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Out From Under the Cosh: The Impact of Football on English Working Class Identity through Cartoons, 1900-1925

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Out From Under the Cosh: The Impact of Football on English Working Class Identity through Cartoons, 1900-1925

Geography, History

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This study examines the impact of football on English identity from 1900-1925 through the concepts of space and place. It is significant because of the narrow view on the subject of previous research and the social importance of football in modern England. Prior research regarding football and English identity focuses on football as the “working man’s game” and highlights the development of a working class identity, in opposition to upper and middle class identities, through football. Unfortunately, it is difficult to find primary sources on this subject from the first quarter of the twentieth century in order to gain a more holistic understanding of the subject. In order to discover more about football’s impact on English identity from 1900-1925, this study uses cartoons published in English newspapers as primary sources to discover a more comprehensive sense of football’s impact on English identity. This analysis shows: 1) Football was generally played and supported by working class males; 2) Football divided England by city, borough, and region through allegiances to various professional football clubs; 3) Football further developed an English identity for white working class males through the England national team. I explain these discoveries through various geographic theories in order to show how football in England simultaneously divided and united Englishmen. This study then applies theories such as topophilia, place pride, the theory of hegemony, and visibility based on the works of the of Yi-Fu Tuan, Stuart Hall, and John Bale, in order to understand how space and place allowed football to influence English working class identity from 1900-1925.