Footy Sheilas: A Memoir and Exegesis

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Submitted in fulfilment for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Swinburne University of Technology, 2016
Abstract

The Project is about multigenerational fans of Australian Rules Football (AFL). The artefact element of this PhD is a memoir focussed upon how a family of fans, predominately female, have followed the Collingwood Football Club over five generations. It involves humour, self-insights, and visual and verbal ethnography. It is a family archive of narratives that are distinctly Australian-based and produced with an Australian humour and narrator’s voice. Above all it provides a dynamic window into the ways that Australians follow a national football code with particular emphasis upon a single family.

The academic framework of this artefact is an exegesis that situates the scholarship within discussion and debate in the literature, and also identifies and addresses a gap in the literature about women football fans with a mutigenerational commitment to an Australian sporting club. A reflexive methodology connects the artefact and exegesis. The creative and analytic processes have led to the artefact evolving from ‘data’ into an artistic representation of the key themes as they have emerged through the analysis. Together the two elements of this project ‘Footy Sheilas’ develop scholarship about narrative discourse, autoethnography and a social identity approach as applied to football fandom and family narratives about it.
Acknowledgements

Firstly I would like to acknowledge and sincerely thank my primary supervisor Professor Pam Green for the many years she spent believing in me and encouraging me to keep going during the difficult times. Her continuing support and advice has been greatly appreciated. I would also like to acknowledge and thank my secondary supervisors Dr Christine Sinclair and Professor Josie Arnold. In particular, Dr Sinclair’s ongoing advice during the crafting of the memoir was invaluable while Professor Arnold invested a significant amount of time in building my confidence, offering advice and insisting that my work was worthy. Professor Arnold has been a wonderful mentor and I am proud to also call her my friend.

I would like to acknowledge my mother Sue and my sister Lisa. Our commitment to the Collingwood Football Club knows no bounds and we have spent many happy and hilarious years together at the football. I am so pleased that our family football stories have now been committed to paper.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for their support and patience. My husband Tom and children Todd and Olivia not only supported my studies but were very willing to be part of my research. They are my world and words cannot express how much their encouragement and belief in me has meant.
Declaration by Candidate

I declare that the content for examinable outcome as a PhD by artefact and exegesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award to the candidate of any other degree or diploma, except where due reference is made in the text of the examinable outcome; to the best of my knowledge contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text of the examinable outcome; and, where work is based on joint research or publications, discloses the relative contributions of the respective workers or authors.

The content of this artefact and exegesis was proof-read by professional editor Dr Rachel Le Rossignol. The work undertaken was in accordance with Current Australian Standards for Editing Practice and restricted to Standard D (Language and Illustrations) and Standard E (Completeness and Consistency). No advice was given on Standard C (Substance and Structure).

Signed:

Dated: 26th February, 2016
Footy Sheilas

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Introduction

This PhD project is presented as a creative artefact in the form of a memoir that records the stories of a multigenerational family of predominantly female Australian Football fans and an accompanying exegesis that situates the scholarship within discussion and debate in the literature. The project identifies and addresses a gap in the literature about women football fans with a multigenerational commitment to an Australian sporting club. A reflexive methodology connects the artefact and exegesis. The creative and analytic processes have led to the artefact evolving from ‘data’ into an artistic representation of the key themes as they have emerged through the analysis. The emergent themes include family storytelling and its role in building and reinforcing a social identity, the practice of rituals and tribal behaviour. Together the two elements of this project ‘Footy Sheilas: A Memoir and Exegesis’, develop scholarship about narrative discourse and autoethnography. It takes a social identity approach as applied to football fandom and the associated family narratives.

In this exegesis, I begin with a brief review of selected literature on Australian Football and its fans. In Section One, I present an overview of the development of my creative artefact (memoir) and the relationship of the artefact and exegesis, and discuss the overarching framework of practice-led research (PLR). I explore self-reflexive narratives and briefly introduce a number of key terms, such as identity and community. Following this is a discussion of life writing and creative non-fiction: as part of this section, I enter into the academic discourse on memoir. I draw on a number of thinkers in the area of memoir (for example, Barrington 2000; Piercy & Wood 2005; Taylor McDonnell 1998; Miller 2007; Zinsser 2004, 2006).

In Section Two, I explore crafting memoir, particularly my humorous memoir. The role that memoir plays in maintaining memories and providing a ‘voice’ also forms part of the discussion. Other writers of humorous memoirs (Birmingham 1994; Fey 2011; Lucy 2008; Griffin 2009; Wysocky 2005) are included in my exploration to provide examples of how life events can be presented using a humorous voice that has the potential to engage the audience. The most influential humorous memoir, as far as my work is
concerned, is Lucy’s (2008) *The Lucy family alphabet*. This particular work not only provides the inspiration for my ‘voice’ but also a structure that leads to a selection of stories that are not restricted to chronological order. Rather the memoir, like Lucy’s memoir, is structured around an alphabetical themed approach that invites the reader to pick up my book, and read the sections in any order while making meaning of the stories.

In Section Three, I briefly discuss practice-led research (PLR) as method and then explore autoethnography as methodology. Key thinkers regarding authoethnography that inform this section include Ellis (1999, 2004); Anderson (2006); Vryan (2006); Ellis and Bochner (2000, 2006) and Chang (2008). The reflexivity of my methodology connects the memoir and exegesis because of the creative and analytic processes in which I engage as part of PLR. This is elaborated upon later in the exegesis. Section Three also offers a theoretical prism in which some of the findings from the memoir are framed. I utilise a social-identity approach within the context of a family engaging in storytelling about their experiences as football supporters as well as the practice of family rituals and how this potentially leads to a sense of identity and belonging to a special in-group.

Sections Four presents my reflections on the question: what did the memoir reveal about myself and my family of football supporters? I draw on selected literature of storytelling and family narratives, the practice of rituals within the context of supporting a football team and explore the idea that, rather than belonging to a community, football supporters are more tribal in their behaviours. The literature drawn from the areas of storytelling, ritual, and community and tribes, provides valuable insights about how supporting a football team can potentially play a meaningful role in family life and provide a sense of identity and belonging. The major themes emerging from the memoir, included in Section Four, are: storytelling and identity; the ways in which storytelling contributes to a sense of belonging; and the rituals practised by my family as football supporters.

The final section of the exegesis focuses on the ways in which a memoir and exegesis represent scholarship and contribute to the body of knowledge. A discussion of why
creativity is important to scholarship then follows. Evidence from the memoir is analysed against the backdrop of the relevant scholarly literature to demonstrate the contribution made by this doctoral research in terms of new knowledge.

**Review of Selected Australian Football Literature**

**Historical Accounts**

There are many publications that record the history of Australian Rules football (or ‘Australian Football’) clubs, teams and players. While other publications explore the cultural aspects of the game and football fandom, there appears to be lacunae in the literature with respect to research publications that record the first-hand experiences of families supporting an Australian football club over many generations. For example, the prominent Australian historian Geoffrey Blainey’s book entitled *A game of our own: the origins of Australian football* (2003) provides explorations of the origins of the game. Rob Hess, Matthew Nicholson, Bob Stewart and George De Moore’s (2008) *A national game: the history of Australian rules football* offers a comprehensive historical account of Australian football across Australia and beyond. Mark Pennings' (2012, 2014) *Origins of Australian football: volume 1 Amateur heroes and the rise of clubs 1858-1876* and *Volume 2 A golden era begins: football in marvellous Melbourne 1877-1885* is yet another comprehensive account of the origins of Australian football.

Another historical account is presented in *The Australian game of football since 1858* edited by James Weston (2008). Publications such as John Murray’s (2008) *Melbourne Football Club: an illustrated history* and Michael Roberts’ (2011) *The mightiest Magpies: the story of every Collingwood premiership season* focus on the histories of particular clubs. Lionel Frost’s (2005) *Immortals: football people and the evolution of Australian rules* offers the reader a selection of short biographies of some of the influential individuals who helped to shape football across the southern states of Australia. Bob Stewart and Geoff Dickson’s (2007) ‘Crossing the Barassi line: the rise and rise of Australian football’ examines the competition’s transition from the Victorian Football League to the Australian Football League, and how this transition was met with
resistance from traditional VFL fans. Each of these historical accounts offers insights into the cultural, political and economic landscapes of the ever-evolving major Australian rules competition.

**Insider Accounts**

Many coaches and players have written autobiographical accounts of their careers, or have been written about. The list of publications generated by clubs, coaches, players, administrators and historians of the game is extensive. Some examples include an autobiography by former Richmond player and Essendon coach Kevin Sheedy (2008) *Stand your ground*; a biography of the great Ron Barassi (Laylor 2010) *Barassi: the biography*; the controversial Brisbane Lions and Western Bulldogs player Jason Akermanis’ book (2009) *Open season*; Collingwood premiership captain Nick Maxwell’s (with Journalist Adrian Gleeson) (2010) *One grand week: a captain’s tale of 2010 triumph* and Jonathan Brown’s (with Adam McNichol) (2015) *Life and football*. Publications such as these provide those who are outside the ‘inner sanctum’ of a football club with stories of what is happening behind closed doors. While some authors of these ‘insider’ accounts of football make mention of supporters, the main focus is on what is happening within the club rather than on the terraces and in the stands.

Women fans and scholars have also contributed to these accounts. For example, a recent publication by Bonnie Palmer (2015) records the experiences of women who have established careers within the Australian football community. Her publication, *Women and the AFL*, provides a selection of interviews with women such as Kelli Underwood (commentator and reporter), Jill Lindsay (former AFL Football Operations Manager) and Chelsea Roffey (the first female AFL Goal Umpire). As well, Palmer interviews female trainers, wives and mothers of AFL footballers and other women who have been involved in the administration of various clubs. The women interviewed did not feel that there was a need for separate women supporter groups, nor were they comfortable about attention being drawn to their gender. Palmer’s (2015) publication comes nearly twenty years after Kevin Sheedy and Carolyn Brown’s (1998) *Football’s women: the forgotten*
heroes. This particular publication records the various contributions made by women, including mothers, wives, administrators and female fans, to Australian Rules Football.

There are a few publications that record women playing Australian Rules Football. For example, Rob Hess’ (1996) *Women and Australian rules football in colonial Melbourne* makes mention of women playing the game in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Hess’ (2004) chapter ‘Chinese footballers and female players: discontinuous and marginalised histories’ examines the history of women playing football. Nikki Wedgwood (2005) has recorded the history of the development of a Women’s Football League during the 1980s in her paper entitled ‘Doin’ it for themselves: a case study of the development of a women’s Australian rules football competition’. In the creative artefact, I record my own experiences as a young woman who played in the Victorian Women’s Football League (VWFL) during the 1980s. This accords with how Wedgwood captures the difficulties encountered by women who wanted to be part of a football competition during this period.

**Football Fans**

There is a large body of academic literature on Australian Football fans. The following offers some selected examples. *Fanfare: spectator culture and Australian rules football* edited by Matthew Nicholson (2005) offers a number of articles on the various aspects of Australian Rules football fandom and culture. This publication includes contributions from numerous academics and covers topics such as cheer-squads, run-throughs (banners) and football fan culture. Rob Hess’ (2000) ‘Ladies are specially invited: women in the culture of Australian rules football’ explores the involvement of women as football spectators during the early formation of the Victorian Football Association and later, the Victorian Football League. Hess identifies different categories of women fans (passive onlookers, voyeurs, socialites, barrackers, civilisers) and provides two case studies that demonstrate the ongoing and important roles women played as ‘auxiliaries’ (such as fundraising for the club and catering for social events) from the inception of the Victorian Football Association. Rob Kingston’s (2005) ‘Football and women in
Melbourne in the 1930s’ examines the stories of a number of women who attended the football with their families during the 1930s. Kingston states:

When questioned, female VFL fans of the thirties stress family involvement in football more than their male counterparts. One reason for women flocking to matches in such large numbers seems to have been the role barracking played in affirming and reinforcing family ties (2005, p. 54).

He also discusses the “loose form of gender segregation applied at the grounds” (p. 58) with women sitting in the stands or in the first row or two of seats around the perimeter of the playing arena (with men occupying the standing room behind). A number of female academics have published work on Australian Rules and female fans. For example, Nikki Wedgwood’s (2008) *For the love of football: Australian rules football and heterosexual desire* explores the sexual attraction of some women to Australian Rules Football players. Margaret Lindley (2002) also examines the idea that female supporters are sexually attracted to Australian football players but rather than objectifying the male bodies, this attraction only forms part of their interest in the game itself.

Whilst there are a number of publications written by Australian football supporters who attend football matches on a regular basis, books written by women recording their own experiences as lifelong football supporters appear to be few. Two examples of books authored by women football supporters are Dawn Leicester and Penny Mackieson’s (2003) *Real women love footy* and Journalist Angela Pippos’ (2006) *The goddess advantage: one year in the life of a football worshipper*. These publications record the experiences of women who are passionate about their respective football teams (Collingwood, Melbourne and Adelaide). These are important publications as they offer evidence of the passion many women have for Australian Football. As Klugman (2012, p. 415) suggests, “the passions of female sports fans has been neglected” by scholars. Traditionally, the supporters who attend AFL matches on a regular basis have included a higher percentage of women compared with other football codes throughout Australia and the world. Hess (2000, p. 113) describes this as one of “the most remarkable
features of the Australian code” while Mewett and Toffoletti (2011, p. 672) observe that
the AFL has enjoyed a “robust following by women”. As of 2015, 35% of AFL
members and 42% of the national television audience are women (Australian Football
League). However, these figures only include the number of women who attend AFL
matches and hold a membership with any particular club. Those women who attend but
do not hold membership are excluded. Thus, the figures understate viewing by women.
Insight into the experiences of a multigenerational family of women football supporters
is one of the gaps the current project attempts to fill. I provide a first-hand account of
my own and my family’s experiences as passionate Australian Football supporters.

The Collingwood Football Club has produced a book entitled: The barrackers are
shouting: stories of Collingwood from the grandstand (edited by Roberts 2006) that
offers the reader short stories written by Collingwood supporters that record their
experiences of, passion for, and commitment to their football club. Matthew Hardy’s
Collingwood tragic provide humorous memoirs that explore the highs and lows of
following a particular football club. These books offer some insight into what it means
to be a fanatical Australian Football supporter but their main purpose is to entertain. My
artefact and exegesis together, however, provide both entertainment and a scholarly
analysis of the social and cultural aspects of football fandom.

Garrie Hutchinson’s (1984) From the outer: watching football in the 80s describes the
experiences of supporting a team in the 1980s, before the Victorian Football League
(VFL) expanded into other Australian states and became national and corporate. He also
offers a view of where the game could be headed. Stephen Alomes’ (2012) Australian
football: the people’s game 1958-2058 explores Australian football from the middle of
the twentieth century through to the modern era. Three examples of publications that
capture the stories of football supporters and explore themes such as ritual, identity and
belonging, both individual and family, are: John Cash and Joy Damousi’s (2009) Footy
passions; Matthew Klugman’s (2009) Passion play: love, hope and heartbreak; and
journalist Cheryl Critchley’s (2010) Our footy: real fans v big bucks. These publications
capture the enduring emotional attachment and passion supporters (both men and women) of the AFL have for their respective clubs.

Cash and Damousi’s (2009, p. 11) data, elicited from individual interviews with a diverse range of Australian Football fans, offer insights into the passion felt by supporters and how their attachment to their club is used to “express aspects of their own personality and their relations with family and friends”. They observe that the shared identifications and attachments to an AFL football club contribute to the building and maintaining of relationships within and across generations of families (2009, p. 25). The football club, with its annual triumphs, trials and tribulations, offers families a common interest and a basis for ongoing conversations about the shared experiences, both the highs and the lows, that come with supporting a football club. Klugman (2009, p. ix) poses the question of why does football “bring such pleasure and pain to its many followers?” He interviews a diverse range of football supporters in order to discover what it is about following an AFL team that nearly sends people to the brink of madness and provides moments of absolute joy and painful suffering, or as his book title suggests “Love, hope and heartbreak”.

Critchley (2010) interviews long-term passionate fans who have been closely involved with their respective clubs (e.g. members of cheer squads, volunteers, online fan communities). Many of her interviewees lament the loss of dearly held traditions and view the more primitive conditions football supporters endured before the game became fully professional, with state of the art stadiums, as the ‘good old days’. Critchley takes a critical approach towards the corporatisation of the AFL and how this process has dramatically altered the football fan experience. She concludes with a chapter about her own story as a passionate Richmond supporter.

Themes, including family ties, elation after an important win and the heartbreak that comes with a terrible loss, are explored in each of these three books. Cash and Damousi (2009, p. 27) comment on the dramatic changes that have occurred as the competition has evolved from a local suburban one (VFL), where each team played at their traditional home ground, to a national and fully professional competition (AFL), and
how this evolution has been distressing for some fans. Critchley (2010) is particularly critical of the ways in which supporters have been disenfranchised as the competition has become more corporate and of how dearly-held traditions have been disrupted or disappeared. While these particular publications offer insights into the lives and passions of football supporters, the books differ from mine as they are not authored by the supporters under study. At the same time, many of the recorded stories are analysed to some degree by the authors (and each author declares their passion for the game and support for a particular AFL team). In particular in his analysis Klugman (2009, p. 3) draws from the worlds of religion and psychoanalysis in order gain some understanding of the passionate behavior and fanaticism of AFL supporters. However, like Hardy (2004), Pippos (2006) and Gilchrist (2011), I have recorded my family’s experiences as football supporters. In addition, like Cash and Damousi (2009), Klugman (2009) and Critchley (2010), my focus is on developing an understanding of what it means to be a passionate football supporter and part of a family deeply attached to a football team, and how this in turn can contribute to a sense of identity and belonging.
Section 1: A Family Narrative

In this section I present an overview of the development of the memoir and the relationship of the artefact and exegesis, and discuss the overarching framework of practice-led research (PLR)

The Memoir: A Background

Australian football, or to be more accurate, supporting the Collingwood Football Club, has been central to my family’s life for five generations, spanning from 1892 through to the present. My family have spent their weekends packing scarves, raincoats and food, as well as travelling long distances, if necessary, to watch our team play. To date members of my family have been present for approximately 2500 home and away matches, 177 finals matches, 43 Grand Finals and 16 premierships (one during the time Collingwood spent as part of the Victorian Football Association, 13 when they were part of the Victorian Football League and two Australian Football League premierships). During this time there has been a Depression, two world wars, a cold war, a cultural revolution, the ‘space race’ and the move from the Industrial age to the Digital age. The one constant in my family’s life over many generations has been supporting the Collingwood Football Club. It is the common interest that draws the family together and creates a sense of social cohesion.

The scholarly framework in this exegesis addresses a gap in the literature with respect to research on the generational support of Collingwood Football Club within one family and what this means for identity, social cohesion and family narratives. For example, my family has slept outside football grounds on cold nights, hoping to secure the much sought after finals tickets. We have sat in the pouring rain watching our team receive absolute thrashings at the hands of hated rivals. We have laughed, cried, fought, hugged and screamed ourselves hoarse – at the football at first in Melbourne and, since the competition has become national, and our team has to play matches outside our state, watching some games together in front of the television. Each game that we attend
seems to provide us with more stories and more memories to add to our family history as devoted Collingwood supporters.

My mother, who has been attending football matches every week for sixty years, has always lamented the fact that our experiences as mad football supporters have not ever been committed to paper. She has a strong sense of family history and believes that our stories should be recorded for future generations. Whenever something amusing or interesting happens to us at the football, my mother exclaims, “We should be writing this down!” This has led to this project.

My memoir records how Australian football has played a prominent part in my family’s life and many other families’ lives, particularly in the city of Melbourne where the Victorian Football League (VFL) was formed in 1897. Unlike other football codes, such as rugby union, rugby league and soccer, Australian football has historically attracted a large female following and has always been well supported by families (Cash & Damousi 2009; Hess 2000; Kingston 2005; Klugman, 2009; Mewett & Toffoletti 2008, 2011). As a woman who has grown up in a predominantly female family of passionate Collingwood Football Club supporters, the idea that ‘football’ is a masculine space where men gather together in large numbers to support their football team is not a familiar concept to me or my family, as my artefact records. However, I am well positioned to bring the unique perspective of a female football supporter’s experience and to conduct an analysis of the experiences of a multigenerational family of football supporters.

Self-reflexive narratives

The issues that I have identified through reflecting on the process of writing my memoir are discussed more fully as I review PLR. This exegesis explores the role that supporting a football team plays in my own and my family’s life by drawing on the accompanying humorous memoir authored by me. In this process a number of themes are identified and explored. According to Sullivan:
… [practice-led] research that is supported by critical reflection and reflexive action can be seen to invert the research process because it encourages working from the ‘unknown to the known’ and it is purposeful yet open-ended, clear-sighted yet exploratory. Practice-led research makes good use of this creative and critical process and may provide novel perspectives in reviewing existing knowledge structure (2009, p. 48).

Drawing on a number of scholarly articles (e.g. Green 2006; Sullivan 2009) I enter into scholarly discussions on the self-reflexive nature of PLR and show how this is relevant to my inquiry. Arising from my artefact production, the central question addressed in this exegesis is: how does one family’s multigenerational membership of a football club contribute to a sense of identity and belonging? As a result I am also interested in understanding what a memoir reveals about one family’s multigenerational experience of being football fans. Through the production of my artefact I have gained some insights into the significance of shared stories and storytelling and into the practice of rituals in the construction of a family’s sense of identity and belonging. This is one way in which I show how the artefact and exegesis “talk to one another”, an essential element of PLR.

Such narrative discourse is an important aspect of PLR. Green (2006, p. 177) claims that: “The high-level academic examination of arts-based outputs … suggests that tertiary institutions and appropriately qualified examiners agree that research through practice develops new knowledge”. Sullivan (2009, p. 49) proposes that: “PLR makes good use of the creative and critical process and may provide novel perspectives in reviewing existing knowledge structures”, and that rather than taking the more traditional research approach of moving from the unknown to the known, PLR inverts this process. Indeed, I have moved from the known (we are a family of passionate football supporters) to the unknown (what does this mean?). This discussion provides a scholarly framework for my artefact in the exegesis.

The common interest that my immediate and extended family members share is a passion for the Collingwood Football Club and Australian football in general, so my
artefact is a memoir that honours my family’s lived experience as football supporters and records our stories. It provides an opportunity to discover what I can about an aspect of the self, a family and a family’s identity and sense of belonging as members of a professional football club. The memoir as a literary form provides a lens through which I can focus on my family’s experiences as football supporters. Zinsser (1998) argues that unlike autobiography, where stories are usually presented in some sort of chronological order, “memoir narrows the lens, focusing on a time in the writer’s life that was unusually vivid” (p. 15). Although my memoir contains stories from five generations rather than a particular time in my life, there is a distinct focus on supporting a football team and I have placed myself as the central figure and storyteller. I endeavour to understand what it means to have been part of this football experience as an individual, with my family and as part of a broader football community. As a scholar engaged in PLR, I also focus on the ways in which the construction of the memoir has enabled me to see multigenerational fan narratives more clearly. This exegesis will take the reader through the steps I took to set up and apply an analytical lens and will provide the academic discussions this has involved. It acts as a scholarly framework for the artefact and hence the two elements are complementary.

The exegesis arises from the writing process of the artefact. It is not a scholarly justification as both elements are complementary productions of academic knowledge. Barrett suggests that the exegesis:

… locates the work within the broader field of practice and theory … It is part of the replication process that establishes the creative arts as a stable research discipline, able to withstand peer and wider assessment (2004, p. 1).

Kroll (2004, p. 4) argues that the exegesis is the critical component of what she describes as a hybridised thesis, that is, one which situates the creative practice within an academic context. She identifies a number of challenges the hybrid thesis (creative artefact and exegesis model) presents for the PhD student. For example, Kroll states that the student is usually aware very early on in the development of the work that there will
be an expectation to be self-reflexive and this can in turn influence the development of the creative product. She offers the example of creative writers wanting their work to be of a publishable standard and the potential to be well-received by an audience outside the academy, yet being aware that the first audience to view the work will be academics. In the case of my work, I have aspirations for my memoir to be published and critically well received by an audience drawn from the general community, and football supporters in particular. At the same time, the purpose of my creative artefact/exegesis is to contribute to the creation of new knowledge. My memoir was written as part of a creative arts/exegesis PhD. This led to self-reflexivity from the beginning of the writing process as I was aware that the artefact did not stand alone as a publication but involved me in bringing creative output and scholarly insights together, as I illustrate throughout this exegesis. Knowing that the artefact would create the ‘data’ to inform my research inquiry and then be analysed had an influence on the decision-making process. For example, I became more deeply aware of the impact of my photographs as visual ethnography. The key questions that were ever-present were what stories should I include and what would these stories reveal about my lived experience as part of a family devoted to our football team? I wanted to go beyond recording our stories in the form of a memoir and discover new scholarly knowledge about myself, my family and our place within the broader football community.

The stories contained within the memoir serve two functions: the first is to record family narratives in the artefact; the second is to reflect upon the production of the artefact so as to identify scholarly implications and ideas to underpin the exegesis. Some of the stories I have written record experiences that various family members tell and retell and have become part of our family folklore, while others are based on my observations and direct experiences of particular events. These stories provide the material for the construction of the memoir and have generated the data and the subsequent analysis presented in this exegesis. In constructing the memoir, I am engaging with the material that contributes to an understanding of what it means to be a member of our family in the context of the defining characteristic of it, which is that we are football supporters of the Collingwood Football Club. I contribute to the body of creative non-fiction through
the construction of the memoir. Further, I contribute to the body of work on Australian football supporters, and in particular, the experiences of female football supporters. As well, in this exegesis, I engage in a scholarly conversation with a number of key thinkers through the exploration and further building on themes of family storytelling and identity, family rituals, and families as part of tribes and communities.

**Identity**

The most significant element of my research project involves ‘identity’. The artefact illustrates what it means to feel a sense of belonging to an in-group. There is much discussion in the literature about how a universal definition of ‘identity’ remains elusive (Fearon 1999, p. 5). There is debate about what is meant by ‘identity’, showing how it very much depends on the discipline focus (e.g. social psychology, sociology, anthropology) and the theoretical position taken by the researcher (e.g. social identity theory; symbolic interactionist) (Brubaker & Cooper 2000, pp. 6-9). My definition of identity is clearly explored through the stories I relate in the artefact and adds to their scholarly discussion about how individuals negotiate a social identity.

The scholarly discussion indicates how individuals need to negotiate more than one identity. For example, in the case of the current study, I am exploring ‘identity’ from a number of angles – personal, family and collective – and a number of categories – daughter, mother, sister and wife, as well as football supporter. In order to fully explore the various angles and categories of identity, I draw on social identity theory (Hogg & Abrams 1988; Hogg 2006; Hogg, Terry & White 1995; Tajfel & Turner 1979; Tajfel 1981) to frame my analysis. As a seminal thinker, Tajfel posits that social identity can be:

understood as that part of an individual self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group or groups together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership (1981, p. 254).
We compare our group with other groups (social comparison) and view the former more favourably.

Throughout the memoir, I refer to myself and my family as ‘football supporters’ rather than ‘football fans’. This distinction is an important part of my analysis of our social identity as football supporters and draws upon Guilianotti’s (2002) work on spectator identities. Football spectators, who make up part of the greater football community, are not a homogenous group. Rather, there is fragmentation of the football supporting community. Guilianotti (2002, p. 31) claims that there are four ‘ideal types’ by which we can classify football spectators, namely; Supporters, Followers, Fans and Flâneurs. Jacobsen (2003, p. 6) makes the observation that sports fan research often uses the terms ‘fan’ and ‘spectator’ interchangeably even though spectators are not necessarily ‘fans’. She suggests that research on sports fans should “define fan and spectator to avoid any ambiguity or confusion”. Guilianotti’s taxonomy of spectator identities offers four categories of football spectators and provides clear definitions of each.

As I discuss further later, Guilianotti (2002, p. 26) argues that the analysis of his classification of spectator identities is principally applied to professional football clubs throughout the world (including Australian Football). From an Australian context, each football club has a diverse group of spectators ranging from those who do not strongly identify with a football club, are more likely to switch allegiances and will prioritise other interests when it suits them (‘Flâneurs’) through to those who are heavily invested emotionally in their football team (‘Supporters’). While Guilianotti’s (2002) taxonomy has been developed to explore the impact of the commodification of football on spectator identification, it can also be utilised as a model to classify spectators situated within particular football communities. Guilianotti’s (2002) ‘supporter’ categories contain four key elements: thick solidarity; topophilic spaces (attaching meaning to particular places such as the home ground of the football club); subcultural relations, and grounded identity. He claims that “traditional spectators will have a longer, more local and popular cultural identification … hot forms of loyalty emphasise intense kinds of identification and solidarity with the club” (p. 57). Two other significant terms used
in both the memoir and exegesis are ‘community’ and ‘tribes’. These are discussed in turn later.

**Memoir**

We are living in a time described by many scholars as ‘the age of memoir’ or the ‘memoir boom’ (Goode 2012; Larson 2007; Yagoda 2009) This is indicative of our passionate engagement with self. As a form of writing, memoir has become increasingly popular with authors and readers alike. For example, the number of published memoirs in the United States grew by 400 percent between 2004 and 2010 (Yagoda 2009, p. 7). Goode (2012) traces what he calls ‘the memoir explosion’ back to the middle of the 1990s and outlines three changes noted by critics during that time. The first change was a substantial increase in the number of published memoirs by unknown authors (nobody memoirs), the second was the growth in the number of female authors and the third shift was that “the memoirs were more likely to be about transgressive or non-normative lives” (2012, p. 23). The ‘nobody memoirs’, or as Neustadter (2004) more eloquently describes, those authored by ‘ordinary people’, are a departure from the memoirs “once written by famous people basking in the twilight of their fame” (Neustadter 2004, p. 237). Memoir is viewed as a more accessible or democratic genre that has the potential to attract amateurs as, according to Couser (2011, p. 28), “… unlike the novel, in literate cultures memoir is a version of something many people produce as part of their daily lives”.

Although memoirs have been written for hundreds of years (Yagoda 2010) and could hardly be described as a new form of life-writing, the current ‘memoir explosion’ is usually traced back to memoirs such as Dave Pelzer’s (1995) *A child called it*, Mary Karr’s (1995) *The liars club* and Frank McCourt’s (1996) *Angela’s ashes*. The former two are viewed by scholars as early examples of successful contemporary ‘memoirs’ authored by ‘ordinary people’ (although Karr was a published poet) (Adams 2002; Couser 2011; Showalter 2012). Each memoir was critically and commercially successful and reached the Top Ten on the *New York Times* Best Sellers list. The common theme of each of these memoirs is surviving an unhappy childhood filled with abuse and family
dysfunction. Although the subject matter is family dysfunction, Karr’s use of dark humour and lack of sentimentality is considered a feature of the memoir. What was dubbed by some as the ‘misery memoir’ written by ‘ordinary’ people became something of a phenomenon throughout the 1990s and early 2000s. Zinsser (2015, p. 5) describes this golden age of misery memoir time as the ‘memoir-crazed 1990s’ where many would-be authors used ‘memoir’ as therapy. According to Zinsser (2015, p. 5) “no remembered episode was too squalid, no family too dysfunctional, to be trotted out for the titillation of the masses on cable TV and in magazines and books … writing was out and whining was in”. Adams (2002, p. 1) claims that the commercial imperative is partially responsible for the proliferation of ‘nobody misery memoir’. The authors are paid a lower advance than more notable figures such as Bill Clinton, and editors and publicists can capitalise on the marketing opportunities that a gripping real life (negative) story can offer.

**Life Writing**

The memoir is often commercially successful as well as critically acclaimed. It is a form of life-writing and usually sits alongside autobiography, biography and confession (Larson 2007, p. 11). It has historically been seen as something of a poor relation to autobiography and has, according to Rak (2004, p. 305) a “difficult critical history … “and that unlike autobiography, memoir has received very little critical attention in its own right”. Barrington (2007) offers a useful definition of the modern memoir and claims that, unlike autobiography where a life is presented in its entirety or whole life span, memoir is a story from a life. She suggests that selection of a particular theme that binds the work and sets boundaries is one of the important skills of memoir writing: “… the writer maintains focus on one aspect of life and offers the reader an in-depth exploration” (p. 109). Smith and Watson (2001, p. 262) identify 60 genres of life writing. This makes the task of situating a memoir in a particular sub-genre difficult. However, all forms of life-writing are, according to Couser (2011, p. 34), “united by being concerned with identities of actual people”.
Life-writing does not necessarily follow conventional schemes of genre differentiation. As Couser (2011, p. 33) states, “genre terms have proliferated over time, and they have often been inconsistently defined and applied”. Literary theorists and critics sometimes describe particular types of memoirs as ‘literary memoir’ if the work is deemed to be worthy of the ‘literary’ title. Barrington (2007, p. 109) argues that even though all memoirs are about life experiences, the literary memoir contains quality writing with “well-honed sentences and paragraphs”. Another important element that signposts a literary memoir is what Barrington (2007, p. 110) describes as ‘musing’ – “… telling a good story … reflecting out loud on the story, bringing retrospection to bear on the events”. Creative non-fiction offers yet another label for a memoir where the author uses the creative techniques of fiction writing and presents “factually accurate prose about real people and events in a compelling, vivid dramatic manner … and the subject matter is expressed in a story-oriented narrative way” (Gutkind 2012, p. 8). Just as creative fiction has sub-genres (romance, thriller, action), life-writing, including memoir, has its own sub-genres. These include, but are not limited to, grief or misery, survival, humorous, family (usually dysfunctional), celebrity/political/athlete experiences and addiction/recovery stories (list from Swenson 2013).

Many scholars, such as Larson (2007 p. 21), point to the prolific number of memoirs being published in the early part of the twenty-first century. Larson believes that as a form, memoir has managed to transcend the major hurdle of needing to contain stories of family dysfunction in order to engage an audience.

The idea that a memoir authored by an ‘ordinary’ person should be an account of the archetypal ‘childhood from hell’ or ‘survival against the odds’ began to shift in the early part of the twenty-first century. Although humorous memoirs authored by ‘ordinary’ people co-existed with the ‘misery memoir’ throughout the 1990s (and even the memoirs written about family dysfunction contain humour), the antithesis of the sub-genre (misery) began to appear in the early 2000s. For example, Daniel Harris’ (2002) *A memoir of no one in particular: in which our author indulges in naïve indiscretions, a self-aggrandizing solipsism and an off-putting infatuation with his own bodily functions* was what Adams (2012, p. 1) describes as “… a parody of the genre”. Yet another
example is Michael Kelly’s (2008) spoof memoir entitled *My Godawful life: abandoned, betrayed, stuck to the window* (under the pseudonym ‘Sunny McCready’). These memoirs appear to be a backlash against the ‘misery memoir’, highlighting and making fun of the life stories of poverty and abuse. Although not a parody of a misery memoir, Amy Rosenthal’s (2005) memoir entitled *Encyclopedia of an ordinary life* resembles an encyclopedic layout and her life (or at least certain aspects of it) is presented in alphabetical order. The front cover is revealing and sets up an expectation that the memoir is humorous while clearly signposting that the work is not the more typical account of surviving in the face of adversity during a dysfunctional childhood that is so prevalent in the modern memoir. Part of the title reads *I have not survived against the odds, I have not lived to tell, I have not witnessed the extraordinary, this is my story.* This accords with my memoir.

Breaking away from the ‘misery’ memoir and recounting a particular time or aspect of a life that is free of dysfunction is not new, but has historically not been common among ‘ordinary’ people writing memoirs. Neustadter (2004, p. 247) suggests that memories of “idyllic childhood are not as numerous as those of miserable childhoods”. He offers two examples that recount happy childhoods and functional families: Jill Ker Conway’s (1990) *The road from Coorain* and Doris Kearns Goodwin’s (1997) *Wait until next year*. Ker Conway’s work was made into a film. She grew up in the Australian outback and remembers her childhood as happy and adventurous, and her family as loving and functional even when confronting adversity.

Kearns Goodwin, a notable American political historian, was interviewed by filmmaker Ken Burns for his documentary on baseball (providing one of the few female voices in the masculine world of baseball). She noticed after the interview that when she was on the lecture circuit, people did not want to hear about the great American political figures she had researched and written about. Rather, they wanted her to share memories of the days when “baseball almost ruled the world” (Kearns Goodwin 1997, p. 9). It prompted her to write a memoir about her love of baseball and a coming of age as a Brooklyn Dodger fan. Kearns Goodwin claims:
As I set to work, however, I saw that my early involvement with baseball was an indistinguishable part of my childhood in Rockville Centre, Long Island. I could not talk about my experience as a fan without also telling the story of my life as a young girl reaching adolescence in that deceptively tranquil decade of the nineteen fifties. (1997, p. 10).

The idea that an ‘ordinary’ person can write a memoir which is not filled with childhood horror stories or other accounts of brutal hardship is no longer rare in the world of memoir. Couser’s (2011, p. 45) preferred term for the genre, ‘life narrative’, indicates memoir can explore social, cultural and historical change.

My own work could be described as a hybrid of a number of sub-genres of memoir (Couser 2011, p. 46). ‘Footy Sheilas’ is essentially a humorous memoir about a family (family history memoir) of football supporters (sports fandom memoir) set in a time of dramatic social and cultural change as a consequence of the ongoing commercialisation and commodification of the Australian Football League. Arguably, my memoir could be described as a ‘nobody memoir’ as it is authored by an ‘ordinary’ woman. Like Rosenthal (2005), I have not faced a life filled with dysfunction and hardship. Like Ker Conway (1990) and Kearns Goodwin (1997), my childhood was happy and I grew up in a functional, loving and supportive family.

**Creative non fiction**

My memoir about my life growing up in a family obsessed with the Collingwood Football Club is best described as creative non-fiction. Wall (2010) suggests the techniques of creative non-fiction, when writing a memoir, include scene, description and dialogue. She also argues the memoir as creative non-fiction should include creating anticipation, propulsion (e.g. making clear the consequences of a mundane moment and how it feeds the larger story), compressing time (what should be conveyed to the reader and what can be left ‘off stage’) and allowing moments and events rather than the passage of time to prompt the story. The narrative is non-linear and I have used the techniques of the fiction writer. Gutkind (2012, p. 6) argues that the ‘creative’ in creative non-fiction is not about inventing things but about “how the writer conceives
ideas, summarises situations, defines personalities, describes places – and shapes and presents information”.

The humorous short stories contained in the memoir feature my mother, sister, husband and two children (now adults). There is evidence of character development, plot and dialogue. My grandparents and great grandparents are mentioned early on in the memoir. Their brief stories provide the context for how and why we became a family of football supporters. There is every attempt made to define each personality. A chapter is dedicated to each of the main family members who attend the football. My intentions are to make the stories “compelling, vivid and dramatic” (Gutkind 2012, p. 6) yet non-fiction. The events described in the memoir are as recalled by my family who are involved in them. There is a sense of family cohesion through the stories: of constant phone calls to discuss the most recent game, what clothing we should wear, what time we should meet and even what we might eat when we arrive at the stadium. The recollection of triumphs after a good win and disappointments after a terrible loss and the special language that the family members use to describe certain events all point to a family that shares a mutual interest and in turn, a sense of belonging and connectedness that has endured across five generations.
Section 2: Crafting the memoir: Setting up the lens

There are numerous publications that offer advice on how to write a memoir (see, for example, Blazer 2011; Miller 2001; Taylor McDonnell 1998; Zinsser 2004). Each ‘how to’ offers examples of narration and voice, structure and memory. Couser (2011, p. 41) argues that writing a memoir is not as simple as using a content/form recipe and then placing the contents into the genre container. Drawing on a number of publications located in the field of ‘how to write memoir’, I began to develop greater insights into life-writing and creative non-fiction and this in turn informed my creative practice. Barrington (2007, p. 110) provides a number of examples of approaches to writing memoir. She claims that memoir writing can be light hearted and “laugh-out-loud funny or blend a personal story into an important historical record”. I have used a combination of these two approaches. Many of the stories contained in my memoir are recollections of humorous experiences that my family has gone through during our years of supporting the Collingwood Football Club. At the same time, the game itself has evolved from being played at the suburban football grounds where each club was established, to a national and highly commercial sporting competition.

The memoir records some of these changes and how they have had an impact on me and my family’s life. According to Blazer (2011, pp. 7-8), the difference between memoir and other genres, such as journalism and fiction, is that memoir provides a personal connection between the reader and author. Within a memoir we see an author inviting the reader into his/her lived experiences. Unlike fiction writing, where the author creates characters and situations that do not really exist, the author of the memoir becomes the protagonist. I am sharing personal details of the stories, rituals and tribal behaviour in which my family and I engage as football supporters.

The narrator’s voice

Like any writing, memoir presents a number of challenges. The memoirist has to take on the roles of ‘self’, ‘other’ and interpreter. As Barrington (2007, p. 111) points out, the writer of a memoir has to wear three hats. The ‘hats’ are those of narrator, interpreter
and the protagonist or hero. For those setting out to write a memoir, finding the right ‘voice’ while fulfilling the dual role of narrator and protagonist in the story can be difficult. As Miller (2007, p. 38) states “voice conveys attitude and as narrator, you need to find a consistent voice”. Further, Taylor McDonnell (1998, p. 131) notes, as the protagonist of the story, “a four year old child will not have the same words or concepts that you have at your command later as an adult telling the story”. As the narrator, I am recording experiences that occurred during different stages of my life. There is a chapter where I recall the first time that I went to the football with my family. I was only four years old at the time. While I describe my feelings and observations about this significant day in my life, at no stage do I recall a single word I said at the time. The only dialogue to appear in the chapter comes from the memory of my mother and sister speaking to me before we arrived at the football stadium. At this point, I am using my ‘narrator voice’ rather than the voice of the protagonist. There is a degree of separation between the two at this stage of the story. As an adult remembering an event, I cannot locate my four year old (child) voice. It was not until I started recording stories about experiences of going to the football as a teenager that dialogue involving me, what I said as well as how I felt, made an appearance.

Blazer argues that voice is a uniting element that gives personality and originality to a memoir. She claims that:

> We won’t know if your memoir is quirky, funny, semi tragic, and ultimately uplifting unless your voice lets us know it is. Frank McCourt’s childhood in Angela’s Ashes and Haven Kimmel’s childhood in A Girl Named Zippy have a completely different feel, even if on some level they are both tragic in their own right. This is because each of these authors has a completely different voice, and they use it to relay their stories in different manners (2011, p. 85).

The consistent voice I have used is the ‘humorous voice’. According to Murdock (2003, p. 157) the humorous voice “gives memoir its vitality”, while Miller (2007, p. 40) suggests the “humorous voice is unmistakable as the readers know where to align
themselves and how to react. We are standing with the narrator looking at her life with amusement”. The memoir offers examples of self-deprecation and conveys to the audience that I have an awareness of the absurdity in some of my behavior. I am deliberately inviting my audience to laugh with me as I stumble into yet another socially awkward situation:

By this stage I was desperate for Mum and Lisa to arrive. I had slowly been pushed up against a wall behind a curtain. There was a chair in the corner and I found myself tripping over the ornate leg that was sticking out just waiting for a clumsy fool to find it. All of a sudden I was on my knees caught in a curtain with my face against the wall. Luckily, the place was so full and busy that nobody noticed me. (‘Footy Sheilas’, p. 38).

Murdock (2003, p. 157) observes that the memoirist will also often “poke fun at loved ones”. Throughout the memoir I gently poke fun at many of my family members and their various quirks as part of our experience as football supporters. Examples include my sister’s eccentric behavior when confronted with authority figures and my mother’s angst at the family being perceived as ‘rough types’ whenever we demonstrate inappropriate (in her opinion) behaviour in a public place.

**Visual narratives and memory**

Photographs complement the written text, and potentially give the reader more cues about the mood or emotion of a particular event. This creative artefact contains a number of photographs that capture some memorable moments in our family’s life as football supporters. While the exegesis does not focus on visual anthropology, some discussion about the use of visual images as part of social science research is deemed appropriate as I have included some visual data throughout the artefact to convey certain emotional responses. Orobitg-Canal (2004, p. 29) describes the use of photographs, and photography in particular as “a medium for reconstructing the imaginary sphere and the invisible processes of social realities we are researching”, while Edgar (2004, p. 84) argues that photographs can “generate more holistic expressions of self-identities”.
For example, the following photographs capture the disappointment when ‘our’ team is performing poorly and the jubilation of an unexpected win. Both photographs convey a particular ‘voice’ or expression of social-identity – disappointment that ‘our’ team is doing badly; jubilation after ‘we’ unexpectedly win and nostalgia associated with the recollection of an important time in my life as a Collingwood supporter. The use of photographs also prompts memories of particular moments throughout my life and serves to engage the reader.

There are some ‘dark moments’ recorded. A terrible loss, a political upheaval within the club, or disappointment when a much anticipated season turns sour or a favourite player moves on, can have a deeply felt emotional impact on a supporter. These disappointing moments have created genuine emotional pain for my family. There are also accounts of moments where I am intoxicated and make a fool of myself in a public place and cause my mother to feel embarrassed by my behaviour. Miller (2007, p. 40) argues that situations that make the reader squirm can be included as they constitute an acceptable part of a memoir. There are a number of moments in the memoir that have the potential to make the reader ‘squirm’. I made the decision to record my more ‘squirm worthy’ moments throughout the memoir but these are written in a humorous style.

Writing a memoir relies on the recollection of certain events, people, places and times. Taylor McDonnell (1998, p. 27) claims “memory is essential to the memoir, however, our memories are notoriously unreliable”. We do not need to remember every minor detail of a certain event in order to write about it. Some of the suggestions about how to overcome problems with memory, such as remembering a particular time or the
sequence of events, include using photographs to jog memory or talking with family and friends (Miller 2001, p. 79); and while exploring memory, searching for a few sharp details rather than trying to remember more minor details as this may be enough to start writing (Taylor McDonnell 1998, p. 31). According to Piercy and Wood (2010, pp. 148-149) small artefacts such as sports memorabilia, books or toys, can bring back recollections of lived experiences. They suggest this involves experimentation to find out what works best for the individual. The following offer some examples of the photos I used to elicit more details from my memory.
The above photos (clockwise from top left) show the stuffed toy I am holding and the windcheater I wore in the third photo. This photo was selected for the front cover of ‘Footy Sheilas’ and was taken in 1990 during a final at the now closed ‘Waverley Park’ stadium. I have retained the clothing and toy for twenty-five years for sentimental reasons. They remind me of what my football experience used to be like as a young woman. Although 1990 was the year that the Victorian Football League was renamed the Australian Football League, and a number of teams outside the state of Victoria had entered the competition (or plans to admit new teams had been developed), most teams still played home games at their traditional ground in the suburb they originally represented.

*The non-linear narrative*

Zinsser (2004, pp. 164-165) notes that many people in attempting to write their life story try to recall events in chronological order. He argues this is not necessary and that when recalling significant events, you should “take whatever memory comes knocking”. During the planning and writing of my memoir, I had conversations with members of my family to confirm certain details, and closely studied old photographs. I also viewed video footage of many football games from the 1980s and 1990s. Memories came flooding back about particular moments that could be considered for inclusion in the memoir. As well, many of the stories had been told and retold by all of us. The stories of significant moments, such as the time my sister and I were escorted by security guards out of the Melbourne Cricket Ground for drunk and disorderly behaviour, have been retold so many times at family events that the details are burnt into our collective memory. They have become part of the family’s canon of football stories. As I began writing, many minor details of particular stories became clearer. Thus, non-linear narrative of the creative artefact was a deliberate choice.

My memoir was written with a purpose that extends beyond capturing a particular time in a life and/or for the interest of a specific audience. I wanted to record my family’s experience as football fans and then explore how those experiences might have contributed to a sense of identity and belonging for both myself and my family. The
memoir became the lens that revealed new knowledge about my understanding of family, identity and belonging. I began by writing down what I believed were the significant stories: where something memorable had occurred that led to my family recounting the experience through storytelling long after the event. At this early stage of writing, new insights about my family were emerging. The first was that we were a family who appeared to enjoy recalling and telling others stories of our experiences at the football. I also discovered that we spent considerable time discussing the latest issues surrounding our football club. For example, my mother constantly calls me to ask my opinion, or to express hers, about an article on the club in the newspaper. The second insight was that we are quite superstitious and practise many rituals as part of our football life. Finally, it became clear that we consider ourselves to be part of a ‘tribe’ (as I discuss later). For instance, it became apparent that when we tell each other (or jointly tell others) stories of our football club’s successes, failures and humorous moments, each member of the family refers to the club as ‘we’, not ‘they’. For example, “we had a great win” or “It was disappointing that we played so badly”. The retelling of these stories always elicits family laughter.

**Conveying humour**

According to Leonard (2014, p. 1), there are six elements that should be considered when writing a humorous memoir. The first is that the funniest stories from our lives do not need to be embellished a great deal because they really happened and they make us laugh years later. The second is finding the right sort of words to depict humour. He notes that certain words, such as ‘kerfuffle’, are more humorous (as compared with ‘uproar’). His advice with respect to the use of the ‘right’ words is to read the story out loud to determine whether the humorous story sounds funny. The third element is to study the ways in which other writers make us laugh. The fourth is to remember that “readers relate well to characters with flaws and weaknesses”. The fifth is that most funny stories can be told in ten pages and the final element is that the writer should continue to practise their craft daily.
Each of these elements can be found in my creative artefact. The various stories and anecdotes really happened to me and my family. I have attempted to use what Leonard (2014, p. 2) describes as “words that make you smile”. I began my research by reading humorous memoirs. As noted previously, there is a certain self-deprecation found throughout my stories – particularly about finding myself in awkward situations that are brought about through drinking too much alcohol and using vulgar language at inappropriate moments. There are also stories about my family rejecting authority figures at the football. Each story is quite short and sharply to the point. However, in order to reach a point where I felt confident my artefact was humorous required a number of iterations.

The first iteration of the memoir contained chapters based on various aspects of football. For example, a chapter about how I feel about rival ‘tribes’ was included in a collection of stories about my family’s experiences with supporters from rival football clubs. Another example contained within the memoir offers a number of stories about my family lining up, sometimes sleeping on the footpath for several days, to purchase tickets to football finals. Feedback on the first iteration was reasonably positive but a number of issues with structure and inconsistency with voice were identified. In an attempt to find the right structure, I revisited a number of ‘how to write a memoir’ guides.

Blazer (2011, p. 64) claims that structure “generally refers to the overall plan for how you’re going to relay the story you plan to tell” and suggests that there is no particular book that will provide, in her words, “a neat and tidy detailed list of memoir structures to choose from”. There is a positive element here in Blazer’s (2011, p. 65) view. She perceives this to be quite liberating for those setting out to write a memoir because it allows great freedom for the writer to select or even make up their own structure that fits well with their writing. For a long time, I struggled to find a structure that suited my work. I continued to experiment with different ways of presenting the stories. For example, in an attempt to offer greater insights into our experiences following a football team, I added a diary that recorded a year in the life of a football family. My inspiration for the diary came from reading Sue Townsend’s (1982) The Secret Diary of Adrian
Mole, aged 13½ and Helen Fielding’s (1996) Bridget Jones’s Diary. However, a combination of long and meandering stories with a diary attached at the end did not prove to be the best fit for my memoir. It read like two books that had been merged rather than a humorous memoir capturing our stories.

I continued to read a number of humorous memoirs seeking inspiration. Some of these include John Birmingham’s (2000) He died with a felafel in his hand – which provides a witty observation of the 89 people he has lived with in shared housing. Another inspirational text was Lynne Wysocky’s (2005) Memoir of a sports widow in which she describes her experiences of having to plan her life around games, tournaments, Superbowls and such like as a consequence of being married to a sports fanatic. This particular memoir resonated with me as my non-football supporting family and friends suffer a similar fate during the AFL football season and some of those experiences, both from my perspective as a football fan and the perspective of those in my life who are not, are recorded in the memoir.

Some other humorous offerings such as Kathy Griffin’s (2009) A memoir according to Kathy Griffin and Tina Fey’s (2011) Bossypants offer examples of how life events can be presented using a humorous voice. The most influential, as far as my work is concerned (as mentioned earlier) is Judith Lucy’s (2008) The Lucy family alphabet. This particular work provides an example of structure that fitted my work very well. It inspired me to move away from long descriptive accounts of life as part of a football family to a ‘punchier’ selection of stories that were not presented in any sort of chronological order. Like Lucy’s memoir, I invite the reader to pick up my book and read any of the chapters in any sequence.

Lucy’s (2008) memoir is a selection of stories set out in alphabetical rather than chronological or thematic order. Her humorous ‘voice’, which remains consistent throughout the memoir, is the glue that binds the stories together. She uses a self-deprecat ing style that not only adds to the humour of the stories, but also reveals to her audience that she is not perfect. Taylor McDonnell (1998, p. 121) believes that a less than perfect voice that reveals a flawed character is an attractive voice. She argues that
readers do not necessarily like memoirs where the author is too perfect, lacking fear or uncertainty. I have quite deliberately set out to be self-deprecating when telling stories about becoming involved in arguments and even my perceived status within my family.

**Generational narratives**

Once I had found an appropriate structure and voice, I had to decide which stories to include and which to leave out. It was important to me to ensure that each generation was represented in some way. As Thompson argues:

> Telling one’s own life story requires not only directly remembered experience, but also drawing on information and stories transmitted across the generations, both about the years too early in childhood to remember, and also further back in time beyond one’s own birth. Life stories are thus, in themselves, a form of transmission; but at the same time they often indicate in a broader sense of what is passed down (2005, p. 2).

My great grandparents and their children established the family’s routine of attending the football each week. They initiated many of the rituals that we still practise, and passed down stories of their experiences to the next generation. Their stories connect my family’s past to the present and provide a sense of continuity for the current generation. They also signpost our family’s long history of following Collingwood Football Club. Originally I had intended to include stories about the friends and acquaintances who have attended the football with my family for many years. However, I made the choice to focus on my family’s experiences in order to maintain my research focus on how a family’s multigenerational membership of a football club contributes to a sense of identity and belonging.

There were a number of ethical considerations as I was writing my memoir. Some of these included the use of photographs and the age of my children. I received university ethics clearance. Barrington (2014, p. 113) discusses the issues that arise when writing about others. She suggests there are “sticky ethical questions” to consider. The fear of offending the people who form part of ‘your’ story can create a certain level of anxiety...
when writing a memoir. Her response to this is that, when writing a memoir, it is important to be selective about what to include and be mindful to avoid revealing certain private details about others. She uses examples such as the closeted gay brother or a close friend’s mental illness.

Most memoirs contain stories that involve family and friends of the narrator. Very few of us live our lives in complete isolation. The author of a memoir is in the privileged position of deciding how the significant ‘others’ in their lives will be represented within the work. Decisions made about who to include, who to leave out, and showing sensitivity when disclosing information about living members of the family, have been important ethical considerations when writing my memoir. For example, my father’s role as an AFL goal umpire gave me access to many ‘behind closed doors’ stories about umpires that could present legal and personal issues. Each family member mentioned in my memoir was given an opportunity to read the passages that contain stories about them, make suggestions and clarify certain details and have consented (through a formal university ethics process) to allow me to include them in the memoir.

As I worked on the creative process of writing a memoir, I made many notes about the emergent themes and began to think about what the memoir was revealing about my family. What I discovered through the lens of my memoir is explored in Sections Four and Five.

In the following Section Three, I discuss PLR and Autoethnography as my method and methodolology. In addition, I introduce the theoretical prism of a social identity approach.
Section 3: Method, Methodology and Theoretical Lens

Practice-led research

As noted earlier, practice-led research (PLR) is an appropriate qualitative research method for the current study. The creative artefact has generated the data and provided a lens that offers insights into how my family’s multigenerational membership of a football club contributes to a sense of identity and belonging. While it could be argued that a memoir written as artistic practice is open to multiple interpretations by scholars and lay people alike, it is the presence of an accompanying scholarly exegesis that brings together practice and research or practice-led research. Green argues that:

For some commentators, it is the existence of the exegesis in the performing arts degree that makes acceptable the notion of practice-led research. The exegesis creates a significant difference between creative writing as art, and creative writing as practice-led research (2006, p. 178).

According to Green (2006, p. 177) the performance of creative writing generates new knowledge for both writer and reader, while the exegesis serves as an avenue to analyse and contribute to new knowledge. The memoir and exegesis complement each other and potentially offer several layers of new knowledge. Sullivan claims that;

In its broadest sense, practice-led research is circumscribed by an equally important emphasis placed on the artist-practitioner, the creative product and the critical process. The locus of inquiry can begin at any of these three points. What is critical, however, is the interdependence of these domains and the central role that making plays in the creation of knowledge (2009, p. 47).

This interdependence of each domain, which in the context of my research consists of a memoir and exegesis, serve to complement each other and, as I have noted, create new knowledge about the role my family’s multigenerational membership of a football club plays in creating a sense of identity and belonging.
Green (2006, p. 178) offers a number of arguments as to why a scholarly exegesis as part of a creative and performing arts research degree makes “acceptable the notion of practice-led research”. The three arguments that Green puts forward include: the exegesis requires a student to reflect upon their contribution to new knowledge; the exegesis as part of practice-led research in the creative field prevents an already established artist/writer from submitting creative work and claiming the originality of the work as the sole contribution to new knowledge; and finally, the exegesis complements the creative work and provides training in documenting the processes as part of authenticating creative work as research (Green 2006, pp. 178-179). However, according to Hamilton and Jaaniste (2010, p. 32) as part of PLR, the exegesis should not “simply replicate a traditional thesis model” more in keeping with the sciences and humanities, nor should it be seen as a piece of academic work that can stand alone as a minor thesis – rather, it “initiates a new form of academic writing”. My PLR requires me to connect the creative practice of writing the memoir (setting up the lens), the contents of the memoir (data) and then conducting an analysis and developing a discussion that addresses the areas I set out to explore in order to generate new knowledge. Part of achieving these goals requires the ability to engage in some reflexivity.

As stated in the preceding paragraph, Green (2006, p. 178) argues that the exegesis requires a “reflexive analysis of the processes of production of the creative component”. Reflexivity to me means utilising the insights I have developed on the writing process involved in my artefact production as a setting off point for scholarly discussion. As Green states:

The combination of the creative work and exegesis requires the candidate to reflect on their specific contribution – the new knowledge created via the exploration of the thesis – and schools them within academic culture (2006, p. 178).

The relationship between the artefact and the exegesis in the production of scholarly knowledge requires reflective insights into writing the exegesis. The question of
reflexivity that thus arises in an artefact and exegesis PhD is much discussed. For example, Lipp (2007, p. 18) suggests that “reflexivity is argued to be a deeper and broader dimension of reflection” but “is an elusive concept to define” and the “complexity of the term stems from the fact it can be employed in different situations and used in various ways”. Etherington (2004, p. 30) argues that there is an ongoing debate surrounding the meaning of the term ‘reflexivity’ but it has the potential to connect practice and research, or in her words, “build a bridge between practice and research”. Ellis and Bochner’s (2000, p. 740) description of reflexive ethnographies is of a method in which authors “use their own experiences in the culture to reflexively bend back on the self and look more deeply at self-other interactions”. Although this memoir contains stories from five generations rather than a particular time in my life, there is a distinct focus on our lives as football supporters and I have placed myself as the central figure/storyteller and I am studying my life alongside cultural members’ lives (Ellis 2004, p. 50). I want to understand what it means to have been part of this football experience with my family but I also then want to understand how constructing the memoir has enabled me to see this more clearly as an important part of scholarship. In order to achieve these objectives, I use autoethnography as a research method.

**Autoethnography**

Autoethnography is an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural. Back and forth autoethnographers gaze, first through an ethnographic wide angle-lens focussing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience; then they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through refract, and resist cultural interpretations (Ellis & Bochner 2000, p. 739).

Autoethnography sees the research focus shift from the more traditional ethnographic method of investigating cultural ‘others’ or marginalised groups to the researchers’ own lived experiences as individuals or as a members of a particular group. Chang, Ngunjiiri and Hernandez (2012, p. 18) state that the two defining features of autoethnography are
“the use of autobiographical data and a cultural interpretation of the connectivity between self and others”. As my research takes the form of a memoir and an exegesis, it is appropriate to use autoethnography as a research method of inquiry. Richardson describes autoethnographies as:

Highly personalized, revealing texts in which authors tell stories about their own lived experiences, relating the personal to the cultural. The power of these narratives depends on the rhetorical staging as ‘true stories’, stories about events that really happened to the writers (2000, p. 512).

As is the case with any methodology or method, autoethnography has attracted some criticism. It has been described as self-indulgent and narcissistic (Coffey 1999, p. 9). However, there is a growing body of research on autoethnography as a legitimate form of inquiry. For example, McIlveen suggests that autoethnography:

… entails some form of autobiographical storying; it serves to explicate a specific dimension of personal experience, in relation to the author’s membership of a specific group (e.g. demographic, cultural, professional), state-of-being (e.g., feeling ill or ecstatic), or event (e.g., career transition); and it is usually constructed in context of theory and practices, so as to formally contribute to a body of disciplinary knowledge (2008, p. 20).

My artefact is a memoir that utilises creative non-fiction shown through my eyes: the story of ‘Footy Sheilas’. In this exegesis the same autobiographical insights result in an autoethnographic methodology to record them. Schwandt (2001, p. 15) argues that autoethnography is “a form of writing that seeks to unite ethnography (looking outward at a world beyond one’s own) and autobiographical (gazing inward at a story of one’s self) intentions”. He provides a quite basic definition but there are a number of different approaches to autoethnography, with each approach requiring the researcher to position themselves in a particular way.

Over the past decade, two distinct methods of autoethnography, evocative and analytic, have emerged. Ellis and Bochner (1999, 2004, 2006) have encouraged students and
colleagues to engage in what has been described as ‘evocative’ or ‘emotional’ autoethnography:

The author seeks to develop an ethnography that includes researchers’ vulnerable selves, emotions, bodies, and spirits; produces evocative stories that create the effect of reality; celebrates concrete experience and intimate detail … In short, her goal is to extend ethnography to include the heart, the autobiographical, and the artistic text (Ellis 1999, p. 669).

The narratives produced within this particular method of autoethnography leave open the opportunity for multiple interpretations. In other words, evocative autoethnography honours personal “stories as data that can stand on their own as pure description of experience, worthy as narrative documentary of experience” (Patton 2002, p. 116). Although Ellis (2004) works within an evocative authoethnographical framework, and has expressed concern that “analytic autoethnography may be an unconscious attempt by realists to appropriate autoethnography and turn it into mainstream ethnography” (Ellis & Bochner 2006, p. 433), she does offer a number of ways to integrate analysis as part of autoethnographic research. She says that:

You may simply want to position yourself in your research by telling your story, then move to analyzing the stories of others, which you connect back to your story. Your focus would be on analysis of narrative. Alternatively, you might focus on telling your story, then frame it with an analysis of literature, and concentrate on raising questions about that literature or about accepted theoretical notions, or on generating new ideas (Ellis 2004, p. 198).

Evocative or emotional autoethnography has drawn criticism from those working within a more traditional ethnographic paradigm. For example, Delamont (2007, p. 3) claims that social research should focus on the powerless, not the powerful. She argues that autoethnography “abrogates our duty to go out and collect data: we are not paid generous salaries to sit in our offices obsessing about ourselves”. In taking this position, Delamont fails to acknowledge that members of the academic community are also members of society. As Chang (2008, p. 65) argues, “given that culture is a web of self
and others, autoethnography is not a study simply of self alone”. Many of us are parents, siblings, spouses and so on, as well as being members of various communities outside of our university’s four walls. Delamont’s definition of data then can be seen as limited and constrained.

On the other hand, Chang (2008, p. 65) suggests that there are three possibilities to consider when attempting to position the self and others in autoethnography. These are: the researcher investigating themselves as the main character with others providing a supporting role; the researcher combining the self and others as co-informants; the study of others as a primary focus but allowing entry to the researcher’s world.

I have positioned myself somewhere between Chang’s first and second possibilities. While I have generated the data through the writing of a memoir, members of my family have taken an active role by suggesting stories for inclusion (or in some cases, exclusion) and provided additional information for stories that involve previous generations. For example, my mother has told stories of following (that is, supporting) Collingwood during the 1950s as well as (re)telling stories that were told to her by her parents and grandparents. However, I have gone beyond recording our stories and have committed to identifying themes and then conducting an interpretive analysis of the stories that requires a different mode of inquiry to that of evocative or emotional autoethnography.

Anderson (2006, p. 379) is a critic of evocative or emotional autoethnography. However his criticism of Ellis and Bochner’s approach is less provocative than that of Delamont. Anderson claims that while this particular method of autoethnography is “to be applauded for its creativity, energy and enthusiasm”, there is a danger that Ellis and Bochner’s successful advocacy of such a theoretical paradigm “may eclipse other visions of autoethnography and obscure the ways in which it may fit productively in other traditions of social inquiry”. Rather, he suggests there is opportunity for ethnographers to take a more analytical approach to autoethnography. Anderson (2006, p. 383) argues that “autoethnography requires that the researcher be visible, active, and
reflexively engaged in the text” and he identifies the five key features of what he describes as analytic autoethnography. These are:

- Complete member researcher (I belong to the family under study)
- Narrative visibility of the researcher’s self (autoethnography);
- Analytic reflexivity (understanding insights);
- Dialogue with informants beyond the self (interaction with others);
- Commitment to theoretical analysis (situating the work within a particular framework).

Two of these features, namely complete member researcher and narrative visibility of the researcher’s self, are common in most authoethnographic work. Analytic reflexivity is another feature of Anderson’s model that can also be found in some models of ethnography such as reflexive ethnography. It is Anderson’s final two features – dialogue with informants beyond the self and commitment to theoretical analysis – that distinguish the analytic autoethnography model from evocative or emotional autoethnography and provide a framework that is appropriate for my PLR. The commitment to theoretical analysis offers those working within an academic setting the opportunity to connect the creative and theoretical components of their work.

Analytic autoethnography has gained support from a number of scholars. For example, Atkinson (2006, pp. 400-404) not only supports Anderson’s (2006) focus on explicit analysis but also claims that the differences between past and present practices within the world of ethnography have been greatly exaggerated, and that the researcher’s personal commitment and visibility within ethnographic studies is not a new phenomenon. As a complete-member researcher, I am cognisant of the current and historical roots of my family’s involvement and membership of the Collingwood Football Club. I am able to draw on my own experiences as a member of my family.

While supportive of Anderson’s (2006) analytic autoethnography model, Vryan (2006, p. 405) argues that two of its five key features may in fact constrain our use of the term and underestimate its potential. Instead, we may interpret Anderson’s as a traditional model of ethnography with a greater visibility of the researcher’s self, reflexivity and a
strong member role. Although Vryan (2006, p. 406) agrees that Anderson provides a persuasive argument for explicit analysis, he finds the fourth of the five key features (dialogue with informants beyond the self) problematic. Vryan claims that it is still possible to have a commitment to analysis even when the project is based exclusively on self-produced data.

In a special edition of the *Journal of Ethnography* (2006) there is a great deal of discussion about self-produced data. I concur with Vryan’s (2006) argument, that while self-produced data can be analysed, the line between data which has been informed by dialogue with informants beyond the self and that which is exclusively self-produced is somewhat blurred. It is not unusual for family history to be passed down orally through generations and committed to paper quite some time after the stories have been told. For example, a number of accounts recorded in my memoir have been passed down to me orally by my grandmother (albeit a long time ago). I am now recording these stories from memory as my grandmother passed away sixteen years ago. Is part of my data – the stories that involve my grandmother – self-produced because I am relying on my memory or do my recollections of conversations I have had with my grandmother constitute ‘dialogue with informants beyond the self’? Writing down the stories is a critical methodological act. The recording of stories told prior to beginning my research requires the use of remembering, which is a deliberate research act despite the unreliability of memory.

Anderson’s (2006, pp. 385-386) discussion of this fourth key feature of analytic autoethnography does not necessarily establish what constitutes dialogue with informants beyond the self. Nor does Vryan (2006, p. 405) elaborate on what he means by self-produced data. Anderson provides examples of a number of studies where the autoethnographer has conducted interviews, had conversations with informants or simply ‘hung out’ with the group of which they are part. Anderson does not provide a concise definition as part of his model. For example, he does not state whether the dialogue with informants beyond the self must be undertaken for the purpose of a particular study in order to fit within an analytic autoethnography framework, or whether memory of dialogue (for example conversations I had with my grandmother)
years before the research process began is adequate. I would argue that self-produced data is influenced by dialogue with informants beyond the self. For example, the stories written about me by myself (although most of the stories contained in the memoir could be classified as recollection rather than introspection) are very much influenced by conversations, physical interactions and memories of events that have been shared with other people.

As noted earlier, this study is framed by analytic autoethnography. Yet, I am also drawing on evocative autoethnography techniques. For example, the memoir could be described as ‘heartfelt’, which is one of the key tenets of evocative autoethnography. Further, there is a certain element of collaboration through the use of co-constructed narratives with family members. Bailey (2008, p. 289) describes co-constructed narratives as giving voice to others (usually participants). I would argue that although I am the author of the memoir, ethical and methodological considerations required that the members of my family had the right to read excerpts for approval, thus leading to some co-construction. After reading relevant sections of the memoir, some family members offered additional material for inclusion and requested some alterations to the original work (insisting they remembered certain aspects to a story that I had left out). It was never my intention to follow the co-constructed narratives but the research process led to the occasional collaboration. These streams of narratives from contributing family members allowed for identifying a number of finer, arguably more socially nuanced, threads contained within these narratives. This added a depth to the analysis as I am going beyond the superficial and obvious, extracting meaningful aspects from the stories that form the memoir and addressing a number of research questions about my family’s defining characteristic of being football supporters.

As discussed here, there are many scholars working in a variety of ways with autoethnography (Anderson 2006; Atkinson 2006; Chang 2010; Chang, Ngunjiiri & Hernandez 2012; Denzin 2006; Ellis 2004; Ellis & Bochner 2006). This work is framed by Anderson’s (2006) analytic model. The memoir and exegesis combined contain all five features of analytic autoethnography and as such this is an appropriate method for a practice-led research PhD that consists of a creative artefact (memoir) and an
accompanying scholarly piece (exegesis). I would argue that the key feature in the case of this research is the commitment to theoretical analysis. The theoretical perspective that frames the current research on both my own and my family’s experiences as football supporters is social identity.

**A Social Identity Approach**

The current study utilizes certain elements from a Social Identity Approach. This provides a more theoretical lens through which to analyse some of the discoveries made from the stories recorded in the artefact. Social Identity Theory (SIT) posits that “identities are tied to group membership and … that individuals use social groups and group membership to maintain and support their personal and collective identities” (Jacobsen 2003, p. 4). In other words, individuals gain a social identity, or a sense of who they are and a sense of self-enhancement and belonging, based on the group (or groups) to which they belong. The three components of SIT include social-categorisation, social-identification and social-comparison (Tajfel & Turner 1979; Tajfel 1981). Hogg, Terry and White (1995, p. 261) suggest that “categorization of self and others into in-group and out-group defines people’s social identity” and that self-enhancement, based on the assumption that people “need to see themselves in a positive light in relation to relevant others, can be achieved in groups by making comparisons between the in-group and the relevant out-groups in ways that favour the in-group” (e.g. sports fans believing their supporters are more committed or their club is better than any other club).

Building upon the influential work by Tajfel et al. (1979) is Self-Categorization Theory (SCT), developed by Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher and Wetherall (1987). SCT focuses on the cognitive processes that individuals employ in which to ascertain that they are indeed part of an ‘in-group’. In the case of sports fans this could be through identifying features (e.g. purchasing and wearing a particular sport’s club’s merchandise) or interpersonal relationships (e.g. an individual practising rituals with other like-minded individuals). Hornsey (2008, pp. 207-208) suggests that as SIT and SCT share similar methods and assumptions, many people, whilst acknowledging the different focus of
each (inter-group and intra-group), refer to both as a ‘social identity approach’ or ‘social identity perspective.’

Stets and Burke (2000, p. 226) claim having a particular social identity “means at one with a certain group, being like others in the group and seeing things from the group’s perspective”. Our social identity is never fixed, however, according to Wann (2006, p. 275), a sports team identification can provide a sense of social connectedness and well-being. While there is constant change happening around and within the family, our social-identity as Collingwood football supporters remains stable and enduring. Furthermore, there is evidence in the artefact that my family as football supporters engage in two other elements found in social identity theory. These are BIRGing (basking in reflected glory) and CORFing (cutting off reflective failures).

A study involving three groups of American College Football fans, conducted by Cialdini, Borden, Thorne, Walker, Freeman and Slone (1976), found that students were more likely to demonstrate positive feelings towards their college football team after a victory than after a defeat. The findings supported the idea that sports fans do indeed BIRG. Cialdini et al. (1976, p. 374) found “in support of our basic argument, being merely associated with someone else's success and failure had much the same effect as personal success and failure”. The college students from the three groups demonstrated this through their use of ‘we’ when discussing a victory and the students under study were more likely to BIRG when in the company of an observer who had a weaker level of affiliation with the successful football team. Cialdini et al. (1976, p. 374) conclude: “through their simple connections with sports teams, the personal images of fans are at stake when their teams take the field. The team's victories and defeats are reacted to as personal successes and failures”. While there is evidence that sports fans BIRG when their team is victorious, sports fans use CORFing as an “image protecting tactic” (Jacobsen 2003, p. 8) when their team suffers a defeat.

Snyder, Lassegard and Ford (1986) found groups use CORFing to cope with failure. Their study involved three groups of college students assigned to a two part group task. Members of a group that had been informed they had failed showed a reluctance to
present to the panel of judges or to wear identifying badges when entering the room where the presentation was to take place (Snyder et al. 1986, p. 387). The findings demonstrated that some members from the failure group attempted to distance themselves from their perceived failure. CORFing has been applied to sports fan research. Wann and Branscombe (1991) found that highly identified sports fans were more likely to BIRG while those who were moderate or low in identification were more likely to CORF. They argue that:

Persons high in identification showed an increased tendency to bask in the glow of victory, relative to persons moderate or low in allegiance. In addition, persons highly identified with the team appeared to maintain their association with the team and continued to enjoy them even when faced with defeat, thereby showing a reduction in the tendency to CORF relative to those low in identification (1991, p. 111).

They describe the highly identified sports fan as ‘Die-Hard’ whilst those with a lower identification as ‘Fair Weather’ fans who are more likely to disassociate with a team when it is performing badly. In the case of the current study, there is evidence that my family engage in BIRGing more often than CORFing. However, we do still CORF after a particularly deflating defeat. I revisit BIRGing and CORFing as part of my analysis in Sections Four.

While not every member of my family attends football matches, the evidence found in the memoir suggests there are ways in which these particular members described in it are able to maintain a level of in-group status through their involvement in certain rituals that are football associated and take place in the home or other public places outside of the football stadium.
Section 4: Discoveries – What the Memoir Revealed

Reading through and reflecting on the memoir revealed a number of themes. These included family storytelling and identity; rituals, routines and family; and communities and tribes. There was some overlap of each theme but for the purpose of analysis, I have separated them out into distinct areas. This section will explore the themes, draw on the work of key scholars within each area and discuss what the memoir revealed about the self (me) and the family.

**Storytelling**

Throughout my life my family, both nuclear and intergenerational, have taken great delight in telling stories about our lives as football supporters. In fact, stories of our experiences supporting Collingwood dominate many of our conversations around the dinner table and at regular family gatherings. Regardless of the event, whether it be a family member’s birthday, Christmas, or any other celebration, and whether it be within or outside of the football season, the topic of football (more specifically, the Collingwood Football Club) is likely to be raised at some point. Many of our football stories have been repeated over and over, consequently such stories have become familiar to all us. It could be argued that the topic of football dominates the ongoing family narrative. Our storytelling (or stories) are contained within the memoir and provide data for close-up analysis. I was curious to know how family storytelling not only shapes and reinforces our identity but also connects us across multiple generations. As Fiese and Sameroff (1999, p. 7) point out, “narratives have been found to be particularly useful in studying identity, emphasising how the construction of a life story is part and parcel of who we are”.

**Family narratives and identity**

There is a link between family storytelling and a family’s sense of identity and belonging (Koenig Kellas 2005, 2010; Langellier & Peterson 2004; E Stone 1989). For example, Stone (1989, p. 31) argues that “family stories … define the family, saying not
only what members should do but who they are or should be”. Similarly, Koenig Kellas claims:

… research consistently demonstrates that stories and storytelling are one of the primary ways families and family members make sense of everyday, as well as … create a sense of individual and group identity, remember, connect generations, and establish guidelines for family behaviour (2010, p. 1).

The literature provides evidence that family storytelling influences collective and individual identity (Fiese & Marjinsky 1999; Karraker & Grochowski 2012; Koenig Kellas 2005; Koenig Kellas 2010; McAdams 1993; Stone 1988) and that family storytelling both within and across generations keeps the bond between family members strong (Langellier & Peterson 2004; Thompson 2005; Thompson et al. 2009). My mother’s parents and her grandmother have passed down their stories of supporting Collingwood and my mother has continued this tradition with her children as have I.

Stone (1988, p. 5) offers a useful working definition of what qualifies as a ‘family story’. According to Stone (1988, p. 5), a family story is “almost any bit of lore about a family member, living or dead … as long as it is significant, as long as it has worked its way into the family canon to be told and re-told”. Situated within what narrative scholars describe as ‘big stories’ are those found in “autobiographical writing or … elicited through interviews and clinical encounters and capture significant events in an individual or groups’ lives” (Freeman 2006, p. 131). These stories go beyond everyday life interactions, are reflected upon after the event has occurred and are then retold. Our big stories are those that we tend to retell when the family gets together and the conversation inevitably leads to the topic of football. One big story that I often recount describes the events leading up to, and the feeling of joy and relief after, witnessing Collingwood winning the 2010 AFL premiership. Another big story is that of my grandmother rushing me out of the MCG during the dying moments of the 1977 drawn grand final. Yet another big story is of my sister and me being escorted out of the MCG by security guards because we had become very drunk and found ourselves involved in
a heated altercation with opposition supporters. Describing and reflecting on how we each of us felt and what we all did as a family and as individuals after Collingwood’s triumph in the 2010 AFL Grand Final has become one of the ‘big’ stories that we retell most often.

Throughout the memoir, various family members refer to the Collingwood Football Club as ‘we’ rather than ‘they’. For example, *G is for Glory* records my family’s shared experience of witnessing Collingwood’s victory in the 2010 AFL Grand Final. There is evidence of BIRGing (basking in reflected glory) taking place through the language my children and I use to describe how we felt minutes after the final siren:

Livvy was screaming “It’s ours, it’s ours”

Todd kept saying “I can’t believe we are the premiers”

The Footy Gods had finally smiled down on us and we had won the flag.

The family views the premiership as ‘ours’ even though we have not taken to the field as members of the team or been part of the inner sanctum of the football club. We are demonstrating that we are highly identified football supporters through our BIRGing (Wann & Branscombe 1991). However, there is also evidence found in the memoir of the family CORFing (cutting off reflected failure). In the ‘Glossary of Terms’ section, there is the term ‘Four Ts’ (no talk, no telly, no tea, no touch). We CORF by refusing to discuss a defeat and insisting that the television is switched off to ensure we do not see any news reports or replays of the game.

Another example of a big story featured in the memoir forms part of the *B is for Boozin’ and Brawlin’* chapter (p. 25) where my sister and I are evicted from the MCG for being drunk and disorderly. As noted earlier, the story has become part of family lore and each member of the family tends to react the same way every time the story is told. My sister and I tell the story and feel a sense of pride that we were prepared to ‘fly the flag’ when an opposition supporter began abusing us and making disparaging remarks about our football team. We laugh hysterically when we recall the moment that my sister was literally picked up by two security guards. She was insistent that she had done nothing
wrong while both of us were being escorted by security guards along the street to the railway station. During the retelling of the story, my mother always expresses her disappointment at our behaviour and shock that my sister drank more than I did given that in our family I am usually the one who consumes the most alcohol. My mother claims that had she been there such an incident would never have occurred. This story reveals something about the dynamic between my mother, sister and me. My mother has always viewed my sister as the well-behaved daughter (and outside the football stadium this is usually the case), me as the rebellious little sister and herself as the matriarch who still has some influence and control over her adult children.

Yet our stories about football reveal that my sister is far more rebellious and more likely to ‘take on’ and argue with authority figures, such as ticket inspectors, security guards and gate attendants than I am. The big stories offer evidence that football occupies much of my family’s time and “ … creates a space for reflection and are thus integral to an examined life” (Freeman 2006, p. 137). Although the narrative of Lisa driving through the MCG grounds with parking attendants chasing us and attempting to force her to turn the car around, is not a ‘big’ story, the fact that she has consistently done this for many years forms part of the ‘big’ story about Lisa questioning those granted some form of authority at football matches. The stories come together in the memoir to present the ongoing family narrative about our lives as a ‘football family’ and how we “get a family life … by daily performances of telling and listening to our stories” (Langellier & Peterson 2004, p. 112.)

Now I move on to explore how these stories have shaped us and contributed to our social identity formation as individuals and as a family.

**Family football stories**

Our family does tell stories and have conversations about topics other than football. In fact, we communicate regularly and my mother, sister and I are in constant (usually daily) contact. Each of us has different views on politics ranging from conservative through to socialist. However, for the purpose of this analysis, my focus is on how our football stories influence our individual and collective identity as football supporters.
Koenig Kellas (2005, p. 366) claims that family stories “affect and reflect family culture by communicating who a family is – its norms, values, its goals, its identity”.

In the context of football, our stories and storytelling not only reinforce our family’s (group) commitment to our football team but consistently provide evidence of our social-identity and self-categorisation as football supporters. McAdams suggests that:

Stories told at day’s end create a shared history, linking people in time and event as actors, tellers and audience. The unfolding drama of life is revealed more by the telling than by the actual events told. Stories are less about facts and more about meanings (1993, p. 28).

My mother’s love of sharing stories about her experiences as a football supporter in the 1950s links the generations of my family, and offers some insights into the history of various family members and their connection to the football club.

Mum loves to reminisce about her younger days in the Ryder Stand at Victoria Park. Back in those days, pies were sold in paper bags. Old Eric would get so excited when the game was close that he would accidentally eat half the paper bag along with his pie. When things were tight, he could be heard screaming “so help my belly bob, what are we going to do now?” I try to imagine sitting there during a close game and watching these odd people in action. Granny fleeing the scene and hiding under the stand, my GiGi raising her pinkie finger and doing the Merlin chant, Eric, in his boots fresh out of the oven, eating a pie and a paper bag and Mum doing her famous sitting high jumps. It was probably more entertaining to watch them than the game! (‘Footy Sheilas’, p. 121).

These stories being passed down through the generations provide a family legacy – that is “strands of meaning that run through a family in ways that give it identity or sense, are constituted in communication through family storytelling, and are continually reshaped over time” (Thompson et al. 2009, p. 108). In our family, grandparents and parents tell and retell their football stories to their grandchildren/children, potentially influencing the next generation’s interest in football and their social identity as being
part of a football family and more generally, football supporters. In their study of sports fandom and identification, Melnick and Wann (2011, p. 463) found that unlike males, females in Australia were more influenced by parents than anybody else during the sports fan socialisation process. I found this most interesting as I come from a predominantly female family. The matriarchal role that my mother takes is most influential. She has been the one who has not only taken us to matches but has also initiated many of the conversations and moments of family storytelling. Arguably, such socialisation processes have significantly contributed to understanding where my sister and I have developed our social identity as football supporters.

The stories that we tell tap into our emotions and offer opportunities to share, listen and interact:

As part of the family tradition, stories and folklore are passed down from older fans to younger fans – i.e. a father recounting stories of the great players from the team's past – serving to create family lore and strengthen a strong sense of tradition of football playing a vital role in family bonds (SIRC 2008, p. 34).

Our storytelling also allows for the few members of the extended family, who neither support Collingwood nor show a strong interest in football, to share their stories of what it is like to live with fanatical football supporters. There are a few accounts of these particular family members reduced to playing supporting roles in our stories recorded in the memoir. These ‘outsiders’ claim our stories are humorous and entertaining, but they find it unusual that we (insiders) constantly retell familiar stories and feel the need to discuss the latest happenings at our football club on a daily basis. Koenig Kellas (2005, p. 368) makes the point that “family stories, by their very nature, are open to legitimation and critique and may marginalize certain members of the family”. Our storytelling is not a deliberate attempt to marginalize family members and make them ‘outsiders’. Rather, football has been such a dominant part of the majority of family members for such a long time, and the game evokes such strong emotions in each of us,
that we unintentionally and very naturally move family conversations towards the topic of football.

Karraker and Grochowski (2012, p. 60) state that “family stories are vital to the fabric of family life, for stories serve as foundations for families’ sense of specialness and connectedness”. They also claim family storytelling fulfils us, making us feel unique and proud. We know when we are retelling our stories to family or to extended family members or beyond them, that these stories are unique as they capture our individual and shared experiences, such as recorded in the memoir:

Footy is the glue that binds the family. We talk about footy, we tell stories about footy and we even dream about footy. I am confident that we will always be a dedicated footy family. I think the famous quote by the former Liverpool FC manager Bill Shankly, “Football's not a matter of life and death ... it's more important than that” probably best sums up how we all feel. (‘Footy Sheilas’, p. 24).

Although a countless number of people have been part of the crowd watching the same football matches as us, their version of the events as they unfold, their emotions before, during and after the game and the stories they choose to tell and retell, may well be different from ours. There is certainly an element of pride when we tell stories that demonstrate the hardships and discomfort that we are prepared to go through as part of being dedicated football supporters. I have tried to capture this sense of pride when I write about our experiences sleeping on footpaths and being verbally and physically abused when queuing for finals tickets.

In this exegesis, then, I am exploring the idea of “family stories providing opportunities for members to describe and interpret events … express powerful emotions, and make sense of events” (Karraker & Grochowski 2012, p. 60). Offering an example of how our story fulfils this function requires me to revisit one of our big stories, such as Collingwood winning the 2010 premiership. There are many reasons why this is the biggest of our big stories. It was a historical win as the week preceding it resulted in only the third drawn Grand Final since the establishment of the VFL in 1897. The
unusual circumstances provide a story in itself and none of us has ever been able to discuss the eventual victory without first describing the numbness we felt after the drawn game. The memoir records the emotional toll this event took on the family and our feelings of anxiety surrounding how we would obtain tickets for the replay. Then there is an attempt to describe the collective feelings of the following week’s victory. Klugman (2009) has attempted to capture the accounts of joy and emotion expressed by football supporters after their team has won a premiership.

I am of course, not alone in endeavoring to convey the excitement of being a football supporter. Klugman’s (2009, pp. 117-135) chapter entitled ‘The premiership is everything: the agonies and ecstasy of September’ contains quotes from a number of AFL supporters describing how they felt after witnessing their team win a premiership. For example, the following account captures the elation a football supporter (and sports reporter) experiences after his team has won the AFL grand final:

In his main account of the game, Harms notes tears of joy, his and others, and an ‘overwhelming mood’ of gratitude. “People look at each other wondering whether they deserve this; this gift”, and Harms felt “like we are chosen. At last”. He writes that, “By the time the final siren sounds, I understand hope fulfilled” (2009, p. 125).

Another response from a Geelong supporter after her team had won the 2007 AFL preliminary final in a very close match:

It was like pure joy. All this tension had built up and then just the release. I remember looking at the sky – it had been pouring with rain and I was saturated – and I was looking at the sky and had tears in my eyes. It was about thirty seconds before I could speak to anyone. And then listening to the song was very, very exciting (2009, p. 133).

This is further illustrated by responses of fans from a different football code. A study on football fans across 18 European countries by The Social Issues Research Centre found that:
References to extreme emotional experiences at football games characterised all aspects of discussions with fans – some referring to the ‘pure joy’ and exhilaration of being at football games. Such is the intensity of the experience that two thirds of fans have cried at football matches – mostly through joy, but occasionally because of despair. Football provides for many fans an opportunity to let themselves go emotionally – to release the frustrations of everyday life (SIRC 2008, p. 10).

My retelling of how I felt after the 1990 and 2010 victories is similar to those football supporter accounts collected by Klugman and the findings by SIRC 2008, and while my account mentions the family members who shared the moment with me, I can only authoritatively write about my feelings. According to Fiese and Sameroff:

> Family narratives move beyond the individual and deal with how the family makes sense of its world, expresses rules of interaction, and creates beliefs about relationships. The process of creating family narratives and the themes inherent in the stories may be shared across generations, regulating family beliefs and interaction patterns. These narratives become a scrapbook of family history resulting from a process of meaning-making in the family (1999, p. 3).

My stories highlight the importance that our family places on the outcome of a football match, and how a result either way can produce strong shared emotions. They also keep alive the memories of previous generations and remind us of how our football stories have contributed to the bonds that are shared across the generations. “This mysticism and tradition is carried from generation to generation and football comes to exists throughout the repertoire of stories that make up the family histories of certain fans” (SIRC 2008, p. 34). There are a number of other stories I tell and retell to my family that are about my own experience as a football player.
Revealing the ‘self’ stories

I begin the chapter G is for “Girls Can Play Footy Too” claiming I have a secret that not many people know about. This is a telling statement and suggests there is a certain shame or embarrassment that I played football in the Victorian Women’s Football League (VWFL) during the 1980s. As well, I was one of the first girls to play for my primary school (boys) team as a registered player in the late 1970s. Throughout the chapter, I make it clear that I wore make-up and styled my hair – in other words, maintained my idea of ‘femininity’ even though I was playing a traditionally male dominated sport. Wedgwood (2005) interviews the founder of the women’s league, Sally Dunning, and uses a fictitious name for the male football association (Banksia) with which the VWFL became affiliated. She records the problems women encountered when attempting to establish the VWFL. There was resistance by certain members of male football clubs to accepting women’s teams and enduring overt sexism was a part of being a female footballer in the 1980s. Wedgwood’s paper parallels my experience as a woman playing football. I record being ‘wolf whistled’, cheered and clapped as I walked towards the change rooms and past the male players gathered in groups to view the women arriving for their first training session. Wedgwood (2005, p. 398) states that there has always been “unapologetically gay and/or butch women” who have participated in the VWFL. As recorded by Wedgwood, homophobia was rife and many women faced ongoing verbal abuse by certain male members of their club. My own identity as a female footballer was that of an ‘outsider’. I felt the need to signpost my femininity in order to avoid the stigma attached to being a ‘butch female footballer’ and consequently, became a victim of abusive comments and discrimination.

The family storytelling about my time in the VWFL is usually focused on me breaking my leg badly in my first match. What was deemed unusual in the 1980s – to the point where I was reluctant to reveal that I was part of the VWFL – is now something of a badge of honour. Whilst I was always proud to reveal my social identity as a football supporter, it was many years before I publicly embraced my ‘football player’ identity. The memoir reflects this.
Women’s football has evolved to the point where the AFL has planned for a women’s competition to begin in 2016. Many girls and women now compete in football competitions across Australia and are being actively encouraged by schools, local football clubs and the AFL.

**Football and Family Rituals**

This section explores my second major theme of rituals, using evidence from the memoir. Practising rituals is a significant part of my family’s life as football supporters. Ritual is present in almost every society, yet defining ‘ritual’ is problematic as there is “no clear or widely shared explanation of what constitutes ritual or how to understand it. There are only various theories, opinions or customary notions” (Bell 2009, p. x). The study of ritual appears to be situated within a number of broad categories. Some of these categories include rituals performed by families within a domestic setting; rituals that form part of religious life, practised within a domestic and/or public setting; and the public display of rituals by participants or supporters of sport. Unless families are placed under twenty four hour observation over a prolonged period, attempting to make meaning of rituals that are practiced by families relies on the researcher conducting interviews, questionnaires and surveys or observing the family as an ‘outsider’.

However, in the case of this autoethnographic study, I am a family member as well as a researcher. This emic position gives me access to my family’s stories of practicing and performing rituals, both privately and publicly as part of our social identity and self-categorisation as football supporters. These rituals include wearing certain clothing, carrying lucky charms, chanting and even eating particular food. Using examples from the memoir, my analysis of rituals is framed by some of the ideas generated by key thinkers in this area. I explore the rituals that I practise in a private setting (home) and then expand out into exploring those practised as a member of a family. Finally I investigate the rituals the family practices in a public setting (the football stadium) with other in-group members (football supporters).

The rituals and the symbols to which we attach meaning form a central part of my family’s practices as football supporters. They underpin nearly all of our preparations.
leading up to the behaviour we engage in during each match. As a family we practise rituals such as chanting, clapping and singing particular songs. Many of our routines have become ritualised, such as selecting what to wear to the football, engaging in certain activities before, during and after football matches, and even the food we eat, because we have attached symbolic meaning to them. G Baumann (1992, p. 184) argues that “ritual as symbolic performances … unites members as a category of people in a shared pursuit”. These symbolic performances, Baumann continues, reinforce a group’s “basic values or creates or confirms a world of meaning shared by all of them alike” (p. 184). What might be perceived as a mundane act, for example getting dressed, could be described as routine. However, in this context the meaning emerges and is made via the selection of clothing the actor dons. This is at the heart of ritual, and exemplifies how routines have become ritualized in our family. Symbolic meaning is attached to the clothing, and so meaning is made as the clothing can be seen as a uniform that enables mutual identification by in-group (family) as well as out-group (others). As part of social identity, this ritual and uniform situates the actor in a socio-cultural location where they are recognized as members of a particular group.

According to Dickstein (2002, p. 441) the “examination of family and rituals provides a window through which to assess pragmatic, affective and social interactions among family members in a natural context”. Throughout the memoir I refer to my family’s regular patterns of behaviour at the football as ‘ritual’. Separating ritual from routine can be problematic. While analysing the data emerging from the memoir, I have also had to consider what patterns of behaviour can be identified as ‘ritual’ and what is merely routine. One of the limitations of being in an emic position as an insider is the familiarity with the family stories that I have written and that are now under investigation. While the familiarity with the stories was an advantage during the writing process, for the purposes of analysis I am now attempting to distance myself or “make the familiar strange” (Garfinkel 1967, p.4). For my family, ritual is such an ingrained part of our experience as football supporters that the line between ritual and routine has become somewhat blurry.
Many families and individual family members have their own definitions of ‘routine’ and ‘ritual’. Fiese et al. (2002, pp. 381-390) undertook a qualitative review of 32 publications appearing “since Bossard and Boll’s (1950) seminal work on family rituals was conducted”. They argue that one of the reasons behind the difficulty in defining the terms ‘routine’ and ‘ritual’ stems from the likelihood “… that everyone has his or her own definition of what constitutes family routine or ritual” (Fiese et al. 2002, p. 382). Furthermore, they suggest that the “definitional obstacles can be overcome by distinguishing between routines of daily living and rituals in family life”. They offer a set of distinguishing characteristics – ‘Communication’, ‘Commitment’ and ‘Continuity’. Unlike routines, rituals take on symbolic meaning for the family members involved and lead to a sense of belonging within the family. Fiese et al. state:

… symbolic communication, commitment and continuity convey ‘this is who we are’ as a group. There is an affective commitment that leaves the individual feeling that an activity has a felt rightness and provides a sense of belonging. Furthermore, there is often an emotional residue where once an act is completed the individual may replay it in memory to recapture some of the affective experience. Rituals also provide continuity in meaning across generations with the anticipation for repeat performance and an investment that ‘this is the way our family will continue to be’ (2002, p. 382).

In this discussion of family rituals, Fiese et al. (2002) provide helpful insights. In particular, the three elements they identify of ‘Communication’, ‘Commitment’ and ‘Continuity’ describe how my family members discuss and are familiar with the rituals and routines practised over time. However, I have identified limitations with their three elements as they do not take into account the potential for ‘slippage’ between routine and ritual. Many of our rituals are not only repeated over time but have a certain ‘taken for granted-ness’ about them. Fiese et al. (2002) focus on rituals that are practiced by the family within a domestic setting. In other words, away from the public gaze. The memoir reveals that my family practices certain rituals associated with our lives as football supporters privately.
An example from the memoir that reveals our practice of rituals performed privately can be found in the chapter *B is for Big Night In*.

Now there are too many interstate teams for us to travel to every game. In order to ensure that all goes well for the team and for us, we have developed new rituals that involve watching the game on telly. It took a few years for us to get it right. At first, we tried Lisa’s house but we kept losing whenever we watched the game there. So, her house was declared the unlucky house and we tried Mum’s place. The problem with that was Mum’s lounge room was a bit small and we couldn’t all sit where we needed to (see *S is for Superstitions and Undies*). The losses kept coming and we realised that we would have to move to a new location. Finally, we tried my house and so far the results have been well beyond our expectations. We have won 80 per cent of our interstate matches since we set things up at my place (‘Footy Sheilas’, p. 32).

Despite the fact that my mother, sister, myself and my children could view the interstate games on a television at any house, or even alone in our separate homes across the Eastern suburbs of Melbourne, we preferred (and continue to prefer) to be gathered together when Collingwood is playing. Recently, we have developed a new routine around the need for Collingwood to travel interstate on a more regular basis during the season, therefore, having to watch games taking place outside of Victoria via television. This practice has evolved because we need to fill in the gap of not always being able to attend the football match in the now national competition.

Returning to definitions of ritual, I see this new practice in terms of Turner’s (1977, p. 183) definition of ritual as “a stereotyped sequence of activities involving gestures, words, and objects, performed in a sequestered place, and designed to influence preternatural entities or forces on behalf of the actors' goals and interests”. This is helpful in understanding and interpreting what it is we are practising as a family. The routine of watching football matches on television has been ritualised because we have attached meaning to the “sequestered place” where we view the game – the ‘lucky’
house. We have transported our “stereotyped sequence of activities” from the football stadium to the private home. Our rituals, although slightly modified, continue:

Mum was horrified that Lisa would be missing and felt this had the potential to really affect the team’s chances of winning. She was so concerned that she brought over a big framed photo of Lisa and placed it on the right seat. Naturally our five friends sitting on the three person couch and the two on the beanbag designed for one thought there might be a vacant spot next to Mum just this once. But she was not having anything to do with such a plan. Any person attempting to sneak over to Lisa’s unoccupied place during the game was told to “get back to your spot right now” (‘Footy Sheilas’, pp. 33-34).

So we wear the clothing we would normally wear to our weekly games of football, we eat certain food before the game starts and we sit in a particular order. These rituals provide us with continuity and convey “who we are as a group” (Fiese et al. 2002, p. 382) because they continue our obsession with following the Collingwood Football Club even though we cannot be present at the game.

**Public Rituals**

The literature about football supporters performing rituals before and during football matches is not only consistent with the findings from my study but is also consistent with the findings from other research (see for example, Bromberger 1995; Debaix, Decrop & Cabossart 2002). Our family is not alone in developing new rituals as well as performing established ones. Like my family, many football supporters develop rituals such as wearing particular clothing, eating certain foods and engaging in symbolic behaviours (see, for example Guilianotti 2002, 2005; C Stone 2007). Bromberger offers a rich description of football supporters practicing rituals:

> In order to tame fate and master the aleatory, the keenest supporters pay enormous attention to their clothes, and even to their choice of underwear. Some of them never go anywhere without the club emblem (scarf, pen,
medallion…); in some cases, they transform their private universe into a sort of domestic shrine where they keep, not only the precious relics of their attendance (match tickets, especially) but also the concrete evidence that they had stood next to their idols (autographs, photos, etc.) (1995, p. 309).

As noted previously, the report from the Social Issues Research Centre (SIRC 2008, p. 34) found that not only did football “… play a key role in family life in much of Europe, linking the shared experiences of family members across generations and creating a lasting sense of tradition and belonging” but that many football supporters followed pre- and post-game rituals. The following description parallels my experience of my family’s rituals:

What might otherwise be forgettable, everyday actions take on new meaning when they become ritualised acts in a specific social or cultural context. From wearing the same shirt (or underwear) or specific combination of clothing, to taking the same route to the stadium…fans supplied numerous examples – some more quirky than others – of habits that they believed would skew the outcome of the game in their favour (SIRC 2008, p. 26).

One fan interviewed by SIRC (2008, p. 26) reported that each time his team was in a position to score a goal, his companions would all have to touch his football scarf. This does not surprise me.

Selecting clothes might be considered a routine where little conscious thought is given before and after the act. However, as football supporters, selecting the ‘right’ clothes that have some sort of symbolic meaning (for example, a lucky scarf or jacket) to wear to the football is part of the rituals of following a football team. Wann, Grieve, Zapalac, End, Lanter, Pease, Fellows, Oliver and Wallace (2013) found that sports fans were superstitious and attached meaning to clothing, lucky charms, even certain people who were considered back luck, as negatively impacting upon the outcome of their team’s performance. An example from the memoir:

If Collingwood won then we were under instruction from my Mum and my Granny that we had to wear exactly the same clothes right down to our
‘undies’ at the next game. If we lost then we weren’t allowed to wear the same clothes again for the rest of the season… Over the years my long blue coat, my mustard parka, my duffle coat and my magpie undies have all been banned from attending any matches (‘Footy Sheilas’, p. 145).

Similarly, Debaix, Decrop and Cabossart found that football supporters were highly superstitious and would wear certain ‘sacred’ items of clothing. One football supporter reported that:

...for the championship I wear my 2 ‘Sambre et Meuse’ [the name of the fan club] T-shirts and for the Champions League, I wear another T-shirt. I wore it once, the first time, for the Champions League when we played Porto and it worked. So now I wear it and we win every time. So I’m wearing it today (2002, p. 8).

This particular fan is stating that special clothing, even that beyond the weekly match day ‘lucky clothes’, is required for special matches. My family also has certain items of clothing that are worn only when a there is a special game such as a Grand Final or a very important match in which the outcome could determine the team’s chances of competing in the finals series. An example from the memoir:

Mum phoned twice during the morning to find out what I was wearing. She was still a little nervous that I was making a radical change at this stage. I reassured her that although we didn’t win while I was wearing the new jumper, we didn’t lose either. Mum decided to go back to basics and wear a few things from the 1990 Grand Final too. She was very tired because she had been up half the night removing little woolly ‘pills’ from her 1990 Premiership scarf. She hadn’t worn it in years. Lisa also dragged out a few relics from the past to wear (‘Footy Sheilas’, p. 66).

There are a number of photos throughout the memoir that reveal much about our clothing rituals. For many years, my mother, sister and I would wear the matching windcheaters and jumpers. The front cover of the memoir shows us not only wearing the same clothing but also holding magpie mascot dolls. We continued this practice for over
a decade. Not only did we believe the clothing we wore had some bearing on the outcome of the game but we appear to be highlighting to the football community that we are members of a given tribe.

**Food Rituals**

Food is a significant component of our family rituals whether at the ground or viewing matches from home. As I indicate in ‘Footy Sheilas’, food regularly dominates our practices and our storytelling. This is consistent with two studies on soccer fans and American College Football fans. The SIRC (2008) report that found that some football supporters have a pre-game ritual regarding the food they consume before a match. For example, some describe always eating two pies, or always having a beer, or eating two sausages as part of their pre-game rituals. Such food rituals must always be followed. Wann et al.’s (2013, p. 36) study of over 1600 American college students reveals that food, candy and drink form part of the superstitious rituals of sports fans. Not only is eating a certain food considered by the fans to influence the outcome of a sports game, but how the food is eaten is also part of the ritual: for example, the timing (at what point during the game should a fan consume a particular food) and how the food is consumed. One fan reported that he would only chew bubble gum on the right side of his mouth while another fan claimed he avoided ordering pizza during a game as it would bring ‘bad luck’ for his team (Wann et al. 2013, p. 37). Food is also part of my family’s pre-match rituals. An example of this that can be found in the memoir is the family’s belief that my eating a Polly Waffle (chocolate bar) before each game had some influence on Collingwood winning a premiership. In my artefact I record how a family food ritual has become a dominant practice helping the team to win:

Many people believe that Collingwood won the 1990 Grand Final because we had a good side and a bit of luck. It was actually a ‘Polly Waffle’ that did the trick. Mum always brings along some chocolate for us to have after our pie and chips. Collingwood got off to a good start in 1990 (except for the first game against the Eagles). Mum had started buying me a Polly Waffle each week and before we knew it we had won nine games in a row.
The chocolate covered marshmallow treat had far exceeded our expectations. Grand Final day was sunny and very hot. Ess’edon came out firing and within ten minutes they had kicked two goals to nil. It was time for the famous chocolate bar filled with marshmallow to weave its magic…  
(‘Footy Sheilas’, p. 144).

The Polly Waffle demonstrates the transition from routine to ritual and even demonstrates how perfunctory this transition can be in practice. What had started out as a routine, my mother being responsible for the purchase of a chocolate bar to eat as part of our weekly lunch, very quickly became a ritual when a pattern was observed between the eating of a particular chocolate bar (Polly Waffle) and the team winning. In this new context, the eating of a Polly Waffle quickly took on a symbolic meaning for our family. What was profane, a chocolate bar, became a ‘sacred’ totem only recognized as such by the in-group members. To the outsider, even other Collingwood supporters seated throughout the football stadium, my eating a chocolate bar before a football match holds little significance; yet my family truly believed that the Polly Waffle possessed magical properties. The eating of particular food is integrated into our corpus of weekly behaviours that constitute ritual.

Another example of the family practising a ritual that involves food is the football picnics we organise before the matches we consider important, such as the opening game of the season. As, for example, the traditional ANZAC day match between Collingwood and Essendon and of course, during the finals series, we gather with extended family and friends in the middle of the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) car park. Each of us supplies particular food. The following two passages from the memoir describe these occasions.

We have been ‘doing picnics’ before each final for years. There’s nothing quite like a beautiful spring day in Melbourne, when the sun is shining, the birds chirping and there is the smell of freshly cut grass around the MCG. To me, these three things represent finals time. Unfortunately, sometimes in Melbourne it can also be rain, hail and wind which then mucks up our plans
for the picnic. However, we are mostly lucky and are able to go ahead and enjoy a lovely pre-match tradition (‘Footy Sheilas’, p. 125).

and;

The 2010 Grand Final replay picnic was a good one. We had about forty people gathered and we had deliberately left plenty of room between our cars and the trees. This gave us enough space to set our tables and chairs up, and kick the footy around. We had witnessed the Blue Coats chasing Lisa’s car through the MCG car park (they always give up in the end) and we had settled in for a nice lunch with our extended family and friends. A few Blue Coats came up to us and insisted we move our cars closer to the trees to make more room. I watched on with great interest to see what Lisa would do to these poor young men. As it turns out, Todd stepped in with the best excuse ever. “These trees are heritage listed and we are not permitted to park our cars any closer than we already have”, Todd claimed. “I thought everybody knew that”, he added. The Blue Coats stomped off all unhappy yet not prepared to concede that they didn’t know such a law existed (‘Footy Sheilas’, pp. 125-126).

The first passage (above) from the memoir suggests that our football picnics in the park are a semi-regular event and it is a tradition we look forward to while the second flags that our picnics are not held in an area designated for such an activity. It also develops the family narrative of how my sister is prepared to ‘break the rules’ and position her car in an area she deems suitable for setting up a picnic (remembering that this is a public park open to football fans for the sole purpose of parking their car on days when there is a football match being played at the MCG).

Such picnic rituals outside the ground are not confined to our practice at the MCG. For what we refer to as a ‘picnic in the park before a football match’, Americans use the term ‘tailgating’ – that is, they drive into a sports stadium car park, lower the ‘gate’ on the back of their vehicle (if they drive a car with a tailgate) and use it as a picnic table. Tailgating is a long held tradition, particularly at American College football matches.
Drenten, Okleshen-Peters, Leigh and Hollenbeck’s 2009 ethnographic study on the ritual commitment to tailgating revealed “football fans strongly identify with the ritual of tailgating” (p. 93). They also found

…four motivations with a dual nature that motivate long-term tailgating behavior: involvement (preparation and participation), social interaction (camaraderie and competition), inter-temporal sentiment (retrospection and prospection), and identity (collectivism and individualism) (p. 103).

Participants in their study commented on how they enjoyed the “spontaneity and freedom from the controlled conformity of everyday life” (2009, p. 99) when participating in tailgating. While Australian football supporters do not use the term ‘tailgating’ (we use the terms ‘picnics’ and ‘footy picnics’), our family is essentially practising the same sorts of rituals that involve communication (between all family members deciding who brings what and timing the arrival at the car park), commitment (giving us a sense of belonging) and continuity (something familiar that we do repeatedly).

**Chanting and Clapping**

The comparison between the ritual performances of football supporters and religious rituals, where chanting, singing and clapping is a standard part of religious practices, has been observed by a number of researchers. For example, Guilianotti suggests that Durkheim’s idea – that “religious ceremonies functionally reproduce the conscious collective. In traditional communities, religious ceremonies assist communal self-worship, bonding the ‘clan’ socially and morally” (cited in Guilianotti 2005, p. 3) – can provide us with a “useful theoretical model for sports sociologists, focusing attention on issues of community, solidarity, integration, ritual and religiosity within sport” (p. 9). Percy and Taylor’s (1997) parallels of religious rituals and sporting rituals yields the finding that it is the clapping and singing that binds a group together. These ideas are explored further in the following section on communities and tribes.
Myerhoff (1984, p. 306) suggests that “ritual inevitably carries a basic message of order, continuity, and predictability … by stating enduring and underlying patterns ritual connects past, present and future, abrogating history and time”. I would agree that our rituals do bind us together as a family, provide continuity and predictability and connect us to the past and present. While we are no longer able to practise some rituals, such as those rituals connected to Collingwood’s days playing at the now closed Victoria Park, we continue to wear certain clothing, eat particular foods and chant, clap and sing.

The memoir contains a number of accounts of my family chanting, clapping and singing during and after football matches. These ritualistic performances are shared with other supporters sitting throughout the football stadium. In the early days of the VFL there was a distinction made between the (usually middle class) supporters who sat in the stands and politely clapped good play and the working classes who stood in the outer. Even the term ‘outer’ is evocative as it describes an area of the ground in which traditionally the poorer supporters were located. It describes a class distinction between members who in the outer would shout, cheer and jeer. This was then known as ‘barracking’:

The working class made a significant contribution to the rituals of football spectatorship in Victorian Melbourne and introduced customs such as ‘barracking’, characters known as ‘barrackers’, and other rituals that expressed a fanatical support for clubs (Pennings & Pascoe 2011, p. 3). Although Australian football supporters tend not to collectively chant throughout matches as frequently as European and South American soccer supporters, there are certain times during the game, such as immediately after our team has kicked a goal, where we will chant and clap. For example:

When it is a big match, such as a final or against a hated rival, we begin the slow and haunting “Coll-ing-wooood, Coll-ing-wooood.” It really took off in 2010 during the finals series. It was our way of drowning out the opposition chants and it worked really well. Some of our players claimed
that it sent shivers down their spine and made them feel invincible (‘Footy Sheilas’, p. 149).

Chanting, clapping and singing is a common ritual performed by football supporters (SIRC 2008, p. 26). Robson’s (2000, p. 9) ethnographic research on Millwall’s (an English Championship League team) football supporters explores the ritual of chanting. Interestingly, part of the title of Robson’s book is drawn from the Millwall fans’ most famous chant: ‘No one likes us, we don’t care’. This chant is part of the title of many books on soccer hooliganism. The Millwall chant can be interpreted as aggressive and signifies the ‘insiders’ – You (the opposition supporters, the police, the football administration) don’t like Us and We (the ‘true’ Millwall supporters) don’t care. The code of conduct expected of AFL supporters has changed over the past two decades. Although Australian Football crowds have generally been better behaved than their English counterparts, AFL supporters, in particular the cheer squads sitting at either end of the ground behind the goals, used to chant more frequently and aggressively (albeit not as aggressively as Millwall supporters). Many of the chants contained swearing or were racist and homophobic. Consequently, certain chants were banned and supporters had to make up new ones. Some examples of the now banned chants are included in the memoir:

\[
\begin{align*}
Are \text{ they good, are they good, } \\
\text{ are they any fucking good, } \\
No \text{ they’re not, no they’re not, } \\
\text{ all their players should be shot (bang).}
\end{align*}
\]

and

\[
\begin{align*}
We \text{ are black, we are white, } \\
We \text{ are fucking dynamite } \\
We \text{ are black, we are white, } \\
We \text{ are fucking dynamite } \\
\end{align*}
\]

(‘Footy Sheilas’, p. 151).
The opposition team and supporters are referred to as ‘they’ while Collingwood supporters are described as the collective ‘we’. Our social identity as part of the club is reflected in most of our chanting. I know these from attending games and some can be found on the Collingwood website (www.collingwoodfc.com):

_Everywhere we go, people want to know_

_Who we are, (who we are),_

_So we tell them, (so we tell them),_

_We are the Magpies, (we are the Magpies)_

_The mighty, mighty Magpies_

Chanting and clapping are rituals practiced by supporters of all football codes. They are repetitive and rhythmic. However, a chant such as the one directly above reveals that supporters believe they are an integral part of the spectacle and member of the ‘team’. Bromberger claims:

… the ‘faithful’ express their excitement, punctuating the actions on the pitch with words, chants and gestures, all of them codified. Their particular way of dressing, and the accessories they exhibit and make use of contribute to this metamorphosis of appearances and behaviour, characteristic of ritual time (1995, p. 307).

**Communities, Supporters and Tribes**

The following explores the concepts of community, supporters and tribes within a football context. Key works informing this section include Andrew’s (1999) work on football communities, Guilianotti’s (2002) taxonomy of football fans and Morris’ (1988) work on tribes. Klugman’s (2009) as well as Cash and Damousi’s (2009) research on Australian Football supporters contributes to the discussion on community, tribalism and football fandom. Such research is congruent with the ways in which I have framed my family’s passion for the Collingwood Football Club.
Throughout the memoir, reference is made to my family belonging to a ‘community’ or ‘tribe’. There is a significant body of research on ‘community’ (for example, Z Bauman 2001; Delanty 2003; Nisbet 1969; Turner 1969; Williams 1977, 1985). Brown, Crabbe and Mellor (2008, p. 305) argue that “Little historical or indeed contemporary work has been conducted on the specific types of communities that football supporters have constituted.” While the term ‘community’ is used widely in social research, attempts to define the term have proven particularly difficult (Amit 2002; Nisbet 1969). However, the idea of ‘community’ is almost always seen as something positive (Williams 1985, p. 76). From my observations, as well as this research, it could be argued that members of a football community (even those that may be thought of by sociologists and anthropologists as a deviant community such as football hooligans), do not consider their beliefs, actions or allegiances in negative terms. Rather, they surround themselves with like-minded people. Football fans offer a good example of this.

Broadly, sociologists tend to think of community as “a form of social organisation based on small groups, such as neighbourhoods, the small town or a spatially bounded locality while anthropologists have applied it to culturally defined groups” (Delanty 2003, p. 2). These broad ideas of what constitutes ‘community’ are relevant to any study of football communities. Taking the ideas found in the research on ‘community’, Andrews’ (1998, p. 106) research on Australian football communities identifies four distinct conceptions, each potentially overlapping or becoming more or less relevant at any given time in the history of the VFL/AFL. These concepts of ‘community’ are: 1) a geographical locale; 2) a local social system; 3) a sense of identity and/or belonging and 4) an ideology. Each of these conceptions is described as part of a greater framework developed by Andrews in an effort to explore the changing nature of Australian football communities.

Collingwood Football Club’s home ground was located in the Melbourne suburb of Collingwood and attracted people who lived within the boundaries of the suburb (and in some cases, such as my family, even beyond the boundaries). The football team represented the suburb and its success on the field led to feelings of great pride within
the local community. The club continued to play its home games and invite its male members and their guests to socialise in the social club building, located on the premises since 1959. The Collingwood Football Club ‘community’ was relatively stable and provided the local community with a geographical locale, a local social system and, even for those who did not live in the local streets of the City of Collingwood, a sense of identity or belonging. However, for many years, only men were permitted to join the social club. It was not until 1982 that women were granted full membership of the social club (McFarlane & Roberts 1999, p. 131) and hence full membership of the Collingwood Football Club community.

It was not only the Collingwood Football Club that previously excluded women from certain spaces throughout the football ground. For example, Cash and Damousi (2009, p. 73) record the experience of a female football supporter who felt excluded from certain areas around the Carlton Football Club’s home ground when attending the football with her father during the 1970s. The female supporter recalls how she was forced to eat her sandwiches on her own while her father attended a male only luncheon. In the memoir, I record the injustice of my mother being excluded from the Collingwood Football Club’s social club until the early 1980s even though she had been attending games from the time she was eight, and has held a season ticket allowing entry to matches for over sixty years. The club acknowledges years of membership based on social club membership and excludes season tickets and reserved seating. This means many passionate female supporters, like my grandmother and mother, are not counted as long-term ‘members’ and are missing from the honour boards that were erected to acknowledge long-term club membership. So, even though the earlier football club communities attracted large numbers of women, there was still some segregation/exclusion based on gender.

After many years of lobbying by the local community, the Collingwood Football Club was established in 1892. As one of the poorest suburbs in Melbourne, and possibly Australia, the club provided a sense of pride and belonging for the local community (Hansen 1992, pp. 28-33). In the memoir, I record with much pride that my great grandfather attended the first match the new Collingwood Football Club played on May 7 1892 against the Carlton Football Club. The move to join seven other clubs in
breaking away from the Victorian Football Association and forming the Victorian Football League gave rise to a Golden era for the club. From 1897 to 1958, the club won thirteen premierships after winning its first VFA premiership the previous year. At least one member of my family (usually more) was in attendance at all of the 13 Grand Finals (14 including the 1896 VFA premiership). During my years of going to the football each week, I have witnessed the gentrification of the once poor suburb of Collingwood. This has created a disruption to our experience as football supporters.

The late twentieth century gentrification of the suburb attracted new residents. Their complaints and petitions to the local council regarding the extra traffic and noise on match day at Victoria Park, coupled with the council’s refusal to allow any ground development, led to the decision by the Collingwood Football Club to not only play its home games at the MCG but to move its training and home base away from Collingwood. In other words, the new local community was not part of the traditional Collingwood resident supporters. This led to the eviction of the Collingwood Football Club, which had once been a source of pride and joy, from the suburb. Arguably, once the Collingwood Football Club left the suburb from which it originated, the supporters were best described as part of a culturally defined rather than geographically located community. I have recorded in the memoir how the move from Victoria Park to a shared venue (the MCG), leaving behind over one hundred years of family history and tradition, was distressing for my family.

I vividly remember the last game we played at Victoria Park in 1999. We shed buckets of tears that day because we were losing our spiritual home. The club could try and convince us that a move to a shared ground (MCG) would be great for the club and make us bigger and stronger but we knew that things would never be the same again (‘Footy Sheilas’, p. 161).

**Supporter**

As stated earlier, throughout the memoir I describe myself and my family as ‘Supporters’. Guilianotti (2002, p. 31, see below) identifies four ‘ideal types’ of spectator identities.
Guilianotti (2002, p. 33) argues that the ‘Supporter’ has a long term relationship with the club that “resembles those with family and close friends”. The Supporter feels an obligation to support their team and the idea of switching allegiances is unthinkable. The supporter demonstrates thick social solidarity through engagement with traditional rituals such as singing and chanting. The ground or stadium is referred to by Supporters as ‘home’ and as Guilianotti observes, the Supporter develops a ‘topophilic’ relationship with the home ground. The various spaces throughout the stadium become familiar and this contributes to the ‘thick solidarity’ felt by the supporter. The ‘Supporter’ spectator identity as defined by Guilianotti aligns with my family’s football identity. There is evidence within the artefact that supports this. For example, our ‘topophilic’ relationship with Collingwood’s traditional ‘home’ ground, Victoria Park, is highlighted in a number of chapters:

Four generations of us sat in the Ryder Stand at Victoria Park. At first it was my Great Grandmother (GiGi), my Grandparents and Mum and her brother and sister. Then Lisa and I came along. Finally, Todd spent a season or two sitting there. We loved everything about the place – there were black and white stripes painted on the stands, the huge magpie placed on the social club wall and the names of past greats on tin sheets right around the ground. We felt safe in the knowledge that the seats were ours and ours alone. No other tribe could occupy the space that was reserved for us. After each game, we would go up to our social club … (‘Footy Sheilas’, p. 159).

I retell the stories of sleeping inside the ground for finals tickets and of going back to Victoria Park after the 2010 Grand Final win even though the ground had been closed for a number of years as since 2000 the club had been hosting its home games at the MCG. I also recall squeezing my young son’s hand during the last game played at Victoria Park and begging him to remember the experience of watching our team play at ‘home’ for the last time. My family has a long-term relationship with the club, a thick social solidarity and grounded identity. These are the elements of the ‘Supporter’ identified by Guilianotti (2002).
According to Guilianotti (pp. 34-38), the three other spectator identities include the ‘Follower’, ‘Fan’, and ‘Flâneur’ and there is the potential within each category of spectator to demonstrate a thick or thin social solidarity with a club. Guilianotti provides an in-depth analysis of each spectator category. I now offer a brief description of the three categories. The Follower might support a particular club but also follow the fortunes of particular players, clubs or managers from other clubs. They may support a club that is ideologically aligned with them but geographically distant. One example offered by Guilianotti (p. 35) is the ‘anarcho-leftist’ St Pauli (a club located in Hamburg). St Pauli attracts support from areas outside of Germany. The Follower, depending on the level of social solidarity, may be content to view the football via television.

As I have indicated earlier, for Guilianotti (2002), the ‘Fan’ is “hot in terms of identification; the sense of intimacy is strong and is a key element of the individual’s self. However, it is a relationship that is rather more distant than that enjoyed by supporters” (p. 36). ‘Fans’ might attend matches, but are more likely to be geographically distant. The Fan embraces consumer products such as merchandise and magazines. An example of a geographically distant ‘Fan’ is a person who identifies with a club such as English Premier League club Manchester United, owns merchandise, belongs to various online Manchester fan forums, but has never been to the city of Manchester. The final spectator category that forms part of Guilianotti’s taxonomy of spectator identities is the ‘Flâneur’. This category of spectator demonstrates a ‘cool’ relationship with the club, thin social solidarity and is likely to “forsake football for other forms of entertainment” (p. 40). Guilianotti (2002) describes the Flâneur as cosmopolitan, bourgeois and increasingly likely to consume football through television. He claims the televising of football matches is tailored for the Flâneur. Also the Flâneur is more likely to view the traditional Supporter as:

Regressive figures from the past … truculent locals who refuse to reconcile themselves to the ineluctable hegemony of neoliberal principles within football. Flâneurs might try to depict hot spectators as emotionally driven
and thus intellectually incapable of appreciating the fineries of the game (2002, p. 40).

I make reference to spectators that fit the description of the Flâneur in the artefact. I describe them as ‘Theatre Goers’ and ‘Corporate Wankers’ (‘Footy Sheilas’, p. 12).

Another significant concept that is mentioned throughout the literature and within the artefact memoir is that of ‘tribe’.

**Tribe**

There is evidence throughout the memoir that my family acts as a tribe that is part of the football community. According to Morris (1988, p. 10) the word tribe conjures up all sorts of images of ‘primitive’ cultures – of near naked people taking part in mystical dances and wearing paint on their faces. Morris argues against the view that ‘civilised’ society has transcended our primitive roots and that it is only those people still living in far flung and isolated places that engage in ‘tribal’ behaviour. Rather Morris takes the position that tribalism has never disappeared. “As our national units become increasingly large and heterogeneous, we create social units on a more human scale … people band together to create modern tribes which share the basic features of traditional ones” (Morris 1988, p. 10).

Like ‘community’, the definition of ‘tribe’ in contemporary society is problematic and it is difficult to find consensus in the literature. Cashman (1995, p. 92) argues that a connection between “sport and aggressive tribalism was an important factor in the rise of organised sport in Australia” and that while sport unified communities, the tribalism that emerged also divided communities. One of the problems that I have encountered in my doctoral work is that the contemporary discussion of tribes or ‘neo-tribes’ does not reflect my own experiences as a member of a tribe. For example, Maffesoli (1996) suggests that neo-tribes are unstable, ever-changing and temporary. Similarly, Z Bauman (1993, p. 141) argues that “unlike ‘classic’ tribes, neo-tribes do not last longer than their units (‘members’)”, yet my family has been part of a ‘tribe’ for 120 years. While the ‘community’ of which we are tribal members has undergone dramatic
changes such as relocating (albeit remaining in the same city), and the traditional supporter base has dispersed from its local beginnings, we continue to be proudly ‘tribal’ in our support of our football team.

Cash and Damousi (2009) record the experiences of long-term football ‘Supporters’ who show all the hallmarks of being tribal in their approach to their football clubs. Many of the supporters that Cash and Damousi have interviewed describe their passion for their team, their sense of rivalry towards other ‘tribes’ and the collective community to which they and their family belong. For example, they suggest that “the team can become the container for feelings of connectedness and significance with family, friends and, sometimes, whole communities” (p. 24). They go on to describe how competitive feelings towards friends who support other teams means that they “can quite brazenly take delicious pleasure in the defeat of a friend’s team” (p. 75). Klugman (2009, p. 55) posits that “footy rituals and superstitions help barrackers become more than just hopeless onlookers. They join them with a group which is much greater than any individual – a powerful tribe on a quest for glory”. Wenke (2009, p. 652) argues that “people have an innate need to belong to a tribe and that sport offers a comfortable and generally safe venue for expressions of tribal belonging”.

Like any tribe, be it traditional or modern, dress is an important part of being a football supporter. Certain dress codes signify a level of support, commitment and even more importantly, a sense of belonging to the tribe. The scarf worn even when it is not particularly cold, the baseball cap with the current year imprinted on it, the black polo top with a magpie emblem on the left breast pocket, and the Collingwood jumper with the favourite player’s number sewn on, all clearly indicate membership of the tribe. Many children paint their faces with black and white patches or stripes. An even more important indicator of being a ‘supporter’ is the membership card and social club medallion that is placed in a small plastic pocket and worn around the necks of fully paid up members of the club. These emblems of allegiance are all important markers of ‘belonging’ and clearly identify the individual as a member of the tribe:
My tribal gear had been purchased several months earlier (it was on special at the local haberdashery store in Lilydale) and I couldn’t wait to wear it ... My tribal clothes had been placed at the end of my bed the night before and I decided I would get up and put them on. The black and white stripes on the jumper certainly slimmed me down and I was quite pleased to see that I didn’t look as plump as usual when I stood back and looked in the mirror. The knitted cap I was expected to wear felt a bit big and the pom-pom at the top bounced around as though it had taken on a life of its own. The knitted scarf was so long that I could wrap it around my neck twice (‘Footy Sheilas’, p. 84 & p. 85).

The artefact contains a passage that describes my great grandfather making the decision to start supporting the Collingwood Football Club from its inception in 1892:

I wish I could claim that he [my Great Grandfather] was a member of the poor folk who lived in the slums around Collingwood. That would be a badge of honour that I would gladly carry around as a measure of authenticity. That is, being able to trace my Collingwood lineage back to the suburb itself. Unfortunately, he was quite a wealthy dairy farmer from a suburb called Templestowe (‘Footy Sheilas’, p. 17).

As already discussed, rituals form and contribute to another aspect of tribal behaviour. As Morris (1988, p. 34) explains, “in the large majority of traditional societies the transition from one level or status to another is marked by distinctive initiation ceremonies or rituals”.

Percy and Taylor (1997, p. 37) explore the “phenomenological relationship between rituals, performance and expectations of crowds, as well as examining the dynamics of tribalism, ‘popular’ notions of masculinity, heroes, shamans and the like”. Although they develop an argument that there are commonalities between the two, Percy and Taylor comment that it is perhaps odd to link football and religion together. My counter-view is that there are many similarities between devout football supporters’ and
religious groups’ practices. A number of references are made to football as a religion in ‘Footy Sheilas’:

Some children experience a first Holy Communion or Bar Mitzvah. These important ceremonies are a sign that the child is entering a new phase in their spiritual development and it represents full membership of a particular faith. In my family, attending your first footy match is an important moment in our spiritual development. This is the time when we become full members of our tribe and all those who have gone before and after me can recall their first match with great clarity. There is always a great fuss made over the first-timer. New football jumper, beanie and scarf are purchased for the big day. Lots of photos are taken and the child is introduced to more than a game of football – they are introduced to a way of life! (pp. 86-87).

In an effort to discover how women become Australian Football supporters, Mewett and Toffoletti (2008, p. 3) ran focus groups and conducted one-on-one interviews with women football supporters. They discovered four ways in which women become fans and offer a description of each. The first group, “In the Bloods” consists of women who were introduced to Australian football through family members (e.g. parents, grandparents): in other words, those who are born into families already emotionally attached to a football team. It is an important part of the family’s cultural practices and the children are raised as football supporters. This is certainly the case with my family. As small children, we did not make the decision to follow a team: following Collingwood is ‘in the blood’. The memoir explores the idea that each child is indoctrinated from an early age. Mewett and Toffoletti (2008) draw on Geertz’s (1973) concept of ‘primordial sentiment’ and make the following claim:

… people are socialised from such a young age into cultural practices that it is as if ways of doing things are part of their genetic make-up. For some, sports fandom is one such learned cultural practice and with it comes an overwhelmingly powerful attachment to a team: an affection that also constitutes an important part of the person’s identity (2008, p. 3).
The other types described by Mewett and Toffoletti include “Learners”; those whose journey to football fandom takes time. These women are usually influenced by friends and/or television. The final two types are the “Converts” and “Sexually Transmitted Fans” – those who suddenly decide to follow football and those who are influenced by their partner. My introduction to football, and that of my female family members, can be categorised as ‘In the Bloods’. We are enculturated from such an early age that supporting Collingwood seems a natural and normal part of our family life.
Section Five: Contribution to Knowledge and Conclusion

The exegesis addresses an important gap in the literature, both creative and scholarly, of first-hand accounts of family groups of women Australian football supporters. As mentioned in the introduction, there are numerous memoirs authored by supporters (e.g. Gilchrist 2011; Hardy 2004; Leicester & MacKieson 2003; Pippines 2006). These publications offer insights into the experiences of attending football matches on a regular basis and they provide evidence of the strong emotional attachment to various Australian Football clubs that in turn creates a sense of identity and belonging. Other publications explore the second-hand accounts of individuals, and groups of families and friends, who are passionate Australian football supporters (e.g. Cash & Damousi 2009; Critchley 2010; Klugman 2009). I have addressed throughout this artefact the body of relevant research on football fans, both Australian and other codes in Australia and the world. This research includes the tribal nature of football fandom, the various categories of football fan identities and the practice of rituals within a football fan context. This exegesis, then, adds new and important scholarship about a family as a supporter tribe. Furthermore, it provides a first-hand account of a family, particularly of the women, and their multigenerational experiences as football supporters.

The artefact, then, records the stories of a multigenerational family of predominantly women football supporters from a female point of view. Whilst women football supporters are very present within the Australian football community, and this multigenerational female tribe is not rare, little has been written by scholars about their passion for and attachment to their team. As Klugman (2012, p. 415) states “the passions of female sports fans have been neglected”. As I have shown, much of the research on women Australian football supporters tends to focus on the unusually large numbers who attend the game compared with other football codes. This combination of artefact and exegesis provides a first-hand creative account and a scholarly reflection to add to knowledge. It lends itself, as I have shown, to the application of a social-identity approach as a study of a family of supporters who are predominantly women.
I have focussed on family identity rather than gender identity as the theoretical lens. Nevertheless, I recognise that a feminist theoretical lens could also be applied. However, this is not within the scope of this exegesis. Furthermore, the AFL has traditionally attracted and accepted large numbers of female supporters. The application of a feminist theoretical lens offers opportunities for further study of this.

The two elements of this doctoral work show themselves as complementary and as ‘speaking’ to one another, as the artefact tells a creative non-fiction narrative and the exegesis provides an academic framework for it. Together they contribute significantly to scholarly knowledge as I employ the methodology of autoethnography. As Kroll (2013, p. 1) notes, together the memoir and exegesis enact ‘creative synergies’. These personal reflections have led me to a deeper understanding of my family of football supporters and of myself. The research has found that the most influential element for women football supporters is the family: or as Mewett and Toffoletti (2008) describe, ‘In the Bloods’. We are what Guilianotti (2002) describes as ‘supporters’ in his typology of football fans.

The accounts of Australian football supporters recorded by Cash and Damousi (2009), Klugman (2009) and Critchley (2010) provide a strong foundation for comparison with my own family’s experiences. Although this is not a comparative study, reflective analysis of the artefact reveals common patterns of behaviour by AFL football supporters. As noted throughout, these have been commented upon by football fan scholars. The practise of rituals and following particular routines is common amongst passionate football fans. These include identifying strongly with a team and developing a sense of belonging, feeling at one with like-minded fans and sharing stories about memorable moments.

**Personal Reflections**

Through the writing of the artefact, I made a number of discoveries about the ‘self’ and others. As mentioned earlier, the aim of the creative work is to capture the stories of my family attending the football over five generations. The memoir’s title ‘Footy Sheilas’ signposts that the stories are about football and (predominantly) women. Although I am
the narrator, the women or ‘sheilas’ referred to are my mother, sister and me. For many years it was just the three of us attending the football each week. My grandparents had become too old to be attending football matches in the middle of cold Melbourne winters and I was yet to have children.

I have lost count of the number of times outsiders (outside of the family and the greater football community) ask about my creative research work. Upon hearing the title ‘Footy Sheilas’, they show great surprise that a family of women were and continue to be so passionate about the game of Australian Football, and Collingwood Football Club in particular. Yet, from the time of its inception, Australian football has always attracted large numbers of women. As mentioned previously, Hess (2000, p. 114) describes this as “one of the most remarkable features of the Australian code”. In my role as the narrator of ‘our’ story, much has been revealed about the self.

An example of self-discovery can be found within the first few pages of the memoir, I inform my husband-to-be that any children we have will support Collingwood. My husband is told that he has no say in the matter:

“But what if they decide they don’t like the football?” Tombo asked. “Oh they will” was my reply. It was a case of ‘give me a child until he is seven and I will give you the Collingwood supporter’. Tombo would soon realise that the force was strong and there was no point trying to resist it (‘Footy Sheilas’, p. 22).

It was important to me to ensure that the family interest in Australian football would continue through my children. By taking a social identity approach, I gained valuable insights into the family as a group of Australian football supporters.

Writing the artefact provided me with many opportunities to reflect upon the stories I have recorded about my experiences as a member of a family devoted to a football team. This exegesis has enabled me to develop a scholarly framework with reference to the artefact. Kroll (2013, p. 2) makes the point: “The synergies between their roles produce outcomes” that enrich “subject and pedagogical knowledge bases” as well as foster
“new research directions, enhancing artistic and intellectual careers”. Together, then, the artefact and exegesis make academic knowledge that arises from the practice itself.

There is evidence of my family having a strong social identification as Collingwood supporters. I have recorded our shared negative feelings towards ‘hated rivals’ and football supporters of other teams. We clearly view our group more favorably than supporters of other teams. I can only speak authoritatively about my self-categorisation as a Collingwood supporter. The entry *I is for Initiation* has revealed the moment when I became a member of the Collingwood Football Club and developed an awareness that I was now part of a ‘special’ group.

Throughout the exegesis, I have discussed memoir itself to indicate how my memoir captures a multigenerational commitment to Collingwood and hence provides sociological data and observations. The creative non-fiction memoir and accompanying exegesis combined contribute to scholarly knowledge about supporting an AFL club over generations from a female viewpoint. The reflective data about myself and my family that provides the basis for my artefact and for this framework exegesis is autoethnographic. As Holt (2003, p. 11) describes: “authors use their own experiences in a culture of reflexivity to look more deeply at self/other interactions”.

Identity and community grow from a lifelong commitment and this project contributes to enriching and understanding this. My family’s narratives that I record in the artefact, a process that I reflect upon in this exegesis, are situated within what Holt describes as “the postmodern research moment [that] has raised doubts about the privilege of any one method for obtaining authoritative knowledge about the social world” (2003, p. 18). There is a sense of self and a personal presence and voice in both elements. Mello (2002) discusses narrative frameworks such as this exegesis as turning the researcher into ‘the storyteller’ who is “a bridge-builder working to link the use and production of stories in the field together with the analytical discourse of research literature” (p. 241).

In my writing of the complementary artefact and exegesis in this project, I have found it necessary to cross a number of disciplines in order to fully interrogate my experiences as an author of a memoir and the writing techniques utilised to complete the work, a
football supporter, a member of a multigeneration family of football supporters and a PhD candidate. Inckle (2005, p. 227) discusses research as “a complex and messy narrative from which I am unable to separate myself [it] dissolves the borders of fact and fiction, truth and representation, self and other… a separated and objective researcher is an impossibility”.

In this exegesis, I have discussed how the two elements of this project can be described as research that arises from and reflects upon creative non-fiction. Whilst the aim of creative non-fiction is “to tell the truth” (Caulley 2008, p. 424), many authorial techniques are used. Caulley (2008) says of this “multiple incidents or situations are combined or compressed to flesh out the narrative” (p. 445). He also states that we should not fabricate dialogue nor claim to know what the others think. I have complied with these directions in this project.

Similarly, I have permitted my research participants to read their contributions as recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1985). In both elements of this project I show how creative non-fiction has proven to be a strong and forceful genre and research technique. PLR has been discussed as the driving method underpinning this project, and I show here how this exegesis arises from reflective critical analysis of my practice in the artefact.

Throughout, I have entered into dialogue with relevant scholarly literature. For example, I draw on a number of thinkers in the area of memoir such as Zisnner (2004, 2005) and Barrington (2000, 2007, 2014). As I am working in a humorous genre, I show in this academic discussion how other writers of humorous memoirs, such as Lucy (2008), Griffin (2009) and Fey (2011), have provided me with examples of presenting lived experience using a humorous voice that is aimed at engaging the audience. The Lucy Family Alphabet (2008) is discussed as being an important influence here. I show how this has led me to construct my artefact.

In the exegesis, I have demonstrated that my methodology of autoethnography is an effective research tool, showing that key thinkers inform this exegetical structure (Anderson 2006; Chang 2008; Ellis & Bochner 2000, 2006). My self-reflexive
methodology as connects the memoir and exegesis so that they ’speak to one another’. I also discuss here how I utilise the theoretical prism of social-identity to elucidate how this project adds to knowledge about a sense of identity and belonging to a special in-group.

I suggest here that my reflections upon creative non-fiction and autoethnography provide data that cannot be accrued or critiqued any other way. In doing this I demonstrate how I identify and then respond to the question: ‘what did the memoir reveal about myself and my family of football supporters?’ I contribute to the literature on storytelling, ritual, and community and tribes, and discuss how supporting a football team can potentially play a meaningful role in family life and provide a sense of identity and belonging.

The two elements of this project contribute new and significant scholarship to the body of knowledge about a multigenerational family of ‘Footy Sheilas’. I bring to public attention the lives of an ‘ordinary’ family and the artefact and exegesis together reveal the rich fabric of multigenerational commitment to supporting a football club.

One of the best things about the footy is that when our team doesn’t make the finals or we lose yet another Grand Final, there’s always next year. The amount of times Mum has said “wait until next year” or “look out next year because we are going to be much better than this year”. That is the very thing that keeps us coming back season after season. All footy supporters live in hope that the next year will bring happier times. Maybe next year will see the start of something special, the beginning of a period of sustained success. In the mid to late 1990s, when Collingwood went through its most unsuccessful era (the team contained plenty of hacks and it seemed to us that there must be many ‘pictures of the pig’ in circulation) some of my friends would ask me how I was coping. My response was always the same – wait until next year! Over the pre-season new players will arrive at the club and old players will retire or be traded to a different club. Coaches will come and go, old sponsorship logos on the team’s jumpers and shorts will
be replaced with new ones. All sorts of changes will take place at the club but my family will still be there next year and for many years to come (‘Footy Sheilas’, p. 171).
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Appendix I – Ethics Clearance

From: Keith Wilkins
Sent: Friday, 27 November 2015 11:00 AM
To: Catherine Farrell
Cc: Pamela Green; Josie Arnold; RES Ethics
Subject: SUHREC Project 2008/134 Confirmation of Ethics Clearance and Receipt of Final Report

To:
Ms Catherine Farrell
cc Prof Pamela Green & Prof Josie Arnold

Dear Cathy

**SUHREC Project 2008/134 Footy Sheilas**

Prof Pamela Green, SR/FHEL, Ms Catherine Farrell
Approved Duration: 27/05/10 to 27/05/11 [Adjusted]

I confirm receipt on 29 November 2012 of the final report on the conduct of the human research activity for the above project in line with ethics clearance conditions issued. I also attach a copy of the original ethics clearance issued.

Best wishes for your higher degree submission.

Yours sincerely

Keith

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Keith Wilkins
Secretary, SUHREC & Research Ethics Officer
Swinburne Research (H68)
Swinburne University of Technology
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---------- Forwarded message ----------
From: Ann Gaeth <agaeth@swin.edu.au>
To: Catherine Farrell <cfarrell@swin.edu.au>, Pamela Green <pamgreen@swin.edu.au>
Cc: RES Ethics <resethics@swin.edu.au>
Date: Thu, 27 May 2010 00:40:09 +0000
Subject: SUHREC Project 2008/134 Ethics clearance
To: Prof Pamela Green/Ms Catherine Farrell, SR/FHEL

Dear Prof Green and Ms Farrell,
SUHREC Project 2008/134 Footy Sheilas  
Prof Pamela Green, SR/FHEL, Ms Catherine Farrell  
Approved duration: 27/05/10 to 27/05/11 [Adjusted]

I refer to the ethical review of the above project protocol undertaken by Swinburne’s Human Research Ethics Committee (SUHREC). Your responses to the review, as emailed on 26 May 2010 with attachments, were put to and approved by a SUHREC delegate.

I am pleased to advise that, as submitted to date, the project has approval to proceed in line with standard on-going ethics clearance conditions here outlined.

- All human research activity undertaken under Swinburne auspices must conform to Swinburne and external regulatory standards, including the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and with respect to secure data use, retention and disposal.

- The named Swinburne Chief Investigator/Supervisor remains responsible for any personnel appointed to or associated with the project being made aware of ethics clearance conditions, including research and consent procedures or instruments approved. Any change in chief investigator-supervisor requires timely notification and SUHREC endorsement.

- The above project has been approved as submitted for ethical review by or on behalf of SUHREC. Amendments to approved procedures or instruments ordinarily require prior ethical appraisal/clearance. SUHREC must be notified immediately or as soon as possible thereafter of (a) any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants and any redress measures; (b) proposed changes in protocols; and (c) unforeseen events which might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.

- At a minimum, an annual report on the progress of the project is required as well as at the conclusion (or abandonment) of the project.

- A duly authorised external or internal audit of the project may be undertaken at any time.

Please contact me if you have any queries about the ethical review process, citing the SUHREC project number. Copies of clearance emails should be retained as part of project record-keeping.

Best wishes for the project.

Yours sincerely

Ann Gaeth  
for Keith Wilkins  
Secretary, SUHREC

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