‘We are Superjews, Ajax is the name’
A study of the Jewish identity of Ajax supporters

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WE ARE SUPERJEW
AJAX IS THE NAME
Cover: The photographs in this thesis originate from private collections and websites (i.e. afca.nl, ajaxfotoside.nl and ajax.netwerk.to).
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**Glossary**

*AFCA*  
The abbreviation for Amsterdamsche Football Club Ajax. The term is also used by supporters of Ajax to refer to fanatical Ajax supporters as a group.

*Ajacied*  
Someone who is associated with Ajax, for example a player, staff member, or supporter.

*Amsterdam Arena*  
The current stadium of Ajax, located in the district South-East of Amsterdam. The stadium was officially opened on 14 August 1996.

*De Meer*  
The former stadium of Ajax, located in the district Oost/Watergraafsmeer of Amsterdam.

*F-Side*  
The traditional ‘harde kern’ of Ajax. The F-Side originated in 1976 and is named after the stand ‘F’ in stadium De Meer, where the more fanatical supporters gathered. The F-Side is often associated with hooliganism. The Dutch dictionary Van Dale defines F-Side as ‘the aggressive supporters and hooligans of Ajax’.\(^1\) After Ajax moved to the Amsterdam Arena, the old and new generations of the F-Side gathered on the south stand of the stadium.

*Harde kern*  
Hard core/more fanatical supporters. The term is often associated with hooliganism.

*Ultras*  
Type of supporters renowned for their fanatical support. Ultras groups are mainly present in (Southern) European football. The Ultras groups are generally focused on passionately and loyally supporting their team and creating an intense atmosphere at the stadium. Ultras groups are often distinguished from hooligan firms. However, there appears to be a degree of crossover between all fanatical supporters.

*Vak 410*  
Group of fanatical supporters of Ajax. The group is often characterized as Ultras, focusing on creating a more intense atmosphere in the stadium. Vak 410 originated in 2001 and is named after the stand ‘410’ on the north side of the Amsterdam Arena. In the season 2008-2009 the group moved to one of the upper south stands of the stadium close to the F-Side.

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\(^1\) “De agressieve en vandalistische supporters van Ajax.”
PRE-MATCH ANALYSIS
VOORBESCHOUWING
INTRODUCTION

Around the stadium of football club Ajax Amsterdam thousands of supporters gather to get into the stands to watch their team play a football match. The supporters walk around in jerseys of their team and wear clothing with the club emblem. At the same time several supporters walk around in jackets with Hebrew writing, they are waving Israeli flags and one can see their tattoos with the Star of David. The vendors around the stadium are selling Israeli flags and the Jewish memorabilia seem to be in great demand by the supporters.

Just before entering the stadium thousands of supporters start singing: ‘Jews! Jews! Jews!’. They are waving their Israeli flags and full of excitement they enter the stadium.

It is a remarkable spectacle taking place on a Sunday afternoon in Amsterdam. It is especially remarkable since hardly any of those supporters are actually Jewish. They do not have a Jewish mother, neither did they convert to Judaism. They are supporters of the football club Ajax Amsterdam and it seems they simply decide to present themselves as Jews for a while.

At first sight it looks like an exuberant and harmless spectacle which repeats itself every home game of Ajax. However, the spectacle also creates more obscure and sinister customs. While Ajax supporters present themselves as Jews, their biggest rivals look for ways to oppose this custom and provoke the supporters of Ajax. Supporters of rival clubs like Feyenoord, FC Utrecht, ADO Den Haag and PSV started giving the Nazi’s straight-arm salute, they have been chanting ‘Hamas! Hamas! Jews on the gas!’ or made hissings sounds resembling escaping gas. The games of Ajax Amsterdam have often been surrounded by anti-Semitic provocations by rival supporters.

One recent disturbing event took place after a match against ADO in The Hague. Ajax had lost the match and afterwards the supporters and players of ADO celebrated their victory. During the festivities the ADO player Lex Immers jumped on a bar, grabbed a microphone and started to sing: “We’re going to hunt for Jews!”

There are numerous examples of such displays of anti-Semitism and it is not always limited to the fiercest rivals of Ajax. At almost every other team in the Dutch league one can hear the supporters sing ‘Everyone who’s not jumping is a Jew!’, while thousands of supporters are jumping up and down.

The games of Ajax are so often charged with anti-Semitic displays that it often leads to public outrage and political debate. It is a recurring theme in the papers and already in 2004 the newspaper De Telegraaf used the headline: ‘Stop those disgusting chants!’

Since then the anti-Semitic displays are still present in and around the Dutch football stadiums and it regularly causes widespread public concern. At the same time there is no clear explanation why Ajax is known as a Jewish club and its supporters as Jews. The Ajax fans seem to have chosen or invented the Jewish element as a part of their identity.

2 “We gaan op Jodenjacht!”
Goal and research questions
The question rises why these supporters call themselves Jews, while most of them are not. How do they feel about that? How does it work? I am interested in how supporters solve the problem that they are not what they say they are. There have been numerous research projects regarding football supporters. However, none of these projects seems to have focused on the peculiar identity of Ajax supporters. While at the same time the Jewish identity of Ajax supporters causes a lot of public concern and sometimes even outrage.

The research questions are therefore:
- Why do Ajax supporters present themselves as Jews, while most of them are not?
- How do Ajax supporters feel about this identity?
- Which reactions does it evoke?

The first questions are more of a cognitive nature. The answer to this question will be based on empirical factual knowledge resulting from literature study. The second and third question will focus on affective aspects. These questions will be answered based on opinions and emotions of the supporters.

This study attempts to uncover the rationale behind the Jewish identity of Ajax supporters. This research can potentially contribute to the understanding and scientific knowledge about the behavior of football supporters, partially because it is not based on moral judgments or condemnation. But also because this study tries to describe the perception of the supporters themselves. In this way, it offers a new perspective which can be used for further research into the behavior of football supporters.

This research may also be of social concern because the perspectives of the Ajax supporters might differ from the prevailing view in the media and politics. The current public view of Ajax supporters might give a wrong impression and the public opinion may not always be correct.

Structure
In the first chapter I will discuss my research methods. I will describe which interviews I held, which sources I have studied and how I conducted my further fieldwork.

To introduce the context of this research the second chapter describes the Jewish history of Ajax. This chapter will give an overview of the Jewish history of Ajax and how the Jewish identity of Ajax supporters originated. It will discuss when and how Ajax supporters started to present themselves as Jews.

The third chapter will be about the different types of supporters. Based on social theory it will be described to what extent they feel connected to their club and how strongly their identity is connected to their favourite team.

The fourth chapter will discuss how the Ajax supporters experience their identity. Based on social theory on identity and communities the emotions and motivations of the Ajax supporters will be explained.
The fifth chapter will focus on rival supporters and the reactions which are evoked by the Jewish identity of Ajax supporters.

The study is closed with a conclusion summarizing the main findings and a discussion of potential future research.
LINE-UP - OPSTELLING
Chapter 1
THE RESEARCH

My fascination with Ajax
I have been intrigued by the football club Ajax Amsterdam for as long as I can remember, but the real fascination with Ajax started at the end of the 1980’s and the beginning of the 1990’s. At that time, Ajax was one of the most famous football clubs. It was not as successful as it used to be in the past but there were numerous fascinating stories about historic victories, brilliant players and the atmosphere at the matches.

In these years, my father took me a few times to the old Ajax stadium, ‘De Meer’, and immediately I was hooked. Much of the daily life evolved around Ajax and the matches in the weekend were something to look forward to the entire week. Not only because of the games but more and more because of the atmosphere and excitement in and around the stadium.

I was fascinated by Ajax, its culture and the supporters. Supporters who are a random group of people, who do not know most of the others and who have completely different backgrounds. Nevertheless, they all have a shared fascination with Ajax and at least in the weekends they are linked by the events, chants and excitement in the stadium. The Ajax supporters have a shared identity, their own stories and traditions. The most interesting for me has always been the Jewish identity and the stories about the Jewish roots of Ajax.

The Jewish identity and roots of Ajax
Several Ajax supporters present themselves as Jews even though most of them are not Jewish, neither by faith nor by origin. At the same time, I have always had the impression that only few of them actually know where this identity comes from and that they have hardly any knowledge of the presumed Jewish history of Ajax.

I started to read about the Jewish history of Ajax, started to pay more attention to it at the matches and wanted to investigate this tradition. When I moved to New York City and studied at the Jewish Yeshiva University, my fascination about the Jewish identity of Ajax fans grew even further. Soon I decided to write my thesis about the subject. I decided to conduct a case study on the supporters of Ajax Amsterdam and their Jewish identity.

Structuring the fascination: describing, understanding and interpreting
In order to write this thesis, I had to structure my fascination into a more structured research method. I focused my research on my own experiences with Ajax and the supporters culture. I tried to explain and to interpret the Ajax supporters’ culture from a perspective of a supporter: being familiar with the events surrounding football and being part of the supporters’ culture. The case study approach allowed me to use this perspective and to use my fascination and experiences.

The strength of the case study method has been shown in previous researches into football culture and identity (i.a. Armstrong 1998 and Robson 2000). The case study method tries to explain events by providing a great deal of descriptive detail and emphasis on empirical data in a
specific context. It makes it possible to focus completely on the case of Ajax supporters and to use my own experiences to analyse the subject and place it in a sociological perspective.

Of course, it is difficult to generalize the result of a case study to other situations and to contribute to theory development. This problem could have been reduced by studying different cases instead of the single case of Ajax supporters. Nevertheless, this single case study is able to describe and explain one specific form of football identity, instead of developing theory. The case study method used in this thesis did not seek to develop theory, but focused on describing, understanding and interpreting the Jewish identity of Ajax supporters.

Qualitative and quantitative research methods
I decided to use both qualitative and quantitative research methods. First because the combination gives a perspective from different angles, but it is also an attempt to create a foundation for my own – qualitative – observations. Even though I have opted for these mixed methods, the most substantial part of the research remains of qualitative nature. The research focuses largely on interviews and my own observations during the years of following Ajax.

All in all the case study contains the following research methods: Observations, interviews, the analysis of data and online surveys.

Observations
The observations mainly took place around football stadiums and places such as bars and clubs, the supporter’s home,4 or even in the public transport on the way to matches. I mainly focused on the behaviour of the fans, their interaction and expressions.

During the years, I have attended matches in all parts of the stadium and amongst all kinds of supporters. It was interesting to see the differences and similarities between all these supporters and how they all experienced football in their own way.

It is important to realize that all these years I mainly was a supporter. I have had my own preferences and it is possible that my own involvement has somewhat clouded my judgment. I have also told some friends and supporters around me about my fascination with the Jewish identity of Ajax and that I had started this research. Nevertheless, I believe that the influence thereof on the research was limited (cf. Bryman 2004, p. 301).

Interviews
Next to the observations, I held numerous interviews using the unstructured interview method. I decided to let the interviews be unstructured and they were more like conversations than formal interviews. I was interested in the point of view of the interviewees and wanted them to respond freely. I mainly responded to points that I thought were interesting or worthy to follow up.

The unstructured interviews gave the interviewees room to pursue topics of particular interest to them. As a result the interviews dealt with all kinds of subjects and contained many sidesteps. Sometimes this made clear what people regarded as relevant and important (Bryman 2004, p. 320). In other situations, it just resulted in a more open and relaxed conversation.

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4 A hangout for and run by supporters next to the stadium.
In the beginning, most interviews were with people I already knew, but often they suggested other people to interview and brought me in contact with them. The fact that some of the interviewees had come to know me over the years was helpful during the interviews.

Some of the interviews were planned beforehand, but there were also several (short) interviews of a more spontaneous nature. I often started a conversation with random fans and people I encountered during fieldwork. Sometimes I watched fans wearing Jewish symbols or singing chants referring to Jews, and often I decided to talk to them about it.

The organized and in-depth interviews were recorded and I told the interviewees it was for research. None of the interviewees rejected the use for research. The more spontaneous interviews were mostly not recorded. Often they were more like small talk and it did not always become clear that I would use it for my research.

The in-depth interviewees
I have held nine in-depth interviews with people from different backgrounds. I have interviewed Arjan who is a lifelong hardcore Ajax fan; Niko who is originally from Croatia and a passionate hardcore fan of Ajax; Martin who considers himself to be a member of the F-Side (a group of hardcore supporters); Peter a lawyer who has been going to the stadium since the beginning of the 1970’s; Willemieke who is a former steward at the Ajax stadium; Nathalie who is an outsider and not a fan of Ajax nor football in general; Rich who is a student at a university and hardcore fan of Ajax; David Beesemer who is a boardmember of the Jewish organisation CIDI; and Uri Coronel who was at the time of the interview the chairman of Ajax.

The further descriptions of the in-depth interviewees have been included in Annex 3.

The short interviewees
During the research 30 short interviews were conducted. These interviews were of a spontaneous nature and could often be characterised as a short exchange of words. I have named the interviews R1 (‘respondent 1’) until R30. Due to the limited background information on these interviewees I have used their input more for illustrative purposes.

The further descriptions of the short interviewees have been included in Annex 3.

In my view both the in-depth and the short interviews were a good way to get an insight into the different experiences of the supporters. It was one of the main methods to collect more detailed information.

Besides the nine in depth and thirty short interviews, I have also spoken to fans of foreign football clubs. I spoke to three fans of respectively Paris Saint Germain, Celtic and Bayern Munich. All these teams have a Jewish following and some of their fans identify themselves with Judaism or in the case of Celtic have strong roots with religion. These interviews were mainly used as an inspiration, to make a comparison and I used them as background information.

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5 This process of selecting interviewees by using pre-established contact who suggested other interviewees could be described as snowball sampling (cf. Spaaij 2006).
Other qualitative research
Next to the observations and interviews, the research also involved the analysis of all sorts of data. Most of which was collected through fanzines, literature, newspapers, magazines, television documentaries, websites and internet forums.

Fanzines
Some of the qualitative research focused on so-called ‘fanzines’, all written by fans themselves and they contained much information expressed through a fan perspective. The fanzines, which were used, were De Ajax Ster (‘The Ajax Star’), Dapp’re Strijders (‘Brave Fighters’) and Meersche Helden (‘Heroes from De Meer’). The fanzines occasionally discussed the Jewish identity of Ajax fans. The fanzine ‘De Ajax Ster’ was first published by supporters in the middle of the 1990’s. After bringing out thirty-nine volumes, ‘De Ajax Ster’ was replaced by ‘Dapp’re Strijders’ which was eventually replaced by ‘Meersche Helden’ which is still being published.

Other publications
Another main part of the research consisted of relevant literature, newspaper articles, magazines and photos. There were several writings available dealing with the historical aspects of the research subject and many academic studies have been used for the theoretical framework. Furthermore, newspapers and magazines have been used as background information and for further investigation of specific events discussed in the interviews. For the same purpose a few television documentaries about Ajax and about the Jewish roots of the club were used. The photos used in the research and included in this thesis were mainly collected on the internet and partially from my own collection.⁶

Online discussion fora
Furthermore, the research focused on discussions taking place on the internet. Discussion forums on internet were a useful source to get an insight into the behaviour, experiences and intentions of the fans. The research involved an extensive study of internet forums and of websites associated with fan cultures. Even though the acquired data has been mainly used as background information to get a better understanding of the social setting, it was a large basis for the case study. Of course, online contributions in discussion are more or less anonymous which could be harmful to the credibility and it is hard to determine whether the actor is making socially acceptable remarks and whether he is truthful in general. Nevertheless, it was helpful in getting a better insight into the behaviour of fans.

Quantitative research
The quantitative aspect of the case study consisted of three online surveys. The surveys consisted of an internet poll containing a single question and a limited amount of possible answers. The polls were conducted on the front page of the biggest online Ajax community, ‘Ajax Netwerk’.⁷

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⁶ Several of the photos are from the website www.afca.nl.
⁷ Ajax Netwerk: http://ajax.netwerk.to.
The Ajax Netwerk community is mainly focused around its news-section and discussion forum. The website reports on all the news surrounding Ajax and gives a platform to supporters to discuss these matters. When looking at the member list of the community it becomes clear that the members are mostly Dutch, but come from all over the country.

The use of the internet polls allowed access to a large body of people and a fast and high response rate. It is clear that there are some disadvantages of online surveys. The most prominent is the fact that web surveys are limited to online populations (Bryman 2004, p. 485). Even though the responses were in the thousands, a group of Ajax fans could not be reached because not all Ajax fans are online or visit this specific website. Furthermore, it is possible that visitors of the website who are not Ajax fans also voted on the polls. Nevertheless, the high response rate and the possibility to specifically aim the survey at an Ajax community compensates (to some extent) for these disadvantages.

Through the above research method, I have examined the Jewish identity of Ajax fans. The results of the case study are discussed in the following chapters.
KICK-OFF - AFTRAP
Chapter 2

HISTORY

“Ajax is a football club with a name from Greek mythology, from Amsterdam and with roots in the Jewish community.” – Former Ajax chairman Michael van Praag

This chapter discusses the background and history of the football club Ajax and its Jewish history. It forms the basis for the understanding of the remainder of this thesis. Many customs and habits of the current supporters of Ajax originated a long time ago.

In the past, there has been limited research into the Jewish history of Ajax. In my opinion the most substantial research is the work done by Simon Kuper. He is a British author who moved to The Netherlands as a child. He studied history and German, and writes about sports, often from an anthropologic perspective. In 2003, he published his book ‘Ajax, the Dutch, the War: Football in Europe during the Second World War’. In this book, he discusses the Jewish history of Ajax and Dutch football in general.

Another important source is David Winner. This English author and journalist is most famous for his book ‘Brilliant Orange’. In this book Winner describes the history and peculiarities of Dutch football. At the same time he analyses Dutch life in general, including the influences of the Second World War. In his book ‘Brilliant Orange’ Winner also pays attention to the Jewish history of Ajax.

The first start: Footh-Ball Club Ajax

The history of the Amsterdam based football club Ajax first starts at the end of the 19th century and within one century, the club developed from a group of friends into one of the most successful teams in history. It all began in 1883 when a few companions, including Han Dade and Floris Stempel, decided to start a club under the name ‘Union’, which was soon changed into ‘Footh-Ball Club Ajax’.

Dade and Stempel were descendents of highly respected families and they choose a name from Greek mythology to symbolize their social position. They showed their knowledge of the classics and it demonstrated their sophisticated background. However, their sophistication did not prevent them from misspelling the word ‘Footh-Ball’.

The ‘Footh-Ball Club Ajax’ started to play games just outside the city of Amsterdam in the county Nieuwer Amstel, at the end of the Overtoom. This was a mainly unused area located directly at the end of a large park, called the Vondelpark. However, in 1896 the city council of Amsterdam decided to lengthen the park and the football-playing friends saw their field disappear beneath their feet and had no other place to go. The end of ‘Footh-ball Club Ajax’ was there.

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8 “Ajax is een voetbalclub met een naam uit de Griekse mythologie, uit Amsterdam, met wortels in de joodse gemeenschap.” (Noord Hollands Dagblad, ‘Een jodenclub die geen jodenclub is’, 18 oktober 2004).
9 The Overtoom was a channel and constituted a major thoroughfare between the West and the centre of the city. Nowadays the Overtoom is a well-known street in the old Western part of Amsterdam.
Reinitiating: Football Club Ajax

Despite the unfortunate start and end of Ajax, the game of football grew steadily in popularity. Football was introduced in the Netherlands in the 1870's in Haarlem, expanded bit by bit and eventually the growth really took substantial form. Especially around the year 1900, numerous clubs were initiated (De Bruyn, Desmit & Schoevaart 1950, p. 18). Mainly young men in their twenty’s started teams like Advendo, Swift Bis, Vios, Sevios and T.H.O.R..

The initiatives of all these new clubs again caught the attention of Dade and Stempel. With their failed first attempt in mind, they decided to give it another try. Together with Carel Reeser, another former member of the late ‘Footh-Ball Club Ajax’, they reanimated the old club. On 18 March 1900, the club was reinitiated at a small bar, called Café Oost-Indië, at the well-known street the Kalverstraat. The club took once again the name of the late Greek hero, but this time the club name was correctly spelled as ‘Football Club Ajax’.  

Nevertheless, the improvement of the spelling did not mean that the club no longer had to face any problems. An ironic twist of fate meant that the club once again faced expansion plans by the city council. However, this time, in 1907, the consequences were not as disastrous and the club simply moved to a different location in the East of Amsterdam at the Middenweg. The new location of Ajax was only a couple of miles east of the Jewish Quarter, or Jodenbuurt. At those times, there were around eighty thousand Jews living in Amsterdam and most of them inhabited the Jewish Quarter (Kuper 2003, p. 18).

The Jewish fans of Ajax

However, this did not mean that many people from the Quarter actually started to play for the team. Ajax was a bourgeois club and demanded its members to have their own kit and a proper football suitcase. This was simply too expensive for many of the Jews from the Quarter, especially since Ajax required all of its members to wash their kit every Sunday. According to the club you could not play for Ajax in muddy shorts (De Bruyn, Desmit & Schoevaart 1950). The Jews who did become members at Ajax were wealthier people from merchant families living in richer neighbourhoods in the South of Amsterdam (Kuper 2003, pp. 18-19). Nevertheless, vast amounts of people in the Quarter supported Ajax, even if they could not afford to be a member or go to the stadium on match days.

Kuper describes how on Sundays the Jewish people from the Quarter travelled to Ajax. There was a little steam tram on the Weesperplein which left every half an hour. People would literally storm it and stick out on all sides in order to travel to the match. Almost all of these people on the tram were Jews. The whole trip was a dangerous undertaking and the tram, which travelled all the way to the area of ‘t Gooi, caused several accidents, resulting in its nickname ‘the Murderer from ‘t Gooi’ (Kuper 2004, pp. 20-21). After arriving at Ajax’s ‘Wooden Stadium’, many of the Jews would assemble at the covered stand and watch how Ajax started the match with ten non-Jewish players and one Jew from New York, Eddy Hamel. Following the final whistle, the Jewish fans would go back to the Quarter where in the evenings they could read about the match in the

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10 Abbreviation of ‘Tot Heil Onzer Ribbenkasten’, roughly translated as ‘To the Glory of Our Chests’.
11 Several years later the name of the club would be changed into ‘Amsterdamsche Football Club Ajax’, which remains the official name until this current day.
Cetem. This first and only football paper would appear on Sunday, the Christian non-working day, and was thus mainly written and sold by Jews. In the evenings, the paperboys would spread out into the rest of the city and sell the remaining copies to the non-Jewish population of Amsterdam (Kuper 2003, p. 21).

In those days, Ajax was the place where Jews of the Quarter and gentiles from the rest of the city came together. Jews, rich and poor, would mingle with the gentiles supporting the same team. According to Kuper the stadium functioned as a melting pot and made the Jewish population a part of the Dutch people, a Jew at Ajax felt himself part of Amsterdam (Kuper 2003, p. 23).

The Jewish character of Ajax
The large amount of Jewish fans gave Ajax a certain Jewish character, although this does not necessarily mean that people saw Ajax as a Jewish club. It was just part of the nature of Ajax and the club was never a solely Jewish club. There were Jewish players, Jewish referees and Jewish fans, and it was much more Jewish than other Dutch teams (Kuper 2003, p. 104). However, technically Ajax was not a Jewish club; the real Jewish clubs of Amsterdam were AED, Wilhelmina Vooruit, Hortus and Eendracht Doet Winnen. Nevertheless, Ajax was immersed in Jewish culture and had a vast Jewish fan base (Winner 2000, p. 212-213).

The Jewish character was strengthened, even in the early decades of the 20th century, because of rival fans. According to the club’s historian Vermeer, many opposing teams referred to Ajax as the ‘club of noses’ (‘de neuzenclub’) (Vermeer 1996, p. 96). Smit described how rival fans travelled to the Ajax stadium after arriving in Amsterdam at the Weesperpoort train station next to the Jewish Quarter. The rival fans would often take the same tram (‘the Murderer from ‘t Gooi’) as the Jewish fans. They would pass the Jewish market on the Weesperstraat and would see the Jewish fans walking to the stadium from the Vrolikstraat and the Pretoriusstraat. The rival fans travelling from the Central Station would normally take tram 9 and also pass the same Jewish areas. As a result, many fans of opposing teams described going to Ajax as ‘visiting the Jews’ (Smit 1997, p. 28). This characterization of Ajax as a Jewish club would never disappear.

We are not a Jewish club
Ajax itself generally denies being a Jewish club and its relationship with Amsterdam’s pre-war Jews. Although the club acknowledges that rival fans called them ‘the Jews’, the club often claimed it did not have a Jewish culture before the Second World War. Ajax historians and club officials like Vermeer and Schoevaert always pointed out that Ajax never had many Jewish members (Kuper 2003, p. 102). The historians claimed there were few ‘Jewish-sounding names’ on the membership lists, and definitely not more than at other Amsterdam clubs. However, considering the fact that in pre-war Amsterdam about 13 percent of the population was Jewish, the amount of Jewish members could still have been substantial. Furthermore, many institutions in Amsterdam had a Jewish culture before the war, and especially Kuper wonders why Ajax would be any different. Besides, according to Kuper, even when Ajax would not have many Jewish members, it is undisputed that it had vast amounts of Jewish fans, substantially more than other teams and enough to establish some kind of Jewish culture at the club.

12 Vermeer is an historian and journalist born in 1953 next to the former Ajax stadium ‘De Meer’. He mainly writes about the history of Ajax.
Ajax in the Second World War

According to Kuper, the reluctance to acknowledge its Jewish past and the fear to discuss the events during the Second World War suggests that Ajax has something to hide (Kuper 2003, p. 104). It is without a doubt that there was cowardice and greyness at Ajax just as at every other Dutch institution in those days (Kuper 2003, p. 105). In October 1941, the Germans banned all Jews from sporting teams and Ajax followed the other Dutch sports clubs by expelling its Jewish members. Nevertheless, the ball kept on rolling and games continued to take place without the Jewish members. Many games took place as if nothing had happened and at that time, the stadiums were still as crowded as before (Smit 1997).

Ajax did not explicitly stand up against the banishment of its Jews. However, according to Kuper, Ajax did have more than its fair share of bravery. Ajax distinguished themselves from most other Dutch clubs by supporting and helping its Jews during wartime (Kuper 2003, p. 105). First of all, Ajax was cautiously supporting its Jews by commenting on the fate of the Jewish members. In the season 1941-1942 Ajax publicly stated:

[We are] in fearful expectation that many more of our members will be taken away, among them those who have stood loyally by our side for 35 years or longer and of whom we have yet to hear anything. Many among us have already left, and we regard the coming times with anxious fear, because we live in an age in which no one can say for sure whom we will see again (Ajax Annual Report 41-42 and Kuper 2003, p. 105).

Ajax made several equivalent comments, which was at that time unique in the Netherlands (Smit 1997). However, Ajax did more than just express its opinion in public. The club functioned as an informal network protecting its members. The club was a melting pot, were Jews and gentiles met. Jews, who lived in the Quarter and were a member of a Jewish football club, only knew Jews. The Jews at Ajax knew many gentiles and a few of those were actually very brave. Several gentiles supported the Jews and gave them shelter. Perhaps the most well known Jewish Ajax member who found a hideout through the football club was Jaap van Praag. Fellow members took care of Van Praag and he managed to survive the war and would later even become chairman of Ajax. The people at Ajax considered themselves members of the same group, for many men Ajax was like an extended family. As a family, they would stand up for each other, regardless of religious or political views. Kuper quotes a passage from the *Ajax-Nieuws* in August 1941:

“What the members of the club do outside the sports field in political or religious regard, we as sports folk must not judge. As club fellows we have to feel as one, which is the overriding demand” (Kuper 2003, p. 117).

After the war: packed with former collaborators

It appears that Ajax, as an informal network, managed to save people. The reason why Ajax hides this past probably relates to the events shortly after the war. In the years after the liberation Ajax still had numerous former collaborators in their midst. The Netherlands might have been cowardly and grey during the war, but after the liberation it showed no mercy to those who clearly had been ‘wrong’ (‘fout’). All over the country, organizations installed purge committees

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13 *Ajax-Nieuws* was a newsletter of the club.
to clean up and expel collaborators. After the war it was only black or white, you had been either
good or wrong. For those labelled as wrong, the social consequences were immense.

After the war, Ajax also installed a purge committee and soon encountered several members who
were wrong during the war. Some were ‘more wrong’ than others and several offences could even
been seen as minor, at least in comparison. However, there was no room for moderate
punishment. The moment the committee would expel a member for minor offences, the whole
life of that person fell apart. He would not only be expelled from Ajax, his social life would be
destroyed. These consequences combined with the strong sense of community and loyalty
towards each other caused the purge committee at Ajax to be very lenient and banish only a few
members. Members, who according to Kuper should never have been allowed to return to the
club, returned anyway and remained a part of Ajax. The club was, in comparison with other
institutions, packed with former collaborators (Kuper 2003, p. 117). Many people at Ajax felt it
was worse to betray a friend than to betray one’s country. The club was a family and although
everyone agreed that one should not betray one’s country, few were willing to banish their
‘family’. The solidarity of Ajax members that protected many Jews during the war suddenly
protected collaborators.

After the war, the Jewish Quarter was deserted. Some of the few surviving Jews returned to the
Quarter and several still went to Ajax. However, the days that masses of people would climb
onto the ‘Murderer from ‘t Gooi’ were over.

In 1950, Ajax celebrated its 50th Anniversary and published a book about its history. The book
included a poem, commemorating the inhabitants of the Jewish Quarter and the many Jewish
Ajax supporters in particular. The poem was only printed in Dutch:

Menig oud historisch plekje
waar men vroeger gaarne kwam
is verdwenen, vormt een leegte
-letterlijk!- in Amsterdam.

Dit geldt wel het allermeeste
voor de oude Jodenhoek.-
Niet te tellen zijn de keren
dat wij brachten een bezoek
aan die markt op Zondagmorgen.-
Voor de koopman bleef geen wens
aan zijn spiedend oog verborgen:
"Is je rechtse weer eens lens?"

[-]
Ajax heeft -hoe kan het anders-
uit het Oosten van de stad,
in de Meer steeds veel supporters
uit het Joodse milieu gehad.

[-]
Jongens van de Zwanenburgwal,
jongens uit de Markensteeg,
-waar ’t eens tintelde van de humor-
nu verlaten woest en leeg...

Die, vol gulheid in hun armoe
-ook al deden ze verstokt-
schenken menig joch z’n "rechtse":
"Als j’er dan maar goals mee fokt!"

Dit was een Memento (mon)
van wat eenmaal heeft geleefd,
bruisend leefde- De Historie
kwam en heeft het weggeveegd...
Maar wie of hen nog mocht krenken,
uu nóg, nu ze er niet meer zijn,
Ajax zal hen steeds gedenken,
-hen die ’n rechtse konden schenken
ook aan schrijver, toen nog klein-
steeds, dus ook bij dit festijn...

Transformation of the club
In the beginning of the 1950’s Ajax was, like the rest of the country, still recovering from the war. As mentioned before, it was confronted with numerous collaborators who had returned or remained at the club and it also would take years before Ajax would transform into one of the most successful football teams of all time. That transformation would start on the 2nd of February 1964 when Johan Cruyff made his debut as a player. However, the transformation would never have happened without a group Jewish war survivors and two gentiles who started to invest in the club. These Jews and gentiles entered the club at the end of the 50’s and completely turned things around. By joining the still middle-class Amsterdam team, they restored the former melting pot and helped turn Ajax into the best football team in the world.

The two non-Jewish investors were the brothers Freek and Wim van der Meijden. Two Ajax supporters who had built their family company and fortune during the war. They built barracks, gun positions and bunkers for the Germans and managed to create an enormous contracting company. After the war, the Dutch court convicted Freek for collaboration with the Germans and sentenced him to three years imprisonment. After the sentence, Freek and his brother Wim returned to the stadium and became famous as the ‘bunker builders’. Even though Ajax did not let them become members, they started to become more and more involved with the team. They started to organise parties, spent time in the directors room after matches, financed transfer fees, paid for salaries and bonuses and even took care of fines imposed on Ajax (Kuper 2003, p. 182).

Despite their questionable role in the war, they became popular faces at the club and found an ally in Jaap van Praag in their quest to become members of Ajax. Van Praag was one of the Jewish Ajax members who survived the war, not in the last place because of the help from his ‘Ajax family’. After spending the war in hiding at a photography shop of another Ajax member, Van Praag completely threw himself on his work and his club, with the ultimate goal of becoming the chairman of Ajax (Kuper 2003, pp. 181-182). The Van der Meijdens successfully backed Van
Praag and soon became members themselves. The club was at that time an intriguing mix of Jews like Van Praag and grey or cowardice gentiles like the bunker builders.

**Jewish investors: Ajax as a Dutch-Jewish family**

The Van der Meijdens might have taken the first steps by investing in Ajax, but a great deal of the financial possibilities was in fact made possible by a group of Jewish investors. In the 1960’s the large banks and corporations were not interested in football and so teams depended on private investors. Following the brothers Van der Meijden, many Jewish investors took on that role. The most famous of them was Maup Caransa, a Jewish war survivor and well-known figure in the Amsterdam business world, who would soon take over the position of the ‘bunker builders’ as the main investor at Ajax. Together with Jewish investors like Leo Horn, Japie Kroonenburg and the Cohen family, Caransa would establish Ajax as the best-paying and richest club in the country.\(^{14}\) For many of the Jewish investors Ajax became a Dutch-Jewish family, especially since many of them no longer had families of their own (Kuper 2003, p. 185). From the 1960’s and onwards many Jews clustered at Ajax. According to Kuper, the Dutch Jews literally loved Ajax: “To those who had survived the war, Holland’s landscape was like an empty room: the great synagogues almost devoid of worshippers, the half a table of relatives at a wedding. But that empty room felt a little less empty when you all visited the stadium together on Sundays” (Kuper 2003, p. 180).

**The Jewish image of Ajax**

Fans of other clubs had already responded to the Jewish influences at Ajax. Before the war they had started with calling Ajax ‘a club of noses’ and in the 1960’s more and more rival fans started calling Ajax ‘the Jews’ or ‘the Jew club’.

In the 1970’s Ajax would achieve world fame and win all trophies imaginable, in part because of the money generated by the Van der Meijdens and the Jewish investors. In the years to come, the private investors would leave one by one and big companies started to get involved with football. The nature of football changed over time but the Jewish image of Ajax never completely faded. Many Jewish people or people with a Jewish background remained involved at Ajax, varying from chairmen like Michael van Praag (the son of Jaap van Praag) and Uri Coronel, board members as Arie van Os and Joop Krant, and an occasional Jewish player as Bennie Muller. However, Ajax was probably not as Jewish as it once has been.

David Winner describes how the former Ajax defender Barry Hulshoff recalls the Jewish climate at Ajax during the 1960’s and 1970’s: “That Ajax team never felt Jewish, but it was there nevertheless. It is an Amsterdam thing – many Jews always had a feeling for us. It was just part of the atmosphere, part of the personality of the team. A certain humour, a selling thing. It was partly to do with Jaap van Praag. And with other players like Bennie Muller. In addition, Sjaak Swart was not really Jewish, though his father was and he really wanted to be, so it is not a problem! Ruud Krol grew up in the Jewish district and his father hid and saved fourteen Jews during the war. The personality [of the team] was to do with laughing, always laughing. We were

\(^{14}\) According to former Ajax chairman Uri Coronel the role of Caransa was more limited and he was not the main investor behind Ajax but solely an advisor. Coronel stated: “Caransa was geen financier, hij heeft misschien weleens een tip gegeven. Het is een mythe.” Translated: “Caransa was not a financier, he might have given an advice once in a while. It’s a myth.”
serious also, but when we laughed, it was often with a Jewish kind of humour. In Belgium and Holland, where do you hear the jokes first? In Amsterdam and in Antwerp – I feel my best in Belgium when I’m in Antwerp, which has a little of the same Jewish atmosphere. [At Ajax] we were in the middle of the Jewish community, so they brought it all to us. Quite a few of the players were Jewish in the youth teams and so on. It was not something you thought about consciously but it was always in this direction. Of course, no one carried Israeli flags at that time. Never. That came much later, in the eighties (…)” (Winner 2000, p. 216).

In addition, Salo Muller, a Jewish physiotherapist at Ajax from 1959 until 1973, has described the Jewish climate in those days: “The players liked to be Jewish even though they weren’t. They liked to talk about it a bit. We had a Jewish butcher in Amsterdam – Hergo in the Beethovenstraat. Before every European match, they gave me an Amsterdam salami, a Jewish salami. And the boys said: ‘Oh it’s Jewish – we like it!’ Dick van Dijk always joked about it. If there was another kind of salami, he’d say: ‘Hey, come on, throw it away – it’s a Catholic salami. We like only the kosher one.’ Before every match, Van Praag would come and tell a Jewish joke. We also had Co Prins, a typical Amsterdam player, a real Amsterdam boy. His family worked on the market with many Jewish men who had their Jewish words. So he was always using Jewish words. It was normal. He wasn’t Jewish himself, but he was using these words because it was part of Amsterdam, part of the culture. They liked to tell Jewish jokes and use Jewish words” (Winner 2000, p. 217).

The historic links with Jews were present at the club and Ajax was still regularly called the ‘club of noses’ by rival fans, often not meant in the most complementing way. In the 1970’s football and its supporters hardened, resulting in violence around matches and in extreme expressions of rivalry. Rival fans made hissing sounds towards Ajax fans referring to the Holocaust, there were chants about Hitler and numerous other forms of anti-Jewish statements against Ajax. One time fans of FC Utrecht displayed a large flag showing the name Ajax, but with the ‘A’ of Ajax as the Star of David and the ‘X’ as the swastika. Later on the same day Utrecht fans showed a banner with the text: “Adolf hier lopen er nog 11, als jij ze niet vergast dan doen we het zelf” (“Adolf, another 11 are walking over here, if you do not gas them we do it ourselves”). For years, the Jewish identity of Ajax had been in the background, but now suddenly it was brought into the spotlights and in an extreme way.

**Jewish symbols**

Also the hard-core Ajax fans started carrying Jewish symbols. From the 1980’s and onwards Ajax fans started to adopt the characterization as Jews. According to Peter:

**Peter:** “Since increasing amounts of people started to “insult” us as Jews, we started to call ourselves Jews. In the 1970’s we were more and more ‘the Noses’ or simply ‘the Jews’ of Ajax. Completely in the style of the F-Side [the hard-core fans] we just adopted that name and presented ourselves as ‘those Jews’ of Ajax, to be able to silence the opposing fans and to take away their ammunition.”

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15 “Wij zijn ons Joden gaan noemen, nadat we hier en daar steeds vaker die “scheldnaam” naar ons hoofd geslingerd kregen. Begin jaren zeventig waren we steeds vaker "de neuzen" en ronduit "die Joden" van Ajax. Geheel in de stijl van de F-side hebben we die naam gewoon omarmd en zijn onszelf dus als "Joden" neer gaan zetten, om zo de monden van de tegenstanders te snoeren, ze als het ware het gras voor de voeten weg te maaien.”
Peter describes how the Ajax fans re-appropriated the term, which was previously used by rival fans in a disparaging way. Because of this re-appropriation, the term ‘Jews’ was no longer solely a profanity towards Ajax fans, but in fact for many of them something to be proud of, or as another Ajax fan puts it:

**RI:** “They call us Jews? Well, that’s right! We are super Jews! Because to us that is not an insult!”

The following years especially the Star of David becomes popular with the supporters. Mainly the fans of the F-Side use the Star of David on self-made flags or banners and soon they introduced the first Israeli flag in the stadium. During an away game in Haarlem, some Ajax fans spotted a large Israeli flag in the city and decided to nick it. They proudly showed the flag during the following games and the flag of Israel soon became one of the most prominent ways in which fans showed their new Jewish identity. One of the fans who brought the first Israeli flag to the stadium states explains in a book about the F-Side:

“It was just a flag and we had no idea of what Israel meant or had meant in the world. I had a Jewish grandfather and knew about the war, but I did not get the symbolism. For us it had nothing to do with politics, anti-semitism, extreme right, left or any kind of affiliation. Most people wore a cap with the Star of David because it bears the Star of David, nothing more.” (Pieloor, Van de Meer & Bakker 2002, p. 102).

Suddenly almost all the hard-core fans had become ‘Jewish’, the Star of David became their logo (a Star of David with the letter ‘F’ inside, referring to F-Side). The photo below shows the logo, above the entrance of ‘Vak F’ at Ajax stadium ‘De Meer’. ‘Vak F’ is one of the stands were the F-Side originated.

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16 “Zij noemen ons Joden? Nou dat klopt! Wij zijn super Joden! Dat is voor ons namelijk géén belediging!”
In later years, the use of Jewish symbols would spread amongst the rest of the supporters:

**Arjan:** “Nowadays it is obviously no longer just the hard-core fans. Because of the appeal of the hard-core fans, it has spread to everybody and now you will see just everybody with Jewish symbols. Maybe not with tattoos, but, for example, everybody is singing along with Jewish chants.”

Even less fanatical fans identify themselves with Jews and especially in the 1990’s many of the chants in the stadium were about Jews and were sung by many supporters, hard-core or not. The stadium was full of Israeli flags and other references to the Jewish identity of Ajax. For the general public Ajax had become a ‘Jewish’ club.
THE MATCH – DE WEDSTRIJD
Chapter 3

Supporters, fans, followers and flâneurs

The previous chapter gave an overview of the Jewish history of Ajax. It described how the Jewish identity of Ajax supporters originated and how Ajax supporters started to present themselves as Jews. This third chapter will focus on the different types of supporters. Based on social theory this chapter will describe to what extent supporters feel connected to their club and how strongly their identity is connected to their favourite team.

It is often suggested that football is just a game, but it is more than that. For many people being a supporter of a football club is a part of who they are, it is a part of their identity. Football is a permanent part of their existence. Former football player Alan Brown famously said: “Football is the biggest thing that’s happened in creation. It’s bigger than any ‘ism’ you can name.” Former football manager Bill Shankly added to this with the famous dictum: “Some people think football is a matter of life and death. I don’t like that attitude. I can assure them it is much more serious than that.”

For some supporters the football experience goes beyond just the games. It is a way of life and following their club creates a sense of belonging (Stone 2007). Football plays an immense role in the lives of many supporters (Armstrong & Giulianotti 1997). Coelho further notes that, for many people, the performance of their football team has great social value which reaches far beyond the simple outcome of a football game (Coelho 1998, p. 159). However, for other spectators football is just a pastime.

When studying the identity of supporters it is important to take these differences into account and realize that supporters differ from each other and that the construction of their identities varies.

Richard Giulianotti, a Professor of Sociology with a focus on sports, has extensively described the different types of supporters. He has set out a model of four ideal-type spectator identities: Supporters, Followers, Fans and Flâneurs (Giulianotti 2002). His main criterion for this classification is the degree of identification spectators have towards their club.

In my thesis I investigate the spectators of Ajax in general. However, the main focus is on what Giulianotti would describe as the more fanatical spectators: the supporters. At the same time, I use both the terms supporters and fans to refer to the fanatical spectators. Despite the ideal-types of Giulianotti I use these terms interchangeably.

The four ideal-types
The four different types of supporters can be classified as shown in the figure below:

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19 Bill Shankly in Sunday Times (UK), 4 October 1981.
The figure shows the four quadrants in which spectators can be classified:
- Supporter: traditional/hot;
- Follower: traditional/cool;
- Fan: consumer/hot;
- Flâneur: consumer/cool.

The horizontal axis (traditional/consumer) refers to the individual’s investment in the club. Giulianotti describes that a traditional spectator will have ‘a longer, more local and popular cultural identification’ with its club, while the consumer spectators will have ‘a more market-centered relationship’.

The vertical axis (hot/cool) refers to the spectators loyalty. The axis reflects the degree to which the club is central in the spectators life and self-formation. Spectators in the hot half of the model have intense kinds of identification and solidarity with the club, while the spectators in the cool half are more disconnected and have a thin solidarity.

**Supporters**
The supporters can be seen as the more traditional spectators. They have a long-term personal and emotional investment in the club and they feel obliged to keep investing in their club by offering their support. Their relationship with the club can best be seen as one resembling those with close family and friends.
At the same time supporters can also offer support through more consumer-like market-centered investments. They might buy shares in the club or buy expensive merchandise. However, these commercial investments are only supplements to the emotional and personal investments.

The basis for the supporters is the strong connection with their club. They have a strong sense of loyalty and will never switch allegiances to another club. That is simply not an option. This is also reflected in the connection they have with the home ground of their club. By attending the games, visiting training sessions and meeting other supporters at the club, they develop a strong connection with the ‘topophilic spaces’ of the club. Giulianotti describes how supporting the club is ‘a lived experience, rooted in a grounded identity that is reflected in an affectionate relationship to the ground that is regularly revisited.’

The personal and emotional investment can be reciprocated in several ways. For some supporters winning games or trophies is a repayment for their support. For some supporters other elements are more important, and their investments are repaid by the club through the style of play, the beauty of the game or the club reflecting certain values or a specific identity.

The types of investments and repayment can differ per supporter and per club. It determines the supporters culture. According to Taylor the supporters culture is further determined by the history and identity of the club, its community and the supporters themselves (Taylor 1971). Taylor compares the supporters culture to a subculture with its own values and symbols. New generations of supporters are socialized into this subculture by the other supporters. They experience the values of the subculture in and around the stadium, or through supporter associations and fanzines. The supporters acquire, in the line of Bourdieu (1984), ‘subcultural capital’. This is not just acquired in a purely market manner, by purchasing the latest club merchandise. It is obtained by going to home and away games, being active in the supporters associations, being part of the subculture. These supporters are the main custodians of the culture of the supporters and club (Armstrong & Giulianotti 2001).

**Followers**
The traditional/cool spectators are described as followers of a club, but they can also be followers of certain players, managers or other people in football.

The follower is aware of the specific identity and community of the club and he often identifies with it. However, the process of identification takes place from a distance, most obviously through (electronic) media. The followers feel connected to the club and some have a thick solidarity towards it. They often have friendships with traditional supporters strengthening their connection to the club. At the same time many followers have a thinner solidarity and lack a certain devotion compared to the supporters. They might feel connected to the background or history of the club, but the connection is not that as strong.

The weaker connection to the club also means that followers can follow several clubs, often with comparable identities or backgrounds. Giulianotti illustrates this with the concept of nested identities. Nested identities can be seen as a having a nest of objects of allegiance (i.e. favored clubs). The follower can always change favorites and pick another club from the nest.

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20 Topophilia can literally be seen as “love of place” (source: Merriam Webster Dictionary).
favorite club is not performing, the follower can follow another club that performs better. The multiple allegiances do not mean that the followers have no knowledge of the cultural politics of football. The followers are often aware of rivalries and they will not have rival clubs in their nest. A follower will not follow both Manchester City and Manchester United or both Ajax and Feyenoord.

Because the follower identifies with a club from a distance, they are also less connected to the ground and other spaces of the club. The stadium is a functional element allowing a football game to take place. However, the follower has no real connection with the ground. He mostly watches games on television and is not part of a subculture of supporters, which is often cultivated at the home ground.

**Fans**
The third category described by Giulianotti includes the fans who can be seen as consumers. Fans can develop love for a club or a specific player, but the relationship is more distant than the relationship of a supporter. Fans identify with a favorite team or player, the feeling of intimacy is large and it is a key element of the individual’s self.

The fan experiences the club, its traditions, the players and other spectators more as a consumer than a traditional spectator. The fans strength of identification is often based on the consumption of merchandise, or on newspapers, magazines and watching television.

The fans are often more involved when the club is successful and has a lot of money to spend. This is mainly due to the increased media attention.

If for any reason they no longer feel connected to the club the fan might start following another club. The loyalty is not as strong as with supporters. Nevertheless, fans have a strong affection for the club, but are more removed from it than supporters.

**Flâneurs**
The flâneurs can best be seen as postmodern spectators, who identify with clubs through depersonalized relationship. They are mainly connected to their teams through television and internet. Their relationship with the club is distant and even when they have a favorite club they often switch allegiances. The flâneurs have no solidarity to the club or its supporters and can best be seen as a distant watcher of the game.

**Spectators at Ajax**
This thesis focuses on the identity of the spectators of Ajax. As described by Giulianotti the process of identification is the strongest with the more fanatical spectators: the supporters. For this reason the supporters have been the focal point of my research, however I have spoken to all kinds of spectators: from flâneurs, to followers and fans.

The spectators themselves also recognize the difference in types of spectators. Especially the supporters are aware that they have a different relationship with the club than most other people. They have a strong personal and emotional bond with the club. Supporting their club is their first priority and this separates them from other spectators. One spectator describes it as follows:
R24: You are a supporter when you go to the club in good and bad times. It is useless for Ajax if someone is sitting at home with an Ajax jersey and Ajax mug listening to ‘Langs de Lijn’ [a radio programme]. It is only useful for Ajax if you support your team in difficult times and people who don’t do that are no supporters. Others might be fans, but nothing more for the time being.21

Another supporter of ‘Vak 410’22 even goes one step further by claiming that going to the club is not enough. He describes how he lives and breathes football as an ‘Ultra’23 and how the club is always his first priority, every single day:

R25: “Fans come, supporters stay, Ultras everyday.”24

The club being the first priority for a supporter seems to be a recurring theme for many spectators. For many of them their bond with the club is illustrated by what they are willing to sacrifice for the club. Some supporters even seem to brag about how important the club is to them and what they would give up for it. They describe how Ajax can be more important than their job, their family or their partner:

Martin: “According to some I give up to much for it, according to some I don’t. I don’t give a shit about birthdays so everybody knows that is an easy choice for me. Weddings are a bit more difficult, but that choice is eventually also pretty clear. Luckily those don’t take place that often.”25

R26: “At this moment Ajax has a high priority for me. I can almost say that it is Ajax above all. It is very nice that my brother in law has his birthday on October 1, but Ajax – Brugge is a bit more important than that.”26

R27: “I earn my money in a bar. I always want to work. I sometimes skip some hours in school for it, but I don’t work when Ajax plays. They know that. They can beg all they want, but I don’t work.”27

R28: “If Ajax would again be in the European Cup final… I could not miss that. I would even postpone my own wedding. Although I think my girl would then leave me anyway.”28

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21 “Supporter ben je als je je club in goede en in slechte tijden bezoekt. Ajax heeft er niets aan als iemand thuis in een Ajaxshirt met een Ajax mok voor zich Langs de Lijn zit te luisteren. Ajax heeft er pas wat aan als je je club aanmoedigt in moeilijke tijden en mensen die dat doen zijn supporters. Anderen zijn misschien fans maar meer voorlopig nog niet.”

22 See Glossary.

23 See Glossary.

24 The supporter of Vak 410 used this English sentence and no translation was used.

25 “Volgens sommigen laat ik er veel te veel voor, volgens sommigen niet. Verjaardagen interesseren me toch al geen reet dus iedereen weet dat die keuze makkelijk is. Trouwerijen is iets lastiger, maar die keuze is uiteindelijk ook duidelijk. Maar gelukkig komen die toch niet vaak voor.”

26 “Op dit moment heeft Ajax een hoge prioriteit voor mij. Ik kan haast wel zeggen dat het Ajax boven alles is. Dat m’n zwager op 1 oktober jarig is, is harsstikke leuk natuurlijk, maar Ajax - Club Brugge is toch net effe iets belangrijker.”

27 “Ik verdien mijn extra centen in de horeca. Ik wil altijd werken. Laat er weleens uurtjes school voor schieten, maar ik werk niet als Ajax speelt. En dat weten ze ook. Ze kunnen smeken wat ze willen, maar ik werk dan niet.”

28 “Als Ajax weer in Europa Cup finale zou staan… dat kan ik niet missen. Ik zou zelfs eigen trouwerij er voor verplaatsen. Al denk ik dat me meissie dan sowieso weg is.”
R29: “With me, my wife does not have priority. I have told her when we got together that I go to Ajax whenever I can go to Ajax, my wife can’t change anything about that.”

R30: “The wife can bugger off! She can get enough attention on the other five days of the week.”

The loyalty to the club is important to spectators and especially to supporters. This is also illustrated by the following chant which is often sung at matches of Ajax:

“This is the club of which I am so proud
This is the club which I love so much
Wherever you go, I follow you everywhere
Yes, I will always be loyal
Ohohohoooh ohohohoooh we are Ajax Amsterdam
Ohohohoooh ohohohoooh we are Ajax Amsterdam”

The loyalty to the club also means that you keep supporting your team when you are losing. Especially since losing does not mean that your support is not repaid. Giulianotti described how, besides victories the investment into the club can also be reciprocated through other elements. At Ajax many supporters experience a form of repayment in the style of play and the beauty of the club. This is illustrated by the chorus of one of the most popular chants at Ajax:

“This is my club, my ideal.
This is the most beautiful club of all.
Here lies my heart, my joy, my grief,
It can thaw, it can freeze,
We can win or loose,
But there is no better club than this.”

The supporters expect each other to support the club at all times. They have a more traditional way of supporting their team and feel strongly connected to Ajax. Giulianotti illustrated that supporters expect everybody within their community to show this commitment, but this expectation is not as high towards other spectators. One supporter described how people can feel strongly connected to Ajax, be a part of the club, even though they do not attend all the games:

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29 “Bij mij gaat mijn vrouw niet voor. Ik heb gezegd toen we iets kregen dat ik naar Ajax ga als ik naar Ajax kan, daar kan mijn vrouw niks aan veranderen.”
30 “Het vrouwtje dondert maar lekker op! Die kan die andere 5 dagen van de week genoeg aandacht krijgen.”
31 “Dit is de club waar ik zo trots op ben
De club waar ik zoveel van houd
Waar je ook gaat ik volg je overal
Ja, ik blijf je altijd trouw
Ohohohoooh ohohohoooh wij zijn Ajax Amsterdam
Ohohohoooh ohohohoooh wij zijn Ajax Amsterdam”
32 “Dit is mijn club, mijn ideaal,
dit is de mooiste club van allemaal.
Hier ligt mijn hart, mijn vreugde, mijn verdriet,
et kan dooien, het kan vriezen,
we kunnen winnen of verliezen,
maar een betere club dan deze is er niet.”
When talking about different types of spectators Rich describes that it is not all about going to matches, but more about a feeling and understanding of Ajax and what it stands for:

Rich: “You are an Ajacied if you understand Amsterdam. You understand that Ajax is a unique club, which can’t be compared to any other. [...] You are arrogant, confident and firmly convinced that Ajax will win, wherever, against whoever, whenever. [...] You know that your club is the best, that your team plays the most attacking football and that your club has the most technically gifted players. Others know this as well, so you know that many people hate you and your club. But you don’t give a shit about that.”  

Another respondent describes that there are always discussions among supporters who can call themselves a real supporter, but in the end it does not matter to the amount of games you visit as long as you are loyal to Ajax and don’t switch allegiances:  

R27: “The everlasting discussion will probably be whether you are a ‘teletekst supporter’ [someone who sits at home following the score on ceefax/teletext] or that you actually go to matches. I think that the feeling for Ajax does not have to be different. But I do think that “once an Ajacied, always an Ajacied”. You don’t just switch to another club, or go a year without Ajax and then return when the results improve.”

The above quotations show that supporters might have the strongest connection with the club, but this does not mean that other spectators do not feel connected or that the club does not influence their identity. Many spectators feel connected to Ajax. Even in modern times people can feel strongly connected to the club. The identity of flâneurs, followers and fans might be more open and fluid, but that does not mean that it is not influenced by the (supporters) culture of Ajax.

Conclusion
Giulianotti has described four different ideal types: supporters, followers, fans and flâneurs. Many spectators derive their identity from the football club. This identification is the strongest for supporters who have a strong personal and emotional link to the club. This does not mean that other types of supporters do not feel connected and do not derive (parts of) their identity from the club. The quotations of the supporters show that all kinds of spectators can feel connected to the club. The connection to the club and construction of identity can result in a supporters subculture with its own values and identity, and with a common feeling amongst its members.

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33 “Je mag je Ajacied noemen als de club in je hart zit en door je aderen stroomt dat houdt in dat je de club moet volgen, zo nu en dan een wedstrijd proberen te bezoeken en er de pest in hebben als we verliezen.”  
34 “Je bent een Ajacied als je Amsterdam snapt. Je begrijpt dat Ajax een club op zichzelf is, waarmee met geen enkele club een vergelijking te maken valt. [...] Je bent arrogant, zelfverzekerd en bent er heilig van overtuigd dat Ajax waar dan ook, tegen wie dan ook, op elk tijdstip kan winnen. [...] Je weet dat jouw club de beste is, dat jouw club het meest aanvallende voetbal speelt en dat jouw club de meest technische spelers in de gelederen heeft. Anderen weten dit, dus jij weet dat veel mensen jou en jouw club haten. Maar dat interesseert je geen ruk.”  
Chapter 4

Identity and community

In the previous chapter we have seen that spectators differ from each other and that different types can be distinguished. We have seen that for many supporters, the football experience goes beyond the games. It is a way of being, offers a feeling of home and a sense of belonging (cf. Stone 2007). Many supporters derive their identity from the football club they support. An identity they share with others and which can provide a common feeling. Coelho notes, similar to Giulianotti, that the strong loyalty of supporters establish that they strongly identify with their team (Coelho 1998, p. 168). Football becomes the central place for the construction and expression of identities of spectators.

The Ajax spectators make use of football as an arena to express themselves and use the club as a vehicle through which they express and strengthen their own identity (Jarvie & Maquire 1994, p. 152). The focus of this chapter will mainly be on supporters, for whom the connection and identification process is the strongest. The chapter will answer the question how the Ajax supporters feel about their Jewish identity.

To answer this question it is important to place the term identity in a broader meaning. Even though the term identity has a long history within sociology and discussions about identity have resulted in vast amounts of literature, there is no standard definition of identity in modern sociology. It is often used to refer to an individual’s sense of self and the perception and ideas about oneself.

Several of the leading contributions to the literature on identity are based on the Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner 1979; Tajfel 1982). Under this theory an identity can either be derived from personality traits and interpersonal relationships (i.e. personal identity) or from belonging to a particular group (i.e. social identity) (Tajfel 1982).

Identity in this context has two aspects. The personal identity refers to personal characteristics, such as: ‘I am a gentle person, I get very easily agitated, I am a quiet person’. The social identity refers to the group to which individuals belong and with which they strongly identify: ‘I am Dutch; I am an Ajax supporter; I am a Jew; I am a Christian; I am male; I am female’.

Tajfel and Turner describe that individuals know that they belong to a certain social group and that there is some value and emotional significance attached to this group membership (Abrams & Randsley de Moura 2002, p. 137). They derive some sense of self from the group, bolstering their self-esteem. For example a football supporter proudly wearing his club’s jersey on the streets, showing he is a supporter. Or someone proud of his nationality saying ‘I am Dutch, who the hell are you?’. People often feel proud or confident because they belong to a particular group and want to show this. An individual might proudly show that he belongs to the group of Ajax supporters: he might even show this through Jewish symbols, chants or clothing.

The identity of supporters is strongly intertwined with the fact that they belong to a specific group. It was already shown in the previous chapter that football not only offers a platform for
identification, it also enables the creation of supporter cultures and communities. For this reason this chapter focuses on both identity and community.

Giulianotti described how the supporters can become part of a supporters culture. Nash (2000) has suggested, following the work of Anderson (1983), that a supporters culture should be conceptualized as an imagined community. The football supporters form a distinct community revolving around a shared identification with their team (Burdsey & Chappell 2003, p. 4).

The imagined community is different from an actual community since there is no everyday face-to-face interaction between its members. The members will never know most of their fellow supporters, will never meet them or even hear of them. However, in their minds, all supporters have the idea of a community: the supporters hold in their minds a mental image of their togetherness. These feelings come to the surface in certain social contexts. For example, the group feeling when the fans gather in the stadium during matches or when they travel abroad to away games.

According to Anderson the fact that the members of the group will have hardly any direct personal contacts, while at the same time they share elements of their identity, makes these communities inherently imagined. It is simply not possible for all the supporters to acknowledge the existence of all those others who share this social identity and for most people this is even irrelevant. The knowledge that they all together constitute a social group is sufficient to create feelings of pride and involvement, despite the lack of personal relationships with most other people in the group. This does of course not mean that every group of people who do not know each other constitutes an imagined community. It is essential that the members share a feeling of community and experience it as being connected to each other. This feeling of a shared identity is one of the fundamental aspects of a supporter culture. It gives an individual a sense of self and a feeling of community (Burdsey & Chappell 2003, p. 4).

The community mainly exists through the feeling of community and the images and representations chosen by its members. Through traditions and symbols supporters can share things with others like them. The entire identity of the supporter culture is built around symbols and stories invented over the years, which create a feeling of community. Hobsbawm describes that these traditions are often invented as responses to specific events. Supporters create traditions to establish an identity, and they often refer to the history of the club, to old situations, or they try to establish their own past by quasi-obligatory repetition of completely new traditions (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983).

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56 The fact that such communities are imagined does not make them ‘false’, since every community expanding beyond the traditional gatherer-hunter groups requires some form of imagination due to its sheer size. Therefore, communities should not be distinguished by their genuineness, but by the way they are imagined by its members (Davidson 2007, p. 159).

37 The concept of the imagined community implies that every person can imagine whatever one wants and that, in the most extreme, one is able to choose an identity like choosing a lifestyle product (Pitrook 1999, p. 140).
This also means that supporter cultures are not a static affair. The invention of traditions, the lack of contact, the differences between supporters and the flexibility of identities in general make the supporter community and their identity very flexible. The way people support their team, which traditions they share and the symbols by which they present themselves change over time. There is no traditional mode of support and fan cultures can be seen as ‘an amalgam of historical episodes, myths, traditions and plain inaccuracies’ (Nash 2000, p. 468).

This flexibility is the strongest with, what Giulianotti describes as, the more modern spectators: flâneurs and fans. Many postmodern academics argue that individuals in modern society are less integrated in communities and can move more freely compared to the premodern society. Bauman argues that identities and communities become more fluid and open, enabling people to freely create and change their own identity. This flexibility of identities is most clear with the flâneurs who have hardly any loyalty or connection to a specific team.

**Belonging to a community at Ajax**

For many people Ajax supporters appear as a tight community, a group of likeminded people who share the same passion: Ajax. This is not a strange perception, the supporters wear the same jersey or the same casual dress style, they sing the same songs and present themselves as one.

During her interview Nathalie, who is not an Ajax fan or football fan, described how she perceived Ajax supporters as a rather tight group of people who are all passionate and crazy about Ajax. From an outside perspective the 50.000 people in the stadium might be seen as one homogenous group of people all passionate about Ajax.

At the same time we have seen in the previous chapter that the differences between the spectators can be substantial. Just because of their numbers, it is impossible for them to be all the same or know each other. They have different backgrounds, are from different age groups and even their passion for Ajax differs. There are fanatical or more ‘hardcore’ supporters of groups like ‘Vak 410’ and ‘Zuid’. There are the people who hardly ever go to Ajax and see it as a nice one-day trip. There are the business people (‘bobo’s’) who might see Ajax as a nice network event or lobby opportunity. There are people who are really passionate during the match and have forgotten about it the next day, and there are the people who live and breathe Ajax for every minute of their life. There are some supporters from Amsterdam who believe that out-of-towners do not belong in the stadium and there are people from all over the country for whom Ajax is the most important thing in their life.

It is clear that Ajax supporters are not an organized and homogenous group of people. Their numbers are simply too great and their similarities too small. However, if you ask many Ajax supporters it is very simple: they might be different, but they are Ajax, they are Ajax supporters and that is it:
Rich: “Ajax is for everyone and does it make much of a difference that the Arena [i.e. the stadium of Ajax] is full of non-Amsterdam people? Occasionally it is quite hilarious, but I respect every Ajax fan who comes to the Arena. We are for only one thing and that is Ajax.”

R3: “It does not matter where you come from, who you are, you are part of it because you’re for Ajax.”

Several supporters also state that the shared passion for Ajax binds them and makes them feel that they belong to the same group. As one Ajax supporter recalls:

Rich: “On the market, Saturday morning, a man in an Ajax tracksuit. It is becoming familiar sight again: people are again wearing the club clothing with pride. Or even with extra pride. People who recognize the clubs color and logo respond differently. Some start staring straight ahead, others are starting to grin. Some others greet or wink, because they are also a part of it.”

The supporters share the passion for Ajax, or as some put it: They are Ajax. According to two Ajax supporters:

Martin: “I don’t give a fuck about what people outside of Ajax think of me. We are Ajax, arrogant as hell, so we do whatever we like.”

R2: “We are Ajax, and – damn it – we have a reputation to uphold”

The supporters have a feeling of togetherness, which especially comes to the surface in the stadium and other place where the spectators meet each other. In the previous chapter we have seen that supporters might have the strongest connection with the club, but even in modern times all kinds of spectators can feel strongly connected to the club. The knowledge that they all together share a passion for Ajax is for many of them sufficient to feel part of the same group. They could be seen as part of, what Anderson would describe as, an imagined community (cf. Anderson 1983).

The following chant, often sung in the stadium, illustrates the supporters meeting each other, their togetherness and loyalty to the club:

“Not a day goes past me
Without my friends by my side
Then we sing from our hearts
This song we do extra hard”

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38 “Ajax is voor iedereen en maakt het uit dat een groot deel van de Arena met niet-Amsterdammers gevuld is? Af en toe nogal lachwekkend, maar ik heb respect voor iedere Ajax-fan die naar de Arena komt. We zijn er maar voor één ding en dat is Ajax.”

39 “Het maakt niet uit waar je vandaan komt, wie je bent, je hoort er bij omdat je voor Ajax bent.”


41 “Het interesseert me geen fuck wat mensen buiten Ajax van me vinden. Wij zijn Ajax, arrogant als de pest, dus wij doen lekker waar we zin in hebben.”

42 “Wij zijn Ajax Amsterdam en we hebben verdomme een naam hoog te houden.”
Different identities of Ajax spectators
The fact that many spectators (the supporters in particular) experience a feeling of community does not immediately clarify what this feeling entails and how the spectators experience the identity connected with this community.

Bauman has argued that in modern times people take on varying identities and each person will make his own determination to which one he or she attaches the most value and which he or she finds the most appropriate (Bauman 2001). This also means that each supporter will attach different values to being a supporter and therefore to Ajax. One supporter might see the Amsterdam background of Ajax as the most fundamental aspect of the club’s identity and their own, another emphasizes the club’s attitude, and another might attach more value to the Jewish roots. This is also reflected in the fact that supporters appreciate different types of repayment for their support (Giulianotti 2001).

Therefore, there are different aspects to the identity of Ajax spectators. It is impossible to generalize the identity of Ajax and its supporters and it is hard to specify every single aspect. Although some people in the public have started to see Ajax as a ‘Jewish club’, it does not mean that all supporters identify themselves with this image.

However, there are elements of the identity which seem to be shared by large amounts of supporters. Elements which could establish a shared feeling of community. Many supporters described how they and other people surrounding Ajax are often characterized as confident, arrogant, full of bravura and rather blunt. Ajax is regarded as the most successful and popular football team in the Netherlands. The club is known all over the world and Ajax fans are proud of this stature. Many of them are proud of the accomplishments of their team and they often act like the game of football was invented in Amsterdam. The fact that the team originates from Amsterdam is an important aspect and many characteristics of people of Amsterdam also apply to Ajax supporters. This was also pointed out by Rich (who was also quoted in the previous chapter):

Rich: “You are an Ajacied if you understand Amsterdam (...) You are arrogant, confident and firmly convinced that Ajax will win, wherever, against whoever, whenever. (...)”

43 “Geen dag gaat mij voorbij
Zonder me vrienden aan me zij
Dan zingen wij vanuit ons hart
Dit lied dat doen we extra hard
Vak 410 in vuur en vlam
We zijn de boys uit Amsterdam
Ajacied tot in den dood
En wie niet springt die is geen jood”
44 “Je bent een Ajacied als je Amsterdam snapt (...) Je bent arrogant, zelfverzekerd en bent er heilig van overtuigd dat Ajax waar dan ook, tegen wie dan ook, op elk tijdstip kan winnen.”
Many supporters state that they consider themselves to be the best even when their club is losing. A well known saying under supporters is: an Ajaxied does not need to win to be the best. This confidence or arrogance is also visible during matches. Simultaneously, Ajax and the people affiliated with it are often seen as rather cold and hard. Almost everything evolves around winning and being the best. The expectations are high and when things do not go according to plan the criticism will be hard and direct. Peter gave the following example:

Peter: “We come to the stadium to see the opponent being defeated. We do not consider the possibility of loosing, we just go to the stadium to check whether Ajax will win with five or six against null.”

Consecutively the club and its supporter encounter much criticism from rival fans. The arrogance and coldness generates feelings of dismay and makes Ajax particularly disliked by other teams and fans. Most Ajax supporters seem rather indifferent to this perception and many of them refer to a well-known saying in football: ‘No one likes us, we don’t care’.

The above characterizations are shared by many supporters. The next paragraph will describe to what extent the Jewish identity is shared by the supporters and is a part of the identity of the Ajax supporters culture.

The Jewish identity

In chapter 2 it is described how the Jewish identity had originated. Peter, an older Ajax supporter who is going to the stadium since the 1970’s, was quoted on how (to his belief) the Jewish identity had begun. He repeated his perception in another quote:

Peter: “Since increasing amounts of people started to “insult” us as Jews, we started to call ourselves Jews. In the 1970’s we were more and more ‘the Noses’ or simply ‘the Jews’ of Ajax.” (...) We just adopted that name and presented ourselves as ‘those Jews’ of Ajax, to be able to silence the opposing fans and to take away their ammunition.” (...) It became a part of our identity and we could show that we were different from all those other guys.”

By following Ajax and visiting the games, I have seen how in the 1990’s the Jewish identity of Ajax came more and more to the foreground. Many chants in the stadium were about Jews, there were Israeli flags, Jewish memorabilia were sold and so on. In that period the Jewish aspect of supporting Ajax had become quite dominant and it is still present in current days.

Nowadays the Jewish identity is still expressed and in multiple ways. During the matches many popular chants at Ajax refer to a Jewish identity. For example:

45 “We komen naar het stadion om de tegenstander verslagen te zien worden. We denken niet eens aan de mogelijkheid van verliezen, we komen gewoon naar het stadion om te zien of Ajax met vijf of zes nul gaat winnen.”
46 “Wij zijn ons Joden gaan noemen, nadat we hier en daar steeds vaker die “scheldnaam” naar ons hoofd geslingerd kregen. Beginjaren zeventig waren we steeds vaker "de neuzen" en ronduit "die Joden" van Ajax.” (...) Wij hebben die naam gewoon omarmd en zijn onszelf dus als "Joden" neer gaan zetten, om zo de monden van de tegenstanders te snoeren, ze als het ware het gras voor de voeten weg te maaien.” (...) “Het werd een onderdeel van onze identiteit en we konden laten zien dat wij anders waren dan al die andere gasten.”
47 As Jarvie & Maquire (1994) described, football can function as an arena to express an identity in multiple ways and they describe that the most effective way is through behavior during matches.
48 For other examples see Annex 1.
“Where do the Jews come from
Israel far away
Do Super Jews live there to
Yes, Super Jews live there to
Do Super Jews like football
Yes, but only if they are for Ajax
Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Amsterdam”\textsuperscript{49}

The supporters make a link between Ajax and Jews in this chant. The link is expressed by thousands of spectators. Often the whole stadium sings along to chants referring to Jews or Jewish folk songs such as ‘Hava Naguila’.

There are also banners and flags in the stadium with the Star of David, or people showing tattoos with Jewish symbols. For example: \textsuperscript{50}

Another example of the Jewish identity was described by Willemieke during her interview. She is a follower of Ajax and she told me that when she meets friends who support Ajax she often shouts “Jeeeeeews” as a friendly greeting.\textsuperscript{51} Also several respondents indicated during the short interviews that they call their Ajax friends ‘Jews’ or that they often yell ‘Jeeeeeews’ as a shout of joy.

\textsuperscript{49} “Waar komen Joden toch vandaan
Israel hier ver vandaan
Wonen daar ook Super Joden
Ja daar wonen Super Joden
Vinden Joden voetbal fijn
Als ze maar voor Ajax zijn
Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Amsterdam”

\textsuperscript{50} For other examples see Annex 4.

\textsuperscript{51} “Jooooooden”
Referring to Jews or using Jewish symbols is one of the ways for Ajax spectators to present themselves and in that sense, the Jewish aspect is an important shared element of the Ajax supporters culture. As some supporters describe it:

R8: “If you do not feel Jewish, you are not an Ajacied. It is us against everybody else.”

R7: “It has become part of the supporters culture.”

The above quotes imply that the Jewish identity can establish a bond between the supporters and a shared feeling of community. It is part of the supporters culture and could even define whether you are an ‘Ajacied’, thus a part of the community.

Outside the football context

The Jewish identity of Ajax spectators is not only expressed during matches, there are numerous examples of Ajax supporters expressing this identity outside the football context.

Martin described that when he walks around in the city in an Ajax jersey or an AFCA vest, it is not an exception that a random stranger starts cheering “Jews! Jews! Jews!”.

A completely different aspect of the Jewish identity comes to the foreground when talking to spectators about non-football related aspects, such as the Israel-Palestine conflict. Several spectators indicated that although they know they are not Jewish, they still have certain sympathy for Jews and also Israel because of the Jewish image of Ajax. They have a lot of affection for Ajax and the Jewish image of this club seems to result in some kind of affection for Jews, Judaism and Israel.

Arjan: “I think that Ajax fans look differently at Israel because they call themselves Jews. I had the same thing, especially when I was younger. I really felt a connection with Israel. I just felt a connection because of Ajax. I always wore a coat with the flag of Israel sewn on it.”

The quantitative research which I have conducted (see Chapter 1) shows that around 17.1 percent of the visitors of a prominent Ajax website felt connected to Judaism (the religion) because of the fact that they are an Ajax supporter.

52 “Als je je niet Joods voelt ben je geen Ajacied, klaar zat. Het is wij tegen iedereen.”
53 “Het is een onderdeel geworden van de supporters cultuur.”
54 “Ik denk dat Ajax supporters anders tegen Israel aankijken doordat ze zichzelf Joden noemen. Ik had het ook, vooral toen ik jonger was. Ik voelde echt een verbondenheid met Israel. Ik voelde gewoon verbonden door Ajax. Ik had altijd zo een winterjas met zo een Jodenvlaggetje er op.”
Ik voel mij als Ajaxied verbonden met het Jodendom
(‘As an Ajax supporter I feel connected to Judaism’)

Eens (‘Agree’) - 17,1% (838)

Niet mee eens (‘Disagree’) - 82,9% (4049)

(Date of poll: July 15, 2009. Total response: 4887)

The affection for Jews, Judaism and Israel also came to the surface on another occasion. Almost ten years ago, the Israeli football club Hapoel Haifa came to Amsterdam to play against Ajax in the UEFA Cup to the delight of many Ajax spectators. I personally remember that the players and fans of Hapoel were warmly welcomed in the city and during the match the Ajax spectators cheered for the opposition. When the Israelis came one goal in front, the Ajax spectators started to support the Israelis instead of their own team. At the end of the match, the Hapoel players were so impressed with the Ajax spectators that they extensively thanked them and even threw their jerseys into the stands with the Ajax supporters as a token of their appreciation.

Similar events took place five years later when Ajax again played against another Israeli team. On October 19, 2004, Maccabi Tel Aviv came to Amsterdam to play a group stage match in the Champions League tournament. Several spectators stated on the internet how glad they were that Ajax would play against ‘fellow Jews’ and how they were looking forward to playing the Israeli’s. Some spectators even stated that a dream had come true when it was announced that Ajax would play against Maccabi. According to one fan on an internet forum: “A match between Jews and Jews! What else do we want?”.

Peter also described how he remembered this game:

Peter: “When Ajax drew against Maccabi Tel Aviv in the Champions League, everybody was very excited. They all thought it was fantastic and said things like ‘we are going home to Israel’ and that kind of stuff. It was really extraordinary, people were even cheering for Maccabi during the match. During such moments you really notice that many people feel very connected to Israel.”

Of course, there are also numerous fans who did not have any special feelings towards playing an Israeli team and a lot of them only talked about the football just as if they would with any other opponent. However, it shows that there is a substantial group of fans for whom the Jewish identity goes deeper than just an occasional flag in the stadium.

This could also been seen when Ajax had to play in Hamburg against the German team HSV in 2009.

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55 Source: Ajax.netwerk.to/forums. Also see Chapter 1 for a description of this website.
56 “Toen Ajax tegen Maccabi Tel Aviv lootte in de Champions League was iedereen super enthousiast. Iedereen vond het fantastisch en riepen dingen als ‘we gaan naar huis in Israel’ en dat soort dingen. Het was heel vreemd, tijdens de wedstrijd juichten de mensen voor Maccabi. Op dat soort momenten merk je echt dat veel mensen zich heel erg verbonden voelen met Israel.”
Arjan: “We had to go to Germany, so many people thought: ‘time to get my Israeli flag out of the closet’. Of course, you can understand this to some extent. You make some kind of link between the Jewish Ajax identity and Germany. You make a link with the past, which should not happen actually. However, I can understand people make that connection. It is the same with the Dutch national team, when they went to Germany to the World Cup, some fans wore German army helmets coloured orange. It is of course odd, but it is just fun to point out the history to those Germans. A little bit of rivalry. It is more a form of provocation; it is not as if we, as the Jews, are getting even or something. Because, there is no real rivalry towards Germany, not more than generally between Holland and Germany. There is no real rivalry between Ajax fans and German clubs. For most people the problems with Germany are gone, maybe it is different for older people. I do think that the link between Ajax and the Second World War is not as present as the link between Ajax and the Israel-Palestine conflict. The Second World War is a long time ago and does not really play a big part anymore. On the other hand, I am standing in the same section of the stadium for a very long time now, between the same fanatical people so maybe it is different in other sections.”

When talking to such fans about non-football related issues such as the Israel-Palestine conflict it becomes clear that many of them feel a lot of sympathy towards Jews and Israel. They feel connected to others as a result of the Jewish aspects of Ajax. This shows that the Jewish identity can create a shared feeling of community, even outside the football context.

Changes over time

The supporters also note that the Jewish identity has changed over time. As stated before, supporter cultures have never been a static affair. The way of supporting, the traditions and symbols by which supporters present themselves often change. According to Arjan the references to Jews are nowadays no longer as present as in the 1990’s. Arjan described the changing presence of the Jewish identity as follows:

Arjan: “A few years ago you could sometimes see a huge flag of Israel in the ArenA. It covered half of the stand and it was an impressive sight. At that time there were more songs like “Jews, Jews”, “And Who does not jump” and “Where do Jews come from”, than now. It is much less now, but hey, it remains the nickname of Ajax.”

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57 “We moesten naar Duitsland dus hadden veel mensen zoiets van, ‘ik pak mijn Israëlische vlag weer even uit de kast’. Op zich kan je je daar ook wel iets bij voorstellen. Je legt een soort link tussen de Joodse Ajax identiteit en Duitsland. Je legt een link met een verleden wat eigenlijk helemaal niet zou moeten. Maar ik snap wel dat je die relatie in je hoofd legt. Net zoals mensen met het Nederlands elftal die toen ze naar het WK in Duitsland gingen, dat sommige oranje Duitse legerhelmjes droegen. Dat is natuurlijk heel raar, maar het is gewoon leuk om de Duitsers af en toe nog even op hun verleden te wijzen. Beetje de rivaliteit, het is meer iets om een beetje te provoceren. Het is niet dat we als Joden nog even ons gram halen of zo. Want er heerst niet echt een vijandigheid naar Duitsland, niet meer dan anders tussen Nederland en Duitsland. Er is niet echt een extra vijandigheid tussen Ajacieden en Duitse clubs. Bij de meeste mensen zijn de problemen met Duitsland de wereld wel uit, misschien dat bij oudere mensen dat minder het geval is. Ik heb overigens wel het idee dat de link tussen Ajax en het Joodse-Palestina conflict. Het tweede wereldoorlog is lang geleden en komt niet zo veel meer terug bij Ajax. Maar ja, ik sta natuurlijk ook al vele jaren op dezelfde plek tussen grotendeels dezelfde fanatieke mensen in het stadion. Misschien is het anders op andere plekken in het stadion.”

58 “Enkele jaren geleden zag je nog wel eens een enorme vlag van Israël in de ArenA. Het nam een half vak in beslag en was een indrukwekkend gezicht. In die tijd waren er ook meer liedjes als “Joden, Joden”, “Wie niet springt” en “Waar komen Joden toch vandaan” dan nu. Het is een stuk minder geworden, maar goed, het blijft de geuzennaam van Ajax.”
Also Peter notes that it is not ‘as big now’ as it has been in the 1970’s or 1990’s. However, also Peter states that it is still clearly there and every once in a while ‘it even explodes and comes to the foreground’.

The statement by Peter that the Jewish identity is still present at Ajax is also supported by the quantitative research. In 2009 approximately 41% of the visitors of a prominent Ajax website considered the Jewish image to be an important part of the identity of Ajax:

| Het Joodse imago is een belangrijk onderdeel van de Ajax identiteit |
| ('The Jewish image is an important part of the Ajax identity') |
| Eens ('Agree') - 41,4% (1477) |
| Oneens ('Disagree') - 53,0% (1891) |
| Geen mening ('No opinion') - 5,7% (202) |

(Date of poll: June 3, 2009. Total response: 3570)

This seems to imply that the Jewish identity is still a substantial aspect of the Ajax supporters culture. At the same time a substantial group (53%) does not consider the Jewish image to be an important part of the identity of Ajax, and perhaps they attach more importance to other aspects of the Ajax identity.

The importance of the Jewish image at Ajax is more apparent when looking at the use of Jewish symbols by supporters. About 55% of the visitors of the Ajax website are of the opinion that the use of Jewish symbols is part of the way to support Ajax and that it is a part of the club.

| Het gebruik van Joodse symbolen door supporters hoort bij Ajax |
| ('The use of Jewish symbols is part of Ajax') |
| Eens ('Agree') - 55,3% (410) |
| Niet mee eens ('Disagree') - 44,7% (332) |

(Date of poll: November 15, 2009. Total response: 742)

Also from this last poll it appears that for a substantial group of spectators the link between Ajax and Jews is still there.

Based on the above you can assume that the Jewish aspects are still a substantial part of the identity of the Ajax supporters culture and that it creates a bond between them. It is something many of them share even outside the football context. In the rest of this chapter I will try to answer the question how the supporters feel about this Jewish identity.
The way the supporters feel about the Jewish identity

The Jewish identity of Ajax spectators does not necessarily go further than using Jewish symbols and referring to themselves Jews. I have never met a non-Jewish Ajax supporter who started to observe Sabbath, celebrate Purim or Hanukkah and most supporters have never seen a Synagogue from inside. Most of them have no particular interest in the longstanding traditions, stories and customs of Judaism or the Jewish people. At the same time all the supporters I encountered are aware of the history of the Jewish people, which is a very sensitive subject within Dutch society. Especially because of these sensitivities it has always intrigued me how the Ajax supporters feel about the Jewish aspects of their identity and the Ajax supporters culture.

During the interviews respondents came up with several explanations. Some indicated that they call themselves Jews to preserve their reputation. Some just think ‘Jews’ sounds good in the stadium and others make a distinction between ‘Ajax Jews’ and ‘real Jews’. Below I will describe these different motives.

**Matter of reputation**

Many people believe that the Jewish identity of Ajax supporters originated as a reaction to rival fans. The rivals supposedly challenged the Ajax supporters with references to Jews and as a response the Ajax fans re-appropriated the term. The Ajax supporters celebrated a Jewish identity not in the last place to preserve their reputation.

R4: “Feyenoord and the others use it to annoy and insult us. We just wanted to show that we don’t care, that we don’t see it as an insult. So we just became the Jews. If we stop now with ‘Jews! Jews! Jews!’ we loose face towards Feyenoord.”

It is questionable whether many supporters still see it as a matter of reputation, but the above quotation is an example of how and why the Jewish identity was cultivated in the 1980’s and onwards. Some Ajax spectators tried to influence how they were perceived.

Several respondents referred to this relationship with rival fans. For example:

R5: “The term Jews has been re-appropriated by us. I sing it loud and proud, anywhere.”

R6: “The chanting of ‘Jews’ and those kind of reference have taken place for years now and will never stop, it is just a part of Ajax. When you are going to an away game and you are in the opposition’s city or you and the group enter their stand or the away section, then we have to show that the Jews are back.”

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59 See Chapter 2.
60 “Feyenoord en de anderen gebruiken het om ons te irriteren en te beledigen. Wij wilden gewoon laten zien dat het ons niets kan schelen, dat wij het niet zien als een belediging. Als wij nu stoppen met ‘Joden! Joden! Joden!’ laten wij ons kennen tegenover Feyenoord.”
61 “De term Joden is van scheldnaam geworden tot geuzennaam, Ik zing het ook, uit volle borst, waar dan ook.”
62 “Het roepen van ‘Joduh’ en dergelijke gebeurt al jaren en zal ook nooit meer stoppen het hoort nu eenmaal bij Ajax. Als je naar een uitwedstrijd gaat en je zit in de stad van de tegenstander of je komt met de groep het thuisvak in van de tegenstander of uitvak dan moeten we laten horen dat de Joduh er ook weer zijn.”
The Jewish identity seems to be important for these supporters, and it could be argued that their main emotion or motivation towards their Jewish identity is the necessity to uphold their reputation towards their rivals.

'It has a nice melody'

There are also several supporters who seem to have never really thought about their expression of a Jewish identity. For some of them the only reason to sing the ‘Jewish’ chants is the fact that it has a nice melody’, ‘it is easy to sing along with’ or ‘it just sounds really good’. They have no particular emotion towards this identity or its potential sensitivities. Arjan describes how he feels about the Jewish identity at Ajax:

Arjan: “I sing along with the Jewish chants in the stadium. It is some kind of automatism. It has become some sort of a habit. I started to go to the stadium in the 1990’s and at that time, it really was the hype. It was not ‘Ajax! Ajax! Ajax!’ but ‘Jews! Jews! Jews!’, ‘Let’s go Jews, let’s go’, ‘Samba Jews’. I do know why I shout it. It is simply because it is good for the atmosphere. When everybody shouts it, it really sounds impressive. Next to that, the word ‘Jews’ creates a lot of possibilities to make songs. It sounds good and makes all kinds of songs possible and it is an easy word to use when making variations on existing songs.”

The Dutch word Jew (‘Jood’) ‘seems comfortable to the ear and just sounds nice’:

Peter: “I don’t see myself as a Jew, but as an Ajax fan. At the same time, it can sound really good to sing ‘Jews’ in certain songs. I would rather sing songs about Ajax and Amsterdam, but to be honest, I do not really care that much.”

Arjan: “Personally I do not care about it all. It just sounds good to sing and the other supporters see you as Jews. Just go with it.”

At the same time several supporters did remark that there is something ‘odd’ with the fact that many non-Jewish Ajax supporters identify themselves with Jews. One respondent formulated this ‘oddness’ as follows:

R9: “By referring to Ajax as Jews, you make some kind of link with a completely different thing and with a certain history. A link which, in fairness, should not really be made, but I can understand why people do it.”

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63 “In het stadion zing ik ook mee met het Joden geroep. Dat is een soort van automatisme. Het is een soort van gewoonte geworden. Ik ging al in de jaren negentig naar het stadion en toen was het natuurlijk nog helemaal de hype. Toen was het niet ‘Ajax! Ajax! Ajax!’ maar ‘Joden! Joden! Joden!’, ‘Let’s go Joden, let’s go’, ‘Sambajoden’. Ik weet ook wel waarom ik het roep. Dat is gewoon omdat het goed is voor de sfeer. Als iedereen het roept dan klinkt dat echt indrukwekkend. Geeft het woord ‘Joden’ allemaal extra mogelijkheden om liedjes te maken. Het klinkt goed en maakt allerlei soorten liedjes mogelijk en het is een makkelijk woord om variaties te maken op bestaande liedjes.”

64 “Ik zie mezelf niet als ‘Jood’ maar als een Ajax. Tegelijkertijd zingt ‘Jood’ soms wel erg lekker in bepaalde liedjes. Ik zing liever liedjes die over Ajax en Amsterdam gaan, maar het maakt me eerlijk gezegd niet zoveel uit.”

65 “Mij persoonlijk maakt het met allemaal niet uit. Het ligt gewoon lekker in de mond en de andere supporters zien je als joden. Gewoon lekker op in hakken.”

66 “Door te verwijzen naar Ajax als Joden wordt een soort van link gelegd met een heel ander ding en met bepaalde geschiedenis. Een link die eerlijk gezegd niet echt gemaakt zou moeten worden, maar ik kan begrijpen waarom mensen het doen.”
It appears that some supporters do not necessarily attach great value to the Jewish identity and their main feeling is the nice sound of the word ‘Jews’ and the fact that it is easy to sing along with.

Another meaning: Ajax Jew
There are also several supporters who give a more detailed description of their feelings about expressing a Jewish identity. They focus on the meaning of the word ‘Jews’.

For most people the term Jews is in the first place the name of an ethno-religious group and not a name for a football team and its supporters. When speaking to Ajax spectators about their feelings towards the Jewish identity of Ajax they often make clear that they are perfectly aware of this distinction. Most of them realize that they are not Jewish in the everyday meaning of the word and they do not pretend to be.

However, many spectators explained that for them the word Jew has acquired a secondary meaning. They experience not a peculiarity or any sensitivity by calling themselves Jews, as they attach a completely different meaning to the word ‘Jew’:

Peter: “The hard core fans using the term ‘Jews’ has got nothing to do with Israel or the Jewish people, but solely with the rival fans who started calling us like that in the 1970’s.”  

Niko: “In my opinion ‘Ajax Jews' and ‘Israel/Jews/World War II’ are two completely different things, and they can call me blind, they can call me stupid, but I don’t give a fuck.”

Martin “For myself I have made a difference between an ‘Ajax Jew’ and a ‘real Jew’. Call me stupid, call me an idiot, but I would love it if they dared to say that to my face…”

R3: “Jews is just Ajax. It has got nothing to do with ‘regular’ Jews.”

R10: “Personally I think the word ‘Jew’ has two meanings: someone of the Jewish faith and someone who is a hardcore supporter of Ajax, which I am neither.” (R10 is a Feyenoord fan)

R11: “We are the ‘Jews’ in our own way and it has got nothing to do with any religion or whatever kind of political bullshit.”

R12: “The fans all know that Ajax has got nothing to do with Israel or the Jews.”

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67 “De harde kern die het woord ‘Joden’ gebruikt heeft niks te maken met Israel of het Joodse volk, maar allen met andere fans die ons zo begonnen te noemen in de jaren zeventig.”
68 “Ik zie ‘Ajax Joden’ en ‘Israel/Joden/Tweede Wereld Oorlog’ als twee totaal verschillende dingen. Ze kunnen me blind noemen, ze kunnen me dom noemen, maar dat kan me geen ene reet interesseren.”
69 “Ik heb voor mezelf een scheiding gemaakt tussen een “Ajax Jood” en een “echte Jood”. Noem mij maar debiel, noem me een mongool. Lijkt me leuk als ze dat in me bek doen...”
70 “Joden is gewoon Ajax, het heeft niets te maken met ‘gewone’ Joden.”
71 “Persoonlijk zie ik het woord ‘Jood’ als een woord met twee betekenissen: iemand met het Joodse geloof en iemand die een hardcore supporter van Ajax is, wat ik ook niet ben.”
72 “Wij zijn ‘de Joden’ op onze eigen manier en het heeft niets te maken met wat voor geloof of politieke bullshit dan ook.”
73 “De fans weten allemaal dat Ajax niets te maken heeft met Israel of de Joden.”
The above quotations show that many spectators make a distinction between two different meanings of the word ‘Jew’. Perhaps these spectators do not necessarily identify themselves with Jews, but solely with the term ‘Jews’.

On the other hand, Arjan notes that not all spectators are able to make such a clear distinction between ‘Ajax Jews’ and ‘real Jews’.

**Arjan:** “People who go as far as taking a tattoo with the Star of David, with an F in it [the F-Side logo], often see themselves as Jews. Most of them think that they are really though because of it. (…) There is also a big difference between people with a Jewish tattoo and those who just sing-a-long with a chant. The guys with the tattoos are generally different types who you recognise immediately. They are not necessarily hard-core but just a bit simple. You know, the ones with the blunt and lumpish behaviour, pretending to be hard-core hooligans. Those guys often really think they are connected with Jews and Israel.”

Some of these Ajax supporters pointed out that the ‘Ajax Jews’ is nothing different from nicknames of other teams. According to many Ajax supporters teams from the south are farmers, teams in the border region with Germany are referred to as ‘moffen’ (‘krauts’) and almost all supporters call the Feyenoord fans ‘kakkerlakken’ (‘cockroaches’).

During the interviews I had the impression that most of the spectators, who spoke about ‘Ajax Jews’ and ‘real Jews’, had a rather blasé attitude towards the sensitivities of expressing a Jewish identity. They did not necessarily acknowledge the sensitivities within the Dutch society. For them their Jewish Ajax identity did not have anything to do with ‘real Jews’ and possible sensitivities within the Netherlands.

In this context it is interesting to see how the team manager of Ajax looks at this subject:

**David Endt (Ajax team manager):** “Indirect, you can really hurt groups of people. ‘Teringjoden’ (’fucking jews’) has a whole different implication then ‘teringhoer’ (’fucking whore’), to put it bluntly.”

**Conclusion**

We have seen that even in modern times all kinds of spectators can feel strongly connected to a football club. The spectators at Ajax all share a passion for the club and for many of them this is sufficient to feel part of the same group. They do not know each other, will never meet all other spectators, but have a feeling of togetherness which could be compared to, what Anderson would describe as, an imagined community (cf. Anderson 1983). Following the work of Giulianotti one could argue that the spectators are part of a supporters culture. Following the work of Bauman it

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74 “Mensen die zo ver gaan dat ze een tattoo nemen met een Davidster, met een F er in, zien zichzelf vaak als Joden. De meeste denken dat ze daardoor hard zijn. (…) Er is ook een groot een onderscheid tussen mensen met een Joden tatoeage en mensen die af en toe mee zingen. De mensen die echt dat soort tatoeages zetten zijn toch wat andere figuren, die kan je er zo tussenuit halen. Ze zijn niet per se harde kern, maar gewoon wat simpelere mensen. Van dat stoere lompe hooligan gedrag alsof je harde kern bent. Die denken vaak ook echt dat ze verbonden zijn met de Joden en Israeli.”

75 “Indirect kun je bepaalde bevolkingsgroepen pijn doen. Teringjoden heeft een hele andere lading dan teringhoer, om het maar eens bot te zeggen.”
can be argued that each spectator will attach different values to this supporters culture and its identity.

Some spectators attach the most value to the Amsterdam background of Ajax, the club’s attitude, or its Jewish roots. This is in line with the statement of Giulianotti that supporters appreciate different types of repayment for their support.

We have seen that spectators use Ajax as a vehicle to express a Jewish identity and this identity seemed to create a bond between them or even a shared feeling of community. We have also seen that the Jewish identity is expressed outside the football context and can create a shared feeling of identity reaching far beyond the football game.

It is clear that the Jewish history is a sensitive subject in the Netherlands and for this reason I have looked at the question how Ajax spectators feel about their Jewish identity, while they are not Jewish. There where three main responses by spectators: (1) that it is a matter of reputation; (2) that is just something that is easy to sing along with and has a nice melody; (3) that there is a distinction between ‘Ajax Jews’ and ‘real Jews’.

The interviews also showed that several supporters had a rather unmoved attitude towards the sensitivities of expressing a Jewish identity. This could perhaps be explained by following the work of Bauman. In modern times identities become more fluid and open. People might still feel connected to certain institutions such as a football club, but their identity easily changes and is therefore less important. Perhaps this makes it easier for Ajax spectators to present themselves as Jews, while they are not. This possibly also explains their sometimes blasé attitude towards the sensitivities of their Jewish identity.
Chapter 5
Reactions of rival fans and outsiders

In the previous chapter we have looked at the expression of a Jewish identity by Ajax spectators and we have seen how the spectators feel about this. It was noted that the expression of a Jewish identity by Ajax spectators is a very sensitive issue in the Netherlands and this chapter will further look at these sensitivities by describing the reactions of rival fans and outsiders.

As described before, football is playing a major part in the process of constructing, expressing and maintaining groups and identities (Burdsey & Chappell 2003, p. 1). The spectators identify themselves with their team and its symbols: they wear its jersey, have tattoos of its emblem or sing the club’s chants. The teams are vehicles of identity and this also enables spectators to differentiate themselves from other groups. By supporting their team they can show their aversion to rival identities, while they celebrate their own (Bairner & Shirlow 1999, pp. 162-163).

The celebration of their identity and the associated positive feelings are strengthened when they compare their group with others. Comparing their group with ‘worse’ groups improves the group-esteem and their self-esteem (Goffman 1959). When spectators are confronted with outsiders like fans of rival teams, the shared identity tends to be strengthened and becomes more sharply defined (Maguire & Poulton 1999, p. 20).

According to Elias such strengthening of the group charisma goes hand in hand with the attachment of a label of inferiority to the other group (Elias & Scotson 1965). Elias and Scotson argue that the more threatened a group feels because of outsiders, the more likely it is that pressure and competition will drive towards extremes (Elias & Scotson 1965, pp. 95-96). In the context of extreme rivalry this can take on extreme and delusional forms in order to maintain a sense of superiority towards rival groups and other outsiders.

Spectators will take into account how others perceive them and they anticipate on the reactions of those others, also when these reactions take on extreme forms. As described by theories of symbolic interactionism: ‘Individuals can not see themselves without seeing themselves as others see them’ (Hogg 1996, p. 70). Goffman further described that people try to control the impressions other people form of them. Spectators will try to influence how others perceive them or their group. They will present themselves in a certain way depending on the other people around them and the social context. This process of being seen and identified by other people influences the self-identification and how people present themselves in everyday life (Goffman 1959).

This means that the reaction by others (such as rival fans and outsiders) could influence the behavior of the Ajax spectators and might change their own feelings about their identity. For this reason this chapter will further look at those reactions by rival fans and outsiders.

Rival fans
Especially during matches rival fans express their rivalry towards Ajax. Of course, the extent to which fans manifest themselves differs from game to game. The expression of identity or the
opposition against another’s, takes place during every match but in some matches it is even more present.

There are several examples in the context of rivalry where the Jewish elements of the identity of Ajax supporters takes on extreme forms and seems to be used by supporters to distinguish their own group.

**FC Utrecht - Ajax**

Dutch football knows many rivalries and the one between FC Utrecht and Ajax is a fierce one. The matches between the teams take place in a tense and often aggressive atmosphere, especially on the stands. The events are almost the identical in recent seasons. From my own experiences and the stories of other supporters the following events can be described. In general more than 1500 Ajax supporters travel to the game in Utrecht escorted by an enormous police force. Arriving at the Galgenwaard stadium of the local football team, thousands of Utrecht supporters are waiting to ‘welcome’ their rivals. The moment the supporters are in each others sight the aggression increases and results in numerous chants and sometimes other escalations. After arriving in the visitors-section of the stadium the Ajax supporters start singing and making it known to everybody that they have arrived. Not much later the Utrecht fans start chanting and jumping ‘And one who does not jump, and one who does not jump is a Jew’ (‘En wie niet springt, en wie niet springt die is een Jood’). It does not take long for the Ajax supporters to react, by simply reversing the chant and singing ‘And one who does not jump, and one who does not jump is not a Jew’ (‘En wie niet springt, en wie niet springt die is geen Jood’), the whole away section is jumping and shouting out their lungs. It again takes only a few minutes before the Utrecht fans respond: ‘Hamas, Hamas, Jews on the gas’ (‘Hamas, Hamas, Joden aan het gas’). The Ajax fans react in anger and the situation escalates. The stadium speaker asks the fans to calm down and refrain from insulting chants, with only limited effect. The atmosphere will remain tense the entire day and the hatred can be felt throughout the entire stadium.

**Feyenoord - Ajax**

This particular chain of events during the game between Utrecht and Ajax is no exception. Not only does this process repeat itself basically every season between the two teams, similar events take place at many Ajax games, either in Amsterdam or anywhere in the country. Especially the games against PSV Eindhoven and Feyenoord Rotterdam are surrounded by such extreme expressions of identity, rivalry and blunt hatred.

The annual game Feyenoord – Ajax is always surrounded with insulting chants, even though the local authorities often try to convince the supporters to refrain from any form of insults. In general warnings by authorities sort no effect whatsoever. The game against Feyenoord is always sold out within seconds and in the year 2008, there were around 1600 Ajax supporters lucky enough to get a ticket. I had visited many games between Feyenoord and Ajax and also managed to get a ticket for this game. The match was played on a Sunday at 12.30 pm in Rotterdam. A gigantic operation took place to transport the Ajax supporters to Rotterdam while preventing a physical encounter with the rivaling supporters. The Ajax supporters gathered at their own stadium in Amsterdam at 9 am to board the train to Rotterdam. Under supervision of hundreds of riot police the supporters were searched for weapons and after two hours everybody was on the trains and ready to go to Rotterdam. The moment the train rolled out of the station one Ajax
supporter shouted, in a jokingly manner, that the thought it was rather typical it is that the authorities forced all the ‘Ajax-Jews’ to travel by train.\textsuperscript{76}

After a relative calm trip of more than an hour the train finally arrived at the train station in Rotterdam next to the stadium. The moment the stadium can be seen the supporters start to get excited, people are standing up, getting ready to leave the train and show everybody that they have arrived. A similar process of action-reaction as in Utrecht took place, with an even tenser atmosphere. One of the groups starts to refer to Jews, to which the others respond and every time they try to surpass the opposing fans. Either by being more insulting, more shocking or more extreme. This process often results in anti-Semitic chants, references to the holocaust and other chants demeaning of Jews. The chants are more than often inappropriate, deeply insulting or even racist. For example:

\begin{quote}
“Do you also hate the team from Amsterdam? 
Kick them on their noses, yes as hard as you can
Because life is only short
All the Jews on the gas”\textsuperscript{77}
\end{quote}

In the past such chants have been tolerated in the stadiums. Nowadays the authorities act up against it and the fans of Utrecht were once sent back before the match in Amsterdam had even begun, because of insulting chants. Next to that: several years ago, the fans were no longer allowed to refer to Jews and to wave flags of Israel or Palestine during the matches between Ajax and Feyenoord. The new policy had some effect, but eventually the prohibition was violated and as a result the matches between Ajax and Feyenoord can no longer been visited by fans of the away team. Nevertheless, despite such efforts of the authorities, there are still numerous insulting chants audible during all kinds of matches.

The ADO Den Haag incident
In March 2011 there was a major controversy involving an incident after the match between ADO Den Haag and Ajax. The forward of ADO, Lex Immers, was caught on camera singing anti-Semitic chants.

ADO had won the match against Ajax with 3-2 and the players were celebrating the victory with their supporters in a bar next to the stadium. Everybody was partying, drinking and singing. Two players, including Immers, and the manager were standing on a small stage in front of a crowd of fans. At that moment Immers grabbed a microphone and started to sing: “We’re going to hunt for Jews.”\textsuperscript{78} The song was targeted at Ajax and its supporters.

The whole incident was filmed and caused great uproar in The Netherlands. Immers responded by saying: “I got carried away in the euphoria of a special win, and at that moment was unaware

\textsuperscript{76} Referring to the deportation of Jews by train in the Second World War.
\textsuperscript{77} “Heb je ook zo’n hekel aan de club uit Amsterdam
Schop ze op hun neuzen, ja zo hard als je maar kan
want het leven duurt maar even
Alle Joden aan het gas”
\textsuperscript{78} “We gaan op Jodenjacht.”
of the offensive tone to an entire nation. I regret it and will accept the penalty imposed on me. (...) In the presence of two coaches, a player and a group of fans I have let the fan in me go. When I sing 'We're going to hunt for Jews,' I mean that we want to beat Ajax. Nothing more, nothing less.” Immers later stated that “the slogan 'We're going to hunt for Jews' seemed innocent.”

The Dutch Football Association suspended Immers for five matches, while teammate Charlton Vincento and trainer John van den Brom (who were also present) received one-match suspensions for their part during the celebrations.

*Experiences of Uri Coronel*

During a short conversation the then chairman of Ajax described several incidents which he experienced during his time as a board member and chairman of Ajax. Firstly he described one of his visits as a board member of Ajax to a match in Rotterdam against Feyenoord:

**Coronel:** “I especially remember one match away against Feyenoord. Before the game we [the board of Ajax] were escorted by the police to the stadium of Feyenoord. We had to walk past the Feyenoord supporters who were all standing around us and making the Nazi-salute. We literally had to walk through a row of Hitler-saluting Feyenoord supporters.”

Uri Coronel also describes one of the incidents in The Hague, in 2010:

**Coronel:** “Last year we had won in The Hague and after the match you could hear the players of The Hague in the dressing room and hallways shouting: ‘Kankerjoden’ ['cancer Jews'] and so on.”

He had similar experiences during a match in Utrecht:

**Coronel:** “It also happened in Utrecht, even on the stand with business seats. Those people were shouting ‘Joden gaan eraan!’ [Jews are gonna get destroyed].”

I have also spoken to some Feyenoord fans about their expressions. Like we have seen in the previous chapter with Ajax spectators, also the Feyenoord fans seem to make a distinction between two worlds (such as ‘Ajax Jews’ and ‘real Jews’). During games between Ajax and Feyenoord the fans of Feyenoord have often waved Palestinian flags in an attempt to insult or provoke the Ajax supporters. The Feyenoord supporters consider waving a Palestinian flag solely as a provocation and they state it is not related to something outside the Ajax-Feyenoord rivalry:

**R16:** “Feyenoord has got nothing to do with Palestine, we never had en we never will. You have to see it as two separated worlds and it is just intended as a provocation towards 020 [Amsterdam/Ajax].” (R16 is a Feyenoord fan)

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79 “Ik herinner met name een wedstrijd uit tegen Feyenoord. Voor de wedstrijd werden we door de politie naar het stadion van Feyenoord begeleid. We moesten langs de Feyenoord supporters lopen die allemaal om ons heen stonden en de Nazi-groet brachten. We moesten letterlijk door een haag van Hitlergroet brengende Feyenoord supporters lopen.”

80 “Afgelopen jaar hadden we gewonnen in Den Haag en na de wedstrijd hoorde je de spelers van Den Haag in de kleedkamer en de gangen schreeuwen: ‘Kankerjoden, dit en dat’.”

81 “Het gebeurde ook in Utrecht, zelfs op de businesstribune. Die mensen schreeuwden ‘Joden gaan eraan!’.”
R17: “Feyenoord fans with Palestine flags? Everybody knows how Rotterdam is, we all hate those muslims. There are not that many people at Feyenoord who are really fond of the Muslim world. It is really just to annoy those people from 020. We do not identify ourselves with the Palestinians. It has got nothing to do with that.”83 (R17 is a Feyenoord fan)

R18: “I can imagine that many supporters of Ajax can’t make the distinction between the football and the real world. Their identity as a supporter is too much connected to the outside. Over there, they really feel that they are the Jews. This is completely different from the Feyenoord supporters. We never shout “we are the Palestinians”. We might wave a flag of Palestine, but this is nothing compared to Ajax. Over there, you see Israeli flags all the time and there are so many people who really think they are Jews or somehow connected to Jews. They even have tattoos with the Star of David and that kind of stuff.”84 (R18 is a Feyenoord fan)

R19: “There is nothing in the tradition of Feyenoord against Jews or pro-Palestine. At Ajax, you can really see the Jewish influences and the Jewish past. It used to be a club with many Jewish people. Even though there are not as many Jews at the club as before, some of them are still there. At least there is some kind of relation between Ajax and Jews. There is nothing relating us to Palestinians…”85 (R19 is a Feyenoord fan)

It is clear that the expression of a Jewish identity by Ajax spectators evokes extreme reactions by rival fans, even when these reactions are strictly limited to the football context. Following the work of Elias it is likely that these reactions will only strengthen the group feeling and Jewish identity of Ajax spectators. In the previous chapter an Ajax spectator was quoted as follows:

R4: “Feyenoord and the others used it to annoy and insult us. We just wanted to show that we don’t care, that we don’t see it as an insult. So we just became the Jews. If we stop now with ‘Jews! Jews! Jews!’ we loose face towards Feyenoord.”86

This quote not only showed that he considered the expression of a Jewish identity a matter of reputation. It also points out the ‘us-against-them’ attitude as a result of the insults by Feyenoord supporters. He expresses the Jewish identity to maintain a sense of superiority towards a rival group.

82 “Feyenoord heeft niets te maken met Palestina, hebben we nooit gehad en zullen we nooit hebben. Je moet het zien als twee aparte werelden en het is gewoon bedoeld als provocatie naar 020.”
83 “Feyenoord fans met Palestijnse vlaggen? Iedereen weet hoe Rotterdam is, we hebben allemaal een hekel aan die moslims. Er zijn niet veel mensen bij Feyenoord die echt fan zijn van de moslimwereld. Het is gewoon om die gasten uit 020 te irriteren. We identificeren onszelf niet met Palestijnen. Daar heeft het niets mee te maken.”
84 “Ik kan me voorstellen dat veel Ajax supporters het onderscheid tussen voetbal en de echte wereld niet kunnen maken. Hun identiteit als supporter is te veel verbonden met daarbuiten. Ze voelen zich daar echt de Joden. Dat is volstrekt anders dan Feyenoord supporters. Wij roepen nooit ‘We zijn de Palestijnen’. We zwaaien misschien met een Palestijnse vlag, maar dit is niets vergeleken met Ajax. Daar zie je constante Israëlische vlaggen en er zijn zo veel mensen die echt denken dat ze Joden zijn of dat ze verbonden zijn met Joden. Ze hebben zelfs tatoeages met de Davidsster en dat soort dingen.”
85 “Er is niets in de traditie van Feyenoord tegen Joden of voor Palestina. Bij Ajax kan je echt de Joodse invloed zien en het Joodse verleden. Het was een club met veel Joodse mensen. Ondanks dat er niet zo veel Joden meer bij de club zijn, sommige zijn er nog steeds. In ieder geval is er een soort van relatie tussen Ajax en Joden. Er is niets dat ons verbindt met Palestijnen.”
86 “Feyenoord en de anderen gebruiken het om ons te irriteren en te beledigen. Wij wilden gewoon laten zien dat het ons niets kan schelen, dat wij het niet zien als een belediging. Als wij nu stoppen met ‘Joden! Joden! Joden!’ laten wij ons kennen tegenover Feyenoord.”
Outsiders
The expression of a Jewish identity by Ajax spectators not only evokes reactions from rival fans. It also leads to reactions from people outside of football.

The Centre Information and Documentation on Israel (‘CIDI’) is often outspoken on the subject. David Beesemer, one of the board members of CIDI, described during his interview that many people at CIDI are of the opinion that the Ajax supporters provoke anti-Semitic reactions by using the name ‘Jews’. He quoted Ronny Naftaniel, director of CIDI, on this subject:

“The slogan “Jews on the gas” remains deeply offensive to Jews in the Netherlands, especially for survivors of the Holocaust and their descendants. They know what is meant by it. Even when there is not a single Jewish player on the field, this slogan remains a call for hatred and violence against Jews and results in broad public revulsion.”

In several press statements the CIDI argues that there is a causal link between the use of the name ‘Jews’ by Ajax fans and the demeaning reactions by rival fans. The organisation even wrote an open letter to the Ajax fans asking them to stop referring to Jews, Judaism or Israel.

At the same time, David Beesemer told me that most people at CIDI mainly have a problem with the reactions of rival fans and not as much with the expressions of Ajax supporters. He also stated:

Beesemer: To be honest, I do not really have a problem with the songs of the Ajax fans. I do have a problem with the negative reactions.

Nevertheless, CIDI is concerned that the hatred of rival fans against Ajax will result in hatred towards Jewish people, also outside the football context. David Beesemer described how in the past, offensive slogans in the stadium were tacitly tolerated and that nowadays it is also heard on the streets. Many people at CIDI believe that it is getting worse and state that recent incidents showed that people actually turned to vandalism against synagogues and violence and threats towards Jews on the street.

Next to the CIDI, I have also spoken to several Jewish people and asked them about their reactions to the references to Jews in the football context:

R20: “I am Jewish and I find it extremely annoying. I think it is ridiculous that people pretend to be Jewish while they share nothing of the history and what it truly means. I think it is terrible.”

87 The Centre for Information and Documentation on Israel was established by the Jewish community in the Netherlands in 1974. It is an independent foundation which focuses on the right to safety of the Jewish people and the state of Israel.


89 “Om eerlijk te zijn, ik heb niet echt een probleem met de liedjes van Ajax fans. Ik heb wel een probleem met de negatieve reacties.”
R21: “As a Jew I have absolutely no problem with it. I think it is great to see all those Israeli flags and Stars of David in the stadium.” (R21 is a Jewish Ajax fan)

R22: “Ajax fans shouting about Jews leads to reactions by other fans and that can be painful. However, whatever you do, you cannot stop it. Ajax and Jews are inseparable for many people. Moreover, a football supporter sees some kind of distinction with the whole Ajax Jews thing, as I normally call it. But do you really think that a Jew who does not know anything about football even knows the term ‘Ajax Jews’? Do you really think he will make that distinction? I do not think so! But what can you do, there are things in football which are even more disgusting.” (R22 is a Jewish Ajax fan)

Some of the Jewish people I have spoken to experience it as unpleasant or even painful that the Ajax fans present themselves as Jews or ‘Ajax Jews’. One of them believes that this is especially the case for Jewish people who are not familiar with football and its customs. Some of them do not seem to have a direct problem with it. As Uri Coronel, who is Jewish, elaborated regarding this subject:

Coronel: “Ajax never was really Jewish. After the war, successful Jews stuck together, but not much more than 200 men, with their father, uncle and aunt. But I immediately admit that there are more Jews coming to Ajax than to the shul. (…) Only in the last twenty or thirty years, the supporters have adopted the Jewish image. (…) In the beginning we were proud of it. Ajax belonged to us (…) They shout nothing more than ‘Jews, Jews’, that is it. I can not mind this. (…) Jewish people seem to have some identification with Ajax. Sometimes I hear people say: ‘Jews who love football are in principle for Ajax’ (…) In Israel they consider it to be great. People who do not know about the responses from rivals really just find it to be great (…) I only started to have uncomfortable feelings about it when our opponents started to treat us disrespectfully. Before that I thought it was rather great (…) In my opinion the reactions from supporters of other clubs are really embarrassing. But I think you can not resolve it. In the beginning I have experienced it as very unpleasant, but apparently you get used to it.”

90 “Ik ben Joods en vind het verschrikkelijk irritant. Ik vind het belachelijk dat mensen doen alsof ze Joods zijn terwijl ze helemaal niks gemeenschappelijk hebben met haar geschiedenis en wat het echt betekent. Ik vind het vreselijk.”

91 “Als Jood heb ik er absoluut geen probleem mee. Ik vind het geweldig om al die Israeliische vlaggen en Davidssterren te zien in het stadion.”


93 “Echt Joods is Ajax nooit geweest. Na de oorlog kwamen succesvolle Joden bij elkaar, maar niet heel veel meer dan 200 man, met hun vader, oom en tante. Maar ik geef gelijk toe dat er meer Joden naar Ajax komen dan naar de sjoel. (…) Pas de laatste twintig, dertig jaar hebben de supporters zich het Joodse imago aangemeten. (…) In het begin waren we er trots op. Ajax was van ons. (…) Ze roepen niet meer dan ‘Joden, Joden’, dat is alles. Ik kan dit niet erg vinden (…) Er is bij Joden wel een identificatie met Ajax. Ik hoor wel eens zeggen: Joden die van voetballen houden zijn in principe wel voor Ajax (…) In Israël vindt men het geweldig. Mensen die reacties van rivalen niet kennen vinden het echt alleen maar geweldig (…) Ik kreeg pas vervelende gevoelens toen de tegenpartij ons onheus bejegende. Daarvoor vond ik het wel kicken (…) Ik vind de reacties van supporters van andere clubs echt beschamend. Maar ik vind het niet op te lossen. Ik heb het in het begin wel als heel onaangenaam ervaren, maar je went er kennelijk aan.”
Response of Ajax supporters

Some of the Ajax supporters have strong opinions about the reactions by outsiders such as CIDI and some Jewish people:

R13: “I am getting tired of Israeli or Jewish organizations who constantly complain about chants like ‘Kanker Joden’ ['Cancer Jews']. Do they really not understand that ‘Cancer Jews’ has got nothing to do with real Jews, or do they just not want to understand?”

R14: “When other people can’t see the difference, than it is their problem, but that does not mean that we have to stop waving our Israeli flags and things like that.”

Many Ajax supporters are of the opinion that their expressions are not in any way demeaning of Jews and they do not believe to be responsible for the actions of rival fans:

Peter: “Of course the problem could be that Ajax supporters present themselves as Jews and that subsequently the opposition reacts. However, you should not forget that the other fans already began the whole thing way before the Ajax supporters started to present themselves as Jews. For years, they had been shouting things like ‘cancer Jews’. In that case, it is way better to be proud of your Jewish image and to be positive about it. If these others notice that you take offence, they will be even more extreme and more anti-Semitic. In that case it will only escalate.”

One of the concerns of CIDI is that the anti-Semitic expressions surrounding matches will start to have consequences outside the football context as well. Not all supporters believe that this will happen:

Willemieke: “Many people hate Ajax and Ajacieden call themselves Jews, so you could think that because of that those people will hate Jews or express themselves in anti-Semitic ways. I don’t really believe that is true. In most cases it is pretty clear that the people express themselves against Ajax and not against Jews.”

At the same time, some supporters have witnessed how for some rival fans the distinction between ‘Ajax Jews’ and ‘real Jews’ fades. A supporter from Rotterdam recounts:

R15: “A while ago a Jew was walking on the street in Rotterdam and was wearing a kippah. He walked past some fans of Feyenoord and they started to insult the Jewish guy: ‘Hey, fucking Ajax fan’ ['Hey, kanker Ajacied']. The guy had nothing to do with Ajax, he was not wearing their jersey or anything. They just saw a Jew and immediately associated that with Ajax. Apparently, their hatred towards Ajax is so big that it...”

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94 “Ik heb het helemaal gehad met die Israëlische of Joodse organisaties die constant lopen te klagen over spreekkoren zoals ‘Kanker Joden’. Begrijpen ze nou echt niet dat ‘Kanker Joden’ niets te maken heeft met echte joden of willen ze het gewoon niet begrijpen?”
95 “Wanneer andere mensen het verschil niet zien, dan is dat hun probleem, maar dat betekent niet dat wij moeten stoppen met het zwaaien met Israëlische vlaggen en dat soort dingen.”
97 “Veel mensen haten Ajax en Ajacieden noemen zichzelf Joden, dus je kan denken dat daardoor die mensen Joden zullen haten of zich antisemitisch uiten. Ik geloof niet echt dat dat zo is. In veel gevallen is het wel duidelijk dat de mensen zich uiten tegen Ajax en niet tegen Joden.”
spreads out to Jewish people. Maybe it was some kind of instinctive reaction. The Feyenoord fans apparently experienced feelings of hatred when seeing a Jew."\(^{98}\)

Most of the spectators I have spoken to seem to understand the sentiments of CIDI and the Jewish people. They consider many of the chants by rival fans to be offensive, harmful and undesirable. However, hardly any of the Ajax supporters who I interviewed believe that their own chants are painful or unpleasant. For many fans, the discussion keeps on coming back to the fact that they are not the ones who are demeaning of Jews, so what is wrong their ‘positive’ behaviour?

**R23:** “No one can tell me what I am allowed to sing and what I am allowed to wear. I can understand that Jewish people can take offence, since there are some horrible chants in the stadiums, referring to the darkest periods in their history. However, this is not done by us, but by the opposition. The things we do shout are at least positive. It's the rival fans who have to stop in order to prevent the Jews being offended.\(^{99}\)

**R23:** “I do not understand why the Jews (and the Ajax board and half of hypocritical Holland) never wants to see the supporters' side of the story. The Star of David and the word Jews has long ago lost the meaning it was once given to it by Judaism and the Jewish people. No one has the exclusive right to a certain symbol. Symbols are taken over by other groups all the time. Religions, people and cultures take over symbols all the time and give it their own meaning. By using the Star of David for more than 20 years, the Ajax supporters have given it a different meaning, which is just as valid as the one given to it by the Jews. Even though they have been using it for way longer.”\(^{100}\)

**R23:** “If the Ajax board really wants to do something, than teach something about Judaism, make people aware of the meanings or even teach the fans about the Jewish history and the meanings of its symbols. Don't simply deny the Jewish history or try to stop Ajax fans from cultivating it. When Ajax fans are more aware of the roots and meanings, they can make their own decisions about whether or not they want to present themselves as Jews.”\(^{101}\)

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\(^{98}\) “Een tijdje geleden liep een Jood in Rotterdam over straat met een keppeltje op. Hij liep langs een paar Feyenoord fans en zij begonnen die Joodse jongen uit te schelden, ‘Hey, kanker Ajacied’. Die jongen had niets met Ajax, hij had geen Ajax shirt aan of wat dan ook. Ze zagen gewoon een Jood en associeerden dat gelijk met Ajax. Blijkbaar zit hun haat tegen Ajax zo diep dat het overslaat naar Joodse mensen. Misschien was het een soort van instinctieve reactie. De Feyenoord fans ervaarden blijkbaar haatgevoelens toen ze een jouw zagen.”

\(^{99}\) “Niemand vertelt mij wat ik mag zingen en voor kleding ik mag dragen. Ik kan begrijpen dat Joodse mensen het aanstootgevend vinden, want er zijn verschrikkelijke spreekkoren in de stadions, die verwijzen naar de donkerste periodes van hun geschiedenis. Dit wordt echter niet gedaan door ons, maar door de tegenstander. De dingen die we schreeuwen zijn ieder geval positief. Het zijn onze rivaal dien die moeten stoppen om te voorkomen dat Joden zich beledigd voelen.”

\(^{100}\) “Ik begrijp niet waarom de Joden (en het Ajax bestuur en de helft van hypocriet Nederland) nooit de supporters’ kant van het verhaal wil zien. De Davidster en het woord Joden hebben al lang geleden de betekenis verloren die het ooit had gekregen door het Jodendom en het Joodse volk. Niemand heeft het exclusieve recht op bepaald symbool. Symbolen worden de hele tijd overgenomen door andere groepen. Godsdiensten, mensen en culturen nemen constant symbolen over en geven er hun eigen betekenis aan. Door de Davidster meer dan 20 jaar te gebruiken hebben de Ajax-supporters er een andere betekenis aan gegeven, die is net zo geldig als degene die er aan was gegeven door de Joden. Ook al maken zij er al veel langer gebruik van.”

\(^{101}\) “Als het Ajax-bestuur er echt iets aan wil doen, geef dan les over het Jodendom, maak de mensen bewust van de betekenis of leer zelfs de fans over de Joodse geschiedenis en de betekenis van de symbolen. Ga niet simpelweg de Joodse geschiedenis ontkennen of proberen om Ajax-fans te laten stoppen met het cultiveren daarvan. Wanneer Ajax fans zich meer bewust zijn van de oorsprong en betekenis, dan kunnen ze zelf beslissen of ze zich willen presenteren als Joden.”
During the interviews the Ajax spectators often became defensive and started to defend themselves and their fellow supporters. Most of them started to point towards rival fans and how they were responsible for any sensitivities or extremities.

There were also some supporters who argued that the chants of both sets of fans should not be seen as anti-Semitic.

**Martin:** “Those chants only attack us as Ajax fans and not real Jews, don’t let anyone tell you differently.”

**Willemieke:** “It is a feud between two groups which sometimes escalates. However, it is not about the Jewish people, it is about the nickname of a football club. It is only logical that people refer to symbols and history to identify with that name or to object to it. That is something you can expect. However, that does not make the reaction of rival fans anti-Semitic. Ajax fans are not real Jews, there is no hate against the Jewish people, but hate against a football team.”

*The Ajax board*

Another party which has responded to the expression by Ajax spectators is the board of Ajax. They have always been reluctant to take a position on this subject, but several chairmen have indicated that they found the Jewish identity of non-Jewish Ajax fans odd or even ridiculous. However, none of them really took action. Former chairman Uri Coronel repeatedly stated there is nothing the board of Ajax can do about it. According to Willemieke, it sometimes happened that stewards were instructed to confiscate flags or banners with Jewish symbols and on several occasions board members talked at supporter meetings to discuss the subject.

At the same time, several supporters pointed out the story that for many years the club continued to sell Jewish memorabilia in the official fan shop. The club sold Ajax jewellery with the Star of David, shawls with Hebrew texts and Ajax ringtones with the sounds of ‘Hava Nagila’, while at the same time they said they were trying to discourage the Jewish expressions by the fans.

One supporter pointed out that the attempts of the board often had counterproductive effects.

**Niko:** “You know what? It fucking pisses me off! I hardly ever shout ‘Jews’ because it makes me think about Anne Frank all the time. However, now the board is gonna forbid us, I am gonna shout it all the time out loud. I am gonna buy a ticket seated next to the chairman and I will endlessly shout ‘Jews! Jews! Jews!’ in his ear. Even at halftime, I will keep on shouting ‘Jews! Jews! We are the Jews!’, ‘Hava Nagila’, ‘Jews from Mokum’, ‘Mazzeltov Jews’. I will read from the Torah and the constitution of Israel and I will be waving my Israeli flag of 10 by 10 meters blocking everybody’s view. I just can’t believe the ugliness of it all. Those people really do not understand anything and they will always be utterly unhappy with themselves, whatever kind of fun job they assign themselves. Bunch of talent-less...

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102 “Die spreekkoren vallen alleen ons aan, als Ajax fans, en niet echte Joden, laat niemand je wat anders vertellen!”

103 “Het is een vete tussen twee groepen die soms escaleert. Maar het gaat niet over de Joodse mensen, het gaat over de bijnaam van een voetbalclub. Het is alleen maar logisch dat mensen verwijzen naar symbolen en de geschiedenis om zich te identificeren met die naam of daar bezwaar tegen te maken. Dat is iets wat je kunt verwachten. Maar dat maakt de reactie van rivaliserende supporters niet anti-Semitisch. Ajax-fans zijn geen echte Joden, er is geen haat tegen het Joodse volk, maar haat tegen een voetbal team.”
criminals!”

(Niko about the Ajax board’s announcement that the club would try to stop the Jewish identity of Ajax and its fans)

Conclusion
In this chapter we have seen that the expression of a Jewish identity evokes numerous reactions. In the most extreme form by rival fans, but also from organizations such as CIDI, from Jewish people and from within Ajax.

It was interesting to see that during the interviews the Ajax spectators often became defensive and started to defend themselves. Even for spectators who recognize the sensitivities of the Jewish identity the reactions of rival fans and outsiders seemed to strengthen their group feeling and an ‘us-against-them’ attitude.

POST-MATCH ANALYSIS - NABESCHOUWING
Conclusion

“In de rand van Mokum, aan de Middenweg,
stond een stadion zo sfeervol, het is gesloopt en dat is pech.
Nu in de Arena veel bobo’s weinig sfeer,
het vuurwerk is verdwenen, ik heb heimwee naar De Meer.
Maar de echte fans die blijven, die houden zich niet tam.
Het zijn de Ajax dichards, het zijn de bhoys uit Amsterdam,
de Joden uit Amsterdam!”

Chant by the F-Side

In this thesis I focused on the Jewish identity of Ajax supporters. I have based my research on the following research questions:

- Why do Ajax supporters present themselves as Jews, while most of them are not?
- How do Ajax supporters feel about this identity?
- Which reactions does it evoke?

Why do Ajax supporters present themselves as Jews, while most of them are not?

The history of Ajax has showed that the club and its supporters have strong roots in the Jewish community. Before the Second World War many Ajax supporters were Jews from the Jewish Quarter in Amsterdam, there were Jewish players, such as Eddy Hamel from New York, there were Jewish referees and according to the historian Simon Kuper it was much more Jewish than other Dutch teams. The author David Winner described how Ajax gained a vast Jewish fan base before the Second World War. The Jewish character was strengthened by visiting fans. The historian Vermeer described how many opposing teams referred to Ajax as the ‘club of noses’ (‘de neuzenclub’).

After the Second World War the Jewish Quarter was deserted. There were some of the few surviving Jews who returned to the Quarter and still went to Ajax. However, the days that masses of people from the Quarter would come to the stadium were over.

In the 1960’s and 1970’s the club would transform. Investors became involved with the club and started to invest in the team by paying for transfer fees and salaries. One of these investors was the Jewish businessman Maup Caransa and together with other Jewish investors he would establish Ajax as the best-paying and richest club in the country. For many Jewish investors the club became a Dutch-Jewish family. Jaap van Praag, a Jewish Ajax member, became chairman and several Jews became board members.

At the same time, in the 1970’s, football and it supporters hardened. There were extreme expressions of rivalry and hooliganism was on the rise. Ajax supporters emphasized the Jewish nature of their club, and rival supporters referred to Ajax in anti-Semitic ways. The extreme expressions of rivalry strengthened the Jewish identity of Ajax and its supporters.

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105 “On the edge of Mokum, at the Middenweg,
There was a stadium so full of atmosphere, it has been demolished and that is bad luck.
Now in the Arena many big shots, little atmosphere,
the fireworks are gone, I’m longing for De Meer.
But the real fans remain, they do not keep tame.
They are the Ajax diehards, they are the bhoys from Amsterdam,
the Jews from Amsterdam!”
In the beginning the Jewish identity was mainly expressed by the more fanatical supporters, but in later years it would spread to other spectators as well. In the 1990’s many of the chants in the stadium were about Jews and were sung by many spectators, hard-core or not. The stadium was full of Israeli flags and other references to the Jewish identity of Ajax. For all kinds of spectators Ajax had become a ‘Jewish’ club.

The sociologist Richard Giulianotti has described four different types of spectators: supporters, followers, fans and flâneurs. The classification is made on the basis of loyalty and devotion of the spectators and the extent to which they derive their identity from the club. The identification is strongest for supporters and fans. They identify themselves with the identity of the club, and are loyal to their team. Especially the supporters have a strong personal and emotional link to the club and the supporters often have a strong feeling of community with other supporters. The followers and flâneurs are more disconnected and have thin solidarity towards their team.

From the interviews it appeared that all four type of spectators are present at Ajax. For many supporters, such as members of Vak 410 or the F-Side, Ajax is the highest priority in their life. For some supporters the clubs is even more important than friends and family.

Following Giulianotti it is of no surprise that these more fanatical supporters strongly identify themselves with Ajax and its identity. The more fanatical supporters of the F-Side glorified the Jewish image of Ajax in the 1970’s and over the years many supporters adopted Jewish symbols and made it part of their own identity. They have tattoos with the Star of David and call themselves Jews.

However, it was interesting to see that not only the more fanatical supporters seemed to identify themselves with the Jewish identity of Ajax. Especially in the 1990’s all spectators appear to go along with the Jewish identify of Ajax. The whole stadium sings along with Jewish chants, even the followers and flâneurs who hardly ever go to the stadium.

Also the less fanatical spectators, seemed to adopt the Jewish identity to some extent. They might not have taken a tattoo or consider themselves a Jew. However, for a short while – during a match – they share a Jewish identity with the supporters and other spectators.

Looking at the interviews I believe that this is mainly the result of a feeling of togetherness (in the stadium). The spectators are all different from each other, but many interviewees described a shared passion for Ajax which binds them. They feel sympathy for the club, and even the spectators who do not go to all the games seem to feel some kind of connection. Especially in the stadium there originated a feeling of community between the spectators. With all their differences, while they do not know most of the others and despite the lack of personal contact, they still experience a feeling of community through elements they share.

This is not a community in the traditional meaning but a more loosely connected group of people who share a passion for Ajax and some parts of its identity. It was interesting to see that also for an outsider, who had no connection to football, the spectators often appear as a tight community.
In my opinion the Jewish identity of Ajax supporters is mainly the result of their strong connection with the club. They have adopted the Jewish roots of Ajax and made it part of their identity, even while most of them they are not Jewish themselves. The reason that also less fanatical spectators started to adopt the Jewish identity can mainly be found in a feeling of community with the supporters. They share a passion for Ajax, they feel a togetherness and identify to some extent with this supporters community.

How do Ajax supporters feel about this identity?
There are all kinds of different spectators at Ajax and each spectator attaches different values to the Jewish identity of Ajax. The interviews showed that for some of the supporters the Jewish tradition of Ajax is an important aspect of the supporters culture and their identity. One supporter even stated that if you do not feel Jewish, you are not an Ajacied.

We have seen how the Ajax spectators express a Jewish identity in the stadium through chants, flags and banners. We have also seen how it is expressed outside the football context through tattoos, nicknames for friends, shouts of joy and in some case a strong sympathy for Israel and Jewish people.

When speaking to supporters about their feelings about the fact that they present themselves as Jews, while most of them are not, the interviewees gave three main responses: (1) that it is a matter of reputation towards their rivals; (2) that is just something that is easy to sing along with and has a nice melody; (3) that there is a distinction between ‘Ajax Jews’ and ‘real Jews’.

Some spectators indicated that they adopted a Jewish identity to preserve their reputation towards rival fans. They express a Jewish identity to show that they do not care about the (anti-Semitic) insults by their rivals and believe they would lose face if they would stop referring to Jews.

Other spectators seemed to have more pragmatic feelings about the Jewish identity. They adopted it because the name ‘Jews’ has ‘a nice melody’, ‘it is easy to sing along with’ and ‘it just sounds really good’.

There were also many spectators who seemed to make a distinction between ‘Jews’ and ‘Ajax Jews’. For them the term ‘Jews’ had not particular meaning, it was just a nickname for Ajax and it had nothing to do with ‘real Jews’.

It was interesting to see that almost all of the interviewees seemed to have a rather blasé attitude towards the sensitivities of expressing a Jewish identity. They do not always find it peculiar that they call themselves Jews, while most of them are not and some of them did not necessarily acknowledge the sensitivities within the Dutch society.

Which reactions does it evoke?
The observation that the spectators often have very pragmatic feelings about their Jewish identity and do not necessarily acknowledge its sensitivities is especially remarkable considering the reactions it evokes.
We have seen that many rival fans respond in extreme and often anti-Semitic ways. There are many people in Dutch society, including people in the Jewish community, who are upset or even appalled by the exchange of expression between football fans.

Nevertheless, many spectators show an unmoved attitude towards these sensitivities. Most of the Ajax spectators believe that they are not to blame for these sensitivities. Many of them described how it is the reactions of rivals which are appalling and that their own expressions are only intended favourably about Jews.

It was also interesting to see that some spectators, who seemed to recognize the sensitivities of the Jewish identity, the reactions of outsiders seemed to strengthen their group feeling and an ‘us-against-them’ attitude. The more other people objected against their identity, the more they glorified it. Perhaps the most illustrative was Niko who never sang ‘Jewish’ chants, but was so upset about the objections from outsiders that he wanted to shout ‘Jews’ and wave an Israeli flag all the time.

Modern society: expectations for the future
The principal aim of this thesis was to generate a deeper understanding of the Jewish identity of Ajax supporters. At the same time it is interesting to see whether the results of my research are able to shed some light on the future.

Based on my fieldwork and the sociological theory I believe that the Jewish identity of Ajax spectators can best be placed in the perspective of modern society. Bauman described how the characteristics of modernity, such as urbanization and industrialization, ensured that modern man has become increasingly individualistic. People are less integrated in communities and can move more freely compared to pre-modern society. As a result identities and communities become more fluid and open, enabling people to freely create and change their own identity.

Especially the followers, fans and flâneurs represent such a modern society: they do not have strong feelings of togetherness with other spectators and do not need such a solid form of community. They more easily switch allegiances and take on varying identities.

This could mean that because of the transition to a modern society the Jewish identity of Ajax spectators will slowly fade away. More and more spectators would become flâneurs with only distant relations and without deriving their identity from the club. The feelings of togetherness between the spectators will diminish. Less and less spectators will take over the Jewish identity or they will easily and often switch to other elements. From the research it already appeared that the Jewish identity is nowadays not as present as it was in the 1990’s and it might further disappear.

On the other hand I believe that in future years it might be easier to take on a Jewish identity. In an individualistic society people might feel less restrained by the responses of outsiders and the potential pressure of the rest of society. The Second World War will be further away and the sensitivities surrounding Judaism might reduce. This might make it easier for Ajax spectators to present themselves as Jews, while most of them are not.
I especially believe that active control and regulation will only have counterproductive effects. The interviews showed that most supporters will not let anybody tell them what to do and it will only strengthen their group feeling. The Jewish identity of Ajax spectators might fade over time, but active policies against it might only enforce it.

The Ajax supporters will keep singing, from the top of their lungs and until the sound will fade away:

Langs de lijn, zingt heel het koor
niemand kan ze stoppen en ze gaan maar door
dan volgt het stadion
we zijn Super Joden
Ajax is de naam
in heel Europa
met een grote faam
zo winnen wij elk jaar een cup
want Ajax, Ajax is de club.

Along the side-line, the whole choir sings
nobody can stop them and they just go on
then follows the entire stadium
We are Super Jews
Ajax is the name
across the entire of Europe
with a great reputation
so every year we win a cup
because Ajax, Ajax is the club

Discussion
In this last paragraph I will shortly focus on potential shortcomings of this research and the possibilities of further research. The fieldwork of this research was mainly focused on male spectators. Despite its prominent role within society football is still dominated by men. Female spectators, players, board members and officials are scarce. I have conducted some interviews with female supporters, but a more detailed research of the difference between male and female spectators might have given some new and insightful perspectives.

Another shortcoming of this research might be its potential contribution to the development of sociological theory. The investigation focused solely on Ajax and its spectators and did not include an extensive comparative aspect. However, there are many other football teams were similar processes of identification and extreme expression occur.

In Spain the football team Athletic de Bilbao is presenting itself as a Basque football team and they generally consider the rest of Spain as their rivals. The team promotes the Basque national identity and is only allowing Basques to play for their team. They have a substantial following in the Basque regions of Spain and they have proven to be a significant vehicle for the expression of separatism and anti-Spanish emotions.

Similarly, FC Barcelona promotes themselves as a ‘Catalan’ club and attracts a mass following amongst Catalans and the Catalan autonomy movement (e.g. McFarland 2007, pp. 54-55). For many Barcelona fans the Catalan-image of the club is an important part of their identity as a ‘socio’ (a supporter of FC Barcelona). They present themselves as Catalans and many demand secession from Spain.

Similar relationships between football teams and identity can be found in Scotland and Ireland, where teams are widely used by various (religious) groups to express their identities (Burdsey &
Chappell 2003). This is especially visible in Glasgow: the football team Celtic has a historic association with the people of Ireland and Scots of Irish descent, who are mainly Catholic. The fans of the rival team Glasgow Rangers traditionally come from Scotland or Northern-Ireland, have Protestant backgrounds and support British Unionism. The football teams provide a platform for the expression of the different identities and these are strengthened by the rivalry between the two teams.

In Italy football matches are often a platform to express political ideologies of football fans. The fans of teams like SS Lazio present themselves as the extreme-right, while the fans of Livorno seem to identify themselves with left-wing and communist ideologies. During their matches the fans of Lazio have been waving Nazi flags, while Livorno fans have been waving their red ‘hammer and sickle’ Communist flags (Guschwan 2007, p. 89).

For this research I have interviewed some fans of foreign teams. However, I believe it would be interesting to conduct an extensive comparative investigation to examine the processes of identification in different cultures and at different football clubs.
Literature

Please note that not all of this literature has directly been referenced or quoted in the thesis. Some of the literature has been used as an inspiration or has been used to gain a better insight into the subject of the case study.

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S. Smit, De bal bleef rollen: Ajax binnen voetballend Amsterdam tijdens de Tweede Wereldoorlog unpublished masterthesis University of Amsterdam (UvA), 1997.

Spaaij 2006

Stevenson & Alaug 1999

Stone 2007

Stromberg 1986

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Sugden & Tomlinson 1994

Tajfel 1982

Tajfel & Turner 1979

**Taylor 1971**

**Tuastad 1997**

**Vamplew 1994**

**Van Reusel, Renson & Tollenneer 1999**

**Vermeer 1996**

**Weiss 2001**

**Wilterdink & Van Heerikhuizen 2003**

**Winner 2000**

**Worchel & Austin 1979**
Annex 1 – Jewish chants by Ajax spectators

Selection of Jewish chants by Ajax fans

Langs de lijn, zingt heel het koor
(Along the side-line, the whole choir sings)
niemand kan ze stoppen en ze gaan maar door
(nobody can stop them and they just go on)
dan volgt het stadion
(then follows the entire stadium)
we zijn Super Joden
(We are Super Jews)
Ajax is de naam
(Ajax is the name)
in heel Europa
(across the entire of Europe)
met een grote faam
(with a great reputation)
zo winnen wij elk jaar een cup
(so every year we win a cup)
want Ajax, Ajax is de club.
(because Ajax, Ajax is the club)

Waar komen Joden toch vandaan
(Where do the Jews come from?)
Israel hier ver vandaan
(Israel far away)
Wonen daar ook Super Joden
(Do Super Jews live there to)
Ja daar wonen Super Joden
(Yes, Super Jews live there to)
Vinden Joden voetbal fijn
(Do Jews like football?)
Als ze maar voor Ajax zijn (Yes, but only if they are for Ajax)
Amsterdam, Amsterdam, Amsterdam

Joden, Joden, we worden kampioen
(Jews, Jews, we will become champion)
En wie niet springt, die is geen Jood
(And one who does not jump, is not a Jew)
Joden! Joden!
(Jews! Jews!)
Ole, ole, super/samba Joden, ole, ole
(Ole, ole, super/samba Jews, ole, ole)
Hava nagila, hava nagila, hava nagila, ve nismechah
(Hebrew folk song)
Een echte jood
(A real Jew)
Zingt voor zijn club
(Sings for his team)
Een echte jood zingt voor zijn club...
(A real Jews sings for his team)
Nikos Machlas/Michael Laudrup/Wesley Sneijder/Etc.
is een Jood
([Name of a player] is a Jew)
Een vakkie, een vakkie vol met Joden
(A little stand, a little stand, full with Jews)
Annex 2 – Chants by rival fans

Selection of chants by rival fans referring to Jews

En wie niet springt die is een jood
(And one who does not jump is a Jew)

Kankerjoden, ole, ole
(Cancer Jews, ole, ole)

Je moeder achter de boekenkast
(Your mother behind the bookcase)

Heb je ook zo’n hekel aan de club uit Amsterdam
(Do you also hate the team from Amsterdam?)

Je vader in de douche vergast
(Your father gassed in the shower)

Schop ze op hun neuzen, ja zo hard als je maar kan
(Kick them on their noses, yes as hard as you can)

Kluivert jodenzoon, Kluivert jodenzoon
(Kluivert son of a Jew, Kluivert son of a Jew)

Want het leven duurt maar even
(Because life is only short)

Alle Joden aan het gas.....
(All the Jews on the gas)

Wat zijn die Joden stil
(What are the Jews silent)

Sisssssssssssssssss
(Gas sounds)

Waterreus, kankerkneus, met je grote Jodenneus!
(Waterreus, cancernose, with your giant Jewishnose)

Hitler was een Bosschenaar
(Hitler was from Den Bosch)

(Against goalkeeper Waterreus, who never played for Ajax)

Hitler was een Bosschenaar
(Sung by fans of FC Den Bosch)

Onder de groene zoden, tussen het beton
(Under the green turf, between the concrete)

Marco Bakker is zat
(Marco Bakker is drunk)

Leggen 50.000 joden in het Den Haag stadion
(There lie 50,000 Jews in the The Hague stadium)

Hij rijdt in de ArenA alle Joden plat
(He drives over all the Jews)

(Had ik ’t maar geweten, dan had ik meegedaan)
(If I would have know, I would have joint)

Reference to a tragic incident at the parking deck of the
Ajax stadium, where opera singer Marco Bakker caused
a fatal incident while supposedly driving under
influence)

Lopen hakken, beuken, steken op zo’n jood uit de Jordaan
(Chopping, beeching, stabbing at a Jew from the Jordaan)

Het zijn maar Engelse Joden
(They are just English Jews)

Altijd is Kortjakje ziek
(Kortjakje is always ill)

(Feyenoord and PSV fans against Tottenham Hotspurs
from London, England)

Midden in de week
(In the middle of the week)

Maar zondags niet
(But not on Sundays)

Zondags gaat hij naar Vak S
(On Sunday he goes to Vak S)

(Reference to a tragic incident at the parking deck of the
Ajax stadium, where opera singer Marco Bakker caused
a fatal incident while supposedly driving under
influence)

Met een ketting en een mes
(With a chain and a knife)
Daarna naar de Bijlmermeer
(Then he goes to the Bijlmermeer)
En hakt daar alle neuzen neer
(And chops down all the noses)
(To the melody of Twinkle Twinkle Little Star)

Van Praag onder een cirkelzaag!
(Van Praag under a circular saw)
Van Praag is een jodenplaat!
(Van Praag is a Jewish plague)

Hamas, Hamas, Temmink aan het gas!
(Hamas, Hamas, Temmink on the gas)
(During Den Haag – PSV, against the referee Temmink)
Liever boer zonder poen
(Rather a farmer without money)
Dan een Jood met 10 miljoen
(Than a Jew with 10 million)

Hamas, Hamas, Joden aan het gas!
(Hamas, Hamas, Jews on the gas)

We gaan op jodenjacht!
(We are going to hunt for Jews)

Joden we komen!
(Jews we are coming)
(A reference to the Second World War)

Het is een vak vol met joden!
(It is a stand/side full of Jews!)

Hij is een vriend van de joden
(He is a friend of the Jews)

Joden zijn laf
(Jews are cowardly)

Alle joden zijn homo!
(All Jews are gay)

Iedereen is joods behalve wij!
(Everyone is Jewish except us)

Schop, schop, schop ze neer
(Kick, kick, kick them down)
Schop die joden neer
(Kick those Jews down)

En volgend jaar (and next year)
En volgend jaar (and next year)

Schoppen we joden in elkaar (we beat up the Jews)
(Jews do not participate)
(Contrary to the rival team, Ajax did not participate in that years European Cup)

Het zijn maar kutkankerjoden
(They are just cuntcancer Jews)

We gaan op jodenjacht!
(Jews lopen altijd weg)

Klap klap klap klap klap klap SIEG
(clap … Sieg)

Hij is een vriend van de joden
(He is a friend of the Jews)

Alle joden zijn homo!
(All Jews are gay)

Anne Frank De Boer ole ole
Annex 3 – Description of interviewees and their quotes

The in-depth interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Arjan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>25-30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Lifelong hardcore Ajax fan. Former F-Side member, now visits the games of Ajax in more quiet parts of the stadium. Works in a nine-to-five office job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of interview</td>
<td>In-depth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting of interview</td>
<td>The interview took place in a building of the University of Amsterdam. It was a quiet setting with few other people in the vicinity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Characteristics</td>
<td>Talkative, cooperative, opinionated, well-informed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quotes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Arjan:** “Nowadays it is obviously no longer just the hard-core fans. Because of the appeal of the hard-core fans, it has spread to everybody and now you will see just everybody with Jewish symbols. Maybe not with tattoos, but, for example, everybody is singing along with Jewish chants.”

**Arjan:** “A few years ago you could sometimes see a huge flag of Israel in the ArenA. It covered half of the stand and it was an impressive sight. At that time there were more songs like “Jews, Jews”, “And Who does not jump” and “Where do Jews come from”, than now. It is much less now, but hey, it remains the nickname of Ajax.”

**Arjan:** “I sing along with the Jewish chants in the stadium. It is some kind of automatism. It has become some sort of a habit. I started to go to the stadium in the 1990’s and at that time, it really was the hype. It was not ‘Ajax! Ajax! Ajax!’ but ‘Jews! Jews! Jews!’, ‘Let’s go Jews, let’s go’, ‘Samba Jews’. I do know why I shout it. It is simply because it is good for the atmosphere. When everybody shouts it, it really sounds impressive. Next to that, the word ‘Jews’ creates a lot of possibilities to make songs. It sounds good and makes all kinds of songs possible and it is an easy word to use when making variations on existing songs.”

**Arjan:** “Personally I do not care about it all. It just sounds good to sing and the other supporters see you as Jews. Just go with it.”

**Arjan:** “People who go as far as taking a tattoo with the Star of David, with an F in it [the F-Side logo], often see themselves as Jews. Most of them think that they are really though because of it. (.) There is also a big difference between people with a Jewish tattoo and those who just sing-a-long with a chant. The guys with the tattoos are generally different types who you recognise immediately. They are not necessarily hard-core but just a bit simple. You know, the ones with the blunt and lumpish behaviour, pretending to be hard-core hooligans. Those guys often really think they are connected with Jews and Israel.”

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106 “Nu is het natuurlijk allang niet meer alleen de harde kern. Door de uitstraling van de harde kern heeft het zich verspreid naar iedereen en je ziet nu gewoon iedereen met joodse symbolen. Misschien niet met tatoeages, maar iedereen is bijvoorbeeld wel aan het meeroepen met Joodse spreekkoren.”

107 “Enkele jaren geleden zag je nog wel eens een enorme vlag van Israël in de ArenA. Het nam een half vak in beslag en was een indrukwekkend gezicht. In die tijd waren er ook meer liedjes als “Joden, Joden”, “Wie niet springt” en “Waar komen Joden toch vandaan” dan nu. Het is een stuk minder geworden, maar goed, het blijft de geuzennaam van Ajax.”

108 “In het stadion zing ik ook mee met het Joden geroep. Dat is een soort van automatisme. Het is een soort van gewoontepuur geworden. Ik ging al in de jaren negentig naar het stadion en toen was het natuurlijk nog helemaal de hype. Toen was het niet ‘Ajax! Ajax!’ maar ‘Joden! Joden! Joden!’, ‘Let’s go Joden, let’s go’, ‘Sambajoden’. Ik weet ook wel waarom ik het roep. Dat is gewoon omdat het goed is voor de sfeer. Als iedereen het roept dan klinkt dat echt indrukwekkend. Geeft het woord ‘Joden’ alleen extra mogelijkheden om liedjes te maken. Het klinkt goed en maakt allerlei soorten liedjes mogelijk en het is een makkelijk woord om variaties te maken op bestaande liedjes.”

109 “Mij persoonlijk maakt het met allemaal niet uit. Het ligt gewoon lekker in de mond en de andere supporters zien je als Joden. Gewoon lekker op in haken.”

110 “Mensen die zo ver gaan dat ze een tattoo nemen met een Davidster, met een F er in, zien zichzelf vaak als Joden. De meeste denken dat ze daardoor hard zijn. (.) Er is ook een groot een onderscheid tussen mensen met een Joden tatoeage en mensen die af en toe mee zingen. De mensen die echt dat soort tatoeages zetten zijn toch wat andere figuren, die kan je er zo tussenuit halen. Ze zijn niet per se harde kern, maar gewoon wat simpelere mensen. Van dat
Arjan: “I think that Ajax fans look differently at Israel because they call themselves Jews. I had the same thing, especially when I was younger. I really felt a connection with Israel. I just felt a connection because of Ajax. I always wore a coat with the flag of Israel sewn on it.”

Arjan: “We had to go to Germany, so many people thought: ‘time to get my Israeli flag out of the closet’. Of course, you can understand this to some extent. You make some kind of link between the Jewish Ajax identity and Germany. You make a link with the past, which should not happen actually. However, I can understand people make that connection. It is the same with the Dutch national team, when they went to Germany to the World Cup, some fans wore German army helmets coloured orange. It is of course odd, but it is just fun to point out the history to those Germans. A little bit of rivalry. It is more a form of provocation; it is not as if we, as the Jews, are getting even or something. Because, there is no real rivalry towards Germany, not more than generally between Holland and Germany. There is no real rivalry between Ajax fans and German clubs. For most people the problems with Germany are gone, maybe it is different for older people. I do think that the link between Ajax and the Second World War is not as present as the link between Ajax and the Israel-Palestine conflict. The Second World War is a long time ago and does not really play a big part anymore. On the other hand, I am standing in the same section of the stadium for a very long time now, between the same fanatical people so maybe it is different in other sections.”

Name: Niko (alias)
Age: 30-35
Gender: Male
Description: Originally from Croatia. Describes himself as a lifelong hardcore Ajax fan. Works as a freelance journalist, translator and text writer.
Type of interview: In-depth interview
Setting of interview: The interview was conducted around the stadium. After the interview we exchanged some insights and opinions through e-mail.
Characteristics: Passionate, talkative, expressive.
Quotes:
Niko: “In my opinion ‘Ajax Jews’ and ‘Israel/Jews/World War II’ are two completely different things, and they can call me blind, they can call me stupid, but I don’t give a fuck.”

Niko: “You know what? It fucking pisses me off! I hardly ever shout ‘Jews’ because it makes me think about Anne Frank all the time. However, now the board is gonna forbid us, I am gonna shout it all the time out loud. I am gonna buy a ticket seated next to the chairman and I will endlessly shout ‘Jews! Jews! Jews’ in his ear. Even at halftime, I will keep on shouting ‘Jews! Jews! We are the Jews!’, ‘Hava Nagila’, ‘Jews from Mokum’, ‘Mazzeltov Jews’. I will read stoere lompe hooligan gedrag alsof je harde kern bent. Die denken vaak ook echt dat ze verbonden zijn met de Joden en Israel.”

111 “Ik denk dat Ajax supporters anders tegen Israel aankijken doordat ze zichzelf Joden noemen. Ik had het ook, vooral toen ik jonger was. Ik voelde echt een verbondenheid met Israel. Ik voelde gewoon verbonden door Ajax. Ik had altijd zo een winterjas met zo een Jodenvlaggetje er op.”

112 “We moesten naar Duitsland dus hadden veel mensen zoiets van, ‘ik pak mijn Israëlische vlag weer even uit de kast’. Op zich kan je je daar ook wel iets bij voorstellen. Je legt een soort link tussen de Joodse Ajax identiteit en Duitsland. Je legt een link met een verleden wat eigenlijk helemaal niet zou moeten. Maar ik snap wel dat je die relatie in je hoofd legt. Net zoals mensen met het Nederlands elftal die toen ze naar het WK in Duitsland gingen, dat sommige oranjé Duitse legerhelmpjes droegen. Dat is natuurlijk heel raar, maar het is gewoon leuk om die Duitsers af en toe nog even op hun verleden te wijzen. Beetje de rivaliteit, het is meer iets om een beetje te provoceren. Het is niet dat we als Joden nog even ons gram halen of zo. Want er heerst niet echt een vijandigheid naar Duitsland, niet meer dan anders tussen Nederland en Duitsland. Er is niet echt een extra vijandigheid tussen Ajaxen en Duitse clubs. Maar voor de meeste mensen zijn de problemen met Duitsland de wereld wel uit, misschien dat bij oudere mensen dat minder het geval is. Ik heb overigens wel het idee dat de link tussen Ajax en de tweede wereldoorlog minder sterk aanwezig is dan de link tussen Ajax en het Israel-Palestina conflict. De tweede wereldoorlog is lang geleden en komt niet zo veel meer terug bij Ajax. Maar ja, ik stel natuurlijk ook al vele jaren op dezelfde plek tussen grotendeels dezelfde fanatieke mensen in het stadion. Misschien is het anders op andere plekken in het stadion.”

113 On his request his real name is not used.

114 “Ik zie ‘Ajax Joden’ en ‘Israël/Joden/Tweede Wereld Oorlog’ als twee totaal verschillende dingen. Ze kunnen me blind noemen, ze kunnen me dom noemen, maar dat kan me geen ene reet interesseren.”
from the Torah and the constitution of Israel and I will be waving my Israeli flag of 10 by 10 meters blocking everybody’s view.
I just can’t believe the ugliness of it all. Those people really do not understand anything and they will always be utterly unhappy with themselves, whatever kind of fun job they assign themselves. Bunch of talent-less criminals!”

Name: Martin (alias)
Age: 30-35
Gender: Male
Description: Hardcore Ajax fan. Considers himself a member of F-Side and is a fanatic Ajax supporter. Works as a chemist in a pharmaceutical factory/lab.
Type of interview: In-depth
Setting of interview: The interview took place on a match day in a bar in the city centre of Amsterdam. It was a busy setting with many other people in the vicinity.
Characteristics: Cooperative, wilful, slightly aggressive, opinionated.
Quotes:

Martin: “According to some I give up to much for it, according to some I don’t. I don’t give a shit about birthdays so everybody knows that is an easy choice for me. Weddings are a bit more difficult, but that choice is eventually also pretty clear. Luckily those don’t take place that often.”

Martin: “I don’t give a fuck about what people outside of Ajax think of me. We are Ajax, arrogant as hell, so we do whatever we like.”

Martin “For myself I have made a difference between an ‘Ajax Jew’ and a ‘real Jew’. Call me stupid, call me an idiot, but I would love it if they dared to say that to my face…”

Martin: “Those chants only attack us as Ajax fans and not real Jews, don’t let anyone tell you differently.”

Name: Peter (alias)
Age: 40-50
Gender: Male
Description: Lifelong Ajax fan. Considers himself to be a fanatic but not hardcore supporter of Ajax. Works as a lawyer.


On his request his real name is not used.

"Volgens sommigen laat ik er veel te veel voor, volgens sommigen niet. Verjaardagen interesseren me toch al geen reet dus iedereen weet dat die keuze makkelijk is. Trouwerijen is iets lastiger, maar die keuze is uiteindelijk ook duidelijk. Maar gelukkig komen die toch niet vaak voor."

"Het interesseert me geen fuck wat mensen buiten Ajax van me vinden. Wij zijn Ajax, arrogant als de pest, dus wij doen lekker waar we zin in hebben."

"Ik heb voor mezelf een scheiding gemaakt tussen een “Ajax Jood” en een “echte Jood”. Noem mij maar debiel, noem me een mongoel. Lijkt me leuk als ze dat in me bek doen..."

"Die spreekkoren vallen alleen ons aan, als Ajax fans, en niet echte Joden, laat niemand je wat anders vertellen!"

On his request his real name is not used.
Peter: “Since increasing amounts of people started to “insult” us as Jews, we started to call ourselves Jews. In the 1970’s we were more and more ‘the Noses’ or simply ‘the Jews’ of Ajax. Completely in the style of the F-Side [the hard-core fans] we just adopted that name and presented ourselves as ‘those Jews’ of Ajax, to be able to silence the opposing fans and to take away their ammunition.”122

Peter: “Since increasing amounts of people started to “insult” us as Jews, we started to call ourselves Jews. In the 1970’s we were more and more ‘the Noses’ or simply ‘the Jews’ of Ajax.” (…) We just adopted that name and presented ourselves as ‘those Jews’ of Ajax, to be able to silence the opposing fans and to take away their ammunition.” (…) It became a part of our identity and we could show that we were different from all those other guys.”123

Peter: “We come to the stadium to see the opponent being defeated. We do not consider the possibility of loosing, we just go to the stadium to check whether Ajax will win with five or six against null.”124

Peter: “The hard core fans using the term ‘Jews’ has got nothing to do with Israel or the Jewish people, but solely with the rival fans who started calling us like that in the 1970’s.”125

Peter: “I don’t see myself as a Jew, but as an Ajax fan. At the same time, it can sound really good to sing ‘Jews’ in certain songs. I would rather sing songs about Ajax and Amsterdam, but to be honest, I do not really care that much.”126

Peter: “When Ajax drew against Maccabi Tel Aviv in the Champions League, everybody was very excited. They all thought it was fantastic and said things like ‘we are going home to Israel’ and that kind of stuff. It was really extraordinary, people were even cheering for Maccabi during the match. During such moments you really notice that many people feel very connected to Israel.”127

Peter: “Of course the problem could be that Ajax supporters present themselves as Jews and that subsequently the opposition reacts. However, you should not forget that the other fans already began the whole thing way before the Ajax supporters started to present themselves as Jews. For years, they had been shouting things like ‘cancer Jews’. In that case, it is way better to be proud of your Jewish image and to be positive about it. If these others notice that you take offence, they will be even more extreme and more anti-Semitic. In that case it will only escalate.”128

122 “Wij zijn ons Joden gaan noemen, nadat we hier en daar steeds vaker die "scheldnaam' naar ons hoofd geslingerd kregen. Begin jaren zeventig waren we steeds vaker "de neuzen" en ronduit "die Joden" van Ajax. Geheel in de stijl van de F-side hebben we die naam gewoon omarmd en zijn onszelf dus als "Joden" neer gaan zetten, om zo de monden van de tegenstanders te snoeren, ze als het ware het gras voor de voeten weg te maaien."

123 “Wij zijn ons Joden gaan noemen, nadat we hier en daar steeds vaker die "scheldnaam" naar ons hoofd geslingerd kregen. Begin jaren zeventig waren we steeds vaker "de neuzen" en ronduit "die Joden" van Ajax." (…) Wij hebben die naam gewoon omarmd en zijn onszelf dus als "Joden" neer gaan zetten, om zo de monden van de tegenstanders te snoeren, ze als het ware het gras voor de voeten weg te maaien."

124 “We komen naar het stadion om de tegenstander verslagen te zien worden. We denken niet eens aan de mogelijkheid van verliezen, we komen gewoon naar het stadion om te zien of Ajax met vijf of zes nul gaat winnen."

125 “De harde kern die het woord 'Joden' gebruikt heeft niks te maken met Israel of het Joodse volk, maar allen met andere fans die ons zo begonnen in de jaren zeventig."

126 “Ik zie mezelf niet als 'Jood' maar als een Ajacied. Tegelijkertijd zingt 'Jood' soms wel erg lekker in bepaalde liedjes. Ik zing liever liedjes die over Ajax en Amsterdam gaan, maar het maakt me eerlijk gezegd niet zoveel uit."

127 “Toen Ajax tegen Maccabi Tel Aviv lootte in de Champions League was iedereen super enthousiast. Iedereen vond het fantastisch en riepen dingen als 'we gaan naar huis in Israel' en dat soort dingen. Het was heel vreemd, tijdens de wedstrijd juichten de mensen voor Maccabi. Op dat soort momenten merk je echt dat veel mensen zich erg verbonden voelen met Israel."

Name: Willemieke
Age: 20-25
Gender: Female
Description: Former steward/security officer at Ajax and Ajax supporter. Works as a PhD student.
Type of interview: In-depth
Setting of interview: The interview was conducted at the home of the interviewee. It was a quiet setting with no other people in the vicinity.
Characteristics: Talkative, cooperative, friendly, well-informed.
Quotes:

Willemieke: “Many people hate Ajax and Ajacieden call themselves Jews, so you could think that because of that those people will hate Jews or express themselves in anti-Semitic ways. I don’t really believe that is true. In most cases it is pretty clear that the people express themselves against Ajax and not against Jews.”

Willemieke: “It is a feud between two groups which sometimes escalates. However, it is not about the Jewish people, it is about the nickname of a football club. It is only logical that people refer to symbols and history to identify with that name or to object to it. That is something you can expect. However, that does not make the reaction of rival fans anti-Semitic. Ajax fans are not real Jews, there is no hate against the Jewish people, but hate against a football team.”

Name: Nathalie
Age: 25-30
Gender: Female
Description: Outsider. Not an Ajax fan or football fan. Student at the University of Amsterdam
Type of interview: In-depth
Setting of interview: The interview was conducted at the home of the interviewee. It was a quiet setting without other people in the vicinity.
Characteristics: Talkative, cooperative, expressive, enthusiastic.
Quotes:

Name: Rich
Age: 20-25
Gender: Male
Description: Fanatical Ajax supporter. Student at a university.
Type of interview: In-depth
Setting of interview: The interview took place on a match day in a bar in the city centre of Amsterdam. It was a busy setting with many other people in the vicinity.
Characteristics: Talkative, cooperative
Quotes:

129 “Veel mensen haten Ajax en Ajacieden noemen zichzelf Joden, dus je kan denken dat daardoor die mensen Joden zullen haten of zich antisemitisch uiten. Ik geloof niet echt dat dat zo is. In veel gevallen is het wel duidelijk dat de mensen zich uiten tegen Ajax en niet tegen Joden.”

130 “Het is een vete tussen twee groepen die soms escaleert. Maar het gaat niet over de Joodse mensen, het gaat over de bijnaam van een voetbalclub. Het is alleen maar logisch dat mensen verwijzen naar symbolen en de geschiedenis om zich te identificeren met die naam of daar bezwaar tegen te maken. Dat is iets wat je kunt verwachten. Maar dat maakt de reactie van rivaliserende supporters niet anti-Semitisch. Ajax-fans zijn geen echte Joden, er is geen haat tegen het Joodse Volk, maar haat tegen een voetbal team.”
Rich: “You are an Ajacied if you understand Amsterdam. You understand that Ajax is a unique club, which can’t be compared to any other. […] You are arrogant, confident and firmly convinced that Ajax will win, wherever, against whoever, whenever. […] You know that your club is the best, that your team plays the most attacking football and that your club has the most technically gifted players. Others know this as well, so you know that many people hate you and your club. But you don’t give a shit about that.”

Rich: “On the market, Saturday morning, a man in an Ajax tracksuit. It is becoming familiar sight again: people are again wearing the club clothing with pride. Or even with extra pride. People who recognize the clubs color and logo respond differently. Some start staring straight ahead, others are starting to grin. Some others greet or wink, because they are also a part of it.”

Rich: “Ajax is for everyone and does it make much of a difference that the Arena [i.e. the stadium of Ajax] is full of non-Amsterdam people? Occasionally it is quite hilarious, but I respect every Ajax fan who comes to the Arena. We are for only one thing and that is Ajax.”

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Name: David Beesemer
Age: 30-40
Gender: Male
Description: Member of the Board at CIDI ('Centre Information and Documentation on Israel'). From Jewish origin and active within several Jewish organisations. Works as a real estate investor.

Type of interview: In-depth
Setting of interview: The interview took place in one of the real estate properties of the interviewee. It was a quiet setting without other people in the vicinity.

Characteristics: Talkative, cooperative, friendly, interested, expressive, well-dressed

Quotes:

Beesemer: To be honest, I do not really have a problem with the songs of the Ajax fans. I do have a problem with the negative reactions.”

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Name: Uri Coronel
Age: 65
Gender: Male
Description: At the time of the interview the interviewee was the chairman of Ajax. At this moment the interviewee has not official function at Ajax and is only involved in the background. Used to work in the insurance industry.

Type of interview: (Short) interview

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131 “Je bent een Ajacied als je Amsterdam snapt. Je begrijpt dat Ajax een club op zichzelf is, waarmee met geen enkele club een vergelijking te maken valt. […] Je bent arrogant, zelfverzekerd en bent er heilig van overtuigd dat Ajax waar dan ook, tegen wie dan ook, op elk tijdstip kan winnen. […] Je weet dat jouw club de beste is, dat jouw club het meest aanvallende voetbal speelt en dat jouw club de meest technische spelers in de gelederen heeft. Anderen weten dit, dus jij weet dat veel mensen jou en jouw club haten. Maar dat interesseert je geen ruk.”


133 “Ajax is voor iedereen en maakt het uit dat een groot deel van de Arena met niet-Amsterdammers gevuld is? Af en toe nogal lachwekkend, maar ik heb respect voor iedere Ajax-fan die naar de Arena komt. We zijn er maar voor één ding en dat is Ajax.”

134 “Om eerlijk te zijn, ik heb niet echt een probleem met de liedjes van Ajax fans. Ik heb wel een probleem met de negatieve reacties.”
Setting of interview: The interview took place in the Jewish Historical Museum (‘Joods Historisch Museum’). The museum had organised a special event about the Jewish history of Ajax. During the event Uri Coronel was extensively interviewed by Simon Kuper. After the interview by Kuper I also conducted a short interview with Uri Coronel at the museum. I have used the data of boths these interviews in this research.

Characteristics: Subdued, calm, eloquent, well-dressed, distinguished.

Quotes:

Coronel: “I especially remember one match away against Feyenoord. Before the game we [the board of Ajax] were escorted by the police to the stadium of Feyenoord. We had to walk past the Feyenoord supporters who were all standing around us and making the Nazi-salute. We literally had to walk through a row of Hitler-saluting Feyenoord supporters.”

Coronel: “Last year we had won in The Hague and after the match you could hear the players of The Hague in the dressing room and hallways shouting: ‘Kankerjoden’ [‘cancer Jews’] and so on.”

Coronel: “It also happened in Utrecht, even on the stand with business seats. Those people were shouting ‘Joden gaan eraan!’ [Jews are gonna get destroyed].”

Coronel: “Ajax never was really Jewish. After the war, successful Jews stuck together, but not much more than 200 men, with their father, uncle and aunt. But I immediately admit that there are more Jews coming to Ajax than to the shul. (...) Only in the last twenty or thirty years, the supporters have adopted the Jewish image. (...) In the beginning we were proud of it. Ajax belonged to us (...) They shout nothing more than ‘jews, Jews’, that is it. I can not mind this. (...) Jewish people seem to have some identification with Ajax. Sometimes I hear people say: ‘Jews who love football are in principle for Ajax’ (...) In Israel they consider it to be great. People who do not know about the responses from rivals really just find it to be great (...) I only started to have uncomfortable feelings about it when our opponents started to treat us disrespectfully. Before that I thought it was rather great (...) In my opinion the reactions from supporters of other clubs are really embarrassing. But I think you can not resolve it. In the beginning I have experienced it as very unpleasant, but apparently you get used to it.”

The short interviewees

Respondent: R1
Description: -
Quotes:

R1: “They call us Jews? Well, that’s right! We are super Jews! Because to us that is not an insult!”

135 “Ik herinner met name een wedstrijd uit tegen Feyenoord. Voor de wedstrijd werden we door de politie naar het stadion van Feyenoord begeleid. We moesten langs de Feyenoord supporters lopen die allemaal om ons heen stonden en de Nazi-groet brachten. We moesten letterlijk door een haag van Hitlergroet brengende Feyenoord supporters lopen.”

136 “Afgelopen jaar hadden we gewonnen in Den Haag en na de wedstrijd hoorde je de spelers van Den Haag in de kleedkamer en de gangen schreeuwen: ‘Kankerjoden, dit en dat’.”

137 “Het gebeurde ook in Utrecht, zelfs op de businesstribune. Die mensen schreeuwen ‘Joden gaan eraan!’.”

138 “Echt Joods is Ajax nooit geweest. Na de oorlog klitten succesvolle Joden bij elkaar, maar niet heel veel meer dan 200 man, met hun vader, oom en tante. Maar ik geef gelijk toe dat er meer Joden naar Ajax komen dan naar de sjoel. (...) Pas de laatste twintig, dertig jaar hebben de supporters zich het Joodse imago aangemeten. (...) In het begin waren we er trots op. Ajax was van ons. (...) Ze roepen niet meer dan ‘Joden, Joden’, dat is alles. Ik kan dit niet erg vinden (...) Er is bij Joden wel een identificatie met Ajax. Ik hoor wel eens zeggen: Joden die van voetballen houden zijn in principe wel voor Ajax (...) In Israël vindt men het geweldig. Mensen die reacties van rivalen niet kennen vinden het echt alleen maar geweldig (...) Ik kreeg pas vervelende gevoelens toen de tegenpartij ons onheus bejegende. Daarvoor vond ik het wel kicken (...) Ik vind de reacties van supporters van andere clubs echt beschamend. Maar ik vind het niet op te lossen. Ik heb het in het begin wel als heel onaangenaam ervaren, maar je went er kennelijk aan.”

139 “Zij noemen ons Joden? Nou dat klopt! Wij zijn super Joden! Dat is voor ons namelijk géén belediging!”
Respondent: R2
Description: -
Quotes:

R2: “We are Ajax, and – damn it – we have a reputation to uphold.”  

Respondent: R3
Description: -
Quotes:

R3: “It does not matter where you come from, who you are, you are part of it because you’re for Ajax.”

R3: “Jews is just Ajax. It has got nothing to do with ‘regular’ Jews.”

Respondent: R4
Description: Older Ajax fan (Presumably 50-60 years old)
Quotes:

R4: “Feyenoord and the others use it to annoy and insult us. We just wanted to show that we don’t care, that we don’t see it as an insult. So we just became the Jews. If we stop now with ‘Jews! Jews! Jews!’ we lose face towards Feyenoord.”

Respondent: R5
Description: -
Quotes:

R5: “The term Jews has been re-appropriated by us. I sing it loud and proud, anywhere.”

Respondent: R6
Description: -
Quotes:

R6: “The chanting of ‘Jews’ and those kind of reference have taken place for years now and will never stop, it is just a part of Ajax. When you are going to an away game and you are in the opposition’s city or you and the group enter their stand or the away section, then we have to show that the Jews are back.”

Respondent: R7
Description: -
Quotes:

140 “Wij zijn Ajax Amsterdam en we hebben verdorie een naam hoog te houden.”
141 “Het maakt niet uit waar je vandaan komt, wie je bent, je hoort er bij omdat je voor Ajax bent.”
142 “Joden is gewoon Ajax, het heeft niets te maken met ‘gewone’ Joden.”
143 “Feyenoord en de anderen gebruiken het om ons te irriteren en te beledigen. Wij wilden gewoon laten zien dat het ons niets kan schelen, dat wij het niet zien als een belediging. Als wij nu stoppen met ‘Joden! Joden! Joden!’ laten wij ons kennen tegenover Feyenoord.”
144 “De term Joden is van scheldnaam geworden tot geuzennaam, Ik zing het ook, uit volle borst, waar dan ook.”
145 “Het roepen van ‘Joduh’ en dergelijke gebeurt al jaren en zal ook nooit meer stoppen het hoort nu eenmaal bij Ajax. Als je naar een uitwedstrijd gaat en je zit in de stad van de tegenstander of je komt met de groep het thuisvak in van de tegenstander of uitvak dan moeten we laten horen dat de Joduh er ook weer zijn.”
R7: “It has become part of the supporters culture.”

Respondent: R8
Description: A young Ajax fan (Presumably 15-16 years old). He indicated that he was not Jewish and came across as less-nuanced and with strong opinions.
Quotes:
R8: “If you do not feel Jewish, you are not an Ajacied. It is us against everybody else.”

Respondent: R9
Description:
Quotes:
R9: “By referring to Ajax as Jews, you make some kind of link with a completely different thing and with a certain history. A link which, in fairness, should not really be made, but I can understand why people do it.”

Respondent: R10
Description: A fan of Feyenoord
Quotes:
R10: “Personally I think the word ‘Jew’ has two meanings: someone of the Jewish faith and someone who is a hardcore supporter of Ajax, which I am neither.”

Respondent: R11
Description:
Quotes:
R11: “We are the ‘Jews’ in our own way and it has got nothing to do with any religion or whatever kind of political bullshit.”

Respondent: R12
Description:
Quotes:
R12: “The fans all know that Ajax has got nothing to do with Israel or the Jews.”

146 “Het is een onderdeel geworden van de supporters cultuur.”
147 “Als je je niet Joods voelt ben je geen Ajacied, klaar zat. Het is wij tegen iedereen.”
148 “Door te verwijzen naar Ajax als Joden wordt een soort van link gelegd met een heel ander ding en met bepaalde geschiedenis. Een link die eerlijk gezegd niet echt gemaakt zou moeten worden, maar ik kan begrijpen waarom mensen het doen.”
149 “Persoonlijk zie ik het woord ‘Jood’ als een woord met twee betekenissen: iemand met het Joodse geloof en iemand die een hardcore supporter van Ajax is, wat ik ook niet ben.”
150 “Wij zijn ‘de Joden’ op onze eigen manier en het heeft niets te maken met wat voor geloof of politieke bullshit dan ook.”
151 “De fans weten allemaal dat Ajax niets te maken heeft met Israel of de Joden.”
R13: “I am getting tired of Israeli or Jewish organizations who constantly complain about chants like ‘Kanker Joden’ ['Cancer Jews']. Do they really not understand that ‘Cancer Jews’ has got nothing to do with real Jews, or do they just not want to understand?”

R14: “When other people can’t see the difference, than it is their problem, but that does not mean that we have to stop waving our Israeli flags and things like that.”

R15: “A while ago a Jew was walking on the street in Rotterdam and was wearing a kippah. He walked past some fans of Feyenoord and they started to insult the Jewish guy: ‘Hey, fucking Ajax fan’ [‘Hey, kanker Ajacied’]. The guy had nothing to do with Ajax, he was not wearing their jersey or anything. They just saw a Jew and immediately associated that with Ajax. Apparently, their hatred towards Ajax is so big that it spreads out to Jewish people. Maybe it was some kind of instinctive reaction. The Feyenoord fans apparently experienced feelings of hatred when seeing a Jew.”

R16: “Feyenoord has got nothing to do with Palestine, we never had en we never will. You have to see it as two separated worlds and it is just intended as a provocation towards 020 [Amsterdam/Ajax].”

R17: “Feyenoord fans with Palestine flags? Everybody knows how Rotterdam is, we all hate those muslims. There are not that many people at Feyenoord who are really fond of the Muslim world. It is really just to annoy those people from 020. We do not identify ourselves with the Palestinians. It has got nothing to do with that.”

152 “Ik heb het helemaal gehad met die Israëlische of Joodse organisaties die constant lopen te klagen over spreekkoren zoals ‘Kanker Joden’. Begrijpen ze nou echt niet dat ‘Kanker Joden’ niets te maken heeft met echte joden of willen ze het gewoon niet begrijpen?”

153 “Wanneer andere mensen het verschil niet zien, dan is dat hun probleem, maar dat betekent niet dat wij moeten stoppen met het zwaaien met Israëlische vlaggen en dat soort dingen.”

154 “Een tijdje geleden liep een Jood in Rotterdam over straat met een keppel op. Hij liep langs een paar Feyenoord fans en zij begonnen die Joodse jongen uit te schelden, ‘Hey, kanker Ajacied’. Die jongen had niets met Ajax, hij had geen Ajax shirt aan of wat dan ook. Ze zagen gewoon een Jood en associeerden dat gelijk met Ajax. Blijkbaar zit hun haat tegen Ajax zo diep dat het overslaat naar Joodse mensen. Misschien was het een soort van instinctieve reactie. De Feyenoord fans ervaarden blijkbaar haatgevoelens toen ze een jood zagen.”

155 “Feyenoord heeft niets te maken met Palestina, hebben we nooit gehad en zullen we nooit hebben. We moet het zien als twee aparte werelden en het is gewoon bedoeld als provocatie naar 020.”
Respondent: R18
Description: A fan of Feyenoord
Quotes:

R18: “I can imagine that many supporters of Ajax can’t make the distinction between the football and the real world. Their identity as a supporter is too much connected to the outside. Over there, they really feel that they are the Jews. This is completely different from the Feyenoord supporters. We never shout “we are the Palestinians”. We might wave a flag of Palestine, but this is nothing compared to Ajax. Over there, you see Israeli flags all the time and there are so many people who really think they are Jews or somehow connected to Jews. They even have tattoos with the Star of David and that kind of stuff.”

Respondent: R19
Description: A fan of Feyenoord
Quotes:

R19: “There is nothing in the tradition of Feyenoord against Jews or pro-Palestine. At Ajax, you can really see the Jewish influences and the Jewish past. It used to be a club with many Jewish people. Even though there are not as many Jews at the club as before, some of them are still there. At least there is some kind of relation between Ajax and Jews. There is nothing relating us to Palestinians…”

Respondent: R20
Description: A Jewish Ajax fan
Quotes:

R20: “I am Jewish and I find it extremely annoying. I think it is ridiculous that people pretend to be Jewish while they share nothing of the history and what it truly means. I think it is terrible.”

Respondent: R21
Description: A Jewish Ajax fan
Quotes:

R21: “As a Jew I have absolutely no problem with it. I think it is great to see all those Israeli flags and Stars of David in the stadium.”

156 “Feyenoord fans met Palestijnse vlaggen? Iedereen weet hoe Rotterdam is, we hebben allemaal een hekel aan die moslims. Er zijn niet veel mensen bij Feyenoord die echt fan zijn van de moslimwereld. Het is gewoon om die gasten uit 020 te irriteren. We identificeren onszelf niet met Palestijnen. Daar heeft het niets mee te maken.”
157 “Ik kan me voorstellen dat veel Ajax supporters het onderscheid tussen voetbal en de echte wereld niet kunnen maken. Hun identiteit als supporter is te veel verbonden met daarbuiten. Ze voelen zich daar echt de Joden. Dat is volstrekt anders dan Feyenoord supporters. Wij roepen nooit ‘We zijn de Palestijnen’. We zwaaien misschien met een Palestijnse vlag, maar dit is niets vergeleken met Ajax. Daar zie je constant Israëlische vlaggen en er zijn zo veel mensen die echt denken dat ze Joden zijn of dat ze verbonden zijn met Joden. Ze hebben zelfs tatoeages met de Davidsster en dat soort dingen.”
158 “Er is niets in de traditie van Feyenoord tegen Joden of voor Palestina. Bij Ajax kan je echte de Joodse invloed zien en het Joodse verleden. Het was een club met veel Joodse mensen. Ondanks dat er niet zo veel Joden meer bij de club zijn, sommige zijn er nog steeds. In ieder geval is er een soort van relatie tussen Ajax en Joden. Er is niets dat ons verbindt met Palestijnen.”
159 “Ik ben Joods en vind het verschrikkelijk irritant. Ik vind het belachelijk dat mensen doen alsof ze Joods zijn terwijl ze helemaal niks gemeenschappelijk hebben met haar geschiedenis en wat het echt betekent. Ik vind het vreselijk.”
160 “Als Jood heb ik er absoluut geen probleem mee. Ik vind het geweldig om al die Israelische vlaggen en Davidssterren te zien in het stadion.”
Respondent: R22
Description: A Jewish Ajax fan
Quotes:

R22: “Ajax fans shouting about Jews leads to reactions by other fans and that can be painful. However, whatever you do, you cannot stop it. Ajax and Jews are inseparable for many people. Moreover, a football supporter sees some kind of distinction with the whole Ajax Jews thing, as I normally call it. But do you really think that a Jew who does not know anything about football even knows the term ‘Ajax Jews’? Do you really think he will make that distinction? I do not think so! But what can you do, there are things in football which are even more disgusting.”

Respondent: R23
Description: -
Quotes:

R23: “No one can tell me what I am allowed to sing and what I am allowed to wear. I can understand that Jewish people can take offence, since there are some horrible chants in the stadiums, referring to the darkest periods in their history. However, this is not done by us, but by the opposition. The things we do shout are at least positive. It’s the rival fans who have to stop in order to prevent the Jews being offended.

R23: “I do not understand why the Jews (and the Ajax board and half of hypocritical Holland) never wants to see the supporters’ side of the story. The Star of David and the word Jews has long ago lost the meaning it was once given to it by Judaism and the Jewish people. No one has the exclusive right to a certain symbol. Symbols are taken over by other groups all the time. Religions, people and cultures take over symbols all the time and give it their own meaning. By using the Star of David for more than 20 years, the Ajax supporters have given it a different meaning, which is just as valid as the one given to it by the Jews. Even though they have been using it for way longer.”

R23: “If the Ajax board really wants to do something, than teach something about Judaism, make people aware of the meanings or even teach the fans about the Jewish history and the meanings of its symbols. Don’t simply deny the Jewish history or try to stop Ajax fans from cultivating it. When Ajax fans are more aware of the roots and meanings, they can make their own decisions about whether or not they want to present themselves as Jews.”

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162 “Niemand vertelt mij wat ik mag zingen en wat voor kleding ik mag dragen. Ik kan begrijpen dat Joodse mensen het aanstootgevend vinden, want er zijn verschrikkelijke spreekkoren in de stadions, die verwijzen naar de donkerste periodes van hun geschiedenis. Dit wordt echter niet gedaan door ons, maar door de tegenstander. De dingen die we schreeuwen zijn in ieder geval positief. Het zijn onze rivalen die moeten stoppen om te voorkomen dat Joden zich beledigd voelen.”

163 “Ik begrijp niet waarom de Joden (en het Ajax bestuur en de helft van hypocriet Nederland) nooit de supporters’ kant van het verhaal wil zien. De Davidster en het woord Joden hebben al lang geleden de betekenis verloren die het ooit had gekregen door het Jodendom en het Joodse volk. Niemand heeft het exclusieve recht op een bepaald symbool. Symbolen worden de hele tijd overgenomen door andere groepen. Godsdiensten, mensen en culturen nemen constant symbolen over en geven er hun eigen betekenis aan. Door de Davidster meer dan 20 jaar te gebruiken hebben de Ajax-supporters er een andere betekenis aan gegeven, die is net zo geldig als degene die er aan was gegeven door de Joden. Ook al maken zij er al veel langer gebruik van.”

164 “Als het Ajax-bestuur er echt iets aan wil doen, geeft dan het de Jodendom,maak de mensen bewust van de betekenis of leer zelfs de fans over de Joodse geschiedenis en de betekenis van de symbolen. Ga niet simpelweg de Joodse geschiedenis ontkennen of proberen om Ajax-fans te laten stoppen met het cultiveren daarvan. Wanneer Ajax fans zich meer bewust zijn van de oorsprong en betekenis, dan kunnen ze zelf beslissen of ze zich willen presenteren als Joden.”
Respondent: R24
Description: -
Quotes:

**R24:** You are a supporter when you go to the club in good and bad times. It is useless for Ajax if someone is sitting at home with an Ajax jersey and Ajax mug listening to ‘Langs de Lijn’ [*a radio programme*]. It is only useful for Ajax if you support your team in difficult times and people who don’t do that are no supporters. Others might be fans, but nothing more for the time being.\(^{165}\)

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Respondent: R25
Description: -
Quotes:

**R25:** “Fans come, supporters stay, Ultras everyday.”\(^{166}\)

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Respondent: R26
Description: Nicknamed ‘Corner’. Hardcore Ajax supporter.
Quotes:

**R26:** “At this moment Ajax has a high priority for me. I can almost say that it is Ajax above all. It is very nice that my brother in law has his birthday on October 1, but Ajax – Brugge is a bit more important than that.”\(^{167}\)

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Respondent: R27
Description: -
Quotes:

**R27:** “I earn my money in a bar. I always want to work. I sometimes skip some hours in school for it, but I don’t work when Ajax plays. They know that. They can beg all they want, but I don’t work.”\(^{168}\)

**R27:** “The everlasting discussion will probably be whether you are a ‘teletekst supporter’ [someone who sits at home following the score on ceefax/teletext] or that you actually go to matches. I think that the feeling for Ajax does not have to be different. But I do think that “once an Ajacied, always an Ajacied”. You don’t just switch to another club, or go a year without Ajax and then return when the results improve.”\(^{169}\)

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\(^{165}\) “Supporter ben je als je je club in goede en in slechte tijden bezoekt. Ajax heeft er niets aan als iemand thuis in een Ajaxshirt met een Ajax mok voor zich Langs de Lijn zit te luisteren. Ajax heeft er pas wat aan als je je club aanmoedigt in moeilijke tijden en mensen die dat doen zijn supporters. Anderen zijn misschien fans maar meer voorlopig nog niet.”

\(^{166}\) The supporter of Vak 410 used this English sentence and no translation was used.

\(^{167}\) “Op dit moment heeft Ajax een hoge prioriteit voor mij. Ik kan haast wel zeggen dat het Ajax boven alles is. Dat m’n zwager op 1 oktober jarig is, is hartstikke leuk natuurlijk, maar Ajax - Club Brugge is toch net effe iets belangrijker.”

\(^{168}\) “Ik verdien mijn extra centen in de horeca. Ik wil altijd werken. Laat er weleens uurtjes school voor schieten, maar ik werk niet als Ajax speelt. En dat weten ze ook. Ze kunnen smeken wat ze willen, maar ik werk dan niet.”

\(^{169}\) “Het eeuwige discussiepunt zal wel blijven of je een ‘teletekst supporter’ bent, of dat je ook echt naar wedstrijden gaat. Ik denk dat het Ajax gevoel wat dat betreft niet anders hoeft te zijn. Maar ik vind wel “eens Ajacied, altijd Ajacied.” Je wordt niet zomaar voor een andere club, of effe een jaartje geen Ajax en dan weer wel als het beter gaat.”
Respondent: R28
Description: -
Quotes:
R28: “If Ajax would again be in the European Cup final... I could not miss that. I would even postpone my own wedding. Although I think my girl would then leave me anyway.”

R28: “You can call yourself an Ajacied if the club is in your heart and in your veins. This means that you should follow your club, occasionally visit a game and be absolutely gutted if we loose.”

Respondent: R29
Description: -
Quotes:
R29: “With me, my wife does not have priority. I have told her when we got together that I go to Ajax whenever I can go to Ajax, my wife can’t change anything about that.”

Respondent: R30
Description: Nicknamed ‘Ernie’.
Quotes:
R30: “The wife can bugger off! She can get enough attention on the other five days of the week.”

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170 “Als Ajax weer in Europa Cup finale zou staan... dat kan ik niet missen. Ik zou zelfs me eigen trouwerij er voor verplaatsen. Al denk ik dat me meissie dan sowieso weg is.”
171 “Je mag je Ajacied noemen als de club in je hart zit en door je aderen stroomt dat houdt in dat je de club moet volgen, zo nu en dan een wedstrijd proberen te bezoeken en er de pest in hebben als we verliezen.”
172 “Bij mij gaat mijn vrouw niet voor. Ik heb gezegd toen we iets kregen dat ik naar Ajax ga als ik naar Ajax kan, daar kan mijn vrouw niks aan veranderen.”
173 “Het vrouwtje dondert maar lekker op! Die kan die andere 5 dagen van de week genoeg aandacht krijgen.”
Annex 4 - Pictures

The following pictures are intended as an illustration to this thesis. They originate from private collections and websites (e.g. afca.nl; ajaxfotoside.nl; ajax.netwerk.to).