patrick Dunning. John Williams was my tutor for the thesis. Um, and, uh, I did a master's degree about 10 years after that part-time at the LSE…it had nothing to do with housing, it had nothing to do with football in housing and social policy, welfare rights and things like that.

So, is working for the council brought you down from Leeds to Brighton?

Oh, it's a long, a long story. Uh, I was born and brought up in Leeds, went to school in Leeds, left at 18 to go to uni. Then met my partner and she came from Crawley and she lived in London. So, I lived in London for a bit. And now I live not far from Brighton, about 10 miles north of Brighton.

Oh, okay whereabouts?

In Henfield…Henfield?

I've never heard of Henfield.

It's a large village. If you're an estate agent, it's a village. If you're not, it's a small town. It's about halfway between Brighton and Horsham.

Do you like living down South?

Oh yeah. I've been…I've lived down South longer than I've lived up North.

Really…I'm a… I'm a Midlands boy, but I…I want to move down south eventually. Um, so… would you consider Leeds a multicultural place where you grew up?

Uh, yeah. In fact, I was in Leeds a couple of weeks ago cause my uncle, one of my few relatives left there is unwell at the moment, and he lives about 15 minutes' walk from Ellan Road football ground…so I went up there to see him. Um, Leeds were playing…they weren't playing the day I was there…they were playing the day after. Um, but yeah Leeds particularly as it's a case with a lot of inner-city football grounds. They are multicultural areas. And that part of Leeds where the football ground is…is large…m, Asian background, predominantly Pakistani and in recent years, Eastern European.

So, what are your thoughts on multiculturalism?

Yeah…well, I…um, I like to experience different people, different places. I like to understand and learn about how they think, what makes 'em tick what they're interested in. Um, and I like to meet people who are different from me. I think that makes you a broader person with more knowledge and experience. And one of the things, what I like about going to football matches is… is especially abroad…is you get to meet different cultures, different people, different languages. When I went to Russia, I started learning Russian. So I can speak a bit of Russian now…I've been helping some Ukrainians learn English recently. So, I've gone out my way to meet Ukrainian…um, so yeah…and I like trying different food and uh, music. Um, and to learn a little bit about culture before I…before I um, visit. Um, having said that, um, my…I went out my way to learn a lot about Russia cause I was interested in Russia and Russian heritage. Not so much about the Middle East. Doesn't really tick my box probably because it's more westernized in many ways and very much un westernized in others and it's that perception of money and that people speak English, uh, and all the, you know, multinational chains will be in every city centre. So, you… it's almost like you… you know what to expect before you go. Whereas I went on my way to learn about what goes on in um, Stalingrad for example, she's much more interesting than Moscow, cause Moscow is all the large chains there…so, one of the things that me and my mates like to do when we…we go abroad, which is why we really look at Eastern Europe over Western Europe, yeah…you're gonna go to obscure places in Eastern Europe. We…we go to, we like a bit of a black…no, that's not what it's called no… dark…dark history.

Dark Tourism…

Dark Tourism…so you know, you go to when we went to Lithuania we went to Ba…the forest where lots of Jewish people…um…were massacred in the second World War…Barba something I think it is…oh we went to…we went to Chernobyl when we were in the Ukraine…we made the effort to go to Chernobyl because that…that's all part of the culture and that…it was brilliant.

I'm very jealous actually, I'd really love to go and I know my Dad would too

We went there about eight years ago. It was…it was just taking off. Now…now it's a lot easier to get there than it was when we went there. We had to make a real effort to go. Um, and there's about eight England fans on this special tour and I've never been on the football tour like it, cause there must have been about 30 people on this coach. There was eight…eight England football fans…there was about eight geeks who just liked doing weird things. And then there was eight environmentalists who were interested in finding out what other plants looked like and the trees and the fruit and all that sort…and there was just eight football fans there.

I'm so jealous that sounds like a bit of me…so it sounds like you've had a lot of travel experiences then and my next question was going to be, could you share some travel experiences with me…

Yeah…yeah and…and the secret is…is from my is from my point of view anyway, is the secret is do you want to go away from what is organized for you…it's like, um, the fan zones, it's organized, therefore it's controlled, it's disciplined, it's organized…he systems controlling where you go when you go…a lot of the England… the real proper England fans won't have anything to do with that…they go to things that are not organized, not controlled, not um…specific, which is random. Uh, and…and I mean things like, um, you know, going to, for example, I was in Milan, um, uh, three weeks ago about 20 of us, we went on the train to Lecco about 40 miles up the line…and what…went to see an Italian 3rd division game…we always go try and see a non…a non-league game…we was in Bratislava went to see a team play on the outskirt of Bratislava…these are…these are…we're talking like…I mean the game in…in Lecco was about 4,000, 3,000 fans…so, it's probably like going to see Crawley play Newport. But the one in Bratislava was like, you know, national League, South.

Oh, okay so proper low down on the pyramid….

You put the England flag up and everyone loves it…unless…unless you're in Russia and they're not having the flag up.

Really…so, where else apart from like Eastern Europe have you travelled to not just for football?

In general. Uh, bit of Cuba. Uh, I've been to, um…all over Western Europe, well, all over Europe really. Um, but outside of Europe, just for non-football purposes, Cuba is um, only place I've been to.

Just for a holiday?

Yeah…yeah…some family and mates yeah…um, I wasn't particularly keen on Cuba

Really? See it's a place I've always wanted to visit because of its history

It's a control thing again.

So, did you stay in a resort?

No…you see that's control….you go to the resort, you get, you know, all of…they tell you what food's on the menu and what drink, what…what time we eat and all the rest of it, yeah…no, we stayed in a hotel in the middle of Havana, but it was not very good because in…this is going back about 10 years ago, probably. I don't, I'm guessing it's still the same now. But the Cuban government had two currencies. So, they had the local currency, and they had the tourist currency and you could only spend the tourist currency in certain shops. So, a lot of the shops and the restaurants and cafes, you were barred from going in cause you couldn't spend the money. So, you took away from the authenticity of where you went…so, the state was controlling you where to go. And then when you, when you went to those places, um, the products were the same as what the locals had, but you've been charged 10 times more

for a bottle of rum… uh, and the state, it was a state-controlled brewery so you had one choice of beer, 4% alcohol in a tin.

Now you put me off going to Cuba…

You'd have a completely different experience if you went…the thing…the one auth… authentic thing that we did was we…we wanted to go to a town outside Havana, can't remember the name of the place. It's about 40 miles away, 40, 50 miles away, and again, you had a local buses and tourist buses…so, we could only get the tourist buses.

Oh, so you couldn't even travel with the locals?
No…so, we got this tourist bus…got us there and it's a tourist bus every hour on the way back, we got to this town middle of the afternoon, it was boiling hot, everything was shut and we got to five o'clock and then we found one cafe that was open. We went in there and the only thing they had to sell was chocolate ice cream. Just chocolate ice cream for some reason. That's it. That was it, just chocolate ice cream. So, we had some chocolate ice cream and then went back to the bus stop and it said "last bus," what have you…we were the only ones there…never turned up did it

The bus?

No, because it's so…unreliable yeah…so, we though what the fuck do we do here, we're 40 miles away from fucking nowhere…we aint walking that…so, the locals cause we obviously stood out in this town cause you know, it's not a tourist town, so, there…there's no tourists going there…so a bloke turned up he said…he had a great big old American car, great big thing…him and his mate had a couple phones…he says…broken English with a…with a phone, Duolingo…he's saying "uh can we help you?" we said "ah yeah we gotta get back to Havana." This is about 6-7 O'clock in the evening…so um, he said "oh yeah" he said "no problem, I'll take you…taxi, taxi I'll take you" his mates are going I'll take you, your mates…so great, yeah…so, we got to…got to go for a ride in this um…like Cadillac…it wasn't just that, he invited his mum for the journey cause she had to go shopping in Havana…an that was the only time in the whole, um, event that you was allowed to..to socialize, um, without control. Whereas when you go to…when I went to the World Cup in Russia, you…you… you would loads of people…people who invited us into…I know people who were renting rooms in people's houses. You know, people invited is right into their house for dinner and things like that.

So, they're quite hospitable in Russia?

Oh, absolutely…that's what you want and theres no control in it either…there's no state saying you can and can't do this.

Okay. That's interesting. So, um, would you consider yourself an experienced traveller?

Yeah…yeah.

And have you ever been to a kind of Islamic country before? I know you haven't left Europe, but Turkey or somewhere similar?

The…the, um, I have been to Kosovo…uh saw England playing Kosovo and that was the first time I've actually been into a mosque…and I was really surprised by how many mosques there was in Kosovo.

I'm not too familiar with Kosovo history to be honest with you…

You're not interested in Kosovo history?... well, it's all part of my dark… dark tourism…so, Kosovo, um…before the fall of the Soviet Union, Kosovo was part of Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia… Yugo is, um, south Slavic… um, so Yugoslavia, the, um, what's the word I'm thinking of… it means in English, it means South slavs…and the breakup of the…and the main two countries in Yugoslavia were Croatia and

Serbia. Historically, Serbia is pro-Russian, um, cyricllic alphabet and all the rest of it, yeah. Croatia was pro Germany in the Second World War, fought on the Nazis side. Uh, and is pro, that's all to do with their link with Ottoman Empire and all that. When this…when the Berlin wall fell an all the countries in Eastern Europe became independent… Yugoslavia splintered. But there was a war in different places in Yugoslavia, particularly the Serbs in Bosnia and also in Kosovo cuz the Serbs saw Bosnia and Kosovo as part of a greater Serbia and they were the most inflation group within Yugoslavia and Bosnia…. Bosnian war, I dunno if you've heard about Srebrenica murder of genocide.

Yeah…I'm aware of the genocide…

So, the…so the Serbian nationalist, um, killed lots of Bosnian nationals, Bosnian men, cuz they were predominantly Muslim and not orthodox Christians…and that's the divide and it's the same in Kosovo. So, the same issue with going on between Serbia and Kosovo…and so Kosovans and, um, Bosnians will have majority in Muslim populations, and they look towards Albania as their, as their closest ally. Whereas Serbia, um…are history is tied with Russian…Russian Empire…um, sorry, I forgot where we were going with this. So… so…so Serbia is a really interesting one to go to cuz the Serbs… I've never… I've never seen England play Serbia, but I know a lot of people who have been to see football, but in Belgrade and they say it's red hot if you go there, you gotta be really looking over your shoulder.

For fighting?

Yeah…and Serb…Serbia in the…in this…I think qualified, they're not in our group, but um, if you walk around somewhere like Brighton, you, you'll come across loads of people from Kosovo and Albania…and I've never met one person from Serbia because they're not allied to the West, their allied to the Russians…so when you um…so the Kosavan war was about um, so when you, um, so the Kovan war was all about, um, Tony Blair and, um, I think it was Clinton who um, gave Kosavan troops and, and military hardware to stop the Serbians from taking over the country…and they forced the Serbians out so when…when I, when I went to see England play Kosovo about four…four years ago, it was the first time England had played and there was a flag in the street saying, "thank you England." And there's a real affinity with the…with the English. And that's the other thing, when you…when you go to these places, people see England as being UK. There's a very clear definition of England…not…not who, who is Scotland? Yeah…England is the UK for a lot of people…um, but that's, so…so that's what the Kosovan history was. So, we…I went to, um, prizram, which is near the border of, um, Macedonia, it's like a second city. Um, and uh, there were loads of mosques in this place. And it was the first time we've been in the mosque.

How did you find that experience?

Well, I didn't really know what I was looking for…so, you went in there and there's no one in there and of course in the mosque there's very little furniture…things. So, I didn't know what to do or I think the thing to do was to show some respect and take your…your shoes off and there's a woman with some sort of water and a head scarf and…and it did advise you to do that. But yeah, I I've never been in a European country where…where the, um, the call of prayers across all the city an the valley, you could hear the call…and…and in Macedonia you can hear it as well…which is why talking about political impacts on, um, on sports. When the, um, qualifying draft for the European Championship 2024 in Germany was made a couple of weeks ago, they thought at one point they thought we were gonna have to redo the draw.

Who were they going to take out of our group again?

Well, this is, this is 21st century eastern European politics for you in a nutshell. Okay. Yeah. So, Kosovo and Serbia don't recognize each other. So, they are kept separate in the draw. They can't draw each other. Okay. Bella Russ have been allowed to play, even though they close allies with Russia. So, the Russians are banned. The Belarusians are allowed to play, but they're not allowed to play in their own country.

They're home games. Yeah. So Belarus had to find another country, that was willing to let them play their home games. And what…after what I've just said, what's the obvious country?

Serbia.

Serbia. Okay. So, Belaruse, they're gonna play their home game in Serbia. Who did Belarus draw in the group? Kosovo…so, at that point the computer didn't pick that out. So, at that point, Belarus were playing Kosovo at home, which wouldn't have been a problem if it had been in Minsk…but because it was in somewhere in Serbia, the Serbians wouldn't allow the Kosovan to play and the Kosovan wouldn't have played anyway…that is politics, yeah. So, they've now found a solution, I dunno where they're gonna play, but Belarus are gonna have to play Kosovo somewhere not in Serbia, but in a neutral country. And I know for a fact there'll be some England fans who are just mad for going to bizarre games who will make the damnest effort to go and see that.

Will you be going?

No, I'm not that…I'm not, I'm committed, but I'm not that committed. But there will be people that will go just because there'll be no one else there…which takes you into a whole new psychology of sport people who go to places where no one else goes.

I believe in tourism there's some research on dark tourism to be fair and they look at, for example, people who travel to Chernobyl who don't tell anybody and they just take their cameras and a tent and try evade the security…

Oh yeah. There's been a lots of people who… who go in the tower blocks and stay the night. And the police are always…I wouldn't have the guts to do that.

I wouldn't have the guts either to be honest…

But yeah, I went to the place with the roundabout and they did the Geiger counter thing.

Oh yeah. How was that?

Oh, it's great. The thing that was really…I mean you could tell some of it was stage managed cuz the…the exclusion zone when I went anyway, I presume it's still, it was about 25 miles around. It literally is in the middle of nowhere… there's a few little hamlets. Um, um, but there's no major town apart from Pripriat, which is, uh, the Soviet town next to um, Chernobyl where about 15,000 people lived there, and they all worked there and had to evacuate. But in these little hamlets outside of that, there's one house that the bus takes you and in there it's all, it's like a shack really, it's all ram shackled. There's a bed in there and there's a curtains hanging off and window smashed. And he goes, "oh, this is where this family had to escape," you know? And they said on this is a children's toy and in the in the doorway there's a… a… a little girl's doll. There's not an ounce of dust on this doll…so, it's clearly been put there in the morning for the effect…anyway I'm digressing.

No…no that's fine it's quite interesting to hear about your experiences…anyway so can you just tell me a little bit about your memories and experiences of the World Cup?

My…my first memories of the World Cup, okay…well apparently my dad, I was born in November, 1965. So, my dad said I did watch the World Cup final, uh, sitting on his knee, uh, 8-7 months old. Great memories…uh, watching England, uh, beat Germany 4 – 2, uh, unfortunately I don't remember. Uh, so my first, um, memories of football was probably about 1972 Leeds beat um, Arsenal in the centenary Cup final…Um, I remember World Cup 1974 really clearly, England didn't qualify. And Don Rey was the manager, ex Leeds manager…and England didn't qualify…so I remember watching the World Cup the first time with only Scotland being the…the national representatives. And that was in Argentina. Uh, and I remember, um, you know, flipping TV screens and commentary down the telephone line, which

actually made it feel as it was a long, long way away. Whereas now it could be next door, couldn't it? And that I think…it loses a little bit the modern technology that it did feel a lot, a completely different world away…um, I remember the 78 World Cup. Well, I remember the 76 European Championships, Penenka's chip penalty, you know…

Was it the first one to be recorded on TV, right?

Yeah, he took it…it was named after him…I remember watching in my grandparents' living room. Um, black and white TV… might have been colour, I can't remember now. Sunday…Sunday teatime it was…um, and the Panenka pen he sort of dinked it, um, 78 was, um…no, 78 was, uh, was Argentina and 74 was Germany, wasn't it? Sorry. Scotland only…Scotland qualified for both 74 and 78 and England didn't 78 was the one in... in Argentina, which was… felt miles and miles away because it was different time zone and it was, you know, hearing people's teams in place you'd never heard of before. Um, and then the first England World Cup was 82, Spain…um, Keegan, Mariner, Ray Wilkins all that. Um, 86 was when I was at uni and I had a good night that night in lots of ways when, uh…when um, Linekar got his hattrick against Poland, we won three nil and I was in Leicester as well, Linekar was a hero, yeah…went to his mum and dads vegetable shop the next day and bought loads of fruit and veg even though I didn't need it…

I didn't even know his mum and dad had a veg shop…

Yeah…yeah…yeah well Leicester market yeah…it was quite popular the next day…I don't think it's still there…um, 90 was uh, Gaza wasn't it…Italian 90… before your time. That was um, that was mad that was, the semi-final with absolutely nuts. That's when I really getting… really started getting into England. 86, 90 World Cup…the 94 one we didn't qualify because we were crap. Um, that was in America. 8 – 98 was Japan, South Korea wasn't it?

2002…

98 must have been in Germany…

98 was France…we were on a family holiday there at the time…

Was France. Cause say I went to my cousin's wedding, uh, and I went in the back room and that was again when, um, Beckham got sent off

Simeone, weren't it?

Simeone, yeah…yeah um…2002 must have been Japan, South Korea which was a very odd one-time difference. Killed it, didn't it…killed it…destroyed it you know 10 O'clock all the games are on what you do now…hate…hate that time difference.

Funny I had the reserve when I lived in Korea when the Russia World Cup was on…I think the final didn't finish until like 2 O'clock in the morning…

Oh that's all right. It's…it's…it's when they start at six and they finish…everything's over by 10 you know breakfast, um, 2006 must have been Germany then…that's Lampard's goal that went over the line…that was…that was the start of the campaign for VAR wasn't it…

And I believe it was the first time they had proper fan parks at a World Cup…I think they tested it at Euro 2004, but this was the first time they were properly implemented I think…

Um, I'll tell you about fan parks in a bit, cause that's when I tell you about the control thing and um…the um…2010 would've been South Africa…

That was the Lampard one, wasn't it?

Yeah, that was the…that was the Lampard…so yeah that was South Africa. 14 was… Brazil…that was a shocker, I know some mates…that's when I…some of my mates… a lot of people I know started supporting England around then.

I thought that would've put them off to be honest…

Well a lot of em are all Birmingham fans and Birmingham got into Europe the previous season and they…they got a taste of it… they got a taste for it. So, that's the other thing is, and you know the other thing about England fans, they all support lower teams…if you if you go…you'll see all the England flags you… you'll see, you'll count on a finger the number of finger of hands. I dunno what I'm saying…you'll…you'll, there'll be very, very few if any Liverpool, Man City, Man U fans…but there'll be loads of Crawly Towns and Port Veils and Chorley and Accrington and all that. Uh, because that's their way to…to go and watch…um but the irony is, and this is the thing about politics of football. When England play Internationals, the Premier League games are cancelled because of the players. But the lower league teams play, however, most of the England supporters are made up of people who support those teams. And a lot of 'em would have season tickets…they've got to make a choice and it pisses a lot of people off…um anyway…18 was Brazil…sorry 18 was uh, 14 was Brazil and 18 was um…Russia. So, my…my first tournament was France in 2016, for the EUROS

How was that?

Uh, I could talk all day about Marseille…uh, but I'll come back to that in a minute. Okay cause it is, I've never seen anything like it in my life… um…um, and I've been to a lot of matches where there've been in trouble and I've never seen anything like that in Marsaille trouble. Um, we went…uh, camping in…uh… France, a lot of England fans did camp… camping and in, um, so there's a lot of England fans in campsites on the outskirts of…we, we were…uh, when we played Wales, we were in, um, Eppe…

Did you drive down?

Uh, we drove down…yeah…we had a…well we had a…a um, trailer tent on the back. Yeah. Two cars. Yeah. Um, but we made the effort to go to Eppe, as there was a lot of England fans. Wales were… a lot of Welsh fans there because it was the Menage…So…so we, again the dark tourism or place… show your respect. There's a lot of England fans at the Menning gate. A lot of England fans put in reeves with the England flag.

How was the dynamic between the England and Wales fans?

Excellent…yeah… banter... yeah, but not aggression…there was a lot of aggression with the Russian fans…um, yeah, but going…going back to France, when we went to, I'll come on to Marseille in a minute, but in St. Etienne, which was the game, the last game in the group and they played Slovakia. St Etienne had the largest fan park I think I've ever been to and there was nobody in there.

See they always market these fan parks as really popular must visit places…

They were a lot there in Russia and I'll come to that in a minute…but in France there was absolutely, virtually no one in any of them…and down the road, um, in the main square, there must have been about 10,000 England fans. You could…if you look on the YouTube, there's a classic Vardy's on fire and all that…and there was thousands there.

Why do think that was then, why were the parks empty?

It's…it's because they're organised…and people don't like being told where to go, what to do what they can and can't do. You know…having your bag searched and all the rest of it, whereas in the town you

just turn up…and you can bring cans in the town yeah. So…and we got to a point where the…the…there was piss, basically a river down the street because there were so many people there that toilets couldn't cope with it. But in the end, people were just pissing in the street. It's that loss of…I mean, I wouldn't do it, but it's that loss of inhibition…hedonism…hedonism, loss of inhibition. And that's why taking coke has become more popular at football now.

 Really?

Oh yeah…yeah…well all fans, not just England fans. I've been to games when Brighton have played and I've been offered coke with the away fans. Middlesborough fans were really, oh God, they were all on it. In the pub opposite the…opposite…a couple of seasons ago, the club opposite the railway station have a line on the GU and all that…and it's…I'm not that…I…I don't I'm quite happy with beer but it's the same effect I imagine it's…it's that release, that freedom that hedonism and then that floating, buzzing it's the escape…the buzz. The adrenaline, the buzz…and that's accentuated when you're going somewhere where you dunno where you're going, where you dunno what's around the corner. That makes that even more a combination…a combination of…and I imagine if you're on coke that heightens it even further. So, it's hard…to think about the fan park it's all about um, people not wanting to be corralled into a manufactured environment…and it is manufactured cuz you've got, um, you know, it's the sponsors beer which is always crap. You know, um, and just, no…no.

So, what you're saying is I shouldn't go to the fan park?

You might have no…you might have limited choices. Because um, if you can't… if you don't have the freedom to go and drink where you want to drink, you might end up having to go there. And…and that ties in with the…the sort of regime's mentality, doesn't it, of control. Um, and that, I think that's one reason why a lot of England fans will be put… put off by it. The fact that they don't have the freedom to go where they want to go, when they want to go and do what they wanna do.

And that's one reason why people like yourself are looking at Dubai as an alternative place to stay?

Without a doubt, um, in Russia it was a bit different, the fan parks were a lot bigger and there were a lot better. And I think one reason for that is, um, it's…it is the only World Cup I've been to. But I was really surprised by the biggest support that came from non-European countries. Columbia, Mexicans, um, Iranians. And I think one reason for that is the European, the, certainly the big European countries, they're so used to main players playing in their leagues or champions league game. They're blasé and they, they're getting more blasé about international football. Uh, they see…some people see it as a second-class thing to club football. The…the England fans who go do so because they support the smaller teams. But if the supporters of the big teams or your armchair supporters are much more blasé about England than they've ever been, but people come from non-European countries, they were huge support numbers…Argentinians loads of them there and they, although they were, you know, in the street and celebrating all that stuff, they seemed to me lots of those cultures seemed to be more, um, willing to go to somewhere that was controlled and organized rather than going to somewhere random.

Why do you think that was?

I don't know…maybe it's a psyche of that country…I dunno.

It makes sense though, because obviously they don't get to see a lot of their star players on a regular basis do they…

That's why international football is more important to them. You know, I mean England…the...the Swedish support, when England played Sweden, the ground was two-thirds full of Russians there were hardly and swedes there, not that many English there either. Um, the French were pitiful their support in the final not that I went to the final but I was in Moscow at the time. Um, but yeah…the Mexicans, Peruvians…every single Peruvian had the…the red shirt on…and I…I um, and I…I do think um, maybe

it's cause they're not used to traveling. So, uh, maybe they're less, um, willing to explore their freedom. Um, but I…I guarantee you when…the… the fan zone in down here when the England women was playing and the women's football, the clientele is so different. Um, I…I can't say this for a fact cause I wasn't there, but it wouldn't surprise me in the slightest as if the client who was there, at the women's football would go to the fan zones.

Would you say it's more families?

There are more families there. But it's not just that it's…it's…it's the…how can I put it? There's not the rebelliousness, there's not the edge. It's like when a lot of England fans who go away, they hate going to Wembley…

I've heard that a few times now…

They hate going to Wembley because it's full of 2.4 kids yeah…with they're mum and dad yeah…and it's like going to a, you know kids scout holiday yeah…there's no edge to it, there's no excitement, no sharpness.

It's very similar to those who support lower league teams, right? It's why a lot of supporters are choosing to follow lower league clubs instead. You go to a prem game and the atmosphere's completely different to when I first started going 15-20 years ago, it's very flat…the only time the atmosphere is truly rocking is if you go to an away game…

Because you're in a minority and you've got the edge and the…well you're going away aren't you…You're surround by people who are committed. They're… they're your brother. You know, exactly that. You go to Wembley and there's, you know, tourist there, you know, eating popcorn and what's going on. The Mexican wave etc…have you heard of the 109 club at Wembley?

I have yes…

The 109 yeah…well the 109 sit behind the goal and you know when the wave goes up, none of them do it, it completely bypasses them…they all sing "follow England away" when it comes out…following the…you…you might hear it if you're there, the wave's going round, it comes down there "follow England away." That's it.

The other interesting thing about following England at home and particularly when it's in London, you get a lot of non-white faces, you don't get that transferred away very much. Occasionally you do, but it's still overwhelmingly white away. Um, having said that, I met a couple of black fans who were living in Russia. They had no problems at all. Um, but the media picked up on, cause I was on the TV all the time cause there's so few England fans there but when they saw blackface in the England crowed they zoomed in.

Why do you think that was?

Cause its news isn't it…

Okay…so what do you like about the World Cup? And what attributes do you associate with it?

Well, it's…it's the whole point of…one of the…football is a mechanism for you to express your self-identity as a person, as a man and as a…your country…yeah. And you express that in lots of different ways. I don't personally express it through violence, but some people do. You know, um, we don't have to do it from violence. You can express it in lots of different ways. Um, by, um, just by being there…and moment…and it's a moment of time, a moment in history. And when I was in, um, um, it's a bit naughty really this I dunno…I dunno how he did it. But he, he was in Samara for the, the quarter final against Sweden and Samara's about a thousand miles away from Moscow. Nice place, but very…not, not easy to

get accommodation. There was about 17 of us renting this Airbnb for a couple of nights. And One of the lads that was in it he just turned up, he…he'd heard on the grape vine that there were England fans there and he said "oh, can I stay here?" Um, so I said yeah. I said, yeah, no problem, mate. And he said that, he said he, he, he worked on the oil rigs in far East Russia and he'd come just cause England were playing and he could get there. Uh, so he joined the band wagon when England were doing well, all the England fans from home couldn't get there. Cause they didn't have the higher card and all the rest of it. So, there was was hardly any England fans in the ground. So, this guy got a ticket for the quarter final, I dunno if he got one for the semi-final, it's harder to get one for the semi-final, but he easily got one at…at um, they were giving them away…literally face value. It was mainly local Russians there…but they were giving away at face value and this guy, never been to an England game at all but he happened to be working on the oil rig in Russia, so he come to that game because it was relatively close. He got into the ground, had no caps, no loyalty bands. But he just, by being there, he was probably one of the few England fans there who weren't, who hadn't paid thousands over two years to get to that point. Yeah. And he said to me when he said, "now I understand boys, why you do this shit cuz I wouldn't, I wouldn't wanna be anywhere else in the world than here at his moment." And he got…but he was there cause he was lucky enough to be in the right place at the right time. Whereas there's millions watching from home who wanted…who would've wanted to have been there but couldn't get there.

People don't realize the hard… the lifts are cost and the effort you have to go through to get to that point. That's why in the, in the, um, the final of the euros at Wembley, I might have told you this when I was contact you before, but when all the England fans, well I call England fans, they're not they all broke…they got…they got in through the disabled entrance, um…in the 109 area where, near where I was that…that's where all England fans who had tickets, had been to 30 games over 15 different countries, they were kicking the shit out of them.

I've seen the videos…

Yeah…they were kicking the shit out of these scumbags who thought that it's they're right, but they didn't report that on the news that the bonafide England fans helped. The stewards didn't want to know, there was hardly any police there it was the England fans kicking them out…so, there's a lot of self-policing that goes on as well.

Oh, I see…

Especially when you go to games where, because it's so difficult to get to, and you've got a relatively small support and you…even if you don't know them personally, you…you begin to recognize their faces…yeah. Or you know, somebody who know somebody who knows them…. yeah. And it is a band of brothers.

That community feel?

It's that community feel and that's how your kind of, um, your…how your nationalism is kind of represented. Which is what you don't get when England are playing Holland in Amsterdam because all of the nuttas turn up for the night…yeah. Get pissed up, get drugged up, go mad…yeah, and they tarnish it, don't they? And they just treat it like a night out.

So, like the lad culture? When really it's about the community spirit…

Well, you've…you've earned it, you know… a mate…a mate of mine, big Brighton and Hove Albion fan and he…Gary…Gary he's called, works with the council, been following Brighton for years and years and years…even when they played at Gillingham, you know, when they…when they lost the Goldstone and everything. And I said to him the…the first game they got, um, promoted to the Premier League and I said to him, well done Gary, you've…you're one of the few to have supported them through the thick and thin and stood with them and I said, what's the best game, best Brighton game you've been to? And he said to me "Exeter away in the Johnson's paint trophy, second round tie" and I said, why is that? He

said, "cause there was 15 Brighton fans in the away end", he said, "it's the smallest away following that I've ever been to following Brighton" and he said, "those 15, some of those 15 I still know and meet up with them and I'm meeting up with them, with some of them today for a beer in the…in the bar up at the Amex"…because that, that's what it means to… that's the identity, the belonging…represent you and all the rest of it…sometimes when you're in a very small group of fans, the intensity is more than when there's thousands of you.

…and I don't…talk about, you know, um, diversity an things in football crowds. I dunno whether people from a non-white background feel that. Say if you are one of 10 black people in that England crowd in Russia, did you feel that…that the closeness to those other 10 black people more than you felt with the other England fans, just because of your colour of your skin or did, did you not, did you feel part of that group…and the guys I spoke to felt they were part of that group…accepted and embraced.
It would be great to interview an England fan from an ethnic minority group, so far I've had no luck though…

Yeah…because there's not that many, you wouldn't have a problem if you went to Wembley and interviewed people. Um…but um, yeah, there's one guy I remember he…he turned up… but it's not, it's not the same for fans from other countries. So, for example, um, he went, when the, uh, Brazilians were there, there was lots of em…um, Brazilians of African origin there just as many as there were Hispanic origin…cause when you think of colonial history in most of these countries, you're gonna have… the other thing as well is, um, a mate of mine's half Welsh. So, he has…but he finds it difficult when England play Wales, he'll support England, but he'll…he'll not be upset if England don't beat them…yeah, and as your living in an increasingly multicultural society, it's interesting to see where national football supporters go. If you've got, you know, your half polish and you're half, quarter Irish and quarter French.

Do you think that kind of impacts on the atmosphere at the ground then?

I… well that is one…that is one of the, I think that going down the line, that is one issue that all international sports gonna have. Not just football. Because if you don't identify of coming from one country, um, then you lose that intensity on what it means to support that country.

So, cricket…that's usually an interesting one for some people…

Cricket's an interesting one. The number of, um, people of Pakistani, Indian or Bangladeshi origin who would support the country of their…their heritage over the country of where they were born or lived in is amazing. But they all support England as a second team. So, it's not that they don't support England…which tells you a lot about people's…people's ties to their blood and how it's projected through sport. Blood really is thicker than water when it comes to sport.

It's like when people chose club over country as well…

And that…that…that trend is increasing. But that…and that's one of the things is globalization, isn't it? As country…as countries don't become, um, mysterious and unique and people from different countries blend together and cultures blend together, and you… in the end, you end up with a, well, you…you end up with a British Asian culture, don't you? So, Amir Khan was a good example of that when he fought the world title fight and he came out with a half England's flag and a half Pakistani flag, did you see that?

Yeah, he's a very good case study…

He's a very…very… very interesting one…he…the only other sportsman that I think in football who tread that in football…who tread that is, um, Ian Wright. He's obviously proud to be black and black culture is important to him. But um, he's obviously proud to be English as well.

I was thinking along the lines of Mo Farrah too…

Well, Mo Farah is one… one, yes. The thing about Mo Farrsh was and is…and it's like, a bit like a girl who plays tennis…

Emma Raducanue?

It's like…it's…it's like how long have they lived in England for? Or have they just used England as a steppingstone to get where they want to go. So, um, Farrah didn't live in England for very long at all. As soon as he got it was about 15 or 16 he went to America, didn't he? He got the scholarship, so he was only in England from…for about 7-8 years as a child.

Is that how you would measure national identity?

Well…well that helps…that helps facilitate your final answer, how do you measure how British you are? And who gets to define it? And as I said at the very start, from a football point of view, from an England fan point of view, the one thing people don't like is being corralled into being told what to do, how to think and where to go. So, England supporters will tell you how English they are for a myriad of different reasons. It won't be one specific reason, but one thing near the top will be how long they have lived in that country…and it's a lot harder to be a football fan if don't live in the situ where your team play…much harder because you don't have that intensity and all the rest of it.

Just to move on then when you travelled to the World cup or the Euro's did you do any other kind of tourist activities?

Yeah, well it's all about, for me and my mates, a lot of it's about dark tourism. So, um…so the last thing you want to do is to go and go to, um…having said that, there's a couple of people who do it who go to…on like the tourist's bus and all the rest of it…yeah. But most people just, um, they'll…they'll go to something because they're interested in that, not because it's the place to go to it. So, for example, in Milan the other day, there's very big cathedral in the middle of Milan but I'm not interested in cathedrals, so I didn't go, but a couple of people did. So, when you go follow the football, even though you go as a group, the reason why your there is the football, that's the one thing you all agree with. But a lot of the time you splinter off and do your own things. There's no…there's no, that's the one…that's a glue that's taking you together…that's the primary purpose. And when you are in the ground or in that moment, that is what brings you together. The rest of the time you are friends with different interests.

So, in Russia what tourist activities did you do?

Uh, so again, cuz we're into all the…dark tourism, so… so, um, Volgograd was brilliant because it had the um, the uh, the flower mill on the banks of the river. And that's where the um, fan park was. So, all about the history of that.

The fan park was on the bank of the Volgar where all the Russian soldiers…

Yeah...uh, I went to Mother Russia…the mother Russia statue

I've never heard of that…
You've never heard of Mother Russia…the great big…the second tallest statue in the world…so it's a…it is a statue of a women holding the…and that's where on the…Volgor it's quite flat and there's a slight hill and that's where hundreds of thousands of Soviet and German soldiers just died and it overlooks the football ground. Amazing place for football…but everybody I know who was in uh Volgograd they all went to Mother Russia and it takes you back again cuz that symbolizes place, identity, belonging, history, loss, sacrifice, all the things that makes you who you are…and not one went on a guided tour. They all did it themselves.

Have you heard of the communism tours, and if so did you do any of those?

Yeah, been to those, yeah…um the best one I went to was in Lithuania when I went to the KJB police station. It was brilliant, just loved it…but that's why we love Eastern Europe, cause it's so you go to Portugal, or if you go to France, you could be in fucking Worthing or anywhere…

Oh, the…the…the KGB um, prison in, uh, well it….it was a Nazi prison in, uh, Lithuania and then after they got booted out, the KGB took it over and they got the different prison cells, and they got the…the torture cells. And one of the…one of the tortures was just horrendous. So, they had this…so this cell, which wasn't tall enough to stand upright in. So, you constantly, so it's like four foot eight or something. So, you're not…you…you can never stand upright. You're always bent over and then, um, they've got a…a plinth in the middle about that, off about the ground. And they've got a basin in there and they've put cold water in the basin…constantly cold water. So you can only stand on this plinth bent over in two to get away from getting hypothermia…just sheer terror.

That sounds like something that would interest me to be fair, like, I remember going to Auschwitz…

Yeah, done all that…the thing about Auschwitz is it's…well the other thing about Auschwitz is that you had to tour, you had to go on the tour. They had to take your round. What you really wanted to do was just go off myself and…yeah, control again…um, what other stuff? So, um, went to the, um, the main memorial in Ukraine. We got the great big, um, monoliths of all the Soviet soldiers who fought in Afghanistan. Um, what else? Um, what, uh, Russian submarine in Kalin grad…the cold war…uh went to uh, I went into a sputnik um, space capsule in the Space Museum in, uh, Moscow. Uh, so the, um, the massacre in the forest, in Lithuania…um Chernobyl um, so that's the sort of thing we, we'd go on. You're not…you're not gonna go and look at opera houses and the cathedrals and the Museums…some…some people would, but our interests are different…and…and the other thing is…is going under…going underground and going into things as well. So, we go like…go to, let's say an underground really, but to go to obscure football matches so that's my cathedral, you know what I mean…or when I was in Krakow I went to the underground bar where all the Krakow ultras drank cause we were looking for a ticket when they played, uh, Legia Warsaw…um, so, uh what else…what else we did…oh yeah we…we um, went in a Russian tank, all that sort of stuff, yeah.

Would you say the football is really primary for you, or?

Oh yeah…the football is definitely…you've got…you've got…you've gotta do these things when the football's not on, and what you…people would splinter off and do their own thing. But most people will be interested in that sort of, um, that sort of history, heritage type thing, not going to see a museum or a…so when…when we went to St. Petersburg, there was eight of us there and there was a huge queue to get into, um, to get into, uh, the Hermitage. A couple of people wanted to go, so they queued in the rain and then the other six went to the vodka museum, yeah. And then they had about, about six different river tours around St. Petersburg and we all wanted to go on the one that went past the football ground cuz that was more important…cause to us that's more important than to go and see some castle or something, yeah.

Yeah, whenever I go abroad, I have to see a stadium or something, or a match…

And a whole group of people who, who make the effort going, have their photograph taken outside in the…in the um, nation's league final three or four years ago in Porto loads of England fans, um, we went, we, well we did it as well, all…all wanted to go to Boa Vista's ground cuz they play in Porto…tiny grounds, very odd place. All in pieces. But they…whilst they were there they wanted to get their photograph outside…yeah, we went to Braga's ground as well in the…in the quarry…it's just got 2 stands…so yeah…so in terms of uh, what do you do when you do non-football things, that's what we do and then of course you've got the…the nightlife that people might partake in on.

So, when you go abroad, is it just to watch England play? Or are there other times you travel with friends, or family and so forth?

With my mates, yeah…yeah and family but uh, and some of my mates, that's…that's the only time we ever meet up, for England games, yeah. Because the other thing about supporting England is you have your friends from all around the country. So I've got mates I go with who live, uh, near Elsmere port, near Chester. Another one lives, um, near Telford. One lives in near Newhaven, all over the place.

Did you meet them all through following England?

So, there's a core group of us who go together and then you know that these other people who are gonna be… a bit like freshers week, you know what I mean? It's the best way I can describe It…yeah. So, the people who…the people who you meet first on your course either you…your own people or in your flat, yeah. And then you go out and start experiencing, don't you? And for the first six months when you're at university, it's impossible not to make meet a hundred people because it's, they know someone and then they want to know you because…it snowballs. You don't get that, um, if you follow England at home, you don't get it. The only way…the only place you get that is if you go to the Green Man pub, you know the Green Man…all the Germans kicked off there the other week when England played Germany…Green Man is on the hill going up towards Wembley central. But it's a main pub for England fans. They've got a big outside area…they get a lot of the England, um, away supporters going there…those that bother going a lot of the away supporters don't even go.

So, do England away fans go to England home games just to get their caps up?
Yeah…yeah

Do some buy tickets and not even go?

Well…well you've hit the nail on the head there…well there was a phase where stewards were walking on…around seats checking people's id against their ticket…because…because you sold your ticket to get the caps…they touched a nerve yeah. So, there's a lot of people, I mean I've done that two or three times. So, that does happen. But they're…they're trying to stamp that out with technology. But that does happen, definitely…and you can't blame people. Say if you're living somewhere like Nottingham, do you want to go see England play Malta at Wembley on a Wednesday night?

What do you think about when England tour around the country? Do you think that's a good idea? Because to me it seems like there the better games to go to…

Absolutely…absolutely. England need to go around the country more…well they need to keep Wembley for some games because it's still, they still need to play in the capital, but um, it's a country not the…the ground. So, they should be going to other grounds. Um, and they should be spreading it around as well. Not necessarily going to grounds that have got massive capacities just to get bums through seats. So yeah, they should be going to, um, Bristol City for example, or Stoke.

The Women's game does…

Exactly…crowd's not as big. You'll get so many fans complaining about having ago about being Wembley centric, uh, and because it's, it happens so often, all this stuff about, well the players wanna play there. They don't, they play there so often…the gloss has been taken off it and a lot of the…a lot of the…the supporters from the big teams well they've been there before. Um, so I think they should play, they should play around, um, other…and that would definitely in our England community that don't easily have access to the national game…when…when Man City played the…the semi-final of the FA Cup I think it was uh, against Brighton it was two-thirds empty you know…So I…I definitely think…but the FA won't do it because Wembley a cash cow, you know…

About three or four years ago, there was a rumour going round that the FA was thinking about selling Wembley. And a lot of the England fans, I knew virtually everyone thought it was a good idea. Um, because um, what they were gonna do, they were gonna sell it to a guy…it was, um, they wanted to have Fulham, Brentford and QPR play at Wembley, yeah. So those...the… the supporters of those teams were vehemently against it, yeah…but…but, um, they were also gonna use it for an American football franchise cuz they…they… they were trying to get a NFL team based in London.

That's been on the cards for a few years now…

Yes…So they used Wembley quite a bit, don't they? And they were trying to get a, they were gonna say, well we'll buy Wembley off the FA, use that, is it 16 games in season, they play…and then…and then the rest of the time they'll use…use it for football and the FA would get the money from the ground, pay off the debt that they had a huge debt to pay off and then put money into grassroots football, which is what they should be doing. You know, so you, you go down to see Shoreham play and the flood light's not working properly. There should be money in for the football for the footlights so the kids can train on a Wednesday night…so, rather kid hanging around the street corners looking for trouble, they've got a place to go…yeah, so the other thing about the England fans is there's absolutely no respect for the establishment or the FA for all that entails.

Oh okay…

Well, the whole thing about the caps wasn't it? I mean they uh…before um, you used to get two caps for going away and one cap for going at home. So, there's more value to going to away games, but they changed it. So, you now get two caps for going to Wembley and two caps for going away…even though, the cost implication, yeah. So, if you went…so if you lived down the road in… in Harrow, you could go to six England games at Wembley and have the same amount of points as someone who went to San Marino, Serbia etc… and who lives in Newcastle…So, but what they're now talking about doing, I think they've started it, uh, if you go and see England women play, you get caps for the men's team…they're bringing that in.

Do you think that's a good thing or a bad thing quickly before I get the drinks?

Well, that… that, whoa…whoa…that…that is a whole new ball game, where you're talking about gender and sexuality and yeah, you're actually combining the men's football, there's a value of going to watch women's football to watch men's football and vice versa. So, the move towards a combination of the two is happening and it's been driven by money because obviously you've got an incentive to go and say England women's play…so the FA are not stupid, yeah.

It did take them a while to figure that out though….

It took em a long time to catch on to women's…I mean I…I, I'm not a fan of women's footballers, just not my bow at all, because of the reasons that I explain, yeah. But as soon as you start getting, giving people the incentive to watch women's football so they can watch men's football, you'll get more people from that group going that will then change the dynamics, yeah…Then there's more money in the game. So, the women will get paid more. So that will change their, the dynamics of being a woman footballer. So, over a period of time the game will become more like the man's game. Not…not necessarily in the way it's played, but in the politics of it, the financing of it, yeah…the accessibility, and the grassroots funding too, and right now the BBC love women's football cause it's cheap as chips. And, like, programs like football focus is at least a quarter the program is centred on women's football.
Slowly but surely that uniqueness of what it… cause it's fresh that is gonna get, it's already getting eaten away. You know what I mean? Yeah.

Interesting, especially about the caps I am quite surprised about that especially seeing as it's cheaper to get womens tickets…

I don't know if they started yet, there's rumors that the… that's what they wanted to do... I mean…I mean if…if pitch technology allows it to happen, um, wouldn't surprise me that we won't be very far away from having a man's game kicking ogg at three o'clock. Chelsea men playing at three, Chelsea women playing at six.

So, kind of like the new Hundred format in cricket…

Yeah…but it'll cut the pitch to pieces so the managers might not like that…but now you've got all weather pitches and those hybrid pitches they can take um, multiple games a lot easier. So as long as this technology allows it, that is definitely on the cards. I… I think yeah, five years…well they've already started playing it at the men's grounds, haven't they and it wouldn't surprise me either if they don't introduce what they're doing in other sports, where they're in mixed relays in swimming and athletics. It wouldn't surprise me if they start having a mixed men's and women's team.

Do you think that is really a thing?

It depends one…one of the reasons why I…I don't particularly like women's football is because the intensity of the game is not the same. And I…I spoken to a lot of women about this and they accuse me of being sexist. Right. But if you're physically not as big and you're physically not as strong, it doesn't make you less skilful. But that's not like that, it's like that, yeah. You know what I mean? You're heading the ball, you're not heading it down the pitch, you're heading it half as far…and I…I would imagine that there'll be a definite movement within the sort of radical feminist movement to, to integrate that but don't get me involved in feminism.

Lucky for you this topic isn't about feminism…

PAUSE IN RECORDING (DRINKS BREAK)

Are you okay to go again?

Yeah.

As I said this part of the interviews focuses on your attitudes towards Muslims and Islam before we move onto the World Cup…right, so could you share with me any thoughts you may have towards Muslims in the religion of Islam?

Uh, I don't know that much about it, so, uh, I'm ambivalent when it comes to all religion, but I wouldn't dismiss, uh, learning more about it whilst I'm there. Uh, the one thing I do know is that Islam is of different, uh, strains and one of the issues about Qatar is that the strain of Islam…are they Sunni Muslims or Shia, I'm not sure which difference is but…so that would dictate certain…um, laws and policies to do with alcohol, for example, with the role of women and things like that. Which is why, one of the reasons why were going to Dubai, which is a different strain of Islam to Qatar.

Can you tell me more about the different strains at all?

So, you've got Sunni…Sunni and Shia's haven't you? They…they're different branches split, bit like Catholicism and Protesticm, two types of Christianism…uh, and certain countries practice Shia Islam and other practice uh…Sunni Islam.

Is it that binary, or are there other splits?

I…I dunno that…I dunno. But that…that will definitely have an… so that will have an impact on, so far as going to the World Cup concerned. That will definitely have an impact. Um, so for example, Iran will have a lot of supporters…Saudi Arabia will have a lot of supporters and they follow two completely

different folders of Islam. So, there's potential for there to be tension, uh, between the Iranians and the Saudies, um, cause of, uh, the strands of Islam where they come from.

Do you know much about Islamic culture itself? You've touched on the roles of women but could you elaborate at all on their roles?

Uh…so, well, uh, going back to Qatar, what I've learned and read about Middle East and…and Dubai is, I think it's Dubai that's got a, it's 80% male population to 20% women. I think that's Dubai. Um, and that's a lot to do with, uh, the nature of the…the Emirate, the type of businesses that are run there. Lots of overseas foreign workers are there. So the role of sort of women and very much, um…the… how… I'm imagining how women are perceived in those places are significantly different because of the lack of women that there are. So, uh…and the value of those women, whether they're Islamic women or women from different cultures.

Um…what do you know about the gender roles though? And Islam in general for example?

Um, not a great deal to be honest with you. Other than it's, uh, particularly male dominated, um, culture, isn't it? With women restrictions on where women can go to certain places, what they have to wear when they go to certain places. Can they go to certain places by themselves or do they have to be accompanied by a man? Can they go to football matches? There's talk about the Iranians being kicked out because this whole issue about women not being allowed to go to football or something like that, isn't it.

I'm not sure, I know I've seen images that women have been segregated at matches in Iran, or some other Islamic country where they have their own separate stand…how do you feel about that though?

Um, well as I said at the very, very start, the first thing that I said was that one of the things about going to support England was that you don't want to be corralled and controlled into where you go, what you do, how you behave. You should be free to do all of that within the bounds of common decency and respect for…for other people and other countries, yeah. Um, so from my point of view, the more women that go to…whether women go to the football match or not, is there should be free to go, whether they go or not. I'd be extremely surprised when we're in Qatar that there'll be a large women support and if they, if there are, they'll be from non-Islamic countries.

We'll have to wait and see. So, do you believe there will be much of an opportunity to interact with local Islamic women in Qatar or Dubai when you're there?

Um, if you make the effort, I…I…I I'm perceiving that you would need to make the effort to, to go to somewhere to…into meet Islamic women as opposed to other places where other people came to you. And by that, I mean, um…um, sharing a Airbnb with a family, mum and dad with a couple of kids…I would imagine it's very difficult to go and share a…a room in a Islamic household with a man and his wife…and in some practices of Islam I don't think that would be allowed at all.

Okay, so do you have any friends who are Muslim, or is there anybody you know?

Yeah…yeah…no.

Can you elaborate?

Um, I…uh, I know, um, people of all different faiths, as I said to you before, I like to meet people who are different to me and people exactly the same as me. What I don't like people who are a little bit like me, yeah. Because I can then pick out the bits I don't like about them, yeah. So, you've either gotta be my doppelganger or completely different opposite to me, yeah. Um, which is one reason why later on I'm gonna go to the… the gay bar around the corner, not…not cause I'm gay, I'm straight but I have got but I've got gay friends who are comfortable drinking there. I'm more than comfortable drinking there because I like to meet people who are different to, to what I am, I find it interesting. So, um…um, but

Muslim friends who, um, some people who, um, practice, um, are devout. Um, one of the guys I work with he uses the prayer room at work. Um, and I've talked to him at depth about, um, uh, um, Islamic culture and about the idea of, um…um, what's it called? Fast…Ramadan and what Ramadan's about and um, at the end of Ramadan the giving of gifts to people to show, um, empathy, solidarity with somebody who's may need your help and support. So, um…and I… I've learned quite…and I've got a lot of people who, who fast every Ramadan. Um, and again, that's one reason why the world…one of the world, that's one reason why the World Cup can't be certain times of year, not just the heat but because of the religious, um, festivals in Middle East, so you couldn't have football on during Ramadan for example.

How do you feel about that in, in football? How they've introduced the kind of Ramadan timeout recently? I don't know if you've seen that?

I haven't no…

I believe it was last year where during Ramadan any Muslim player after the 25-minute mark could break their fast and take some energy on especially at night games

Ah…you…you've got to be very careful that you…that it's just not tokenism. Um, I know a lot of the whole thing about the Black Lives matter and then giving you the knee, there's a lot of, um, people I go to football with are 50/50 about that…they're 50/50 about it…they understand what it's about and they…they respect what it means. But it's a tokenism of doing it there, and then, you know, it's…it's pointless…it's pointless doing all these, uh, minor tokens… all these minor tokens if you don't see real change, and the real change is when people of free choice, walk through the turnstiles and go and see the game or they turn up training on a, you know…you know, couple lads you can see lads turn up wearing the um, um, turbine for a football practice…that tells you… that tells you that… that is things that you never see not give, putting your knee on the floor for some gesture in front of the TV cameras.

Do you think there will ever be real change though?

I think there…there definitely will be. And I…and I think the definite change is as you become a more, um, as you become a more multicultural society, all those, um, rigidities of where you come from become diluted. So, a bit like saying, um…um, you could be of a certain faith but you don't have to go to church on the certain day. You don't have to go Sunday service, you can go on Monday afternoon by yourself, yeah. You don't have to um, go to Friday prayers every Friday to be a good Muslim. You go whenever you're free and available.

So, in terms of football?

And…and that and that…that would then free up the availability for people to partake in…in sports and events. Um, so for example, if you are…I used to work in uh, um, near uh, um, Stanford Hill with the largest civic Jewish population, there's not a cat in helss chance of them play of…of a Orthodox Jewish person playing football on a Friday.

In your opinion is religion a hinderance at times then?

Um, it's not the religion that's the hi…the hindrance. It's the constraints that religion puts on you, isn't it? And it's not just restraints on the religion, it's also restraints on the state, isn't it? Yeah. On, on how it wants you to behave. So, it takes us back to the fan zone. Yeah. Wants you to go to the fan zone, doesn't it? Yeah. Uh, it wants you to, um, it, it wants you to uh, respect another team's national anthem, doesn't it? That's what they want you to do.

Well, that's why we have the traditional 3pm kick off on a Saturday

The traditional 3pm kick off in the calendar, yeah…and uh, times when people… working class people worked Saturday morning and watch football Saturday afternoon. So, so I definitely think, um, so I

definitely think things will change, but you need it to change at a grassroots level. I mean if you go to a cricket match, it's changed… the number of Asian players in English cricket team…there's no reason why you couldn't have that, um, in football or rugby. Well, you do get that in rugby…um, you get a lot of people from um…uh, first Nation Australians and Malis and all the rest of it don't you playing rugby. So, so it, it sport can cross boundaries without a doubt. And, and, and I think it's, it, it it is definitely increasing. But um, and I think it's a snowball effect is the more non-white faces you get in the crowd, the more…the more non-white faces you'll get. And definitely if you goes to Wembley, to see England play, there is a huge proportion of um, particularly Asian, uh, faces. And that I think that's partly because of the large, um, uh, sub-continent diaspora around…around Wembley and Harrow and all the rest. So if you, if you go to the area where those people, where those larger communities, if they will embrace it.

Have you seen that kind of change since following England?

Slowly…but not hugely…that's around the home support, not the away support

Do you think in a few years' time you might see that transcend into the away support too?

Slowly, but as I said, you wrote the race out that that the away support is all about the identity and that…that my brothers and the intensity, yeah. And that to me there's still a discord between that and being of a non-white background or…just subconsciously.

Will that always be there?

Uh, well I don't think it will because the more…the more people who go to the, the home games, the more likely you are to build up that rapport with the people.

It's really interesting to hear your take on this, although it is slightly off topic so moving on…if you can think about relations between different religious groups in England, especially Islam. How do you believe these communities interact with other communities, particularly white Brits, or other British citizens?

Um, well I've said to you the other day, I was in…in Leeds the other day, um, my uncle is the only, he's one of three uh, white faces on his street it's about 15 minutes from Elland Road football ground. And the other two white faces are from Eastern Europe. Everyone else are Pakistani or Bangladeshi descent and very, very little integration at all, especially within the older communities. In fact, I went to the, I went to the um, help the agents place where it goes and there's literally one room full of elder Pakistani women and one room of elder white women, literally.

Why do you believe that is?

I think it's cultural, historical, um, a lack of understanding about what each group…fundamentally they're both interested in the same things aren't they, like…like, family, life, cooking, um, uh, friendship, kinship, all the same things. Uh, but I do think that is definitely different in younger community…more connections without a doubt.

Why is that?

Because more people are um, live parallel lives…more people live integrated lives, not parallel lives…schooling um, little things like, um, I dunno if you notice the multitude of these cake and ice cream shops that have opened everywhere, there's loads in Brighton and at Wembley when you go, yeah. Predominantly open to cater for the non-drinking, um, youth from somewhere for people to go meet ice cream park and cake shop. But more and more, uh, people in cultures who do drink a whole alcohol go there as well. Cause they like to go and have coffee or ice cream. So, what started off as a, as specifically a, a place for somebody who's of a different cultural history or heritage is beginning to be

infiltrated by other people who are not of that cultural heritage, but what it offers them is something that they're interested in themselves.

Okay…um so there was a report out a few weeks ago, or a few months ago called dinner table prejudice. The report found that people who are prejudice towards Muslims are actually from the middle and upper classes of society and not from below…can I just get your take on that? I dunno if you've seen the report.

Um…from my experience, the more, um, educated you are, the more, the less prejudices your more likely to be. So, I'm not gonna say base it on class, I'm gonna base it on knowledge, education and experiences and the essence of who you are, yeah….so that's not my experience.

Can you elaborate on your experience?

As I say. So, people who, who, who I know, um, who are um, and I'm not basing it on class, I'm basing it on, um, people's um, innate interest in expanding their horizons and education is a key driver for that. Yeah. Um, that, that fuels you interest in different people and places and food and all the rest of It, and I think if you, if you come from a, a background with that allows you good education that will allow you to come into contact with different cultures and ideas. And if you have a lower class or underclass and you've got no, uh, life chances, then you're gonna stay within your own group.

Why do you believe people stay within their own group?

Because of takes you back to the very thing we said before, yeah. The sense of identity and belonging and the essence of who I am…comfort. And yeah, it's a whole um, um, Darwin thing, isn't it? About, um, uh, the, the, um, what's the word I'm thinking of? The uh, is it, is it, is it, yeah. Is it, is it about, um, you, you, you, your animals would stay with their own and would attack someone from outside. Yeah. And they would then attack the weakest from their own in order for them to survive in their purist war, yeah and…well it's, it's the whole idea, Nazi theory is part of it, yeah. Um, and I think that is innate in humankind as a species cuz every species behaves in that way. But humans have the ability to get out of that and to lift themselves out of that and behave in a, a way that is more human. Cuz they have thoughts and feelings and sensitivities that other creatures don't have.

There's a social psychological theorist, well he died years ago now but he argued that it's part of human nature to favour your own ingroup because of the commonalities and the feeling of being safe…the sense of being in a comfort zone…

But that…that can be changed by what's inside of you; do you want to experience different things, widen your own horizons and in order to do that, when you have the ability to think like that, which is God given to you. And secondly you have to have the resources to behave like that and the experiences as well. And ironically to give you the example of my uncle and the Pakistani ladies in one room and the white lady in the other, they live side by side and they have the opportunity to share those experiences, but they don't.

There's actually an interesting study that was done 15-20 years ago that looked at how people of different races, or ethnic groups self-segregated themselves on a beach…I think it was in South Africa...um, and the researcher observed like where people would choose to sit and stuff…

It's a sub-conscious bias and I think that's goes right back to the animal instinct of survival looking at the, um, that's probably not a politically correct thing to say in…cuz um, radical thought…it's trying to move you away from thinking like that, isn't it? And toward inclusivity and all the rest of it. Yeah. But the only way I could, you can become truly inclusive is you have to give up a little bit of yourself and take on board something from others, whatever that may be, yeah. So yeah, literally you've got to, uh…even down to basic things like learning another language or experience somebody else's food. Yeah. Or go to a somebody else's places of worship or even wear somebody else's clothes. You know, wear clothing for example. Unless you prepare to do experience those things, you'll never, and give up a

little bit of yourself, um, to become somebody else and more rounded then you, you… you won't, you'll just do what those women did and they just stick to their own group. And…and that covers all ethnic groups. Not, it's not just one ethnic group who actually, who um, uh, doesn't accept others. It's not white women…it wasn't the white women saying no to the Asian women. And it wasn't the Asian women saying no to the white women…you have to give up a bit of yourself.

And your identity?

Well…your…you're not giving up your identity, your bartering your identity…your bartering your identity don't you.

Okay, just moving on then how do you think Muslims and Islam are represented within the media in the UK?

Um…I thought it was only gunna be questions about football…um, I think, um, you tend, the media does tend to portray, um, Islam in a case of, um, a rigid idea and concept and doesn't, um, explain that there's, um, freedoms within different types of Islam to do different things. It's like one, one idea, one concept. You are either a Muslim or you are not. And of course, that's not the case.

Um, so is their kind of like any stereotypes that comes to mind is kind of frequently used within the media?

Um, well the obvious one is, is on news reporting. So, you'll often get, um, um, war conflicts are often identified through religion and you'll often get, um, again, it's my idea of this tokenism where you often get somebody from a Muslim background to talk on behalf of their whole community when they, the whole community is, has diversity within it, yeah. So, if you can't possibly have…how can a um, Muslim elder talking about riots in Leicester recently? Yeah. Between the Indian population and Pakistani, how can a Muslim elder truly know what a um, 16 year old, um, in Leicester who's father's Pakistani, his mother's white, white English, how can he talk to represent what they think?

True, there's so many different experiences and identities and it goes back to the fact that everyone is different, and identities are plural. Are there any specific stereotypes that come to mind that are used frequently to describe Muslims?
Um, the clothing, is one. So, you identify, um, people who would wear certain type of clothing as being more religiously rigid than others. Um, and that I think in, in the media you do, when you get, you often show pictures of large, large number of people wearing Islamic clothing.

Is that a negative thing or positive?

Oh, I think that…it depends which way you look at it, yeah. I have again, um, I'll be controversial here, but you don't have to wear, um, Islamic clothing to be, um, Muslim…there's different, um, clothes that you can wear. For example, the hijab doesn't have to be black, it can be pink, can't they? There's no colour bar on it, yeah. Um, and I think by everyone wearing the same type of club, almost a uniform, it's a uniform that people see. Isn't it? It…it it's that perception of isolation, indifference and not of me that I think alienates people, well it alienates me….but, but if I saw, um, say, I mean I'm not sure the different types of strand of Islam, but say if you said, um, from say Lebanese descent, um, and they wear the head scarf…that although that part of an Islamic headdress that doesn't, the image that portrays isn't the same as somebody wearing the full veil.

So, do you think they have a choice in the matter?

They have…um, well Islam allows 'em a choice, whether or not the peer pressure in their family allows 'em a choice is a different thing altogether.

Because if you look at Iran for example, in 1960s, a completely different place than Iran in 2010.

Well, a friend of mine, she, um, got married to uh, um, Iranian, um, Muslim, and while she was married, she wore the Islamic clothes, and she divorced him. And now she doesn't wear those clothes at…because she, she wanted to conform to his religion…she married him, so as part of her commitment to him, she took on his…what he wanted her to be as a woman.

So, there was a power imbalance there?

And she was happy to do that. But when she separated from him, she didn't feel necessary to continue to wear those clothes. And her children, of which their father, their father is Iranian, didn't feel the needs to wear those clothes either. But it doesn't make them any less of having Muslims heritage…um, but every religion has the um, uh regalia and clothes doesn't it. I was in…I was in um, uh, the Vatican Square a few years ago. Have you been to the Vatican?

Never been to Rome…

It's an amazing place. The little side street from the Vatican and they've got, um, it's uh, clothes shop for popes and nuns. Ecclesiastical clothes shop…made it look like a department store, yeah. I went into this department and they had crooks, you know, like are they called crooks staffs where, you know, all in crushing with diamonds and they had you know the hold, and they had you know, the, the yellow and white, um, crowns, I dunno what the word…and then they had all the…the different robes and, and they, it's so on and gold on it and, and everything. And it took up about 80% of…of the shop, right, for the…for the, um, the bishop, the arch. Um, what what's the, what's the, what's the name for them, the archbishop. So, it's…it's clothes for, for senior church, Catholic church. You know, they got the, the gold um, um, things down there and all that… anyway and in one little corner, like a tiny little corner, they had, um, clothes for the nuns, okay. And it was one uniform. It's a very meek clothing, yeah. Flat shoes, stockings and it was like a blue and white pinafore, yeah. You went into this shop, and I was, was in there for ages. I got amazed by it and I don't, I'm sure it wasn't just the luck of when I was there. I'm sure it happened all the time. I went in there and there must have been about 60 people in the shop, not one bishop or Arch Deacon, 60 nuns all from places like the Philippines and Indonesia. And they'll come in to do their pilgrimage, but they're also coming to buy their clothes…

but…but it made me talk about clothes and what they symbolize and, and the power balance, all that. It made me smile that you've got all this space set aside for a tiny proportion of people, of all the regalia. And you've got this little bit in the left leftover bit in the corner where everyone was buying, but they're all buying exactly the same thing because the religion is teaching them to look exactly the same.

In your opinion, is it repressive?

I think that's repressive, yeah.

Do you think it can be empowering at the same time that they choose to wear that and want to wear that?

I personally don't know…but what it does give them is it gives them a sense of identity, doesn't it? The very identity that I've talked about going to the football wearing an England shirt and all of that stuff.

Well, they do say football has replaced Christianity as a religion…

It's the same when I worked in the, with the Orthodox, Orthodox Jewish area and all the, women mean were all wearing… all with the hair pieces and the flat shoes and the um, the hats and all exactly dressed the same, yeah. Um, a bit like the England fans all wearing English shirts when they go to watch. So, maybe football is a, is a modern religion. And that would explain why people like me don't go to the cathedral or the mosques. They would rather go to a football ground.

Right, so I'm conscious of time here, it's 20 to 6, so what time did you say you have to shoot off?

In about 10 minutes

Okay, right so looking towards the World Cup what image do you have of Qatar and the Arabian Peninsula as a sport event destination?

Um, well it's, um, expensive, elitist, um, because...the whole of the Arabian Peninsula…the Arabian Peninsula that you can gain access to as a Westerner, okay. Which is different to parts of the Arabian Peninsula that you can't get to because, um, of war or because of the politics not being pro-western.

What countries would you define as the Arabian Peninsula?

Uh, well I would go, um, Bahrain, what pro-western?

Just the countries that make it up…

Um, well the Arabian Peninsula. I'd say Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, um, Yemen, uh, Oman, UAE and all its constituent parts. Um, Muscat…Muscats the capital of Oman, isn't it? Um, I wouldn't say, um, I wouldn't say Israel and Palestine are part of the Arabian Peninsula. Um, basically anything east of the Red Sea.

You pretty much named them all apart from the big one…

Did I miss one out? Did I, uh, which is… I said Saudi, didn't I? Huh? I

No, the big one where…where the World Cup is

Oh, Qatar. Didn't I say Qatar? But the interesting thing is, there's, there's enclaves of countries within other countries. So, when we're in Dubai, we're hoping to go to Oman, there's a little enclave across the strait of mamoose, um, which is part of Oman, not the UAE. I'm hoping to go there.

What do you think of some of the Arabian Peninsula countries such as Saudi Arabia investing into sport? Such as Man City and more recently Newcastle United…what is your perception of this?

I think that is the, the way of, um, if you live in a capitalist society, uh, then those who have got money, you're gonna want to invest to make more money. And the Premier League's a cash cow, isn't it? With all the TV rights and, um, I think, um, the rich become richer, and the poor become poor.

So do you think that's why they're investing into sport just to make more money?

Not just…well that's one, that's one significant driver you gotta invest, to lose. But you know, yeah, it's odd not to be attached with something that is the best…cultural attachment, yeah. Same with horse racing, I mean to horse racing as well. And the Middle East have got a huge stock. I'm hoping to go to May down, which is like the Royal ASCOT of Dubai when I'm there, um, and again, they invest massively in, in horse stock. Um, so I think it's a way of, um, elite countries with people with lots of money, um, finding way to spend their money to make more money.

In your opinion is that a good, or bad thing?

Uh, mm, well I'm not, I'm not a socialist, so, uh, I...I don't particularly believe in the redistribution of wealth because if you redistribute money to people who haven't earned it, they don't, they don't understand it and they won't spend it on the right things. I know you could argue that, uh, peak millionaires haven't earned it, the systems make the millionaire. I understand that, but we're not here to talk about that, are we? Yeah. But, um, I, I think that, um, the, the whole, you get what you're getting at

here is the whole thing about, you know, the migrant workers and you know, the number of people dying in the construction of grounds and all the rest of it, yeah. What's the morality of, of that, isn't it? So, um, it's very sad. Um, the world's is full of Injustices and me not going to the World Cup isn't gonna change those injustices.

Just in sports there's a lot of injustices in general…

Uh, I think that as an…as an individual, me making a stand against them won't change one thing, yeah. In fact, by going to those places, I'm more likely to, um, to uh, find out more about those places I can learn more so that maybe I could…could tackle injustices moving forward. It's a bit like the, um, as I said to you before the gay fans I'm meeting later, when I said I went to Russia for the World Cup, they said I couldn't possibly go to Russia. And I said, well, if you don't go, you can't see what it's like and you can't affect change. It's alright to, to sit on ya from a far and say, I'm not partaking that because it's something I don't agree with. Well find out about it and do something rather than just be passive about it.

I'm very conscious of time, so just quickly then have you looked at any tourism activities to do when you're out in Dubai?

Yeah, we're gonna go, I wana to go to Oman, um, gonna go um, to uh, um, desert, night desert in the cars, yeah. Dune buggy things. Uh, I dunno about camel riding. In Dubai you gonna go on all the hell skeletons and the horse racing is my thing. Um, but also go round um, other things like ethnic, like local restaurants and cafes. Um, I don't like going to um, chains when I go abroad. So, I will be putting money into local economy by going to a, you know, a coffee shop…a shisha, shisha coffee shop.

Do you know much about the local food?

Uh, I haven't looked it up. Like when I went to Russia I learned all about Russian, Russian food. I haven't done that so much for Dubai…again because the feeling is is that it's, it's such a well-known place that you turn up and you probably…one one street you could have a Kebab the next street you could have fish and chips and the next street you could have tapas, couldn't you?

Um, so do you have any concerns about the Arabian Peninsula or Dubai as a tourist destination or any concerns in general?

Uh, the only thing is, um, is um, about uh, security, um, especially… um, and I think security inside the ground would be fine. It's the pinch point is outside grounds.

What is it about security that you're concerned about?
Um, well one, the sheer volume of people who were gonna be there. So, crowd control is a big one for me. Cause I…I had friends who died at Hillsborough. Well, so, no, they were, they didn't, they were at Hillsborough, they didn't die. They trampled over people who died to get out. Sorry. Put that right. Um, so crowd control is a big one. Um, and uh, the whole terrorism thing, not, not because it's in Qatar. Cause any big national event, world event like that will be a magnet. Uh, um, and the, the pinch points definitely when I was in Russia, the pinch points weren't in the ground. It was a bit just before you got to the ground.

So just a bit off topic, but…so as soon as you land in Qatar at the airport, you're gonna be straight on the metro to the ground, or?

No, so we, we…we're flying out on the Saturday evening. So, we get to Dubai about five in the morning, but with all the sportops people. And then the England game is on the, so we, we get into Qatar about half past five on a Sunday morning and the England game is on, if I remember correctly is on the Monday at 10 o'clock.

First game against Iran…

Yeah, Iran, yeah. So, we'll be back on the plane after about eight hours.

Oh okay. So, you fly out straight after the game essentially.

And then in and out, yeah.

Are you excited about that? Are you gonna be able to…

I really want…no I…but I…well what will happen is if, if England get to the quarter finals or further then we'll we we're talking about relocating to Qatar and leaving Dubai cuz there'll be more accommodation available then there'll be less people around. That's what happened in Russia. It's a lot easier to get accommodation once the knockout stages began cuz half the fans have gone. And ironically, as I said to you before, um, if you're gonna go to games or you want accommodation, you want a lot of the European teams to stay in cuz they're gonna be the least well supported, yeah. So, if say England, England, Iran, the ticket for that would be really hard because there'd be so many Iranian coming over. But if it was…so a game like um, um, Portugal against um, uh, Portugal against Ghana, that would be a relatively easy game to get tickets for and it'd be relatively easy to get accommodation if there's a game on. I

Right. Um, anyway, I know you need to shoot off. So just one quick final question. Could you just tell me about your thoughts on the World Cup in Qatar.

Um, I think it'll be different tournament because of the closeness of the grounds, but that's been diluted by the fact that the accommodation is not available for you to everyone to experience that which is why you've gotta fly in and out, which makes it like any other tournament where there's lots of traveling involved. Time of year doesn't fit in with um, European psyche. Um, but it fits in with…but it, it, it fits in with the needs and requirements of the Middle East in terms of the heat and the religious aspect of not having it in religious holidays. And therefore, although I respect that, I, again, I wouldn't, I would prefer the summer tournament not in Qatar, but since it's there I'll go. I have never been to the Arabian Peninsula. I'll probably never go again. So, it's my…football's a vehicle for me to go and learn about.

If you enjoyed your experience, would it tempt you to go again maybe and explore the region more?

Probably not because I, I would've enjoyed the experience cuz it's the football that leads it. So it, it's all led by football. So next summer I'm go hoping go to Georgia for the under 21 tournament. Um, I've always wanted to go to Georgia, but now I have a reason to go. Football's the vehicle.

Travelling always second…

Yeah, and you'll find that with the hardcore England fans. That's what it's about and a lot of people just go for the day out and not interested in anything else. I'm, I'm quite… the people I go with are a little bit more different, they're more willing to do those things even though they're there for the football they like to experience new cultures.

Appendix 6: Audio-Visual Diary Transcripts

Stephen Diary 1:

So, day 9 in Qatar now. So, I'm having a really good time…in terms of speaking to the locals haven't actually interacted with all of them but spoken to a lot of migrant workers who come from India, Pakistan and other Muslim countries and there really, really friendly and interested about our countries and England, and stuff like that and the football scene and they've been talking to us about that.

…so, my opinion of Muslims hasn't changed in a negative way at all…the efficiency and transportation and everything has been great. Obviously, that's a lot…down to the migrant workers but…yeah obviously going to see Senegal later on…went to see Brazil last night, which was really interesting to sort of see…all of the sort of people from India and places like that coming to support Brazil, but anyway…right okay.

Ian Diary 1:

Oh, uh, good afternoon. It's, uh, Thursday, the 7th of December, uh, just having a quick video to help Tom out with his, uh, thesis. Um, today I just have a few words about, um, clothing in, uh, the Middle East and impact on football. Quite interesting. We're seeing quite a few people wearing traditional Arab dress, but carrying, um, scouts or banners for, for Western teams. Um, certain people go to the football dress in, uh, outfits that represent their countries, such as the Lord Admiral Hat for England. There's an American dressed up with a Statue of Liberty hat, um, Australian kangaroo hats and it just made me realise that actually clothing is a type of uniform, uh, can be religious, um, can be, uh, a way to mark someone's cultural and identity, whether it be traditional Arab dress or non-Arab dress. So, uh, that's the observation that I've got to make today.

Thank you.

Nick Diary Transcript 2:

Hello, mate. So, we're on, day three of, uh, our trip out here. Again, lots of positive experiences, um, especially with all nations. We're at the Japan, Germany game today. Um, the Japanese fans were phenomenal. Um, met them on the, on the boats out there. Um, had some great chats with them and bumped into some Welsh fans and had good chat there. Um, the service again is outstanding. There are not enough people who can help you get to the ground, show you where the tube is or the buses or the stadiums.

Everybody's incredibly friendly. Um, there was one, uh, negative situation that happened, uh, the night before last. I wasn't there at the time, but some of the lads met, um, a fella from Saudi on the cruise ship. Um, and he was very proud of the fact that he was a people trafficker. Um, he was with his friend and his friend went to school with him. Um, his friend validated everything he was saying and just said that he didn't agree with what he was doing, which is, um, pretty fucking mental. He said to the lads, he was like, I can get you any girl you want. Uh, just let me know what you want and I'll get you it, which is, um, crazy. Apart from that, everything's been great. Just it's, that one mad situation. Everything else has been, has been

class, um, big screen by the pool. We've been watching all the games there if we've not been going to them. Um, and yeah, the, uh, the guy who looks after our room is Tunisian great relationship with him. Really friendly guy. Um, just the other night was a bit crazy.

Appendix 7: 'Post-event' Interview Transcript

<u>Sarah Post-Interview 6th April 2023</u>

So just thinking back to when you started to pack for Qatar, how were you feeling? Did you have any concerns or anything that was popping in your head?

Um…obviously I was still worried about like the dress. What should I take? What am I supposed to wear? Um, but because we…well, because I went later down the line in the tournament, I could see what everybody else is wearing. It didn't seem to be a problem. So, I tucked in an extra couple of pairs of short shots.

When did you go out again? Because Terry went out first and then you didn't go until?

Yeah, he went out before…before the Wales game the day before…. yeah, the day before the Wales game.

And when did you go out? Sorry.

When did I go out? He went out the day before the USA game. I went out the day before the Wales game.

Oh Okay that was a day before I left that was.

Yeah…but there was, you know, the atmosphere was good. And I've been seeing, like, a lot of things about the Red Lion on all.. all the Facebook and social media groups, the England supporters Club. So I could see that it wasn't quite like they were telling us it was um… I had friends out there that were… that lived out there and they were messaging me and they were really excited about it all. Um, so, it wasn't too… I wasn't, I started to…all the anxieties that I had before started to ease, really…seeing the reality of it.Had I gone at the beginning of the tournament, I think I probably would have been a bit more dubious, packed differently as well and stuff so, it was good.

Yeah, definitely…definitely. I mean, I flew out what, the first couple of days of the tournament and I didn't really know what to expect.

Yeah, and it was when all that stuff with the…the beer was all…all that stuff for the alcohol and like only a few days before the tournament they changed all of minds about everything and that through massive worry in my head before the tournament started, because I was like the changing their mind on these things, what's the rights of people going to be like? What's the atmosphere going to be like? What's the policing going to be like? Um, very much in two minds, because if they want to showcase the country they've got to have it as good as possible and as visitable as possible, but at the same time I didn't really know what to expect because everyone was having a good time.

It was literally like on the Friday they changed their minds about the alcohol right, like a couple of days before the first game… which was on like the Friday or Saturday…

Sunday…yeah, because I think it was supposed to start on the Monday but then they moved the game because Qatar weren't playing the first game and everyone was like, why is the host country not playing the first game? So, I think they moved that game to the Sunday, I think.

I remember watching that game before I packed my bag actually…so, when you first landed in Qatar what were your initial impressions? Because I remember getting of the bus and it was weird because there was only like 5 of us on this World Cup shuttle bus because everyone else got on a transfer bus

Yeah. So I actually got chatting to the guy that was sat next to me on the plane and he was doing something…he was something to do with…I don't know grassroots football. I don't know they've visited tournaments, they…he was telling me about it. Now I can't really remember it. Ohh, I thought, what am I going to do? Everyone's saying women shouldn't travel on their own, but there's so many people here they're travelling and…and then these guys said just stick with us. They were staying on the cruise ships but they were staying on the third cruise ship that had been drafted in a bit later, I think.

The smaller one…the opera was it?

Hmm yeah…yeah, that's the one…

So, they were in almost a completely different direction to me and I planned my route and a new which…which tube I needed to get on. And Terry and Richard were saying, we'll meet you at the tube station. I was like, how on Earth am I going to meet you at a tube station. They are my…like, they're big, they're massive and he's like, we'll see you don't you worry. What I didn't realise is that stupid map system…everybody was going to come out the same dot, so they knew exactly. I was like how are you going to know which entrance I'm coming out o,f or exit or whatever. And that's how they knew because everyone comes out the same one. I was like how an earth did you know I was coming out of here? Oh, that's the only way you can. Um, because they were saying they'd come to the airport to meet me and I was like, what is the point in that? And actually it was easy enough for me to get on, but I didn't have any Internet.

Hmmm. Did you get the data card, the free one?

Like so, I've got one of the free data cards, but that was a nightmare because I tried to get one through this Oovado or whatever it was in the UK before I landed, and then it was saying post to the address and because I've tried to do that twice, it said I wasn't eligible for the one that they'd given me because I think you could have six days with them. And then with Vodafone I'd got a free card for however many days, so I used that for the first couple of days and then I think it was £6…£6 a day for internet, but because I must have a spend manager on so I could use it on my phone for one day but then this £10 spend manager kicked in, I couldn't put it on there and I tried to lift that whilst I was out there and couldn't so, I was like ohh that's great.

The Wi-Fi at the stadiums wasn't the best either was it?

Ohh, the Wi-Fi everywhere was pretty terrible and every…everyman and his dog was trying to get onto that portal to get the tickets for the games even in the pubs and stuff like that I managed to get a ticket…because we obviously had tickets for all the semi-finals, well the semi-final and the final before we got knocked out um and then we had…what did we have…we obviously didn't get to the semi-finals so we were in this bar by the stadium and I was like I've got a ticket in the basket here it was like 200 and odd quid, it was one of the lower categories, I think. But there was only 1 ticket and there were three of us, and they're all going go If you want to go, go. And had it not been Argentina I probably would have gone. But Argentina and Morocco…and the place was full of Moroccans I thought and the Argentinians they'll just bounce up and down. I didn't want the atmosphere… I didn't want the atmosphere. I thought that it's not… It's not going to be a nice atmosphere I don't think so, I just didn't watch it.

Fair play, I'm so jealous you managed to even have a ticket…so, what were your first initial thoughts and reflections when you got to Qatar and made your way to the metro?

So, the first…this was interesting and I actually wrote this in my diary. The first person that we got chatting to. So, I was with this, this group of lads that said come with us but then he got stopped for customs or whatever to get his bag looked at, I have no idea. And I was like ohh, I'm just going to go out and they were like ohh, that's fine. But he was out really quick. So, by the time I'd walked round, picked up the SIM card, they were on their way to the metro. So, we all travelled together and the first person… first Qatari person on the tram…we were chatting to him and he was an ambassador or some sort of a person for human rights… he worked in that big building, human rights committee. So, he said that he'd been so busy up to this World Cup and all the rest of it and like flat out so he'd not managed to enjoy any of it at any point because he was just so busy with all this human rights stuff. Um, but there weren't that many people like….Qatari people you didn't see lots of them, like in the Souq's and stuff like that there were a lot but that first initial coming in, it wasn't….just full of all them volunteers. "Metro this way"

With their hand gloves, they were everywhere weren't they…

I know, I quite liked them

So, yeah you didn't feel like you could see or interact with many local Qatari's it was more like service workers?

Yeah…yeah, pretty much and…and football fans…a lot of Indians rather than Qatari people in the national dress. Um, yeah and I think it was you know that was my first thoughts and there were a lot of women with a lot of kids hanging off their arms and stuff that were in the national dress…I saw more women than I did the men initially um, which I thought was unusual because they keeps telling me you shouldn't be on your own.

Did you manage to speak to any women or?

No, not really. Spoke to quite a few men um…in the Souq's, when it was like game days and stuff like that on, you would dress up ready for a match then they would talk to you and stuff. But they seemed to, you know…avoid really and I suppose that is because…well I don't know that's what their cultured into doing isn't it? They need permission…They need permission to do everything.

I didn't think about that to be fair, but I noticed…did you go to the Corniche?

Yeah…

Because if you walked down there at night you could see it was filled with women in traditional dress and young children just playing around. Like you said you couldn't really see a lot of men in traditional dress just women on their phones…and little kids running around

Yeah, they were all everybody was on phones all the time, taking pictures or videos, or talking, or loudspeaker speaking.

They loved it…so, what were your initial thoughts on the facilities and transport, how was that?

Ohh I thought it was amazing to transport it was absolutely fantastic and you know everyone complained about the one way systems and things like that. But I think to…all the places I've been to in the past when you're trying to get to those games and it is crush central, it's absolutely mental. Everyone's pushing and shoving to go in every single direction and the people that live there are doing their normal daily commute, get squashed in it all.

I remember, I think it was going to Wembley and Huddersfield were playing Nottingham Forest in the play-off final and it was the first time, Nottingham Forest, had been there for god knows how many years and the place was a sea of red and people were pushing and shoving and there was this one woman on the floor and her friends are with her and People then were trying to help her, but the problem was that there were too many people. She was having a panic attack. It was horrible. So, actually these one-way systems prevented any of that so I was quite, quite for it.

Yeah, it's not nice at all, I was in Milan a few weeks ago to watch AC play and I remember the metro station outside the ground had gates which would close and count down the amount of people going to the platform…it was a horrible feeling being funnelled like that…

Yeah, they but when we were there people were just squashing in and squashing in and people were saying no more, no more but they kept on coming and pushing past and when you got further down the line more people were trying to get on and there was no room on the tram and the doors wouldn't close, so we were stuck on this tram at all these stations for ages sweating it was horrible…and actually in Qatar they had those doors.

Oh, did they? I didn't notice, I didn't really use the metro much.

They did. They had the…the like…the Perspex doors on the lines I think which is probably to prevent people jumping onto the tracks or falling on the line as well and they only opened at the doors…so, it was the same sort of thing they only opened when the tram was there. They weren't counting the amount of people getting on because I don't think they were ever that full um, but they had the safety doors like that before and then the doors opened only at those specific points.

Interesting observation, so could you tell me about the atmosphere in your first couple of days, what was it like?

I thought it was great…so I arrived. I was pretty shattered and then we went up to…we'd booked into an apartment, so they've been staying in a cabin somewhere else. So, they had used the buses and the metro I only got on a bus once and that was after the after the quarter final. Very sad [England lost] um and then couldn't…yeah…so, then quick change and went out and we were trying to find somewhere to go for a beer and stuff. And I said I've been stuck on a plane all day I do not want to be going into a bar…ohh just a second [door knocks].

Anyway, you were saying…

Yeah the pubs, so I didn't want to be in a pub, so we're looking for somewhere outside um, we went to the Red Lion, we walked to the Red Lion because it wasn't far from our apartment…ohh God um I'm glad that we didn't get in there, there was a queue round the block and so we went…ended up at the Radisson Blue and it was a great atmosphere in there and Terry had not been in there, they had not been in an outside bar at all.

Was that in West Bay? Sorry.

Ohh…I don't think it was the Radisson blue…no, it wasn't in West Bay because we were at this point, we were staying, I don't think it was far from the Red Lion. If we walked there, it took us about 15 minutes to walk there and that was where the apartment was. And then we moved after a week, we moved into a hotel which was in West Bay.

How was your accommodation?

Ohh it was really good. I loved I um, big, clean… I think they'd all been specially sorted out what they'd said when they got there is that everything was brand new and the people, the service workers in that

apartment were like, the nicest people. You…you know, they couldn't do anything more for you…there was fresh…there was fresh towels whenever you wanted them, and they'd come in and clean it whenever and when you were leaving the building, we left the keys with them. They were on the desk 24 hours a day um…but yeah, and…and we had a problem with the shower because the way the shower screen was or whatever it kept flooding the bathroom. But every time they were up there cleaning it, sorting out, sanitising it. No, no problems at all with that, but that was in like the downtown Msheirib that's where it was, that's the station I got off at and I think that was the best area…

Just opposite the Souq Waqif?

Well, we were further up than that, the Souq, so, that's where the station was, we were probably about 10–15-minute walk from that station um…but I went out, you know, they've been there nearly a week before me and they were knackered. I was like, I'm ready…I'm ready for this. I'm not far, I'm not staying in and I was happy to walk out even round that area by myself, I walked. I went for a run um, apart from the fact it was too hot, and I couldn't properly run….

I thought these evenings were quite a good temperature when the sunset…

Yeah…yeah. I mean, I didn't mind the temperature during the day either. I thought it was an okay temperature at least it wasn't you know, crazy weather and it didn't seem that hot…you know, when you step out and you start sweating straight away if you're in appropriate attire, you can see why those blokes wear those what they wear and the women wear the dress that they wear because…it's very, you know, like cotton and cooling.

So, you felt safe then when you're walking around?

Yeah, even in that downtown area, there was never a problem, um, and I went to… I went to some Curry house…I mean that Curry was hot. I was eating in there for ages, and they were, like, sit down this, that and the other and you know, offering you everything and it were just full of probably service workers. There weren't many Qatari people in there. Um…even that area, there was a few that walked round the streets and stuff, but I didn't see many in national dress.

Okay so thinking about your first game I remember I was absolutely buzzing when I saw the stadium. Could you just walk me through your first game and your thoughts and reflections for example what did you do, what happened, who played etc…

So, I was poorly before I came out. Probably might have had COVID but who knows but I didn't get tested I had that horrible…I had a horrible cough but I think a lot of people had, had that chest infection cough but it wasn't COVID um, so I didn't…I felt a bit rotten when I got there, we'd obviously had that night in the Radisson, which was fairly sedate, chilled but nice atmosphere. In fact, I was talking to a girl there…where she was from Saudi and she was absolutely loving it because they never get anything like this and she was like "ohh, you know, I love football and I love people" and she was a nurse, she literally just popped over.

Was she drinking at all, because someone explained to me that people from Saudi were popping over to Qatar to drink in the hotels because Saudi is completely dry…

Hmm, no…yeah, she was in the hotel, she wasn't drinking nothing. But she'd not long finished work…she liked popped over after work…um, and then it was obviously the day of the game. They were like "ohh, we're up early" and…before when they had gone to the USA game and I was like, "why didn't you get the flag up?" They said they couldn't get it up. It took them 3 hours to get into the stadium, so they were wearing these stupid suits, these England suits which were like full of England flags, trousers, jackets, waist coats, ties um, so like, oh okay and I…I didn't really know what to make of it that it would take 3 hours to get into the ground when it's not that busy and all the transport systems are fantastic, whatever and then so we got ready in the hotel, ready to be drinking at 12 I was like I'm not

drinking this early. It's a long day. It was like 10:00 o'clock, wasn't it? Ohh no, that was an earlier kick off. I think that one.

Sorry, which game was your first game again?

The Wales game…um, we didn't get to see any other games, we kept trying to get tickets, but we couldn't even get any tickets…and they'd queued up at that deck centre or whatever it was, but they were the same ones you could get online [tickets] and all the touts were getting them…I think because you speak to the people outside the pubs and they were trying to sell them on an so that definitely wasn't a fool proof system…fool proof system I don't think…um, but yes, so we…they'd decided that they liked the Champions bar they'd been drinking in there quite a lot. So that's where we're going before the game…it's obviously Wales, so there was a bit of friendly banter. There was a lot of Mexican staying where we were so even like in the apartments there was an atmosphere like it was a good atmosphere, it was party, party atmosphere and…and then…we've got ready and we're setting off we were walking to the station? I think we were walking to the station musharib, whatever it was…getting the metro to West Bay…but we walked down the stairs and all the people who are in the apartment were like "ohh pictures, pictures. Can we have pictures? Can we have pictures?" walking down the street there must have been 10 people bearing in mind it's a fairly quiet time all you get… in fact fact, that's one thing that I remember about being in that apartment is all the prayer times getting piped out the streets.

I missed out on the cruise ship…

You didn't get that in West Bay and you didn't get that on the cruise ships and unless you walked on the Corniche at those times. But literally when we're in the apartment, it's all around the streets around there and people were up on the roofs, and they were all praying…4:00 AM in the morning.

They didn't wake you up did they?

Yes, it did…it was like every morning…Richard stayed out one night and he was getting in at 4 O'clock and he says "I have no clue what time I got in" I went "I can tell you what time you got in because it was morning prayer times"…um, but yeah, we got down…we got down to the Champions bar and they started straight away on these towers of beer…we got through three of those between three of us…

How much were they? Were they expensive?

Ohh very expensive…so, I think in there it was like…probably 15 a pint maybe…but when you get when… I mean the cruise ship I thought was the most expensive cause you didn't even get a pint. You could get a bottle for like €15 and so yeah, I particularly liked the cruise ship we did the um…we only did three nights on there.

Which one did you do again, was it the big really fancy one?

No…no, we did the Europa…no sorry we did the Poesia and then it was Opera the other one.

Yeah, that's the one I stayed on…

So yeah, we stayed on the one you did then…so, we just did dinner every day…the day that I got there we did lunch because I was like there's no way I'm lasting until this and then he said "well you can go in and you can get a pizza to take out" but that was like €20 euros or so and you know I was like well it's €50 euros for lunch and you can go in a drink for 3 hours, that's what I'm going to do...I'll try bring a slice of pizza out for Terry…but on the Europa you could go back in and out as many times as you like, but they stopped you on that ship where we were…so, basically, if you went out I don't think you could have got back in again. Um…and then…so I sat in there and sat down…sand got chatting to some Moroccans. Whilst them other two were at the pool waiting for me to bring pizza out…I sat in there for two hours having beers with them…I didn't even get anything out. I text him saying I'm not getting

anything out of here and I'd only just got on…but we did dinner every night, and we just drank…I mean, the first night we were all hammered and then we went up and we were having…there was some people from Coventry and we were having a good chat with them and the Brazilians and stuff.

Was the Wales game at the Al Bayt Stadium?

No…no it wasn't…all the rest of them were at Al Bayt…it was at that one…it was at, I can't even remember what…I knew all the stadiums, what they were called and who was playing…it was the one with more of a bowl shape…

Education city?

No…no cause we didn't play there…we played in three stadiums, we played in one where there was a running track around it, it wasn't that one… Al Thamima, no it wasn't there um…

Khalifa international?

Yes, that one Khalifa…I did not like the stadiums…I liked the outside of the stadiums and I liked you know the perimeter outside…perimeters were fine, and then inside we never really got to see what was going on because everything's outside the perimeter and they were promising that you could watch the other games, but we wanted to get in to try and get our flag up. Never got it up really um, and so many…so many people picture, picture, picture, picture…I got fed up with it in the end, and then all the film crews are there an…in fact, there was one interview on Sky…no one…even my family couldn't tell what I was saying

You got interviewed on Sky?

Ohh we were on everything with them too. Absolutely everything…CNN news, who are the people out there?...Bein sports um…breakfast TV, ITV…it was them two in them blooming suits

People must have been attracted to them like magnets…um, so do you feel like the stadiums were accessible?

There were accessible…but they were dangerous…dangerous inside…the seats you're practically…there would be no way that you'd get away with that in like the UK with the restrictions and regulation and health and safety.

Could you elaborate?

Well, the steps were really narrow, they created loads of funnel points where you got…you know where you've got a lot of people going into a narrow…narrow space…what do they call that? Just left my head anyway…um, yeah and then…the…the amount of people that they crammed into a small space was probably too many, I mean…you know, if you got sat next to two big people, you've got no chance…I was like, I'm squashed…push over that way…push over that way "oh you're not my husband, which seat are you even in"…um and then there was an incident so, in that game we were sat in the corner and then...I think category two tickets we had I think, or category 1 on the corner…I don't know…anyway um, we…so I was on the edge seat and moved to the edge seat cause I was fed up of getting pushed and shoved. And no, it wasn't people were pushing and shoving, it were just people normally sitting down and standing up um…and as I left as I went down the steps…I nearly fell down the steps…um, everyone thought I was pissed…I'll admit I'd had quite a few by this point…but I hadn't had a drink for 4 hours or whatever it was…but there was actually…like the steps and they weren't big steps, but it went along and then there was a dip in the steps, and then it went along again…so, that's what I thought…like my ankle had kind of gone because I expected to put my foot down and there was a big hole…you won't get that in England…I took a picture of it I was like…and I don't think all of them were new stadiums they'd just like extended them or made extra bits on some of them because that stupid stadium that we

had to travel out into the middle of the desert that was only used because one of the big sheiks, he owns it and he said he'd only accept the tournament if you could have the games there, some of the games played there.

Is that why? because it was a nightmare getting back from that stadium, the going wasn't too bad but coming back was terrible…

Yeah, it's getting out… so, we got the maps and we were going the wrong way all the time, I think…so you have to walk round the whole of the block to get to the buses. Whereas if we'd have just gone out the other way, we'd be almost at the buses…so we got…we got the metro which is a very long walk from the stadium itself…we got the metro back after the Senegal game, but after the France game, we got the bus…but we got separated from Richard and for some reason he thought he was going to the Souq…so he got on the Souq buses, but we were staying in West Bay at this point…but we said, but we'd stayed in the stadium for longer afterwards. I was like, I'm not leaving we've been in this situation before because you know they played us a good tournament, we were all absolutely gutted…we all came away thinking that we were the better side, but we couldn't finish. We could have finished that…we were the better side…we played better, but they played and just finished the job…they had two chances and they got them in the back of the net. We had so many chances but couldn't get it in the back of the net…so really…I don't…I don't think Harry Kane should have taken that second penalty…it's his teammate…his teammate he was taking it against…that was the…the key factor for me…and he says, you know I didn't prepare any less for that penalty than I did the first penalty. You know, I always prepare to take two, but that's who you're prepared to take em against. So, if you know that you took your first one…you know when you're practising…when you practice against him when you play for Spurs…anyway.

I think we probably won the tournament if we beat France.

Yeah, I think so too…my favourite song out there was the one I can't even remember what it was from, but it was that one that went "this time more than any other time" cause I was like ohh it's gonna happen this time. It's our time…so, I had a ticket…I got a ticket for the final, but I had to be back at work, my flight took me back after the semi-final and everyone was saying what you gonna do, what you gonna do? Like the ticket would have gone for so much money but how could I have not gone to the final if we were in it…but I'm a nurse and I've got patience to check on I'm busy, it was in winter so…

I suppose the silver lining was we didn't get to the final, so he didn't have to worry about that.

That was the only silver lining…at least I didn't have that huge moral dilemma…and Richard who we were with he just wanted to go back cause I said to them, I said right "what you gonna do if we get knocked out? Are you staying? Are we just gonna get these flexible flights and not book accommodation or what do you want to do?" "No, no, we'll stay. It'll be a holiday. It'll be great." …but then as soon as we got knocked out, it was like I wanna go back now. And the wife's putting pressure on me to go back. So, I'm gonna have to go back um…and I just said well I'm not going back until I'm due to go back after the semi-final…you wanna go back? You go back, but um, Terry wanted to stay out. They've paid for the accommodation, which they lost all their money on…which was quite a bit of money really and it was only for a week.

Did you and Terry stay out there then?

We all stayed out there in the end um…and because it was only a few more days wondering really.

Okay, so, in terms of security at the stadium how did you feel about that?

They weren't doing anything. They paid all those police officers to sit there and be bored stupid…and all the cleaners and stuff…I felt like tipping a load of rubbish on floor just so that they got something to do…um, but that takes me back to the policing of the international European policy and how they treat

people…but I also think that a lot of the…a lot of the people that go to the football to cause the trouble were priced out of the World Cup, that's something to do with it as well. But then, having said that, going to Naples last time and Milan, there wasn't…the trouble, wasn't there? There were no arrests of English people…the only trouble that I saw in Naples this time, there was a guy with his face all smashed up…we were like "ohh God what's happened?" …um…and it turned out the night before it were his mate that done it…he was like "oh yeah, I don't know what happened" …another person I was talking to in the bar will like. "Yeah, no, he were in here last night and it were his mate, I was like "oh god"…but yeah, that's what I thought it was…it was probably a mixture of the two. There was a better atmosphere…was there a better atmosphere because people priced out? Who knows…um, but even…even with…the only game that I know there was a bit of trouble, was it?...it was a Morocco game and I think the sheer amount of people that was trying to get into the stadium…but that was it…and also the fear…the fear that if you did something wrong they wouldn't…the punishment wouldn't be light…I was talking to someone um…the night, the day before the Senegal, or the fay of the Senegal game…it was before that, we were in the Red Lion and there were a group from Harrogate and they'd just come over…not long…there…there were a few of them, they were coming and going and one of these lads they've…they've gone to the fan fest…he said "oh I was in the drunk tent last night"

The drunk tent?

Yes…there was a drunk tent. So….so what they did because they didn't want you to be drunk, they didn't, want people…. So, they were happy for people to be drinking, but they didn't want people to be hammered. Which is fair enough. Why would you want that? They're a dry country drink it…well they're not a dry country and…and a lot of the Qataris were in bars drinking and…and you know they'd sit there…Terry took so many pictures of people and posted them on his Twitter saying "these guys don't drink"…oh…nobody's ever said that they don't drink, but drinking isn't public. Drinking is in licenced premises behind closed doors so to speak, which was nice about some of the rooftop gardens in the hotels and…and the outside premises in the hotels because otherwise…people were like you haven't got a tan have ya? I was like oh I were never outside…if you wanted to drink, you'd have to be in…um, and there were no pre drinking before you went out getting ready.

Yeah, you couldn't just grab some cheap booze and take it back to your room could you?

No, but they…they must have been in the fan fest, because he'd had quite a bit to drink and they just took him into this drunk tent slapped…slapped a drip in him…and I went well that's the best hangover cure ever just put a glucose drip up…sober you up, let you have a little sleep…fantastic.
Sounds good to me, no hangover…so, I know some people were concerned about the lack of alcohol before the tournament but on the alcohol availability were there any limitations on the fan experience?

No, it was everywhere…apart from in your apartments and at the stadium…but they never really is at the stadium you see I couldn't understand the big hoo ha about that…other than the fact that they've gone back on a promise of what they'd said. I did not see any issue with it whatsoever because you can't…um, and even if you go Wembley now you can't get it. You know people used to drink on the streets, but since the euros that's changed…you know you can't buy… you can't buy alcohol in the supermarket on Wembley way on match days…so last time when we went…and it has like a massive effect on like…because it's such a residential area you know…but you know they must advertise when the games are and when the alcohol will be prohibited and stuff like that so, they should just be prepared, shouldn't they? Um…but when you go into the supermarkets, they've got all like sheets down and they won't…they won't sell it.

So, not being able to drink at the game didn't affect you too much then?

No…you could get enough beforehand…I mean, I don't like…I don't like to be drunk, I like to remember what you're watching…yeah…but's it's nice to have a few and get into the atmosphere I

think… um and then you know, some of the best food we ate was in the Souq which was…there was no alcohol there, you'd just get your water and stuff with…you just got coke zero and that with your meal…um, and then go out on a night for a few drinks if you fancied it so it weren't…weren't an issue…I didn't find it a problem.

Okay…when I was over there, I read some stories about Wales fans wearing rainbow hats and stuff and they had to remove them, or they weren't allowed into the stadium. I don't know if you saw that, but if you did what did you think about it?

No, I didn't see any of that.

So, basically a Wales fan had a rainbow bucket hat on and they tried to go through security but they were told they weren't allowed to wear it…what do you think about that?

I mean…I've got mixed thoughts because I think….I don't agree with there culture and their views, but at the end of the day, that is their country…and if you go to any country, you should be respecting what's there and people were told about rainbow…you know wearing rainbow things, what is the problem with that? But going to promote…you know, it's a football match at the end of the day, you leave your politics at the door and stuff like that…were they wearing it to make a point? Who knows, I don't know.

Yeah, I can't remember… I remember watching it on the news or seeing it online and there was a bit of news frenzy over it.

The media was awful, I was going crazy all the time because the media… the way that the media were portraying everything…and I get it, I don't agree with the Qatar morals policy. I don't agree with the way that things are, and I remember in our last interview when I saying, well, how can they… you know, it would be interesting to see how things change from the World Cup. You know, you can't just relax all these rules for all these weeks and then go back to normal…but they have… I'm like how can you move forward with all this good work you've done? How can you just lift that up to be in this modern world and see what we've got to offer and then just go back to and not find that shocking.

Well interestingly there was a report released the other…I think it was by a international labour union… that said that some of the labour laws in the country that they progressed, they have now reversed some of those decisions already…

I'm not surprised but…but that…that has upset me, I thought that this would really move the country forward um…um…no, I mean…but I did and…and you talking about this person in a rainbow hat…each stadium, even each time at each stadium was very different of what you could take in and what you couldn't take in, and some people would allow you in with the ropes, and some people would allow you in with tape and some people wouldn't. And then the amount of times we had the flag checked for the sizing and then they wanted to know what this said, they wanted to know cause we had our names on the flag. Who's who? Who's that? Who's that then? Because they wanted to make sure that it was nothing offensive because they didn't know…they didn't know what the words were…um, and…and I kind of get that…that's acceptable, I think.

Okay, similarly I also noticed a lot of fans, not just England fans wearing traditional dress because I saw you could buy them at the metro stations with like either the St. Georges Cross on or the Argentina flag. What did you think about that?

I loved it…I said to Terry you'll have to buy one of them and go home in it.

Was it in good taste?

Yeah, no one seemed to be really bothered…you know why…you know they're making money off it then I didn't see it as…I didn't see it as offensive or, you know, I think it was all about let's get on

board…um, but you could tell like when you went past some of the shops, you know where they were selling all the cuffs and collars and the different cottons and stuff and…that's expensive I mean not the one the England fans were wearing and all the other teams…like polyester and stuff and the more…the different cuffs and stuff was different classes and it were all very…very "look at what I've got" etc…I just thought about all the laundry and stuff, but they just buy new ones I think…very elegant.

Yeah, the ones the fans were wearing were very crinkly…definitely hadn't been ironed or made out of good material if was funny though.

Yeah…and I think that was it…that didn't seem to be that we shouldn't be doing this, or we shouldn't be doing that or that's bad…you know, it was all very light hearted, everyone was in good humour…um, we were in the Souq one day and we put our flag up and these people on these balconies above were like "get that flag down take the flag down". So, there was a little bit of that, but it was fine no none's kicking off…you know we've done what we've done and it was a good atmosphere.

Did you find it welcoming then?

Yeah, really welcoming, really, really welcoming…um, you know it was the men that spoke like, you know, you go back to how people treated you…people beeping in their cars and stuff like that…but when you were walking down the streets and walking around, it was always…unless…unless you were in the Souq and it were the day people wanted to stop then have pictures taken with you and stuff like that…um, it was always if you're just walking down the street, it's the men "how we finding the competition, how we finding it here in Qatar" the women didn't…they didn't speak. I couldn't say "ohh what do you do about childcare around here then? You can't…you know, they were not…you couldn't…you couldn't have those conversations.

I see, and why do think that was?

I don't…I don't know really…maybe they were told not to…I don't know, it's their culture isn't it.

Okay, so moving on what were thoughts on the World Cup as a whole? And in your experience did it successfully promote the country and region?

Um…I think it was a success…but the fact that they've reverted all the laws so quickly is a problem, um…I wouldn't go back, have done it, I've ticked it off…I wouldn't be in a rush to visit it and I know a lot of people out there that lived out there, they were so buzzing for the competition…um, they got to a few of the games, but it wasn't just that it was people came…they had a good atmosphere, they had bands on…like Robbie [Williams] was on and they were all excited. "Ohh we get to see Robbie, we get to see Robbie" because they never get anything like that out there…so, the fact that they had that they were loving um…but yeah, it's all just gone back to boat trips and breakfasts and brunches now.

Did you manage to meet up with your friends when you were there?

No, we were just busy. I was like, "well it's game day that day" and then hopefully it'll be on that day and then we were busy on that day…

Yeah, I remember you saying you were hoping that they take you out for a nice brunch.

Yeah…well we got out for a nice brunch. We went to…where was it…to trader vics we'd gone…we'd gone to…was it a curry house on the Friday for food cause we'd booked into a brunch and they cancelled it last minute…so, that annoyed me…they were like "oh, we don't actually have brunch on now um, but we've got this deal instead" …I was like "no thanks"…I mean I'd have said no anyway they'd taken that deal away away and then only told me three days before, they should have told me when they took it away…um, and then…so yeah, we'd seen this guy and he was steaming, and we thought o"h it must be alright there" …think he'd had too many margaritas…um, so we booked in…I

really enjoyed the food, my friend was saying "ohh, just don't pay over the odds for it there because it's just like pub food". But it was um…like…Asian type…mixed sort of Asian food type…

Hybrid sort of stuff?

Yeah, it's not Terry's favourite cuisine, so he was like "ohh it's alright but" …um but you know you could get a bottle of Becks there and stuff like that and it were all included and it were all inclusive for two and a half hours so…um, and I think that were about…I think 100…maybe just a bit less each…but you could eat as much food as you wanted and as much beer as you wanted in all that time and cocktails were included and all sorts of stuff…it might not have been that much, but it was definitely around the 70. But when you think you were paying £15 a pint.

Yeah, all you need to do is have five or, six drinks, and you've got your money worth haven't you?

Exactly and we had more than that…and we bagged some…bagged some…what are them things, with the flowers on…I can't even remember what they're called now…garland thing that you put around your neck…like hula thing or whatever, I don't know any way we got some of them…we got a red one and a blue one and loads of other ones…we put on for the game the red one but we didn't win.

Did you do any kind of tourism stuff?

No. We went to…we went to, I wanted to go to the Pearl, so we did go one…me and Terry went there one day for breakfast, but I got there, and I was like, "what even is this? There's nothing here." …Um, we had a really lovely breakfast. That was nice and there was a harbour there when we eventually found it…um…and I think you…you could have spent more time doing stuff like that. But I think it was…awkward really…and we were on the cruise ship for three days, so I said once I'm on that ship, I'm not leaving it.

Okay…did you feel as though you could learn a bit about Qatari culture and Islamic culture when you were over there?

Ugh…not really…not really…um…it was nice to get in the Souqs and stuff like that but obviously the atmosphere there was very different. It was nice like, seeing what people were eating…but I as much as they were welcoming and you know, some people wanted to talk to you. There were a lot of people that did not…um, you know I remember being sat…stood outside I think we were just stood…stood watching some kids playing football and stuff like that and then there were these guys and we're eating like a whole lamb or something ridiculous, it was this giant piece…we'd just had our lunch so we weren't hungry, I was like "ohh, look at that, what they're eating there" and they're like" ohh come, you know have some. Do you want some?" and all that but you know that there's that nice…nice welcoming stuff there but then…everywhere and people looked busy. People just, you know…I didn't…I think and learning about it because it was so different at the time…was hard…people were more bothered not talking to you about what their lives are like, they didn't really wanna tell you. They more wanted to know what you thought about their country…. when you spoke to people really, well that's what I found.

That's interesting…did you feel as though that, or did you see a lot of tourism promotion going on over there, or was it just strictly World Cup?

Pretty much football, football, football. But there was like…look you know come and visit this here…visit the pearl, visit this, visit that um…there was a lot of information and when you got there and you got the guides and stuff like that, there was a lot of information in there about stuff…um…we went down to the Souqs one day and at the back of the Souq, to you know where the camels are and they were taking the camels out with training and stuff like that. So that was good to see, but I wanted to visit places…I wanted to go while England were still in the tournament. I wanted to go to the other Souqs where they were and stuff like that, but they just didn't wanna travel. They didn't wanna do stuff. I thought well I had to separate myself and just go by myself and I would have done that, I wouldn't have

felt like I couldn't have done that um, but with game days in between and then you were tired the next day and stuff like that…it just um…never really happened….there weren't enough time, but then but then equally I wouldn't think I'd rush there to go back to see that because when I did go to the like… I wanted to walk on that Corniche at the night-time, I wanted to see the fireworks…and they were good, but they were…they just lacked a bit of something it just felt really quiet…like there was no atmosphere.

I found it quite too, although I thought the Corniche was busy at night a lot busier than during the day anyway…

Yeah, we went on night-time once and it was busy, but it was busy…just with kids…yeah.

And people just going around on bikes and e-scooters…I remember from side to side just to try avoid walking into one of them…

We hired scooters…and we were like "ohh, we're going to get…we're gonna go down" …so, we're going down to the Souq one night for some dinner because we've never been to Souq on a night-time. We always went in the mornings, but on the game days and stuff like that um…and we…we went down, got these scooters out… so this were when we were in the hotel…so we got the scooters from West Bay station outside there and off we went…we got to the bit where you get onto the Corniche cause we were like "yeah, we've seen loads of people on there" and they just stopped we were like "what's going on here?" It turns out you can only ride them in some certain areas and the Corniche was restricted…so people that were on the electric scooters on the Corniche they obviously had their own…they weren't hired scooters…um, and I was like "ohh" so we ended up having to take em back to pop them back…and we just got to the metro.

I didn't even see that you could hire scooters…

But it was good…was good fun for the…the thirty yards we were on them…Oh noo, I think we get them from outside the hotel but then we returned…we return them to West Bay outside the station.

I really want to hire one, one day…but I just didn't even know you could do that in Qatar…

When you went on the thing then there was like a blue map about where you could go an it were pretty restricted where you could go…you couldn't go like 30km…probably could have got to a fan fest.

So, in terms of in terms like food, did you try any local delicacies or anything like that or was there a lot of local food advertised, do you think?

Yeah…yeah definitely in the Souq…so we went out and we are in a few other restaurants down there, then there was like, you know where the spice markets and stuff… there was a guy he looked really busy um…he were like…the local kebabs and stuff like on sticks and I was like "I really wanna try this but the queue was just huge… I don't wanna wait" so, we walked on…but yeah the food was… their food…their food was good.

What did you try? Schwarmers and stuff?

Yeah…um…we got one of them in this big restaurant where they had some man with teacups…outside spinning his teacups for money or whatever…but…tried some of that Turkish ice cream, I didn't like that.

Oh, did you try some? Because I noticed it was quite popular in the Souq I was like "I can't be assed it's probably just going to taste like ice cream…

No, it didn't it were like chewy in a way… it's not normal…um…but yeah, the…the food was good. The kebabs, the meats, nowhere had lamb chops, though everybody had run out.

Okay…I'm just moving on a little bit then…I remember seeing quite a lot of what I assume were local and regional supporters wearing traditional dress…particularly Saudi fans with flags and the head scarf and stuff, do you think people from the region were committed to the event and like a shared vision of promoting the Islamic World Cup?

Um…Saudi definitely…Qatar not so much…I just think their football club isn't big enough and not a football country…and that is what was evident in the stadiums. They were there for the prestige of it…you know all them places with the, you know, the royal boxes and what not behind the stadiums and the people that were in it, they were leaving. They must have stayed 10 minutes to watch that football and the rest of the time they were sat having the meals and stuff and food and…and I just thought…you should…I know your teams rubbish but get behind them. We're losing however much an people stay…people don't leave…I mean they do at Wembley last week be we were winning and they still left um…but yeah it was obvious that yeah, they may have been wearing the scarves…but Saudi were definitely a lot more into it than Qatar though.

I thought the Moroccans and Tunisians as well had great support…

Oh…oh wild…but a lot of the Moroccans that I spoke to were from everywhere else…um I did speak to a guy cause Morocco played when we played…we played Senegal or was it when we played France…I can't remember, and they were playing on the same day as us…um and…oh it must have been the quarter final because they've got into that quarterfinal and really didn't expect to… so, they were absolutely on top of the world and this one guy, he brought school…he brought school…they chartered a plane in and brought a school…

Really?

You know, all these kids are…you know, and…and what, an experience for them…so yeah, they definitely did embrace it.

And based on your experience will people that attended the World Cup have a different view, or behave differently towards Muslims and Islam in general?

I think…I think some people will um…but then you've got the majority of people that didn't go because of where it was…which you can't change their…their opinions um…and then a prejudice runs deep doesn't it? Sometimes. So, you go out there, you have a good time. You think all these people are alright, they're all really welcoming but your prejudice remains an that wears off and I find that a bit sad really…

They might just relate to Qatari people, or service workers rather than Muslims as a whole do you think?

Probably…separate the two yeah…yeah…absolutely, probably.

How do you think relations could be sustained post World Cup?

Well…I think for a start them back tracking on all the blue rules is a big mistake um…and laws for human rights.

Do you think there's going to be any lasting impact at all from the World Cup, then?

No…I was hoping that there would be and then being out there and seeing the atmosphere and…and how everyone was so welcoming um…and how well actually…you can walk down the street…it's just…it's only the big shopping malls and the museums and well you wouldn't walk in there in next to nothing anyway…so…that's the only respectful about the dress and stuff like that, so…um…you know

an the beer availability…and I think those sorts of things people will accept and I think "oh yeah, people do, do things in a different way, that's okay." But on the whole of it…and then…um, I mean the biggest thing pre-World Cup for me was the…the laws and the human rights and a lot of this stuff about the women, but then you know that… that is it's their culture, isn't it? That's what they believe but is that just because you don't know any different…I struggle with it all really and I really hoped that something would come of it for their…for their rights…oh one time um…where were we…we were in this real dodgy pub on a high floor, Irish bar um…and there were these toilet attendants and there was a little Indian guy probably getting paid the smallest pittance…and this bar was absolutely packed and they were charging high end prices and it was a smoky, horrible dive um…an he literally twisted his gloves that much and didn't do anything, he literally…he was just stood there and then his mate, well it weren't his mate it was this…the other guy he was doing all the work and they just drafting people in and I felt really sorry for him and I tried to talk to him and he's saying he didn't understand and all the rest if it um and I just…it broke my heart, but then he's in that position doing that for that…you know…this…this guy that were with him was like "ohh, you know I've tried to tell him, I've tried to do this, that and the other but he's not listening" So, there was a bit of both…he was putting himself in that position because he was so desperate for a little bit of money but then he wasn't prepared to do the job either.

It is disappointing to see like that report come out, it's like they've kinda gone back on their word…

And I think if you're gonna do that, how can how can that move forward with relations if you're not gonna be truthful and honest and stuff?

Especially if they want to host more sport events and promote tourism in the region too…well in Qatar.

Yeah, exactly.

Okay then, so based on your experiences in the country, what image do you take from the event, and Qatar in general? And has this changed from before the event?

Yeah, it has…um, certainly the atmosphere was more party atmosphere than I thought it would be…I've never experienced a World Cup and people said that it wasn't usual as the World Cup, but it never was gonna be, because it was in the winter…a lot of people couldn't go because; one, it was in the winter, and two, the price was so much money…and I think people will struggle in America next year because of um…the way that the tournament is. So, I don't think it's just Qatar that prices people out…you know it's expensive wherever you go for an event like that um…I have respect for them, there wasn't no trouble…so, on the whole it was a lot better than what I was expecting…but then when I've come away and I hear about what goes on…I mean that stuff, like that bar I'm talking about um that was the night Richard stayed out…and literally everybody talks about the Brass's I had to google what the word meant, I didn't know what it meant…

The Brass's?

I was like "what is a brass" it's a prostitute…

Oh, is it? I didn't know that.

I did not know, you didn't know either so, people talk about where's all the brass's at…and they are there, there are sex workers in all these dodgy hotels…"do you have room?" No…" well I have room for you if you want?" they're…they're everywhere…and that's not a new thing um and that hadn't come because of the World Cup so…I don't know

You're not the first person that said that to be fair…someone told me that if you wanted it, you could find it…

You could find anything what you wanted out there um, and you just needed to know where to dint it and be careful about it…

I don't…well it's not my cuppa tea to be fair, I'm surprised people weren't too scared to do anything like that…

It's not my cuppa tea either.

It's like other places we'd been too…and I didn't like the seedy places and I think that…that is something that's always there and maybe…

Like the underground kinda culture…

Yeah…but then I think sometimes it's worse like that, but there were a lot of seedy places, which is why I liked places like the Radisson and Champions bar and stuff like that, because…yeah, you pay a bit more, but I didn't mind paying more to get a better experience that weren't so…and the Red Lion was all right but we only ever went during the day and not a place I would…there's no way that I'd go into that place when it all became smoky and stuff like that, because the beer weren't great either…yeah, we might have only been paying £6 a pint, but the beer ain't great

I never managed to make it there…

The first couple of times it were alright…but then I was like "oh, I'll just stick to a bottle

Yeah…I was speaking to some international fans and they…they really wanted to go to the Red Lion just to see like England fans drinking and stuff…I thought it was weird that they wanted to go there just to see the England fans and what the atmosphere was like…

Yeah, there were a lot of people that were doing that…but then I liked…I liked being in the Champions bar because you got everybody in there and like when they were already for the games and stuff and I could see all the fans…and the Mexicans were amazing and a lot of the Mexicans stayed out for the whole tournament even though they got knocked out really early um…but I mean that's the same…well it's not the same as any World Cup because you don't mix with everybody because you mix with the people… I think that's what was different and that was what was good about the World Cup, is that all the teams were in the same place, and you got to see all the backing of all the teams. Do you know what I mean?

Yeah definitely…definitely…

Whereas when you go to a normal World Cup, you're in that city and you've travelled there, so you see who you're playing a game against and who else might have been playing the game against three days before or whatever. But because everyone was all in the same country in the same sort of areas, and they all went to the same places you've got everybody…everybody.

I think the proximity and engagement with so many fans perhaps, helped prevent any trouble too in a strange sort of way as everyone was mixing together rather than having two sets of fans in one place looking for trouble…

But I spoke to some people…so we'd had a great day for the Wales game in the Champions bar…the Welsh were fantastic people to have a good laugh with and a bit of…okay friendly banter…they were there because this was their first time, so there were loads of them…but then in the game I saw some English people and they were proper slagging off the Welsh "oh them Welsh tossers, whatever" and um, I was like "what's your problem with them? ... you know we've had a good laugh with them today I don't have a problem…and to me, that's also prejudice…as much as it's not like the prejudice against the Muslim and stuff like that "oh Welsh people, they're all idiots" um…and I…I said that and they

were proper aggressive…I went well "I'm gonna leave you to your thoughts, you crack on, do you and I'll do me mate but you know, tara."…and they were like "you're not living wherever, you're not next door to them so you wouldn't understand" I was like "well maybe I don't, but can't you just be nice?

Yeah…some people are just built differently you know…so I was going to ask, do you have any final thoughts or reflections about your experiences you'd like to share?

Yeah, it was a great World Cup…the media over here portrayed it to be very different which made me mad because…I should have been more excited going. I was excited, but I should have been more excited going to this huge experience than what I was and that was all down to the media…um…I get it, they've got different cultures but speaking to the people out there…worked out there, that have been out there for many years. There was a singer in a bar and she was chatting to us about all sorts of stuff and how it is an… and actually they've got kids out there, they…you know been there for many, many years as school teachers and what other else um…and so, they have chosen to live there and yes, they enjoyed the atmosphere of the football …but actually the life that they went there was so that they could have this chilled out, relaxed lifestyle…so, that's there as well so, you know it's not all…it's not all about them and they've got a human rights committee, they are making some progress, albeit now they've gone a bit backwards but surely they should keep going forward so, hopefully as a country um…but I do think that there's been so many mixed messages…and I wouldn't rush back. It's not the sort of place that I would rush back to.

What about other countries, or places in the region like Dubai?

No…that's never been on my to do list to go I'm more of a...you know, yeah I like a beach but I love…I like a relaxed beach I don't like this extravagance of everything and…you know, I mean I think wherever you go, you've got two different types of classes, whether you go to Jamaica or Dubai, or Qatar you…you've got difference even in England you've got divides of wealth and poor…and it's the same anywhere but I think these places they portray themselves as you know…this luxury that this…that and the other.

So, it's tailored to high end tourism, that's their objective, that's what they're trying to do?

Yeah, I think so, yeah…um, and that they've got so much money, they don't know what to do with it.

That's true, I saw the other day that Qatar have put a bid in to buy Man United…well a member of the royal family has…

This Olympic bid that they've got…they've got a whole building…they've got a whole Olympic separate workforce. I mean I suppose that's for the Olympics as well but um…when do you hear about Qatar and the Olympics...I don't know any Qatari runners or travelling Olympic athletes.

I don't believe they send many athletes to the games to be honest…

And this is what I can't understand why…these non-sporting nations are not trying to…cause I was like "ohh, look at them kids playing football. They wouldn't be playing football if it weren't for this World Cup." But actually, they probably would…but bring these things into…like when we have things as compulsory don't we in sports and things like that…um, and you push for people to get into this, but it's…that's not their culture.

So…sport development from a young age?

Yeah…so, I was hoping that the World Cup and things like that would bring a lot of that, but I struggled to find what was going on and how that was…how that was going to improve.

It's interesting that you say that because as part of their national strategy they're trying to um…promote sport participation because they have a lot of health problems with obesity um…especially because of that laid out and relaxed lifestyle you were talking about and the fact local citizens do receive high rates of welfare…

Oh, that's good…that's good, that's what needs to happen from it, I think.

Yeah…we'll just have to wait and see…oh, I forgot to ask did you manage to make it to the Fan Park at all?

No…well we made it twice, but by accident in the blooming taxi an we couldn't get out…so, every time we clicked where we wanted to go this taxi on the Uber was taking us to the fan park and we're like…"don't you dare take us in there again" cause like the queues in there were crazy to get in…um, I wanted to go at one point…an then there was another fan park…the 900 park was it…there were two…there were a few different fan parks, but the 900 park was closer…but we didn't…we didn't make it to any of them either

Obviously, you went out after me, so do you think it was busy in general? Because I heard as soon as the group stage had finished it quietened down a bit…

It didn't…I don't think it did it just became different so, maybe I think um… a lot of the places you know…warm beds in the crazy out of the sticks wherever it was um like the tin box parks and stuff like that, they started to close down…so where we were staying um…there was a lot when we stayed in the hotel. There was a lot of press in there and like I said, when we were in the apartment, there were a lot of Mexicans in there and some of them did go home. Some of them didn't. You would then see people in the bars um…so yes, nations changed but what happened was, as people progressed through the tournament, which would have been the same for England if England had progressed, people were boycotting it…but then they would have come out…those people that were boycotting would have come out…they were all looking…they were all on those pages, "how can I get a ticket to the quarter finals? How can I get a ticket to the semi-finals? Has anybody got semi-final tickets that want to go? Anybody got this? Anybody got that?" because they all wanted to come and all provisionally booking flights and stuff like that to get out and…so, it just changed the dynamics, but towards the end the whole place started filling up with the Argentinians and that created a different atmosphere. They seemed to come with a bit of an agenda…whereas the earliest stages it was party, party. The later stages it just felt a bit more edgy and I don't know how it would have felt leading up to that final.

Do you think there might have been some trouble if they didn't win?

I think so…probably, yeah.

Okay…is there anything else you'd like to add?

No…no, that's it.

And you said you didn't manage to keep any Diaries when you were out there?
So, I did…I wrote a diary about what we've done and stuff. It started off every day and then as time went on I didn't have the same commitment…but I looked…I looked for it and couldn't find it and Terry was trying to do those video diaries and couldn't upload it and stuff like that…think he wanted to do this blog and all sorts of stuff, but I don't know what happened.

I remember you saying beforehand he wanted to do that…

But there was, I mean, there's so many blooming interviews and you type in England dans in Qatar go to that…there's so many pictures of us and then they have this WhatsApp group where like loads of people were in this group and are all on media watch and then there was a picture of me in the Manchester

Evening News…first time I've been sandwiched between a hurricane and a flooding…oh and then we were on the way back on the bus from the game…from France and somebody said to Terry "oh you two are in the Peninsula news, on the metro"

Like a celebrity…

Literally, it was everywhere…thought it had died down but went into the post office when I come back, and she was like "oh you were on the telly" … when we got back to the hotel and the Wi-Fi came back on, phone was like going crazy "Oh you out in Qatar…I see you out in Qatar" and then when I got back to work they'd put this ugh picture up like a collage and it said on TV more than Southgate…it was definitely good fun.

Yeah definitely…I mean if there's any photos you'd like to share with me you know you can just send me an e-mail or Whatsapp and I'm happy to take a look and use some if you're okay with that?

Yeah, that's alright…they're all of us looking like typica tourists…I'll send you some.

Perfect thank you…and I just like to say again thank you for all of your help and your time, I really appreciate it…

Appendix 8: A Visual Representation of some 'in-Vivo' and descriptive codes and the development of themes.
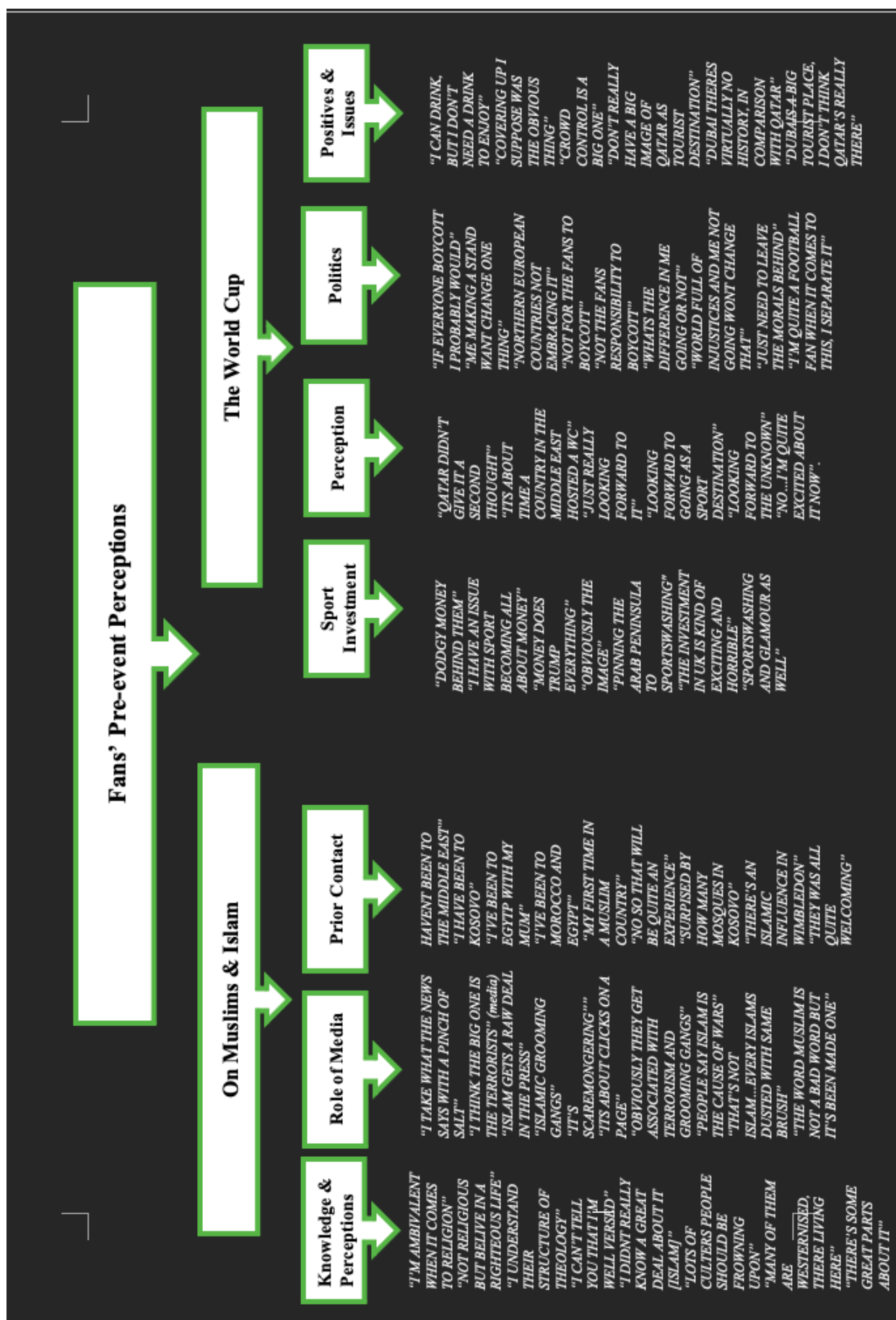
Fans' experiences

Related to Fandom

Alcohol consumption

Kept looking for bars.
We didn't drink much because of the price.
There were a few hotels that had mock pubs.
The bars were hidden.
EASY ENOUGH TO GET A DRINK

Comfort & Safety

Feeling Safe
Found it completely safe.
It's safer than Peterborough.
Safety were good.

Transport & Organisation
Transport was amazing.
The airport was fantastic.
It was easy to get around.
The grounds were really close.
Best World Cup for organisation.

Volunteers
Volunteers everywhere.
It seemed over the top how many there were.

Unity & Atmosphere

This whole unity thing.
Atmosphere was amazing.
It felt like a World Cup

Tourism & Intercultural activities

Tourism Activities

Sightseeing
The Islamic art was amazing.
Pearl Boulevard was brilliant.
Desert safari was fantastic.
Didn't find the time.
Mostly football.

Constraints
Had a game every day.
Too expensive.
We did what we would do back home.

Stereotypes

So many shops selling thawbs.
They were selling stereotypes.
England thawbs.
Definitely trying to cash in on the fans.

Image

Culture & City
Wasn't particularly Arabic.
Very modern.
I could have been anywhere.
Very westernised.
CLEANEST CITY…I'VE EVER SEEN.
Lacked the verve
I don't think it was authentic.
They were trying to be authentic.
Could have been anywhere in the world.
Artificial sort of city.
I wouldn't go back.
It was like a gilded cage.

Cuisine
I wanted more authentic food.
Food was spot on all the authentic stuff (laughs).
Not authentic

Observing the Other

Only the men would speak.
Felt safe as a woman.
The whaling started early.
A lot of prayer rooms.
Elegant traditional dress.

Fans' Contact & Reflections

Revisit intentions

"I WOULDN'T GO BACK"
"NO OTHER REASON TO GO APART FROM SPORT"
"I WOULDN'T RUSH BACK THERE"
"IT'S NOT THE SORT OF PLACE I WOULD RUSH BACK TO"
"I'M NOT PLANNING TO DO SO, BUT WOULD BE INTERESTING TO REVISIT"

Perception of 'locals'

"LOCALS WERE BRILLIANT"
"THEY LOVED IT"
"THEY STARTED TO SMILE A LOT MORE"
"I THOUGHT THEY WERE GREAT"
"THEY SEEMED REALLY STANDOFFISH TO ME"
"RUSSIA, YOU HAD PEOPLE COMING UP TO YOU"
"IT WAS SORT OF LIKE THEY DIDN'T WANT US THERE"
"BIT OF RESENTMENT TOWARDS THE WEST"
"THEY PROBABLY WOULD HAVE RETREATED FURTHER"
"INTERACTIONS WITH THE LOCALS WEREN'T GREAT"
"BODY LANGUAGE"
"THEY WEREN'T REALLY THE FACE OF THE TOURNAMENT"

Migrant/Service Contact

"BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE"
"HAPPY TO BE THERE"
"HAVING THE RIND OF THE PORK CHOP"
"LOVELY PEOPLE"
MIGRANT WORKERS
"GOOD WELCOMING PEOPLE"
"HUNDREDS, THOUSANDS OF THEM"
"FELT SORRY FOR THEM)
"MIGRANT WORKERS"
"FANTASTIC PEOPLE IN THE HOTELS"
"THE WORK ETHIC WAS BRILLIANT"
"MAINLY SERVICE WORKER"
"SPOKE TO A LOT OF MIGRANT WORKERS"

Learning/Perception Change

"CHANGE SOME PERCEPTIONS"
"DIDN'T LEARN ANYTHING"
"DIDN'T PROMOTE ISLAM"
"MASSIVE WASTE"
"ME VIEW HASN'T CHNAGED"
"IMPROVED MY IMAGE OF BOTH"
"WOULD'VE LIKED TO LEARNED A BIT MORE"
"PREJUDICES WERE REINFORCED"
"IT WAS A LOT BETTER THAN WHAT I WAS EXPECTING"
"YOU CAN HAVE FUN THEIR"
"IT WOULD BE UNFAIR TO SAY I DIDN'T LEARN ANYTHING"