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Constructing and contesting identities and community membership in online football forums

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CONSTRUCTING AND CONTESTING IDENTITIES AND COMMUNITY MEMBERSHIP IN ONLINE FOOTBALL FORUMS

A Research Report submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Psychology by Coursework and Research Report in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 16 February 2015.

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DECLARATION

I declare that this research project is my own, unaided work. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at this or any other university.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Word Count:

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I would like to dedicate this to my granny, Danae Papaphotis. I will always love you. Thank you for all the love and care you gave me. You are gone but never forgotten. You live on in me and I hope I can make you proud.

I also owe a lot of thanks and appreciation to my research supervisor Prof. Kevin Whitehead. You have been a very understanding and wonderful supervisor and I would not have been able to do this without your guidance and expertise. Thank you so much.

Angelo Philippides

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Abstract

The internet has provided a new medium of communication that has resulted in distinct forms of social interaction and provided a new social space in which people from all over the world come together as a community to discuss football. Within this space they are socialised, cultures are transmitted, social structures are reproduced and identity is transmitted. Thus the aim of this study was to understand how followers of a particular football team invoke and contest membership into the categories of football supporter and community of supporters in an online forum. The method used was Membership Categorisation Analysis (MCA) within the Conversation Analysis (CA) approach. The sample was a critical case study and consisted of interactions from a single discussion thread of an online football supporter forum. The results revealed that the Opening Post (OP) formed a space in which potential respondent identities and status as community members could be made relevant however implicitly provided constraints regarding how members were expected to respond. Agreeing members produced a community consensus on how other members should respond however as more members with disagreeing responses expressed their opinion, a more moderate community consensus emerged in which disagreement and agreement between members was not a requisite for contestation of community membership. When there was contestation for community membership and identity, members used collective pronouns, account-giving, partial agreement, category-tied predicates, vernacular specific to a team and phrases like "in my opinion" and "to me". The study concluded that within an online setting, football supporter identity and community membership are dynamic processes that constantly change, are context-dependent and are managed by the members in order to achieve certain aims.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This research within the approach of Conversation Analysis (CA) and through the use of Membership Categorisation Analysis (MCA), intended to gain insight into how members within an online community construct and manage identities; specifically to understand how members construct and manage their identity as football supporters of a particular team in an online football supporter community. Additionally, the research intended to understand how identity was used to imply inclusionary and exclusionary boundaries for community membership; and to understand how football supporter identity was constructed and managed to maintain or contest membership of an online football supporter community. Thus, in general, the aim was to understand how followers of a particular football team invoke and contest membership into the categories of football supporter and community of supporters in an online forum.

The internet is an increasingly prevalent medium that is being used not only for searching for information but also for playing games, communicating with others online and creating new personas and identities (Delaney, 2008). As of 31 December 2014, there is an estimated 3 billion internet users (Internet World Stats, 2014), which accounts for more than 42.3% of the current estimated world population of 7 billion (The World Bank Group, 2013). Additionally, the amount of internet users continues to increase as growth from 2000-2014 is at 741.0% (Internet World Stats, 2014).

Furthermore, online communication has provided a distinct medium of communication and interaction that is free from competing influences of other channels of communication, as it is primarily visually presented language, and without physical context (Herring, 2004). For instance, online communication is visual-based, asynchronous and one-way transmission while face-to-face communication is audio-visual, two-way and synchronous (Herring, 2004). Also, online communication or computer-mediated interaction has resulted in the formation of a new social space in which people can create online profiles, develop relationships and become members of online communities (Markham, 2011). Forums are examples of such a social space which is, as Antaki, Ardevol, Nunez and Vayreda (2006, p. 114) define, an "Internet location in which people can read and post messages singly or in a developing 'thread'". As of 2014, approximately 1.8 billion users would have accessed social networks (Statista, 2014). This indicates that the internet is becoming a medium that is being increasingly used for communication and joining online communities.

Furthermore, Subrahmanyam and Greenfield (2008) highlight that there are many different forms in which online communication and interaction can appear, and of the electronic hardware that can support it. For example, online communication includes e-mail, instant messaging, text messaging, chat rooms, bulletin boards, blogs, social networking utilities, video sharing, photo sharing, massively multiplayer online computer games (MMOG) and virtual worlds (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008). Thus, social networks and the forum, on which this study is based, can be accessed via a Personal Computer (PC) or from a mobile phone while on the bus ride home. Hence, online communication and technology have provided a unique medium of communication and interaction in which people from all over the world and from different backgrounds can "virtually" come together as a community, in ways that would not have been possible in the "real world" setting and without this kind of technology. The significance of this has resulted in distinct forms of social interaction in which people from all over the world are socialised, cultures are transmitted, language is put to use, identities are affirmed, institutions are activated, social structures are reproduced (Clayman & Gill, 2004) and identity is transmitted (Goodwin & Heritage, 1990).

With regard to understanding online communities, there is much value as research shows that there are many positive outcomes of being part of a community, such as increased happiness (Diener & Seligman, 2004); group affiliations that fulfil the need for love and belonging (Maslow, 1954); social capital, which refers to a person's membership of social networks or groups that allow benefits for that individual such as sharing privileged information and having better access to opportunities (Swartz, de la Rey, Duncan & Townsend, 2008); allowing members to participate in the community in order to achieve certain goals – hence by allowing members to participate in society, they feel a part of the community (Swartz, et al., 2008); providing social contact with others which is positively related to psychological health (Wann, 2006); and offering the social benefits of camaraderie, community and solidarity as well as social prestige and self-esteem (Zillman, Bryant & Sapolsky, 1989). Thus, studying how communities and community membership are constructed and managed in an online setting is valuable as there are many positive outcomes of being part of a community which is an increasingly used medium that has its own distinct social space and social practices.

With relation to analysing football supporter identity and membership of communities of football supporters, football is a significant factor in the lives of billions of people worldwide with a 3.2 billion global TV audience of the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa (FIFA,

2014); this being 45.7% of the world population. Furthermore, with relation to internet connectivity, there were 5.3 million unique viewers tuned in for the round-of-16 match between Belgium and the United States via online streaming (FIFA, 2014a) and 24 million unique users watched some 15 million hours of content through FIFA's multimedia services solution alone (FIFA, 2014a). Additionally, the soccer league in England, the Barclays Premier League, is the most watched league in the world with TV audiences reaching 4.7 billion people for the 2011/12 season; it is broadcast in 212 territories and works with 80 different broadcasters (Premier League, 2012). This highlights how football is a popular and globally watched sport in society in addition to which the internet is a medium being increasingly used to access football and football-related media; thus, it is a significant area for analysis.

Furthermore, football is more than just a sport as it reflects society and culture as is evident in the sectarianism between rival football clubs due to political, class, regional and religious reasons. For example, this is evident in the rivalry between Celtic Football Club and Rangers Football Club in which political, religious and social division in Scotland and Scottish culture is expressed (Holligan & Deuchar, 2009). A further example is that of the Hillsborough tragedy concerning Liverpool Football Club where the loss of 96 supporters resulted in community and collective traumatisation that has had an effect on the community and society with regard to regret and the pursuit of truth from the authorities (Hughson, 2011).

Furthermore, racism in football is the result of a number of social factors such as political backgrounds of soccer fans (Back, Crabbe & Solomon, 1999). Pearson (2012) notes how supporting a football team is a means through which males are socialised into masculine rituals and practices and furthermore, how football is used as a ritual marker of masculine solidarity (King, 2002). Therefore, football is more than just a sport, it is a means through which people are socialised, cultures are transmitted, identities are constructed and social structures are reproduced.

Finally, there has been a gradual departure from the conceptualisation of identity as a fixed, cognitive structure to understanding it as a context-dependent process that is constantly changing and created within the interaction (Condor, 2000; Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 1996). While much research has been conducted with regard to football supporter identity in this framework (King 2002; Pearson, 2012; Kuper & Szymanski, 2009), few studies have been

done that have explored football supporter identity through a social constructivist framework in which a dynamic and action-orientated position is implemented.

Thus, the significance of studying how football supporter identity and community membership of a particular team is socially constructed, negotiated and contested in an online community is situated in the fact that the internet has created a new and distinct context with regard to interaction and social practices in which it has provided the ability for people to come together in an online community and communicate about similar interests with other people that they would not have been able to communicate with, without this technology. This in addition to the fact that the internet is continuing to grow as a dominant medium for communication and the lack of research conducted with regard to football supporter identity as changing and context-dependent, warrants research into understanding computer-mediated interaction and its social practices with regard to the aims of this study.

For these reasons, the present study focusses on football supporter identity and community membership specifically in relation to online interaction and an online setting via the analysis of a football forum. To achieve this aim, I firstly review literature on online interaction, online communities, social identity and football supporter identity. Secondly, I state the research questions and data and sampling in which I highlight why the data was chosen with reference to the methods used and aims of the study. Thirdly, I proceed to highlight in detail the method used for the analysis; that of Conversation Analysis (CA) and the approach within CA of Membership Categorisation Analysis (MCA). I then proceed to analyse the data and finally provide conclusions for the research questions and the broader significance it has in terms of community membership and identity construction and management.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Literature Review

2.1.1. Online Interaction

The internet and online communication is a relatively recent phenomenon (Herring, 2004) and with the continued increase in the use of the internet (Internet World Stats, 2014), in addition to the increased amount of people accessing social networks (Statista, 2014b), this has resulted in many studies and models being developed in order to understand computer-mediated discourse (CMD). CMD is defined as "the communication produced when human beings interact with one another by transmitting messages via networked computers" (Herring, 2004, p. 1), the focus being on language and language use in computer networked environments within the broader interdisciplinary study of computer-mediated communication (CMC) (Herring, 2004). The importance of understanding online communication is that it has provided a distinct medium of interaction that is free from competing influences of other channels of communication, as it is primarily visually presented language, and without physical context (Herring, 2004).

Online communication in which interaction takes place can be categorised into two groups, synchronous and asynchronous (Herring, 2004). Asynchronous means that users do not have to be logged in at the same time in order to receive and send messages while synchronous CMD requires the parties to be logged on simultaneously (Herring, 2004). Furthermore, CMC is a one-way transmission in that recipients do not know they are being addressed until the message is sent in one unit while oral communication is two-way, with the speaker and addressee both able to hear the message being produced (Herring, 2004). This highlights how the online structure of CMC has provided a distinct form of communication and interaction compared to face-to-face communication and interaction (Herring, 2004). The online forum on which this research is based is a one-way transmission and asynchronous where users can send and post messages whenever they choose to without other parties having to be logged in.

Due to the asynchronous aspect, one-way transmission, and the fact that online communication allows multiple participants to communicate and interact simultaneously, this may result in disordered turn-taking due to the system posting the messages in the order that they are received (Herring, 2004; Herring, 1999). This could be problematic because in relation to the method of CA used in this study, Heritage (2008) highlights that turn-taking

can be interrupted in multi-party interactions. However, this problem is overcome with *addressivity* which is highlighted by Werry (1996) as users adapting to the limits of turn-taking in multi-participant communication. This can be the user explicitly naming the addressee, and linking the response to the other members' response by ways of content, quoting, or copying large portions of the previous message response (Herring, 1996; Severinson Eklundh & Macdonald, 1994).

Further differences with regard to online communication as opposed to other forms of communication are that CMC exchanges are quicker than written exchanges although still slower than spoken exchanges and that the asynchronous format allows time for editing and constructing a response (Herring, 2004; Herring, 1999). Furthermore, there is the lack of simultaneous feedback caused by reduced audio-visual cues (Herring, 1999). A final characteristic of online communication and interaction that is worth highlighting is that of "emoticons"; emoticons are visual pictures or printable character sequences that express emotions such as sad or happy (Herring, 2004). These are highlighted by Herring (2004, p. 11) as "compensatory strategies to replace social cues normally conveyed by other channels in face-to-face interaction". Thus, online communication and online interaction should not be understood as "a second-class form of communication, in which 'meaningful relations' cannot be developed at all or only achieved with great difficulty" (Jones, 1998, as cited in Lamerichs & Te Molder, 2003, p. 452).

2.1.2 Online Communities

Online communication or computer-mediated interaction has resulted in the formation of new social spaces (Markham, 2011). Such an emergent channel of communication and social space has developed in the form of dedicated websites of a bounded system known as social networks which are used by people to interact with other people with similar interests (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). An example is that of Facebook. Another channel, and on which this study is based, is that of forums which Antaki, Ardevol, Nunez and Vayreda (2006, p. 114) define as an "Internet location in which people can read and post messages singly or in a developing 'thread'".

The wider social meaning of these forums and social networks lies in the development of online communities. As Poynter (2010) highlights, web-based forums are the most basic form

of online communities where members via a specific site or social network can discuss their views on different subject matter. Boyd and Ellison (2008) define social network sites as web-based services that allow individuals to: construct a public or semi-public profile in a bounded system; communicate with other users about similar interests; and view and communicate with other members in the system. Moreover, Preece (2000) defines an online community as: people who interact socially with the goal of satisfying their own need or performing leading or moderating roles; people with a shared purpose that give reason for the community such as information exchange, common interests or needs; the existence of rules and policies that dictate how people should behave; and computer systems that enable and assist the social interaction in a manner that creates togetherness.

There are many different types of online forums, for example: entertainment forums (Hussain & Griffins, 2009), educational forums (Tang, 2012), and support forums (Giles, 2006; Stommel & Meijman, 2011). Furthermore, there is literature focusing on how these new social spaces have affected many different aspects of human society and development, for example, with regard to relationships with peers, romantic partners and strangers (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008) and ways in which people accomplish work as a concern for HRM (DeFillippi, 2002). Thus, the internet through computer-mediated communication which includes the exchanges of texts and images, has created social spaces in which people can create online profiles, develop relationships and become members of online communities (Markham, 2011; Harrison & Thomas, 2009).

The importance of this has resulted in the creation of a new social space with its own social practices with regard to self-presentation, interpersonal interaction and dominance of certain groups (Herring, 2004). Moreover, the internet has provided a distinct form of social interaction in which people are socialised, cultures are transmitted, language is put to use, identities are affirmed, institutions are activated, social structures are reproduced (Clayman & Gill, 2004) and identity is transmitted (Goodwin & Heritage, 1990).

In addition, there is much research with regard to the positive outcomes of being part of a community, such as: increasing happiness because interpersonal relations can contribute to people's happiness (Diener & Seligman, 2005); group affiliations that fulfil the need for love and belonging (Maslow, 1954); allowing members to participate in the community in order to achieve certain goals – hence by allowing members to participate in society, they feel a part of the community (Swartz, et al., 2008); providing social contact with others which is

positively related to psychological health (Wann, 2006); offering the social benefits of camaraderie, community and solidarity as well as social prestige and self-esteem (Zillman, Bryant & Sapolsky, 1989); and social capital, which refers to a person's membership in social networks or groups that allow benefits for that individual such as sharing privileged information and having better access to opportunities (Swartz, de la Rey, Duncan & Townsend, 2008).

These benefits have been shown to carry over into an online setting. It has been hypothesised that social capital has now continued onto online forums (Maksi & Young, 2013). For example, Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe (2007) highlight that within Facebook, a social network site, the sharing of information has been associated with social benefits. This can also include forums such as the one on which this study is based.

This means that the internet via social networks and the creation of profiles, has allowed football supporters to form online communities and thus benefit from the advantages of being supporters of a particular team within an online community setting. Therefore, studying inclusionary and exclusionary boundaries for community membership in an online community such as Liverpool Football Club (LFC) in the form of a forum, may allow one to gain insight into how individuals act and perform as members of a community by use of identity construction and contestation and additionally, to understand the processes of how communities function in an online setting.

2.1.3. Social Identity

The nature of studying social identity within an online setting brings about a new challenge with regard to traditional methods as online communication has provided a distinct medium of communication that is free from competing influences of other channels of communication, as it is primarily visually presented language, and without physical context (Herring, 2004). Additionally, traditional models for studying social identity rely on an individualistic and cognitive framework. These models understand social identity as "an individual's knowledge of belonging to certain social groups and valuing of this membership, or the part of an individual's self-concept that derives from knowing he/she belongs to a social group" (Swartz et al., 2008, p. 310). The centre of this understanding is that social identity is a real entity and exists within the individual (Antaki, Condor & Levine, 1996).

Wilkinson and Kitzinger (2003) explain this ontological aspect by highlighting that when an individual makes a statement, they are grouped into specific categories that are fixed. In other words, the current models tend to understand social identity as a socio-cognitive reality; that they are stable, pre-existing patterns or order that can be discovered such as the Social Identity Theory (SIT) (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and the Self-Categorisation Theory (SCT) (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher & Wetherell, 1987).

However, theorists have more recently started to examine identity not as a fixed, cognitive structure that is imposed by psychologists, context-dependent and manageable but rather changing and emergent from the participant, the situation, and the participant's interaction with other participants within the situation and context (Condor, 2000; Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 1996; Antaki et al., 1996). Thus, research, specifically in interactional settings and situations of which online forums are such a setting, is increasingly looking into the processes of identity construction, maintenance and negotiation. For example, Lamerichs and Te Molder (2003) highlight that when studying social identity within CMC, attention needs to shift from this cognitivist approach to a discourse-based approach, as a discursive model understands the nature of reality as the product of fluid definitions of a situation created by human interaction and laboratory settings do not allow insight into the complexities of the construction of social identity. At the base of this premise is that "people attach symbolic meaning to objects, behaviours, themselves, and other people, and they develop and transmit these meanings through interaction" (Howard, 2000, p. 371), thus resulting in the construction of identity through language. This is a feature that is emphasised in CMC as language is the dominant channel of communication.

The use of a dynamic and action-orientated approach and reason for implementing this method in the study is warranted when traditional methods are critiqued. For example, Lamerichs and Te Molder (2003) highlight that the early social cue perspective approaches to CMC such as the social presence model developed by Short, Williams and Christie (1976), the cuelessness model by Rutter (1984) and the Reduced Social Cue approach (RSC) by Sproull and Kiesler (1986) reduce the social nature of online communications and assume that people's evaluations are grounded in individual psychological states separate from the social and interactional environments in which they are embedded; and the anti-normative behaviour in the RSC approach starts from the a priori notion of what normal is. This highlights how earlier models view computer-mediated interaction as "a second-class form of communication, in which 'meaningful relations' cannot be developed at all or only achieved

with great difficulty" (Jones, 1998, as cited in Lamerichs & Te Molder, 2003, p. 452). Furthermore, it highlights that these models disregard the social context in which interaction takes place meaning that it lacks attention to the empirical details of the object of study, as humans are social beings in which the interaction is influenced by the context. This, in addition to how the internet has provided new social spaces, makes it evident that static cognitive approaches are insufficient in understanding the construction of social identity within CMC.

Furthermore, problems arise for traditional methods within an online environment due to the nature of the internet with regard to the lack of demographics and anonymity as traditional approaches to identity rely on this type of information for analytical purposes (Herring, 2004). This notion is highlighted in the Social Identity Model of De-individuation Effects (SIDE) (Postmes, Spears & Lea, 1998) which hypothesises that due to the nature of the internet with regard to the aspect of anonymity, identity can change and is not fixed and as a result influences the understanding of social identity and group behaviour. As a result, individuals will use any cues presented to construct an understanding of one another (Spears & Lea, 1992). The significance of this is that if there are not enough context cues, people will result in relying on social categorisation to form an understanding of social context (Spears & Lea, 1992). In other words, due to the depersonalised nature of the internet with regard to individuals, people rely on using cognitive efforts to perceive and understand the individual.

However, Herring (2004) highlights that language use and choice of words act as discursive markers for demographic information. For example, Herring (2004) highlights that educational level is made evident through the sophistication level of the language used. Similarly, age is revealed through the preoccupations and life experiences in the message content and gender is revealed through message content or gender-revealing nicknames (Herring, 2004). Furthermore and what is more significant with regard to the method implemented in this study is that signalling identity, for example race, is as highlighted by Burkhalter (1999), at the discretion of the participants. Thus, as Ellis (2010) highlights, identity within social networks is the result of communicative creation as the information provided on one's identity is chosen with the knowledge of how other people on the network will respond.

Hence, identity is produced and shown with the use of category-bound activities which are actions, activities or forms of conduct that are characteristic of the category-based common-

sense knowledge (Schegloff, 2007). To repeat, identity and membership are understood by how participants themselves orientate to one another, the words used and chosen by the participant, and the sequential implication of when an identity is produced or contested. Additionally, Clayman and Gill (2004) highlight that CA views identity as a means for achieving certain goals that are constructed and adopted during a particular interaction (Clayman & Gill, 2004).

Therefore, participants can (and do) monitor each other's language and make interpretations about these sort of things, and the outcomes of this are potentially observable to researchers studying the interactions. So the presence or absence of particular demographic markers becomes a participant's problem to address, and the researcher's job becomes examining how the participants address it rather than imposing their own notions of identity on the interaction. In other words, as according to the method of CA used in this study, social identity is constructed within the interaction and does not exist a priori (Heritage, 1984). This means there are no structural variables such as race, gender or personality traits that exist prior to the interaction but rather the focus is on the endogenous organisation of the interaction and how the participants themselves produce structure and orderly features of interaction that display their understanding to and of one another (Clayman & Gill, 2004). Therefore, within the social constructionist approaches in which language and the study of language is the focus, descriptions and word selection within particular sequences are analysed in order to understand how football supporter identity was constructed, and due to the aspects of anonymity and lack of valid demographic details of which traditional methods are relied on, it is the most suitable and fitting approach to studying CMD.

Another traditional model is the Social Identity Theory (SIT), which refers to the identification and self-concept a person has with being part of or perceiving themselves part of a social group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Empirical support for this theory has relied on the minimal group paradigm which finds that people do discriminate in favour of in-groups for rewards (Tajfel, 1970). For example, a study by Dietz-Uhler and Murrell (1999) examining fans' reactions to game outcomes used this model to understand the reason why football fans behave the way they do when their team loses, and found that when there was a threat to their group, their group identification with their teams elicited a strong reaction to that threat. Similarly, as found in a study by Hirt, Zillmann, Ericksor and Kennedy (1992), if the team performs poorly, fans feel worse about themselves and their own abilities. Furthermore, SIT states that people ascribe more positive characteristics to members of their own group (Tajfel

& Turner, 1986). It must be noted that social identity theorists do place more emphasis on the plasticity of social identification; as Tajfel (1981) was clear to highlight, social identity is a process and not only a fixed reality.

However, despite the SIT and SIDE models providing a less rigid framework such as allowing participants flexibility in choosing identities and that context can change the identity displayed, meaning that social identity is a process (Lamerichs & Te Molder, 2003; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), they are fundamentally flawed due to two reasons. Firstly, participants pick from a pre-established set of building blocks for possible identities. Therefore, the model still does not fully recognise the social nature of online interaction in which social identity is not treated as an objective entity but is made evident through participants' orientations to one another.

Secondly, these models use experimental settings to attain data where the context is defined as a passive phenomenon; however, as CA highlights, the context is significant but can only be observed as such when a participant orientates to it. Thus, within a CA framework, as Potter and Wetherell (1995) highlight, that data that is "naturally occurring" offers a number of advantages and allows for the examination of phenomena that researcher-generated data tends to miss out on as the data attained in an experimental setting is influenced by the context and researcher presence and thus is not representational of the phenomena. As Heritage (1984) highlights, interviews, observational methods, native intuitions and the use of experimental methodologies are unsatisfactory ways of attaining data as these techniques lose the specific details that naturally occur and are replaced with idealisations of how interaction works.

Similarly, Speer (2002) explains that naturally occurring data is centred on studying the ordinary unfolding of people's lives while contrived data is data obtained from prearranged circumstances such as informed consent (Speer, 2002). As Schegloff and Sacks (1973) state, natural interaction does not occur in a research intervention; hence, the data that is attained in an interview is not considered naturally occurring and is, as a result, less representational of the actual phenomenon. In other words "the context in which the research project takes place has a significant effect on the behaviour of respondents and the overall quality of the data" (Speer, 2002, p. 511). However these debates between naturally occurring data versus contrived data are complex and require considerable attention when conducting research.

According to Potter and Wetherell (1987), they suggest that to test whether or not data is natural one has to ask if the data obtained within the interaction would have happened the way it did if the researcher was not born. In other words, for the data to be considered natural, it must not be influenced by the researcher in any way. This has methodological and theoretical consequences as it neglects the notion of experimental settings used in other approaches in which the data is influenced by the researcher and context of a laboratory setting.

In other words, due to the experimental control, the processes happening in researcher-generated/experimental data are potentially different from how they may happen in naturally occurring settings, and thus it is difficult to know whether findings from experimental studies can be generalised to non-experimental/non-research settings (Antaki, Condor & Levine, 1996). Hence, as Heritage (1984) states, naturally occurring data allows insight into the actual phenomenon as it does not rely on research intervention and thus, it provides insight in capturing the complexities of the processes of inclusion and exclusion in online communities and how identity is constructed and managed. Thus, a CA approach is the most fitting method as it takes into account the context of the interaction and due to the new environment created by computer-mediated interaction, this would allow greater insight into understanding the processes in which social identity is constructed. Secondly, it allows the data to represent itself instead of imposing a researcher's notion of the phenomena.

The forum on which this study is based is the public domain for anyone to look at. This allowed me to see how people act in a naturalistic setting and hence the participants' voice was given priority, eliminating the aspect of relying on post-hoc reports of what they do, and instead allowing me to observe it directly. In other words, the participants' interactions in the online community and football forum occurred naturally whether or not I was there. Hence, the posts are not influenced by my presence but rather the context in which they are situated, thus providing data that reflects the actual phenomenon being studied.

Such studies with the use of a constructivist approach in comparison to traditional methods have yielded useful results. For example, a study by Sneider and Te Molder (2009) highlighted how by defining vegan meals as ordinary and easy to prepare, the 'ordinariness' helped construct and protect veganism as an ideology. This highlights how the category-tied predicate was used as a means of achieving the action of protecting veganism as an ideology. Therefore, identity is composed of understanding the orientations of the participants

themselves and not a category that is pre-assigned to participants grouped in empirical research methodologies (Sacks, 1992; Clayman & Gill, 2004). For these reasons, this study used an action-orientated approach to identities taken by social constructionist approaches for the study of social identity in CMC.

2.1.4. Football Supporter Identity

With regard to football, it is more than just a sport as it reflects society and culture. This is evident in the sectarianism between rival football clubs due to political, class, regional and religious reasons. For example, the rivalry between Celtic Football Club and Rangers Football Club in which political, religious and social division in Scotland and Scottish culture is expressed (Holligan & Deuchar, 2009), the rivalry between Barcelona and Real Madrid and the political and cultural tensions between Catalans and the Castilians that reflects the Spanish Civil War (Ghemawat, 2007), and the Hillsborough tragedy concerning Liverpool Football Club that resulted in cultural traumatisation and the pursuit of truth from the authorities by the community (Hughson, 2011). Therefore, football is more multifaceted than just the sport aspect as the team has a history that is located in the community and society. The reason that a person supports a team is more than just the style of football the team plays. As a result, a supporter and their identity as a football supporter has many aspects that go beyond the sport aspect of it which means that research into football supporter identity can reveal broader insights into society as a whole.

In addition, racism in football is the result of a number of social factors such as political backgrounds of soccer fans (Back, Crabbe & Solomon, 1999). Furthermore, Pearson (2012) notes how supporting a football team is a means through which males are socialised into masculine rituals and practices and furthermore, how football is used as a ritual marker of masculine solidarity (King, 2002). Therefore, football is more than just a sport, it is a means through which people are socialised, cultures are transmitted, identities are constructed and social structures are reproduced. Thus, football supporter identity is a reflection of a number of societal and cultural phenomena.

In terms of research, traditional approaches with regard to football supporter identity have found that supporters attribute the loss or success of the team to their commitments level according to attendance (Hirt et al., 1992) and that masculinity is the strongest predictor of

motivation (Wann & Waddill, 2003). However, due to the ontological understanding of CA with regard to social identity, the same principles apply to football supporter identity. To illustrate this ontological difference, a study by Lamerichs and Te Molder (2003) highlighted how users on a depression forum managed their identities by revealing that they displayed being "depressed" in appropriate ways while also acting in a supportive way. This emphasised how people suffering from depression discursively managed their identities within an online community of "depression sufferers". Furthermore, a study by Giles (2006) on eating disorders, revealed how there are subgroups within online communities and how identity is used as a means to produce boundaries of what it means to be part of that community, thus producing what it means to be a member of that community. Similarly a study on the construction of lesbian identity highlighted how it changes through the development of the interaction (Kitzinger & Wilkinson, 1995). Thus identity is not static but rather a process of construction within an interaction at a given time.

In addition, there is much research on football supporter identity with a traditional approach but little research has been conducted with regard to CA on football supporter identity within an online setting. For these reasons, this research would help contribute to understanding football supporter identities with a different approach compared to traditional approaches.

2.2. Research Questions

1. How do participants construct and manage their identities as members of a football supporter community in online forums?
2. How do participants use particular versions of these identities to manage and/or contest their own and others' membership in the community?

CHAPTER THREE: METHOD

3.1. Data and Sampling

The sample for this study consisted of interactions from a single discussion thread of an online football supporter forum. The forum chosen was a Liverpool Football Club forum: www.redandwhitekop.com. The full name of the website is redandwhitekop: Independent Liverpool FC Website. The data analysed was collected between 26 January 2014 and 5 February 2014. The forum is specifically aimed at Liverpool Football Club (LFC) supporters.

This site and forum was purposively selected for two reasons. Firstly, LFC is a team with a rich history and a large dispersed global fan base. Thus, due to the fact that the global fan base is distributed across a wide geographical area, people without the technology of the internet would not be in a position to be members of an identifiable community in the absence of this forum. In other words, the online space created within this forum is a place where they can feasibly "come together" as a community, and it thus (in addition to being affiliated with the football team) serves an important function of bringing these supporters together as a community in a way that otherwise wouldn't happen. Additionally, only people with internet access can access this forum; thus, it was purposively selected and in accordance with the aims of the research as the study focused on the context of being an online setting and the new social space it creates with regard to football supporter identity and online community membership.

Secondly, this is a very popular LFC forum with 12,843,973 posts in 166,079 topics by 41,378 members and is an independent forum (Liverpool FC Forum, 2013). The significance of this is that the forum is operated by and for LFC football supporters and hence, it lends to the aims of the study as it is a naturally occurring online community; one without moderation by the club. In other words, this makes it a naturally occurring online community specifically built around a particular kind of LFC football supporter identity, making it the ideal place for researching the aims of the study.

In addition, the online community of the forum implies the LFC community as a whole. So despite it being a specific online forum, it is a virtual meeting place for the broader community of LFC supporters. Hence, with regard to inclusion and exclusion, it is a virtual meeting place for not only the online community but also the community of supporters as a whole.

The forum on which the study is based makes available a variety of threads within different topics that one can participate in. The section of the forum on which the study is focused is titled "Liverpool FC Forum"; the site states that the criterion for participation in this specific type of forum is "Use this forum for any messages relating to Liverpool FC – In other words **not** posts like 'I'm new here,' 'FAO Tom, Dick or Harry', pointless transfer speculation or other such bollocks". This highlights the normative structure of this forum and was chosen as this would highlight discussions specifically about LFC, as opposed to other non-LFC topics that can also be discussed on the forum. Thus, this disclosed interactions that would highlight the focus and aims of the study with regard to football supporter identity and community membership.

The data that was selected for analysis was chosen from one single thread within this selected part of the forum. The topic of the thread within the said forum was "Do we let the officiating of the Etihad, Emirates and Stamford Bridge pass?" This thread was created on 2 January 2014 at 03:22:11 pm by Timbo's Goals and was last edited by the 5th Bentile on 16 February 2014 at 06:56:29 pm, www.redandwhitekop.com/forum/index.php?topic=311070.

Data collection took place between 2 April 2013 and 1 September 2014. I initially observed the forum and familiarised myself with the process in which the forum operated, then created an account in order to gain a deeper understanding of the processes of the forum in the broader context of a community.

The reason for analysing this particular thread with regard to football supporter identity and community membership was that due to the controversial nature of the topic, it provided polarised opinions and thus made salient the phenomena on which the study is based: the construction and management of identities as members of a football supporter community in online forums; and the use of particular versions of these identities to manage and/or contest their own and others' membership in the community. In other words, due to the topic of this thread being controversial in subject matter and the structure of the thread being in the form of a question, it gave rise to polarised opinions where community membership and authenticity of football supporter identity were called into question and (eventually) openly contested, making it a good thread to look at for such processes.

Additionally, the types of processes that occurred in this particular thread were similar to those that occurred in other threads on the forum albeit not always as frequently or as clearly in this thread. In other words, the thread constituted a "critical case study" in which the

characteristics and processes of a particular case are examined in all their complexities (Welman & Krugar, 2001) and it reflected other threads with the same processes, thus making it an ideal setting to examine the aims of the study. These interactions and processes were recorded with the use of the "print screen" function on the computer and verbatim excerpts from the thread were included in the analysis in this way.

No ethical clearance and informed consent from the participants were needed for the data analysed in the study as this data is available online for the public to access and it is "naturally" anonymised by the participants using "screen names", which are effectively pseudonyms, rather than their real names in the forum. Moreover, as is the nature of the internet and forum, posting something on a site implies consent for it to be viewed, responded to and quoted. Hence, using this data from a forum does not put the participants at any further risk than they have already put themselves by posting on the forum. Thus, no ethical clearance was needed for any aspect of the study.

3.2. Data Analysis

The data was analysed using Membership Categorisation Analysis (MCA), which was developed by Sacks (1972; 1992) within the Conversation Analysis (CA) approach developed by Harvey Sacks (1992) in collaboration with Emanuel Schegloff (1996) and Gail Jefferson (2004).

Within the approach of CA, the target is to understand naturally occurring ordinary discourse and it is through interaction that the foundation of reality and social life forms (Schegloff, 1996). This fundamental ontological principle in which meaning is socially constructed means social identity is constructed in an interaction and does not originate within the individual (Schegloff, 1996).

Furthermore, the recipient is not just a reservoir of knowledge or blank slate but rather an active body which the teller has chosen, and the teller has thought of how to convey the message in a specific context (Schegloff, 1996). Thus, football supporter identity and community membership were not understood and analysed as an existing "entity" within the individual but rather created in the interaction and in the context of an online football supporter forum for a particular team.

CA can be summarised into three core assumptions: "(1) interaction is structurally organised; (2) contributions to interaction are contextually oriented; and (3) there two properties inhere in the details of interaction so that no order or detail can be dismissed, a priori, as disorderly, accidental or irrelevant" (Heritage, 1984, p. 241). Firstly, this highlights that language is not mundane but rather everything is orderly, meaningful and has structure (Sacks, 1992). In other words, language is a resource that is used by participants and thus the focus is what participants do with it. It is the understanding of talk as action-orientated (Lamerichs & Te Molder, 2003). Sacks (1992) highlighted that the researcher's task is to understand how participants create and manage their identity with the use of the words chosen from the lexicon, rather than imposing categories on them and making assumptions based on those categories. In other words, every word chosen by the individuals in the online forum was considered meaningful and emphasis was given to how individuals created their football supporter identity, and when and how football supporter identity was used to manage and contest community membership.

Furthermore, Schegloff (1996) highlights that a clause, sentence, turn, and utterance are all interactional units and that these units compose what can be understood as sequences and trajectories. The base of this organisation is turn-taking, meaning that only one person can talk at a time. Successive turns or actions are formed to be comprehensible as some first actions make the next action unavoidable meaning that if the following response is not done, it allows analytic insights to be made. Thus, these sequences can then allow one to understand the conversational pattern of when there is a silence or when the pattern of conversation changes (Sacks, 1992; Schegloff, 1996). This was used to understand when there was a change in topic or silence within the interaction due to disagreement, hence highlighting instances when football supporter identity was used to imply exclusionary and inclusionary boundaries.

Furthermore, sequences can be organised to that of repair which is the pattern of conversation designed to address problems with speaking, hearing, or understanding talk (Schegloff, Jefferson & Sacks, 1977). Heritage (2008, p. 307) highlights that "repair must necessarily involve practices for identifying what is being (or to be) fixed and which is the replacement, and these differ between speakers and recipients". As Stokoe (2012) highlights with regard to self-repair, if a category-feature formulation is successful, it does not become the object of repair, meaning that the structure continues as normal, making it evident that the category feature was accepted as shared category knowledge. Therefore, with reference to the topic, if

a member has a feature of football supporter identity that is not accepted, they will attempt to repair the deviation and as a result, it will be reflected in the structure of the interaction as account-giving in a first turn, a transition space or in a third turn (Schegloff, Jefferson & Sacks, 1977). Another such sequence trajectory is question-answer adjacency pairs in which, when a question is asked, the normative structure would be that of an answer (Schegloff, Jefferson & Sacks, 1997).

Therefore, the sequential implications of the interaction help to illustrate how members construct and manage their football supporter identity to maintain community membership. In other words, the focus is on how participants "use" language to make accusations, how the participant presents an opinion in response to a question, how a participant shows disagreement and how a participant provides accounts as a process of self-repair, revealing how community members in the forum construct and manage their LFC supporter identity.

In relation to the second core assumption of interaction being contextually oriented, "each action is context-shaped in the ways in which it is designed and understood by reference to the environment of actions in which it participates. And it is context-renewing in the way that each action, in forming a new context to which the next will respond, will inevitably contribute to the environment sequence of actions within which the next will be formed and understood" (Heritage, 1985, p. 280). Hence, the context of it being online communication in an online community must be taken into account. People participating in online football forums orientate themselves to the context of being on an online football forum within the broader context of an online community, and hence provide answers that reflect these contextual factors; however, the participant must make it relevant because the focus within CA is on the process of construction of meaning that does not exist a priori. Furthermore, each turn provides a new context for what comes next which means that the context is not simply pre-existing but selectively orientated to and continually updated (Lamerichs & Te Molder, 2003). Thus, each utterance provides a new context for what comes next. This means that the interaction moves forward, meaning that when a statement is made about what a football supporter is, the next turn of talk is based on what has been said before.

The third principle highlights that there is a bias against a priori speculation about the orientations and reasons of the speakers in favour of examining the conversationalists' actual actions (Heritage, 1984). Hence, in relation to the topic, understanding football supporter identity and community membership when in a disagreeing position is manifested in the

social actions of the interaction as reality and that meaning is socially constructed. This means that there are no pre-existing constructs in which to contrast notions such as abnormal to normal, or the definition of a football supporter to an inadequate supporter; only in the conversation can meanings be constructed and the group's meaning system described. This, as highlighted in the literature review section, has methodological and theoretical consequences as it neglects the notion that identity is a perceptuo-cognitive reality which many current social psychology models use to understand social identity.

With regard to MCA, the guiding principles used were selected from Schegloff (2007) and Stokoe (2012). This technique belongs to the CA apparatus and hence has been developed under the guiding principle of CA as a means of understanding how participants use their knowledge about categories of people and inferences to make a frame of reference to make meaning of the world and to perform everyday actions in the world.

The method and analytic concepts for the analysis are Membership Categorisation Devices (MCD). This includes 1) the collection(s) of categories and 2) the rules of application (Schegloff, 2007). As Schegloff (2007) highlights, the collection(s) of categories entails understanding that category labels are inference-rich and has expectations of presumptive knowledge of what that category should be like and how it should behave. There may be attempts to block this presumptive knowledge with the use of modifiers. The second step involves protection against induction and refers to when the member of a category goes against the common-sense knowledge of that category. This results in members not revising the category or viewing the differing member as an exception but rather seeing the person as defective or different. This can result in the member trying to change and thus reinforcing the common-sense knowledge and using modifiers to protect against induction or subversion into the category-based common-sense knowledge (Schegloff, 2007). The third step involves category-bound activities. This means noticing actions, activities or forms of conduct that are characteristic of the category-based common-sense knowledge, thus indicating a category membership (Schegloff, 2007). The Rules of Application consist of the Economy Rule, the Consistency Rule and that of hearer's and viewer's maxims (Schegloff, 2007). These guiding principles highlighted how football supporter identity was constructed and managed and how group membership was based on the words selected by the members and how the members made sense of one another's actions in the interaction.

In addition, the methods for systematic analysis for MCA by Stokoe (2012) were used. They were five guiding principles derived from Sack's work. They involved: 1) collecting data in accordance with the focus of the research; 2) building a set of categories in which there is explicit mentions of category terms, membership categorisation devices and category-resonant descriptions; 3) identifying the sequential positioning of each categorical instance in the interaction sequence; 4) analysing the design and action orientation in which the category, device or resonant description occurred; and 5) locating how participants orientated to the category, device or resonant description, and how the speaker built and resisted categorisations (Stokoe, 2012).

Further key concepts used were: 1) category-tied predicates which are characteristics of a category; 2) standardised relational pairs which are pairs of categories that carry duties and moral obligations; 3) duplicative organisation which entails categories that work in a unit; 4) positioned categories which refer to categories with hierarchical relationships; and 5) category-activity "puzzles" which refer to unexpected combinations that perform an action (Stokoe, 2012). Thus, the analysis focused on how members orientate themselves with regard to football supporter identity, how members use identity in the conversational sequence to contest alternative versions of what it means to be a football supporter, and how community membership is maintained and managed with the use of football supporter identity.

The data was not split into segments highlighting specific notions, as I did not want to change the order or disrupt the structure so as to present the data in the same sequence in which responding members in the forum would have seen the discussion unfold. For this reason, my analysis chronologically presents and breaks the thread up into smaller segments providing detailed analytic discussion of the most salient features of the segment in accordance with my aims for the research. This gives the reader a view of the sequential unfolding of the thread, while allowing the reader to understand the main processes that occurred at the various points during the interaction.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis begins with a description and explanation of some of the general structural features of the forum. I have done this to provide a context for the more specific analysis of the single selected thread that follows, allowing the reader to fully understand the main processes during the interaction in which the context significantly contributes to it.

4.1. The Structural Features and Context of the Forums

The structure consists of a series of threads created by users of the forum (members of the community) which involves posting a topic question, opinion or discussion topics with an opening post providing an account for the reason the topic and thread were created. This community member is labelled as the "author" or "original poster" (OP) of the thread. This is evident in the extract below:



The significance of this with regard to the research focus is that this prioritises the voice of members in the community as they can choose to discuss anything related to LFC. Therefore, this provides a social space in which football supporter identity and community membership are made salient. Moderation only occurs if there is abusive language or anything that is inappropriate. Furthermore this moderation is done by the community members and users of the forum themselves rather than outsiders thus maintaining a social space in which football supporter identity and community membership are salient.

Secondly, a member's profile name is displayed with the amount of posts that have contributed to the forum and online community. As evident, Timbo's Goals has posted 4,758 times. This indicates status within the online community and is significant as it is a marker in which community membership and football supporter identity are displayed as it indicates the amount of time a member has invested in the community by writing posts, compared to the many users who have less than 100 or 1000. This may not mean that the member has more

authority on topics and opinions expressed in the interaction and thus more claim to community membership and football supporter identity. However, it does indicate a kind of legitimacy as a community member by virtue of the amount of time invested in the community.

Furthermore, the internet allows the use of normal single images, GIF images and emoticons. GIF images are a number of consecutive images edited so that they provide a video-like visual. Emoticons are symbols that are used to display emotions, such as a smiley face or a sad face. This allows CMC to successfully express emotions and stance, something that would be more difficult with just a text-based medium. Furthermore, with relation to the GIF images, these act as visual evidence that can be used to validate a point in a disagreement sequence and thus highlight a way in which participants manage their own and/or contest others' membership in the community.

The interactional sequence that follows is that other community members then respond to that post.


SMacDougall
Main Stander
Posts: 249
Re: Do we let the officiating shams of the Etihad and Stamford Bridge simply pass?
« Reply #5 on: January 2, 2014, 03:37:11 PM »
Quote from: Timbo's Goals on January 2, 2014, 03:35:49 PM
I know Chakan. But what we saw in these two crucial games goes way beyond anything I've seen in over 50 years watching.
It was so blatant. No reds fan i've spoken to since - most with a similar supporting pedigree like my own - can recall seeing anything like the bias in these two games.
Perhaps it's time for the club to break new ground.
I think you are exaggerating, to be honest. It wasn't that bad.
Logged

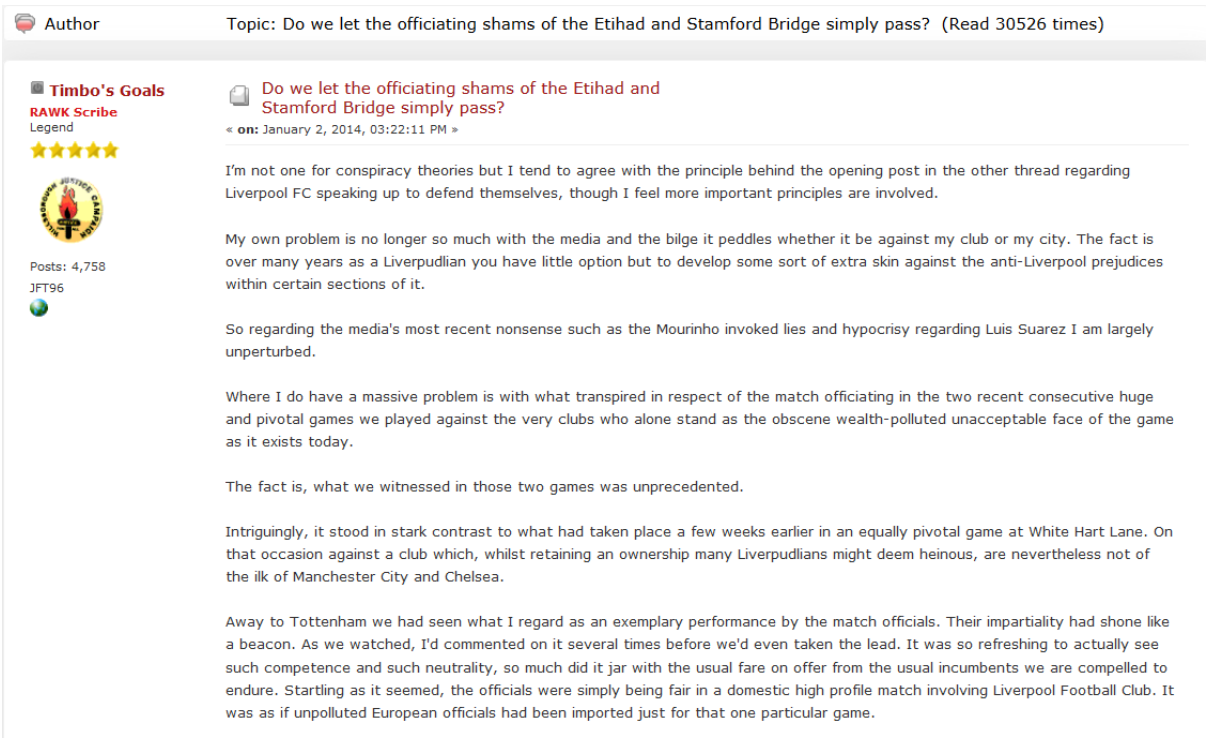
Members can respond in two different ways and have a choice to respond to either the topic of the thread or another member's post. The first way in which a member indicates which response they are replying to is by using a feature that allows the replying member to indicate specifically which reply and member they are communicating with. This is made available via the user interface of the forum in the form of a "Quote from" feature, as evident from the extract above. Furthermore, it quotes the user or member name and the date on which the post was sent. Additionally, a bold font is sometimes applied to sentences in the reply that the replying member wants to specifically highlight and refer to in their response. This allows a discussion on a topic to emerge in an understood, coherent and ordered sequence in spite of the multi-participant and asynchronous nature of the internet.

The second way of responding is to not use the "Quote from" feature but instead, to use the same wording or sequentially follow the reply that the post is responding to. Additionally, responses are numbered e.g. "Reply 5" and thus, this allows CA as a method for analysis as it allows the sequential pattern of turn-taking, on which the method is built.

Having provided an introduction to some of the most important general features of the forum, I proceed with the analysis of the single case thread that I have selected in order to address the research questions of this study.

4.2. The Analysis of the Selected Critical Case Thread

Data Extract 1 – The Opening Post (OP): Timbo's Goals posts an opening thread with the topic asking "Do we let the officiating shams of the Etihad and Stamford Bridge simply pass?" Timbo's Goals then proceeds to provide an account of what he wants to highlight and discuss in this thread with other football supporters in the online community, specifically that the referees showed "blatant favouritism" to the home side when Liverpool FC played two away games at the Etihad (Manchester City FC) and Stamford Bridge (Chelsea FC) and that it was not accidental but rather "something sinister", inferring a biased agenda against LFC.



Author | Topic: Do we let the officiating shams of the Etihad and Stamford Bridge simply pass? (Read 30526 times)

Timbo's Goals
RAWK Scribe
Legend

Posts: 4,758
JFT96

Do we let the officiating shams of the Etihad and Stamford Bridge simply pass?
« **on:** January 2, 2014, 03:22:11 PM »

I'm not one for conspiracy theories but I tend to agree with the principle behind the opening post in the other thread regarding Liverpool FC speaking up to defend themselves, though I feel more important principles are involved.

My own problem is no longer so much with the media and the bilge it peddles whether it be against my club or my city. The fact is over many years as a Liverpudlian you have little option but to develop some sort of extra skin against the anti-Liverpool prejudices within certain sections of it.

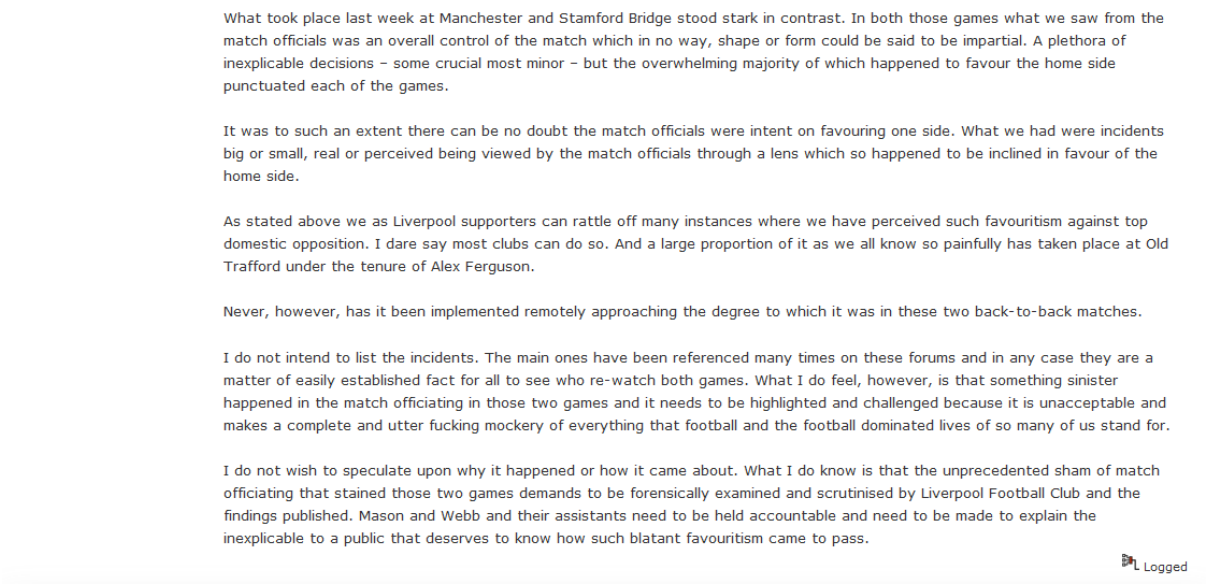
So regarding the media's most recent nonsense such as the Mourinho invoked lies and hypocrisy regarding Luis Suarez I am largely unperturbed.

Where I do have a massive problem is with what transpired in respect of the match officiating in the two recent consecutive huge and pivotal games we played against the very clubs who alone stand as the obscene wealth-polluted unacceptable face of the game as it exists today.

The fact is, what we witnessed in those two games was unprecedented.

Intriguingly, it stood in stark contrast to what had taken place a few weeks earlier in an equally pivotal game at White Hart Lane. On that occasion against a club which, whilst retaining an ownership many Liverpudlians might deem heinous, are nevertheless not of the ilk of Manchester City and Chelsea.

Away to Tottenham we had seen what I regard as an exemplary performance by the match officials. Their impartiality had shone like a beacon. As we watched, I'd commented on it several times before we'd even taken the lead. It was so refreshing to actually see such competence and such neutrality, so much did it jar with the usual fare on offer from the usual incumbents we are compelled to endure. Startling as it seemed, the officials were simply being fair in a domestic high profile match involving Liverpool Football Club. It was as if unpolluted European officials had been imported just for that one particular game.



What took place last week at Manchester and Stamford Bridge stood stark in contrast. In both those games what we saw from the match officials was an overall control of the match which in no way, shape or form could be said to be impartial. A plethora of inexplicable decisions – some crucial most minor – but the overwhelming majority of which happened to favour the home side punctuated each of the games.

It was to such an extent there can be no doubt the match officials were intent on favouring one side. What we had were incidents big or small, real or perceived being viewed by the match officials through a lens which so happened to be inclined in favour of the home side.

As stated above we as Liverpool supporters can rattle off many instances where we have perceived such favouritism against top domestic opposition. I dare say most clubs can do so. And a large proportion of it as we all know so painfully has taken place at Old Trafford under the tenure of Alex Ferguson.

Never, however, has it been implemented remotely approaching the degree to which it was in these two back-to-back matches.

I do not intend to list the incidents. The main ones have been referenced many times on these forums and in any case they are a matter of easily established fact for all to see who re-watch both games. What I do feel, however, is that something sinister happened in the match officiating in those two games and it needs to be highlighted and challenged because it is unacceptable and makes a complete and utter fucking mockery of everything that football and the football dominated lives of so many of us stand for.

I do not wish to speculate upon why it happened or how it came about. What I do know is that the unprecedented sham of match officiating that stained those two games demands to be forensically examined and scrutinised by Liverpool Football Club and the findings published. Mason and Webb and their assistants need to be held accountable and need to be made to explain the inexplicable to a public that deserves to know how such blatant favouritism came to pass.

Logged

With the topic being in the form of a question, the sequence structure was that of question-answer adjacency pairs. This implies and assumes that the responding members are allowed to give their opinion on the topic as is the expected sequence of question-answer adjacency pairs. However, through membership categorisation analysis, it is evident that Timbo's Goals with regard to the topic and hence the subsequent interactions, is implicitly activating the category of LFC football supporter via the use of the collective pronoun "we". Hence, despite Timbo's Goals asking a question in the OP and topic, the use of the pronoun "we" constructs a football supporter identity, of what it means to be an LFC supporter and a community of supporters. As a result, the sequential implication in which that category of football supporter identity is constructed and the constraints the poster provides, implies that LFC supporters responding to the thread, should show agreement and offer possible opinions and options in accordance with Timbo's Goals about the problematic and biased officiating during these two games and how something should be done. In other words, responding members should present and construct their identity to be in agreement with the claim presented in the OP if they are to manage and maintain community membership as disagreement would position themselves as attackers of Liverpool.

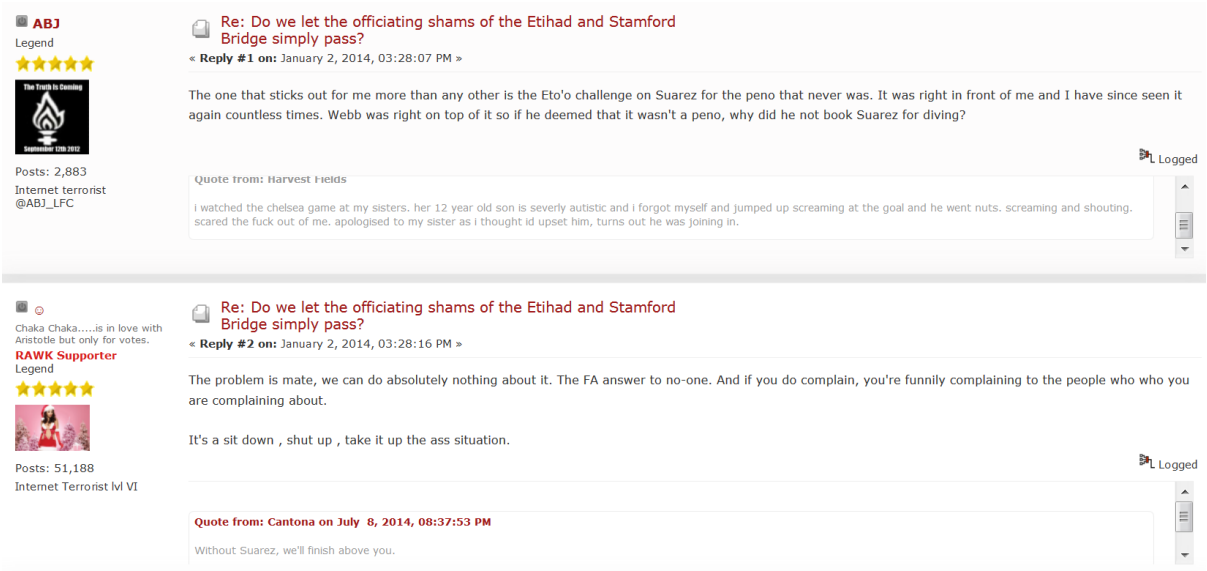
More so, members who respond to this thread with any form of disagreement with Timbo's Goals' OP are according to his account of what it means to be a football supporter, questionable or inadequate LFC supporters. This is evident in the use of the pronoun "we" in the topic and post, and his mention about how these incidents have been discussed many times on these forums; "the main ones have been referenced many times on these forums and in any case are a matter of easily established fact for all to see who re-watch both games".

Thus, he firstly presents the incidents as being known in the community and is not questioning whether or not the officiating decisions were biased or not but rather stating that they were biased and he is looking for reparation and accountability from the officials in the form of an explanation for their "blatant favouritism". Thus, his post implies a categorisation of "LFC supporters versus the officials", "us versus them", and also implicitly, "LFC supporters versus people (questionable LFC supporters) who do not believe the officials have anything to answer for".

Furthermore, the constraints for potential inclusion provided by the poster, are evident in "as a Liverpudlian you have little option but to develop some sort of extra skin against the anti-Liverpool prejudices within certain sections of it". Therefore, with the poster positioning himself as a Liverpudlian, he suggests that to be an LFC supporter is to include not just the club but the city as well when talking of anti-Liverpool prejudice and bias. Thus, he reiterates his construction of an LFC supporter identity as being defenders of Liverpool versus attackers of Liverpool who have prejudices against the team and the city, thus creating an "us versus them" construction. Hence, Timbo's Goals, in the production of what he understands an LFC supporter to be, as evident from the constraints he implicitly activates, is additionally as a result implying inclusionary and exclusionary conditions for continued community membership.

Thus, the author, Timbo's Goals, posts a topic that provides opportunities for potential respondents to make relevant their identities and status in the community. However, in doing so, certain constraints and resources for people to respond to are implicitly and/or explicitly activated. For example, Timbo's Goals constructs a category of LFC supporter identity that align themselves with defenders of Liverpool with regard to biased officiating for those two games and prejudice against the city as well as being opposed to attackers of LFC, respondents who fail to agree with the poster and hence risk exclusion from the community as they are questionable LFC supporters.

Data Extract 2 – Initial Responses: This extract sequentially continues with the discussion in the first two replies to the OP and highlights agreement with the OP by two other members.



As is evident, ABJ implicitly agrees with the bias and problematic officiating complaint of the OP as he provides an example that supports this notion. The second respondent shows partial agreement with the OP by implicitly activating the category of LFC supporter via the use of the collective pronoun "we", but however disagrees that something should be done. Thus, in this thread, this begins to create an implicit sense of positioning, that a member should position themselves in order to be included in the community with the minimum requirement being agreement with biased officiating.

Data Extract 3 – The First Disagreeing Response: This extract highlights how a member, by providing a disagreeing response to the "us versus them" construction of the OP, manages their vulnerable position of not being included in the "us" while still expressing disagreement with the OP. In other words, this extract highlights how the user, by providing a disagreeing response, understands that it has implications for their football supporter identity and community membership. Specifically that disagreement with the claim of bias in the OP by Timbo's Goals and the implicitly activated constraints of being an LFC supporter, result in the management of identity in order to still be included in the "us" and the LFC supporter category.



SMacDougall
Main Stander

Posts: 249

Re: Do we let the officiating shams of the Etihad and Stamford Bridge simply pass?
« **Reply #3 on:** January 2, 2014, 03:33:52 PM »

I don't really see it as big a deal that it's being made out to be on this forum.

Yeah, we had some dodgy decisions go against us against City and Chelsea, but that's at their home grounds.

In fact, I'm willing to bet that when the big boys come to Anfield, we'll see some big decisions going our way.

No one will be complaining then.

Not saying it's right, but it does even out over the course of the season, in my opinion. Unless you're Man United or Chelsea, as they seem to get everything. (Although, since Fergie's departure, Man United haven't been so lucky).

Logged

The significance of this post in the sequence is that although one of these people has partially disagreed about what should be done about this, all of them have essentially agreed that there is a bias against "us". Now this participant deviates from this position by posting a disagreeing response as he claims that it is not "a big deal" and "it does even out over the course of the season". However, despite his disagreement with what the others have said, he still positions himself as one of the "us"/"we" with the use of the collective pronouns as he understands that he may be vulnerable to being positioned *by others* as not really being part of "us" and the defenders of LFC.

In the first sentence, "I don't really see it as big a deal that it's made out to be on this forum", the construct of "us versus them" created by Timbo's Goals and collaborated by the other two agreeing members with regard to the complaint of biased officiating is undermined as SMacDougall questions in general the reason and purpose for the thread. Therefore, with regard to his football supporter identity and community membership, SMacDougall places himself at risk of exclusion from the community as his response is going against the shared common-sense category knowledge of football supporter identity produced in the OP of "us versus them". In other words, due to his construction of LFC supporter identity being disaligned with the previous three respondents, he has placed his community membership and LFC football supporter identity at risk.

This is further highlighted in the second and third sentence, "Yeah, we had some dodgy decisions go against us against City and Chelsea, but that's at their home grounds" and "In fact, I'm willing to bet that when the big boys come to Anfield, we'll see some big decisions going our way", where SMacDougall offers an alternative explanation for the complaint of bias, his explanation being that the bad decisions were the result of "home ground advantage". Thus, by providing an account for his disagreeing response, he is mitigating the

potential risks that come with disagreement by offering evidence for the basis of his disagreement.

In addition, SMacDougall then proceeds to provide a further account for his disagreeing viewpoint and disagreeing response in order to try to manage and negotiate his position as a community member and LFC supporter within the insider "us" constructed in the OP; highlighting preference organisation. This is evident in the use of the pronoun "we" and "us" in this sequence, he presents and includes himself with the other respondents as one of them. Similarly, with the use of the word "yeah", he displays limited agreement with the previous posts so as to express to the community members that he is not in complete opposition to everything they have said; showing that it is limited agreement in the sense that they were bad decisions but not the kind of bias the OP complained about. This is further manifested in the sentences "Not saying it's right, but it does even out over the course of the season, in my opinion. Unless you're Man United or Chelsea, as they seem to get everything". Here, SMacDougall continues to negotiate the boundary of inclusion in the community by activating the category of LFC versus Manchester United and Chelsea. In other words, SMacDougall continues to negotiate and manage his community membership by creating and including himself as the "us" in an "us versus Manchester United and Chelsea United" construct. Thus, the partial agreement, like the accounts he has given, serves to mitigate the extent of his disagreement and thus his oppositional positioning.

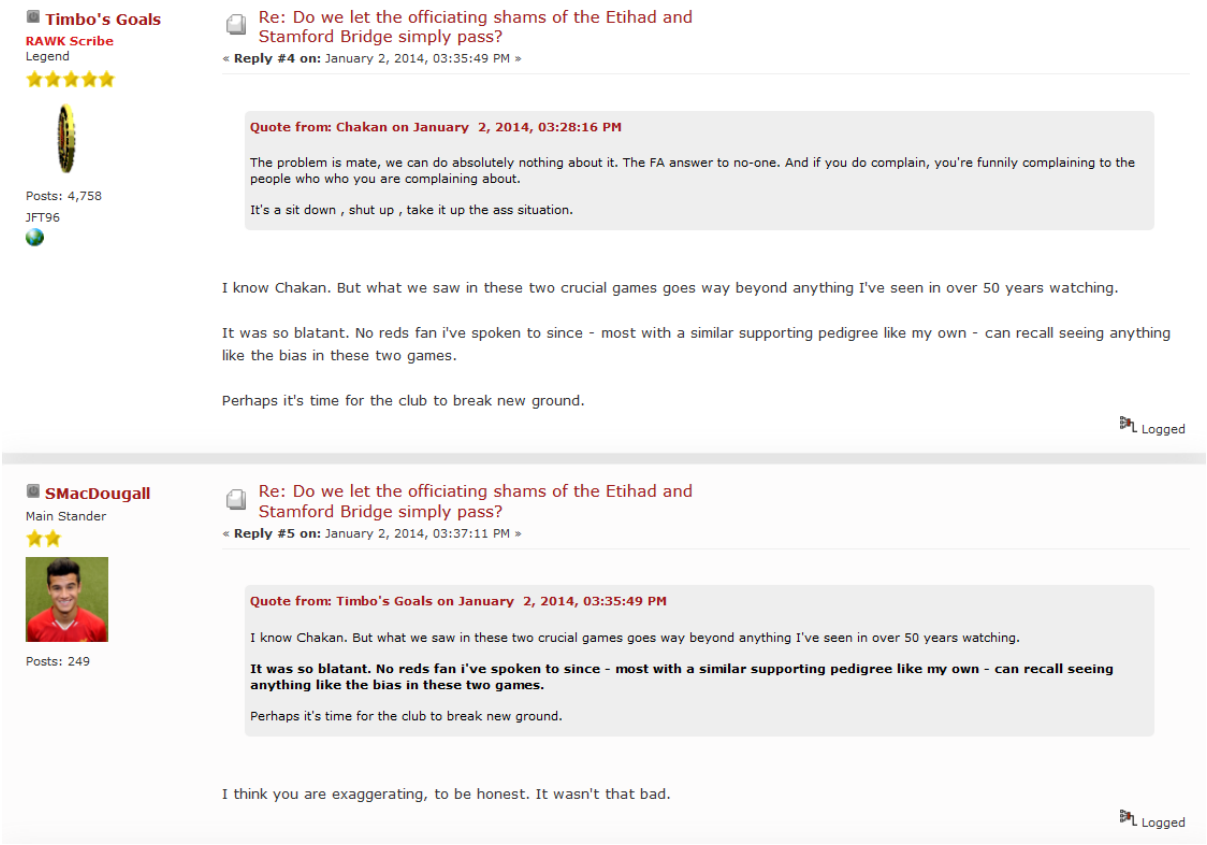
Furthermore, he again shows limited agreement with the OP by saying "Not saying it's right, but it does even out over the course of the season, in my opinion". He does not agree with it being specifically against LFC, but does acknowledge that there were grounds for complaint in those specific games. So SMacDougall is placing himself somewhere between the extremes of "us" and "them", positions implied in the OP. Thus, he is managing the implications of his disaligned positioning by still showing he is one of the "us" even though he disagrees with what the others have said up to this point.

Furthermore, SMacDougall does not make use of the "Quote from" feature. The sequential implication for this is that the response is not only directed at Timbo's Goals and the other agreeing members but also possibly those who could subsequently be responding to the general topic of the thread. In other words, SMacDougall is contributing to the general discussion of the thread, and providing a position that partly disagrees with what others have said, and thus provides an alternative position that subsequent contributors could agree or

disagree with. Thus, despite his disagreement with the expected position one must take to be considered part of "us", he is implying that being part of this forum and the community it represents, is not necessarily the same thing as being part of "us" and LFC supporters. Thus, he suggests through his actions that he can disagree with others in the forum/community without positioning himself outside of the broader community of LFC supporters.

Moreover, SMacDougall with the use of the words "in my opinion" treats this as a matter of opinion rather than fact, implying that there is no right or wrong answer and position on the topic. Hence, SMacDougall implicitly legitimises the fact that different people are allowed to have different opinions on the topic and hence disagree with the topic but still be included in the community of supporters, thus legitimising his own community membership. The use of the words "in my opinion", coupled with how he does not refer directly to Timbo's Goals, his use of the modifiers and his explanations for why he disagrees, functions to mitigate his disagreeing and disaligned position, thus highlighting the negotiation process for his continued inclusion in the community.

Data Extract 4 – Continuing disagreement and more explicit contestation of community membership and identities: This data extract continues to highlight the disagreement interaction between the previous community members. Firstly, it highlights a member's use of football supporter identity to imply membership in the community. Secondly, it highlights how a member, Timbo's Goals, constructs his football supporter identity as a way of warranting authority on the topic while simultaneously reinforcing his football supporter identity and his inclusion in the community. Lastly, it illustrates how a member, SMacDougall, manages his disaligned football supporter identity by simultaneously invoking the activated category by Timbo's Goals and negotiating the boundaries of community membership.



Timbo's Goals
RAWK Scribe
Legend
Posts: 4,758
JFT96

Re: Do we let the officiating shams of the Etihad and Stamford Bridge simply pass?
« **Reply #4 on:** January 2, 2014, 03:35:49 PM »

> **Quote from: Chakan on January 2, 2014, 03:28:16 PM**
>
> The problem is mate, we can do absolutely nothing about it. The FA answer to no-one. And if you do complain, you're funnily complaining to the people who who you are complaining about.
>
> It's a sit down , shut up , take it up the ass situation.

I know Chakan. But what we saw in these two crucial games goes way beyond anything I've seen in over 50 years watching.

It was so blatant. No reds fan i've spoken to since - most with a similar supporting pedigree like my own - can recall seeing anything like the bias in these two games.

Perhaps it's time for the club to break new ground.

Logged

SMacDougall
Main Stander
Posts: 249

Re: Do we let the officiating shams of the Etihad and Stamford Bridge simply pass?
« **Reply #5 on:** January 2, 2014, 03:37:11 PM »

> **Quote from: Timbo's Goals on January 2, 2014, 03:35:49 PM**
>
> I know Chakan. But what we saw in these two crucial games goes way beyond anything I've seen in over 50 years watching.
>
> **It was so blatant. No reds fan i've spoken to since - most with a similar supporting pedigree like my own - can recall seeing anything like the bias in these two games.**
>
> Perhaps it's time for the club to break new ground.

I think you are exaggerating, to be honest. It wasn't that bad.

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The sequence begins with Timbo's Goals' reply to a previous member's response, namely Chakan. This is for the post analysed in "Extract 2". In Chakan's post, he shows partial agreement with the OP complaint. This is evident in the use of the collective pronoun "we", the endearing word "mate" and that "we can do absolutely nothing about it", thus displaying partial agreement, as he agrees with the blatant bias but disagrees by saying there is nothing that can be done about it. Hence, Chakan aligns his positioning with that of Timbo's Goals, despite the disagreement with regard to what can be done, thus managing his position to be included in the "us" in the "us versus them" construct. In other words, Chakan reproduces the activated category of LFC supporter identity and thus includes himself not only in the online community and specific thread of this forum but also in the broader community of LFC supporters as a whole.

In Timbo's Goals' response to Chakan, it is evident that there is disagreement as Timbo's Goals defends his point in the face of the first sign of disagreement with it and suggests that what happened warrants some kind of further action. However, since they agree with regard to the main issue at hand, that being the biased refereeing, their positions are largely aligned and situated in the "us" and "defenders of LFC" construct. This is implicitly evident in the reciprocal use of the pronoun "we". Thus, there is no evidence of mitigation for disagreement

and for community membership and LFC supporter identity to be called into question and no need for the negotiation and contestation as there is agreement with the principal complaint.

Furthermore, in Timbo's Goals' response to Chakan, issues of identity, community membership and the use of identity to achieve certain goals are made evident. In the sentence "No reds fan I've spoken to since – most with a similar supporting pedigree like my own – can recall seeing anything like the bias in these two games", he displays and depicts his football identity and inclusion in the community by using the jargon term for LFC supporters, "reds fan", and by grouping himself with other LFC supporters and the community. Furthermore, by implying that the "reds fan" community reflects a position similar to his own about the compliant of bias, opposing positions are at risk of exposing themselves as "non-reds fans". Thus, the use of the "reds fan" and "supporting pedigree" achieved from "over 50 years watching" is a way in which Timbo's Goals provides authority for his viewpoint. He uses these aspects as a basis for validating his complaint about biased refereeing in which he claims that those with the requisite "supporting pedigree" agree with his complaint, and thus implies that those who disagree, lack this "pedigree" and by extension, inclusion in the LFC community.

Therefore, football supporter identity is produced with the goal of validating and providing authority for a viewpoint, invoking membership of the community and confirming his own football supporter identity. Simultaneously, it implies that respondents who do not agree with his complaint about biased officiating have questionable football supporter identity and community membership as they do not have the same calibre as his viewpoint and are not aligned and reflected in the broader LFC community. Thus, Timbo's Goals implies criteria for the inclusion in and exclusion from the category of "reds fans", "defenders of Liverpool" and community of LFC supporters; the "us".

With regard to SMacDougall's response, he is again disagreeing with the complaint of bias in the OP by claiming that the refereeing "wasn't that bad". This is in direct opposition to the previous post that it wasn't as bad as Timbo's Goals has just claimed it to be, as is evident in the "Quote from" feature and the use of "you". Thus, given the threat implied in Timbo's Goals' previous post, this may have consequences for matters of identity and community membership. However, there is no clear sense here that SMacDougall is working to manage any threat to his identity and/or membership – if anything, he is ignoring or not noticing any possibility that such a threat may be relevant. In other words, SMacDougall is still continuing

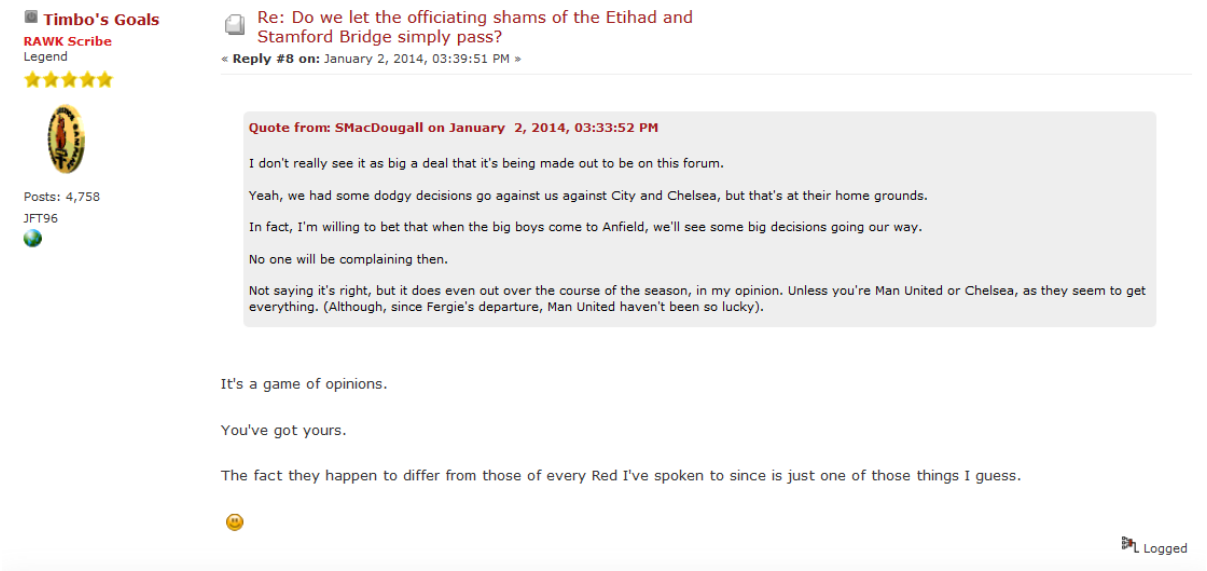
to emphasise his disagreement with the OP and complaint of bias despite his position being that of a disaligning response with regard to the implicit constraints constructed in the OP and the implied consequences for such a viewpoint, specifically, Timbo's second post of this thread which is in response to Chakan.

Thirdly, to manage the disagreeing nature of his position, SMacDougall makes use of the words "to be honest" to function as a device to mitigate his disagreement by treating it as something that he is compelled to produce as a matter of honesty i.e. suggesting that agreeing with Timbo's Goals would be dishonest. Similarly, "it wasn't that bad" implies partial agreement with the fact that the referees were still biased; however, it was not as bad as Timbo's Goals is making it out to be. Thus, even if he is mitigating his disagreement, he is not showing a clear orientation in terms of it having implications for his community membership and LFC supporter identity.

Thus, to summarise, as long as there is alignment with regard to the main issues as hand, despite disagreement with regard to secondary issues, this keeps the issues of community membership and identities largely implicit. However, disagreement on fundamental points, as evident in SMacDougall's response, can, although may not always, provide occasions on which these issues are more explicitly brought into question. Thus, disagreement with regard to what can be done regarding the topic question is less of an issue as opposed to disagreement with the OP and complaint of bias directly. This highlights the difference between disagreements among football supporters within the community as opposed to disagreements that could infer criteria for exclusion from the community; the issue being positioning as regards the predominant viewpoint. In other words, membership legitimacy is reliant on the alignment with the main issues being discussed despite disagreements with regard to secondary issues.

Data Extract 5 – Progression in explicitness with regard to the threat of exclusion: This data extract highlights the continuation of the sequence pattern, and culmination, to a pivotal point with Timbo's Goals' response; *Reply 8.* Timbo's Goals is implying that SMacDougall is at risk of exclusion from the community; specifically, this thread's understanding of LFC supporter identity if he maintains his disagreeing position; if he continues to manage and present his identity in an unaccepted manner. This highlights the progression in the explicitness with regard to threat and risk of exclusion. It starts out largely implicit in the OP,

then becomes more clear, but still somewhat implicit/indirect in the post above, and then becomes more direct/explicit in the following post. This is significant in terms of the sequential unfolding of the exchange, with initially implicit threats to membership progressively becoming more explicit when the participant being threatened doesn't take sufficient corrective action to address the threat.



Timbo's Goals
RAWK Scribe
Legend

Posts: 4,758
JFT96

Re: Do we let the officiating shams of the Etihad and Stamford Bridge simply pass?
« **Reply #8 on:** January 2, 2014, 03:39:51 PM »

Quote from: SMacDougall on January 2, 2014, 03:33:52 PM

I don't really see it as big a deal that it's being made out to be on this forum.

Yeah, we had some dodgy decisions go against us against City and Chelsea, but that's at their home grounds.

In fact, I'm willing to bet that when the big boys come to Anfield, we'll see some big decisions going our way.

No one will be complaining then.

Not saying it's right, but it does even out over the course of the season, in my opinion. Unless you're Man United or Chelsea, as they seem to get everything. (Although, since Fergie's departure, Man United haven't been so lucky).

It's a game of opinions.

You've got yours.

The fact they happen to differ from those of every Red I've spoken to since is just one of those things I guess.

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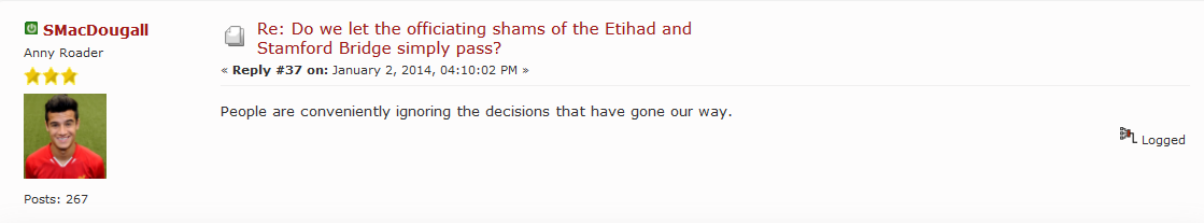
Timbo's Goals' reply makes use of the "Quote from" feature to highlight the response to which Timbo's Goals is responding , which is the reply analysed in "Data 3". He states that everyone has opinions which can be seen as a move towards accepting SMacDougall's alternative response to the OP as acceptable. However, he then proceeds to lower and lessen SMacDougall's opinion by referring to how this alternative position is not represented and accepted by the majority of LFC supporters, "reds fans" and "Reds" that he has spoken with. Thus, when Timbo's Goals implies that his alternative explanation for the biased officiating is not accepted in the LFC supporter community, he is implying that SMacDougall is at risk of excluding himself from the community by virtue of the position he has taken, irrespective of whether or not it is a matter of opinion.

This notion is further advanced with Timbo's Goals' use of a smiling emoticon to conclude his post. This proposes that with the suggestion of SMacDougall basically excluding himself from the category of "reds fans", being potentially serious in nature, Timbo's Goals makes use of the emoticon to lessen the impact of what could otherwise be taken as a highly negative action towards SMacDougall. Thus, with the use of the emoticon, Timbo's Goals suggests it is a "joke" and shouldn't be taken too seriously; however, it still maintains the

serious undertone of being threatened with exclusion from the community without being "officially" or "seriously" done.

Lastly, as Timbo's Goals' opinion regarding the biased officiating is claimed to be accepted as valid amongst the majority of LFC community members that he has spoken with, he, without explicitly doing so, invokes his own community membership and then uses his football supporter identity and community membership as a means for providing authority on the matter and hence validating his OP. This highlights how identity is used to achieve the goal of validating and giving authority to a viewpoint which results in the construction of criteria for inclusion and exclusion in the community.

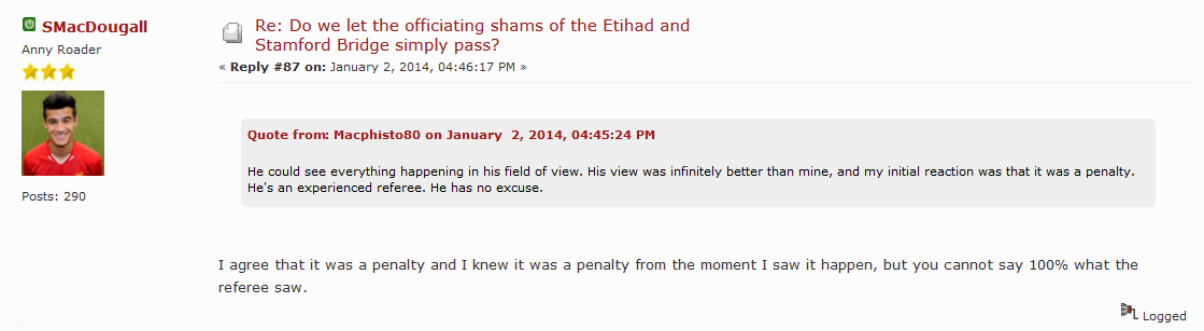
Data Extract 6 – Continued disagreement from the member threatened with exclusion: This data extract highlights SMacDougall's continued stance regarding his disaligned position with regard to the OP and complaint of biased officiating. He is further placing himself at risk of being excluded from the community as implied in the OP and Timbo's Goals' later posts.



In this post, SMacDougall states that "People are conveniently ignoring the decisions that have gone our way". The significance of this sequence is that this response by SMacDougall is *Reply #37* and is his third post following *Reply #5*. This indicates there have been another 30 responses in between his posts by other respondents who have agreed with the OP and the biased officiating. I have not focussed on this as my aim is to focus on the disagreeing exchange rather than all the posts that have aligned with the OP. Secondly, with the word "people", SMacDougall is referring to other members on the forum and not specifically to Timbo's Goals. Thus, he is now disagreeing not just with Timbo's Goals, but with others who have agreed with him on the forum. Hence, he is positioning himself against a developing community consensus, rather than just against the OP and an individual. This means that SMacDougall is further placing himself in a position to be excluded from the community.

Furthermore, as SMacDougall is still trying to engage with other members and gain their acceptance of his disaligned response and position, it indicates that SMacDougall ignores, purposefully neglects or does not notice the implications of the constraints implicitly proposed in the OP and by Timbo's Goals' later post with regard to how the disaligned response of SMacDougall places him at risk of exclusion from the community. Also, this is not the first time he apparently does not attend to these issues, as his previous post also didn't show any explicit awareness of them. The use of the word "our" indicates that SMacDougall is still grouping himself with the community of LFC supporters despite the implied exclusion by Timbo's Goals if he maintains his viewpoint as it is not reflected amongst the majority of "reds fans".

Data Extract 7-9 – Other participants continue the disagreement with the member threatened with exclusion: This first data extract analyses an interaction between Macphisto80 and SMacDougall. It involves Macphisto80 confirming the complaint of bias by explaining that the referee was in full view of a penalty decision that was not given for LFC, and SMacDougall's continued opposition to the notion of the OP and complaint of bias.


SMacDougall
Anny Roader
Posts: 290
Re: Do we let the officiating shams of the Etihad and Stamford Bridge simply pass?
« Reply #87 on: January 2, 2014, 04:46:17 PM »
Quote from: Macphisto80 on January 2, 2014, 04:45:24 PM
He could see everything happening in his field of view. His view was infinitely better than mine, and my initial reaction was that it was a penalty. He's an experienced referee. He has no excuse.
I agree that it was a penalty and I knew it was a penalty from the moment I saw it happen, but you cannot say 100% what the referee saw.
Logged

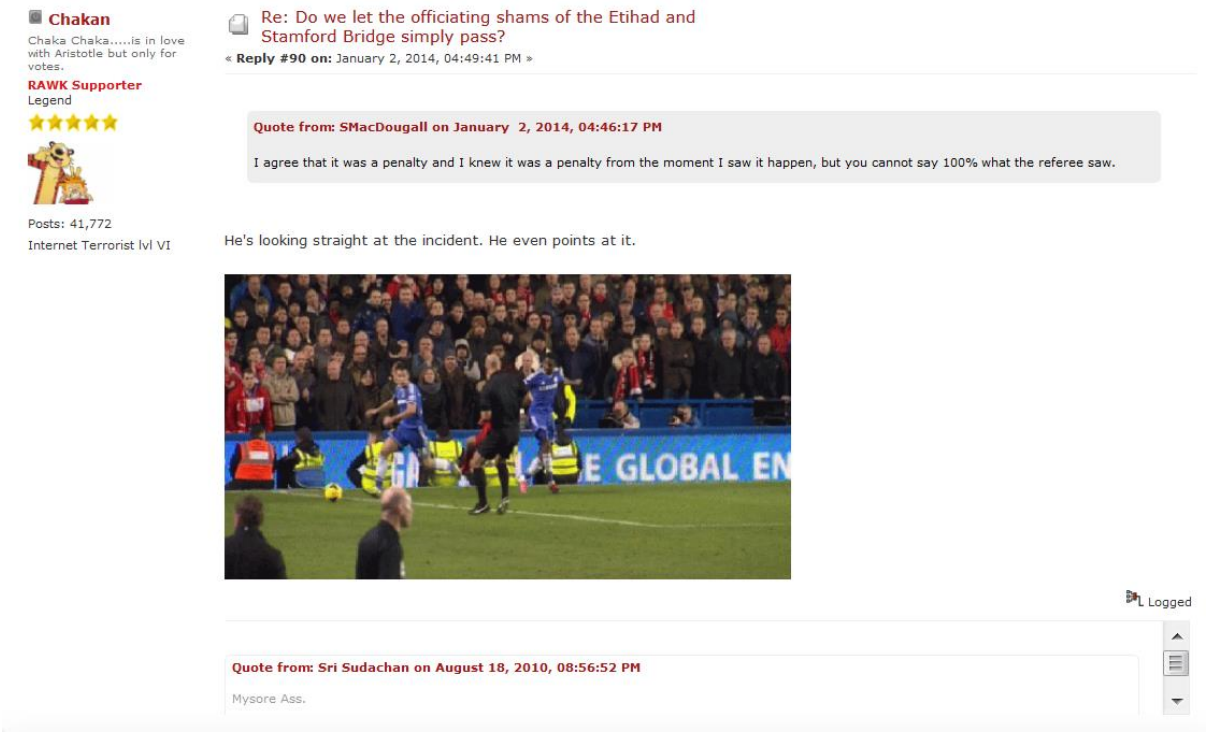
As evident in "He could see everything happening in his field of view" and "He has no excuse", Macphisto80 agrees with the complaint of bias when he examines the penalty decision that was not given in favour of LFC and states that there is no other explanation besides that of bias. Therefore, in Macphisto80's agreement with the OP and reason for agreeing, his response reinforces the implicit norms and constraints set up in the OP and subsequent posts for community membership and being a "true" LFC supporter.

However, as evident in previous posts, SMacDougall continues to position himself in opposition to the complaint of biased refereeing which is the principal complaint in this thread. In SMacDougall's response to Macphisto80, he again tries to provide an alternative

reason to that of biased officiating against LFC. Initially, it was “home ground advantage” and now it is the possibility that the referee “could not have seen it”. He is thus explaining that it is possible that the decision in question was due to the referee not seeing something clearly rather than a clear bias i.e. a deliberate wrong decision. However, similar to his previous post to Timbo’s Goals, he also shows partial agreement. This is evident in the line “I agree that it was a penalty and I knew it was a penalty from the moment I saw it happen, but you cannot say 100% what the referee saw”. To explain, he agrees with other respondents that it was a penalty; however, he claims that it is not due to bias against LFC. Hence, he is managing his disagreeing response and the implication it might have on his identity and community membership by positioning himself somewhere between the extremes of the “us” and “them” positions implied in the OP by accounting for the position he is taking while simultaneously claiming membership in his agreement, albeit being limited.

This disagreement is now boiling down to specific incidents and decisions that are being proposed as evidence for the broader topic at hand; that of claims of bias against LFC by referees. In addition, the same participant SMacDougall, who has been consistently taking oppositional positions up to this point, is also disagreeing with the specific evidence offered by another participant, Macphisto80 who is in support of the position of Timbo’s Goals and reason for the OP.

The following, Data Extract 8, highlights a post by Chakan which is in response to SMacDougall’s previous post regarding how the referee could not have seen the penalty decision. Chakan attaches a GIF image to refute SMacDougall’s reply highlighted in the previous post.

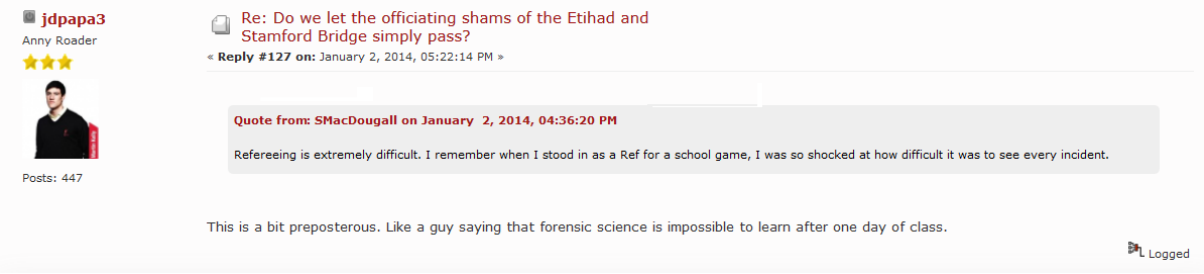


Chakan uses the "Quote from" feature with a GIF image to directly answer and dismiss the alternative explanation provided by SMacDougall. Hence, the activated category in this thread of football supporter identity which is constructed on the grounds of biased officiating is maintained and reaffirmed with the visual evidence and description "He's looking straight at the incident. He even points at it". This dismisses the notion put forward by SMacDougall of the referee not seeing it and hence dismisses the explanation of SMacDougall, resulting in the questionability of SMacDougall's LFC supporter identity and community membership.

Simultaneously, this functions as an example of how Chakan through agreement with the OP of biased officiating is positioning himself in the "us" of the "us versus them" construct, thus including himself in the community. Furthermore, this post is answering the response that was directed at Macphisto80. As a result, these two respondents collaboratively produce the position taken in the OP against biased officiating and again reflect the developing community consensus that there is an agenda against LFC. This suggests that deviation from this position will have implications for the validity of the respondent's football supporter identity and community membership.

The following, Data Extract 9, highlights a response to a post by SMacDougall who continues to maintain his oppositional position despite the developing community consensus that it was blatant favouritism and biased officiating. SMacDougall provides another

alternative reason for why the referee might have not seen or given the penalty decision, this time being the difficulty of the job. However, another member criticises SMacDougall's disaligned position as seen in jdpapa3; *Reply #127*.


jdpapa3
Anny Roader
Posts: 447

Re: Do we let the officiating shams of the Etihad and Stamford Bridge simply pass?
« Reply #127 on: January 2, 2014, 05:22:14 PM »

Quote from: SMacDougall on January 2, 2014, 04:36:20 PM

Refereeing is extremely difficult. I remember when I stood in as a Ref for a school game, I was so shocked at how difficult it was to see every incident.

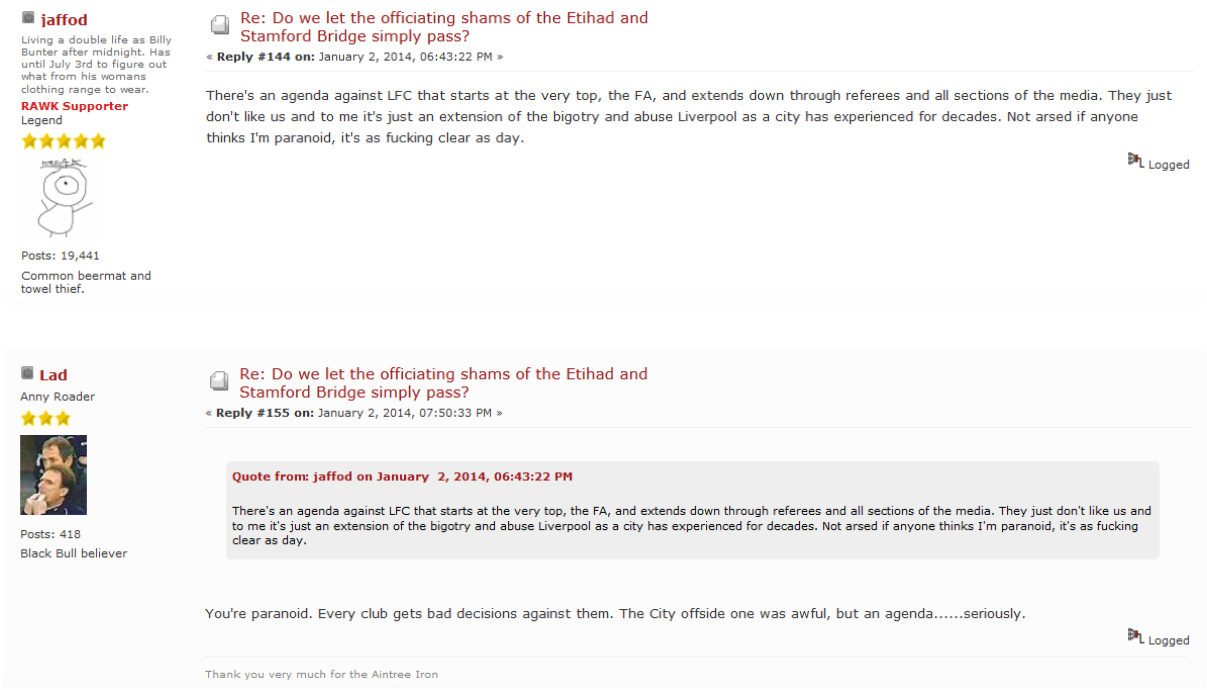
This is a bit preposterous. Like a guy saying that forensic science is impossible to learn after one day of class.

Logged

As is evident in his response, "Refereeing is extremely difficult. I remember when I stood in as a Ref for a school game, I was shocked at how difficult it was to see every incident", SMacDougall continues to try to mitigate his disagreeing position by providing a reason for his disaligned position and alternative reason for the biased officiating. However, this explanation is criticised by jdpapa3 who states that SMacDougall's comparison is not valid as the referee has many years of experience and not a one-day stand-in ref.

The significance of this is that up to this point, a multitude of respondents have shown agreement with the predominant issue at hand, that of biased officiating. Thus, within this thread, the position with regard to the OP has become a consensual position on which there is broad agreement within the community, which makes the rare case of disagreement offered by SMacDougall stand out. This has implications for LFC supporter identity and community membership as the constraints for membership in the "us" in the "us versus them" construct have been corroborated and collaborated with other respondents. This has created explicit criteria for community membership as every other possible alternative explanation for the refereeing has been dismissed and has not received any form of agreement. This is reaffirmed as after this response, SMacDougall withdraws from the thread which is interesting, because essentially, his membership and football supporter identity have been questioned on the basis of his position, and he has nonetheless maintained his disagreement, and now he is literally excluding himself from the thread – which doesn't mean he is excluded from the community or an identity, but it does provide evidence for the difficulty participants may have in sustaining a precarious disagreeing position in the face of broad community consensus on an issue. The choice seems to be between giving in to agreement, or continuing to disagree and becoming progressively more isolated and possibly ultimately excluded, or withdrawing altogether.

Data Extract 10 – Another participant disagrees with the emergent consensus: This is the second interactional sequence analysed and is taken from the same thread, however from a later date. This next data sequence was chosen as it repeats the disaligned position of SMacDougall compared to Timbo's Goals' position but with different respondents. This is significant because it shows that even after one consistently disagreeing participant has withdrawn, it is still possible for others to disagree – so there is still room for contestation of the issue at hand, even when a consensus has apparently been fairly well established. However, the thing that is being disagreed with here is quite extreme and "conspiracy theory"-like, and even jaffod, the participant who is expressing it, shows awareness that he could be seen as "paranoid" which is then exactly what the responding participant, Lad, in the next post, suggests in disagreeing with him.



jaffod
Living a double life as Billy Bunter after midnight. Has until July 3rd to figure out what from his womans clothing range to wear.
RAWK Supporter
Legend
Posts: 19,441
Common beermat and towel thief.

Re: Do we let the officiating shams of the Etihad and Stamford Bridge simply pass?
« Reply #144 on: January 2, 2014, 06:43:22 PM »

There's an agenda against LFC that starts at the very top, the FA, and extends down through referees and all sections of the media. They just don't like us and to me it's just an extension of the bigotry and abuse Liverpool as a city has experienced for decades. Not arsed if anyone thinks I'm paranoid, it's as fucking clear as day.

Logged

Lad
Anny Roader
Posts: 418
Black Bull believer

Re: Do we let the officiating shams of the Etihad and Stamford Bridge simply pass?
« Reply #155 on: January 2, 2014, 07:50:33 PM »

Quote from: jaffod on January 2, 2014, 06:43:22 PM

There's an agenda against LFC that starts at the very top, the FA, and extends down through referees and all sections of the media. They just don't like us and to me it's just an extension of the bigotry and abuse Liverpool as a city has experienced for decades. Not arsed if anyone thinks I'm paranoid, it's as fucking clear as day.

You're paranoid. Every club gets bad decisions against them. The City offside one was awful, but an agenda.....seriously.

Logged

Thank you very much for the Aintree Iron

In jaffod's response to the topic and thread, "There's an agenda against LFC that starts at the very top, the FA, and extends down through referees and all sections of the media. They just don't like us and to me it's just an extension of the bigotry and abuse Liverpool as a city has experienced for decades. Not arsed if anyone thinks I'm paranoid, it's fucking clear as day", jaffod clearly agrees and aligns himself with the OP and the complaint of bias but says something even more extreme along the lines of a systematic conspiracy. Thus, he positions himself within the majority of respondents in this thread and in doing so legitimises his LFC supporter identity and community membership.

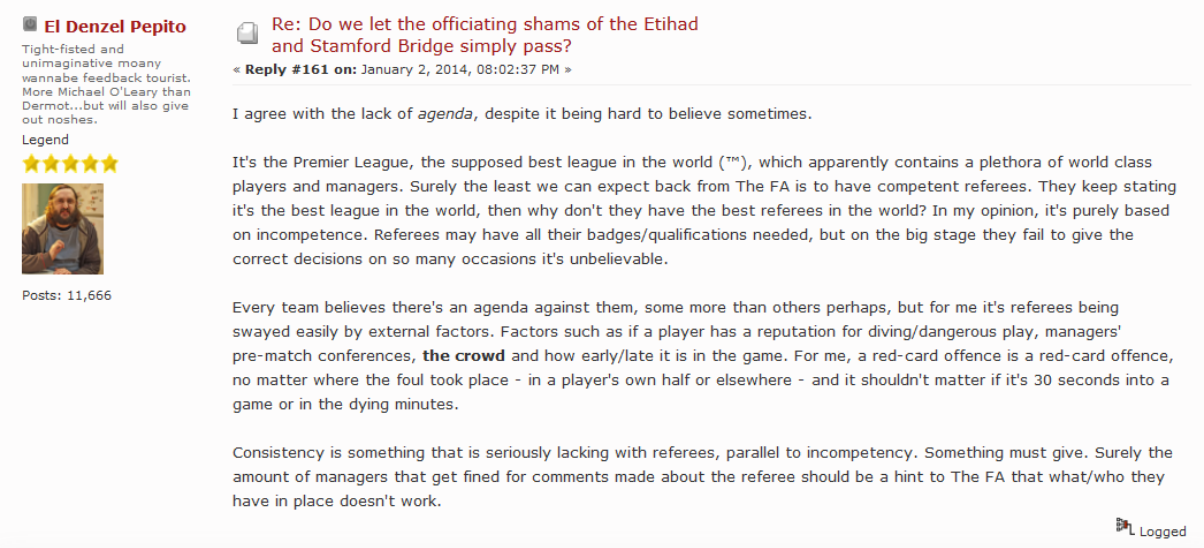
Furthermore, he categorises himself as an LFC supporter and community member with the use of the word "us" in the same sentence as LFC. Hence, he repeats similar notions in Timbo's Goals' posts with regard to the "us versus them" construct in which he has positioned himself as part of the "us" and "defenders of Liverpool". Thus, he maintains and aligns himself with the main issue produced in this thread.

Similar to Timbo's Goals in the OP, he extends the category of LFC supporter beyond that of just the football component to include the collective category of the city as well. He manages this extension to the construct produced in the OP with the use of the words "to me". This expresses that this is his belief and he is not trying to indoctrinate, confirm or extend his position to anyone else who might not agree, thus managing the implication this extension might have on his LFC supporter identity and community membership.

Lad's reply "You're paranoid. Every club gets bad decisions against them. The City offside was awful, but an agenda……seriously", is specifically directed at jaffod as Lad makes use of the "Quote from" feature and states that "You're paranoid" which is in direct opposition to jaffod's statement of "not arsed if anyone thinks I'm paranoid". What is interesting here is that while Lad here is effectively agreeing with the consensus that the refereeing was "awful", he disagrees with the suggestion of "an agenda". This highlights that even though there can be consensus within the community, this consensus can also be stretched and disagreed upon, as evident in Lad suggesting that jaffod is effectively going too far with the thought of an agenda against the team and city as evident in "but an agenda……seriously". Thus, there are parallels between SMacDougall and Timbo's Goals with Lad and jaffod; however, jaffod is expressing a more extreme version of the complaint that Timbo's Goals did, and Lad is disagreeing only with the most extreme elements of what jaffod is saying. In other words, this interaction says something about the limits of agreement and consensus within the community.

Data Extract 11 – The emergence of a more moderate community consensus: This data extract highlights the outlines of a more moderate consensus that can be seen to be emerging. This emerging consensus shows agreement in some respects with the OP and subsequent posts but disagreement with the more extreme implications of the OP and subsequent posts, specifically agreement with bad officiating but disagreement with the notion of biased

officiating and an agenda. So this is where we start to see the limits of consensus and points of potential contestation.



El Denzel Pepito

Tight-fisted and unimaginative moany wannabe feedback tourist. More Michael O'Leary than Dermot...but will also give out noshes.

Legend

Posts: 11,666

Re: Do we let the officiating shams of the Etihad and Stamford Bridge simply pass?

« **Reply #161 on:** January 2, 2014, 08:02:37 PM »

I agree with the lack of *agenda*, despite it being hard to believe sometimes.

It's the Premier League, the supposed best league in the world (™), which apparently contains a plethora of world class players and managers. Surely the least we can expect back from The FA is to have competent referees. They keep stating it's the best league in the world, then why don't they have the best referees in the world? In my opinion, it's purely based on incompetence. Referees may have all their badges/qualifications needed, but on the big stage they fail to give the correct decisions on so many occasions it's unbelievable.

Every team believes there's an agenda against them, some more than others perhaps, but for me it's referees being swayed easily by external factors. Factors such as if a player has a reputation for diving/dangerous play, managers' pre-match conferences, **the crowd** and how early/late it is in the game. For me, a red-card offence is a red-card offence, no matter where the foul took place - in a player's own half or elsewhere - and it shouldn't matter if it's 30 seconds into a game or in the dying minutes.

Consistency is something that is seriously lacking with referees, parallel to incompetency. Something must give. Surely the amount of managers that get fined for comments made about the referee should be a hint to The FA that what/who they have in place doesn't work.

Logged

El Denzel Pepito, like the previous post by Lad, shows partial agreement with the OP and developed community consensus. He agrees to the degree that the officiating was awful but attributes the poor decisions to other factors such as "incompetency" and "external factors" rather than an agenda. In addition, he uses the collective pronoun "we" to present, and include, himself to the other respondents as one of them despite his disaligned position. Furthermore, by saying "despite it being hard to believe sometimes", El Denzel Pepito suggests that those who believe in an agenda are not being completely unreasonable or "paranoid", as Lad has suggested. So there are some subtle differences between this participant and Lad's position, rather than them straightforwardly agreeing with each other and disagreeing with the OP. This highlights an emerging moderate consensus in which boundaries are drawn within the issues at hand: whereas before, the community consensus was that there was biased officiating, now the emerging consensus is that there is agreement with the degree of poor officiating but there is disagreement with the opinion that there is an agenda against LFC.

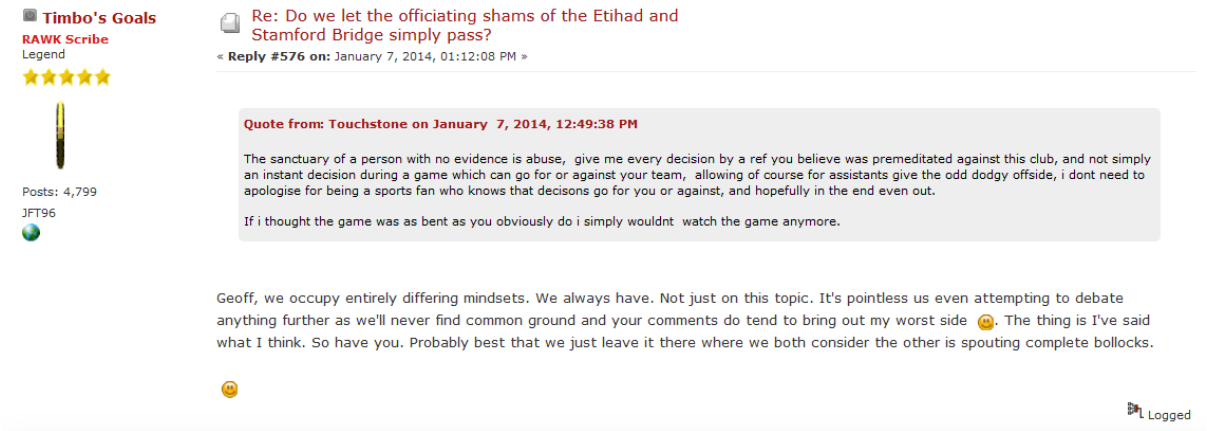
This is evident in the use of the words "in my opinion" and "for me" as he treats this as a matter of opinion rather than fact, implying that there is no right or wrong answer and position on the topic. Hence, El Denzel Pepito implicitly legitimises the fact that different people are allowed to have different opinions on the topic and hence disagree with the topic but still be included in the community of supporters, thus legitimising his own community membership.

Additionally, as more respondents have now replied with a dispreferred response and between themselves have collaborated to construct an alternative position in which there is disagreement with the OP and compliant of bias but agreement amongst themselves, there is now the possibility of participants clearly and explicitly disagreeing with each other, while still expressing respect for one another and being able to make light of their disagreement.

In other words, by this point a space has been created for the possibility of reasonable disagreement, such that disagreeing doesn't clearly or necessarily put one at risk of being excluded from the community. So El Denzel Pepito is disagreeing with some aspects of the OP, but agreeing with others; agreeing with some aspects of what Lad has said, but implicitly disagreeing with others such as the accusation of paranoia. Therefore, whether this post is "dispreferred" depends on what you are considering it relative to, meaning it is both preferred (agreeing) and dispreferred (disagreeing) in relation with what the developing community consensus is towards a topic.

Things are now much more complicated than just being about wholesale agreement or disagreement, but this complexity is exactly what produces the very nuanced sense of where the boundaries of consensus and contestation are, and by implication what it would take for a disagreement to potentially result in exclusion, as opposed to being disagreement within a community. Hence, it is evident here how the community can adapt over the course of an exchange from threats (even if joking) of exclusion to allowing for disagreement without it having implications for membership or football supporter identity, which is what we see more of in Data Extract 12.

Data Extract 12 – A more moderate community consensus: This data extract was selected as it highlighted a different interaction sequence where respondents "agree to disagree" with each other's disaligned position with regard to the OP and complaint of bias. Specifically, it highlights how the author of the thread, Timbo's Goals, accepts another respondent's dispreferred response while still maintaining and reaffirming his position. The significance is that the member with the disaligned position was not implicitly questioned with regard to his position in terms of LFC supporter identity or community membership, thus highlighting the emergence of a moderate community consensus which allows agreement and disagreement without implicit or explicit threats of membership due to disagreement.





As evident, Touchstone, like SMacDougall, Lad and El Denzel Pepito, does not agree with the OP complaint of bias against LFC. Touchstone questions the validity of Timbo's Goals' position by asking for evidence for every decision that he thought was "premeditated"; decisions that could not have gone either way, ignoring the occasional "dodgy offside" call. Thus, like the previous members, he provides reasons for why he disagrees with the OP and complaint of bias and an agenda.

Secondly, in the comment "I don't need to apologise for being a sports fan who knows that decisions go for or against, and hopefully in the end even out," he categorises himself not just as an LFC supporter but in the broader category of sports fan. Hence Touchstone activates a hierarchical identity category of "sports fan" as a way of achieving authority and validation for his disaligned and dispreferred response by implying that he is not just a football fan but more so a sports fan thus maintaining his LFC supporter identity and community membership.

However, the key significance of the interaction is evident in his comment "I don't need to apologise" as this implies that he is not attempting to negotiate and account for his disagreeing position while simultaneously highlighting that an apology is the expected outcome for a disagreeing position because he is claiming that his position is a reasonable one. He is also suggesting that Timbo's Goals has been too demanding in expecting that others should agree with him, or that if they don't agree with him, they are guilty of something that warrants an apology. So there is a negotiation/contestation again here of the kinds of things that can be taken to be reasonable positions within a community, as opposed to disagreement with a community consensus that could put one at risk of exclusion.

As evident in "if I thought the game was as bent as you obviously do I simply wouldn't watch the game anymore", and allowing for the possibility of "dodgy" decisions, he in a sense agrees with those who have complained about such decisions but he is aligning with those who have said these things are not evidence of an agenda. So he's taking a similar kind of position to the one others have taken.

In Timbo's Goals' response, he highlights how there have been many interactions between himself and Touchstone, and secondly, that they do not end in agreement and understanding as is evident in "Geoff, we occupy entirely differing mindsets. We always have. Not just on this topic. It's pointless us even attempting to debate anything further as we'll never find common ground and your comments do tend to bring out my worst side (Smile emoticon)". Furthermore, the use of the word "debate" infers discussion of positions with regard to the topic and OP which is completely contradictory to his actions when juxtaposed to the authoritarian position he adopted with his demeaning and discarding of opposing respondents' opinions in previous disagreement interactions. This is reaffirmed with the use of the words "common ground" which implies that the aim with regard to differing opinions is to find a position where both parties can understand one another; again, an action that was missing with previous interactions.

What further emphasises the difference in Timbo's Goals' position to his previous stance is evident in the sentence "The thing is I've said what I think. So have you". This implies that this is in fact a matter of opinion as opposed to fact which is completely opposite to his response, and viewpoint, to SMacDougall's notion of "in my opinion". Additionally, he accepts that their differing opinions are to one another "complete bollocks" which again

indicates a change in stance in which members are allowed differing opinions without the threat of being excluded from the community.

This is further reflected in the more egalitarian position of Timbo's Goals with the use of words like "we" and "us" as opposed to the dividing category of "reds fans" and implied "non-reds fans"; "us versus them". Additionally, they have had previous interactions indicated in how Timbo's Goals addresses Touchstone as "Geoff" which implies a more personal tone, reflecting a history between these two members in the online community. However he still maintains the undertone of his viewpoint by not backing down from his position and while not implying criteria for membership exclusion, he also does not imply membership inclusion as well. Therefore, despite the disaligned opinions, there is no implicit suggestion of membership exclusion from either respondent.

These posts highlight the emergence of a community that is based on reasonableness and fair-mindedness. For example, this interaction highlights that agreement with the OP and the constraints implied is not a requisite for community membership or a means that defines one's football supporter identity because, as evident, despite Touchstone disagreeing with the OP and complaint of bias with his position in the "them" construct, he is not implicitly or explicitly threatened with exclusion from the community. Furthermore, when other constructs are produced, it can create a position in which the preferred and aligned response is brought into question. Also, previous interactions within different threads can result in the sense of community by virtue of being present; therefore, it does not matter if positions are disaligned. Finally, due to an emergent, alternative community consensus regarding the topic, this alternative position is not understood as an individual random position but rather a significant position that is held by many other people within the community thus resulting in a community where disagreement and agreement is not grounds for exclusion.

In Touchstone's response, "Timbo agreed mate, and I respect your point of view" shows a similar peaceful tone by calling Timbo's Goals the endearing term "mate" and saying how he respects his opinion. These responses show a level of compromise on both sides, to be accepting of people's different positions regarding the OP and compliant of bias. This again can be the result of previous interactions and thus presence and community contribution to the thread infer community membership. In these circumstances, past interaction in the community was used as a means of reducing conflict due to opposing positions, making it a disagreement between supporters as opposed to disagreement as grounds for exclusion from

the community. Furthermore, as stated, the thread through different members' posts has created a space in which participants can clearly and explicitly disagree with each other, while still expressing respect for each other and being able to make light of their disagreement.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

5.1. Conclusions

This research set out with the aim to understand how followers of a particular football team invoke and contest membership into the categories of football supporter and community of supporters in a forum. This was achieved using CA and its supplementary method of MCA.

The data revealed the sequential and structural importance with regard to the forum, OP and topic thread. It revealed how the thread creates a space in which potential respondent identities and status as community members can be made relevant. However the OP provided, whether implicitly or explicitly, constraints and resources for people to use and respond to. In this case, a construct of "us versus them" with regards to biased officiating against LFC was put in position despite the thread being in the form of a question, with the OP implicitly aligning towards being the defender of LFC against biased officiating. The respondents, through their responses, whether in agreement or disagreement, manage their position in such that they can contribute to the thread and be accepted as a community member. The reason for this is due to the structure of the forum as it allows members to participate in a wide variety of topics. Also the author starts a thread with a topic and OP, and a participating member implicitly accepts the constraints for the thread. Although not definitive, agreement with the author and his position results in inclusion while disagreement places the responding member at the possible risk of being excluded from the community. This of course being dependent on what the community consensus seems to be and whether the ratified members actually attempt to exclude members based on their differing opinions. Furthermore, partial agreement also suggests inclusion in the community only as long as the agreement is with the main issues being debated. Therefore, when members respond to the thread, they position themselves as implicitly agreeing with the constraints of the OP and hence it is not about whether the existence of the thread is invalid but rather about backing and contributing to the aim of the thread. However their position on the topic and community is then reliant on the resulting interactions with other members and the community consensus that emerges.

When members were in a dis-aligned position and at risk of exclusion from the community, due to their disagreeing response, devices of account giving; collective pronouns; phrases like "in my opinion", "to be honest" or "to me"; and partial agreement with certain features of the OP were implemented. These devices served to negotiate and manage community

membership due to their dis-aligned position regarding the OP and complaint of bias and thus mitigate their disagreeing position. For example, "we" and "us" were used as a means of inclusion in the community despite disagreeing with regard to how a football supporter should and is expected to behave.

Furthermore respondents constructed and managed their identity and community membership via the use of category labels and category-tied predicates. Thus members presented themselves as part of the football supporter identity and community with the use of category-tied predicates; the vernacular that is specific to LFC supporters, and category labels such as "reds fan" hence grouping themselves explicitly in the community and as a football supporter. This was done as a means for negotiating their dis-aligned position and inclusion in the community or as a way of validating their continued community membership. Furthermore, the use of positioned categories and by grouping their identity in the majority opinion allowed respondents a means in which they could validate and negotiate their positions thus in the broader sense constructing and managing their identities as football supporters in the community.

Thirdly, as the forum progressed, disagreement and agreement was not a requisite for contestation of community membership. As highlighted when the thread started, the OP implied constraints for continued group membership in which the disagreeing member was met with contestation. This created a community consensus of how other members should respond to be included in which disagreeing members mitigated their dispreferred response. However as the forum progressed and more members with disagreeing responses expressed their opinion, a more moderate community consensus emerged in which disagreement and agreement between members was not a requisite for contestation of community membership. This highlighted that the difference between disagreements among football supporters within the community as opposed to disagreements that imply criteria for exclusion from the community of football supporters is much more complex that just agreement and disagreement. For example, in the start of the thread, agreement and alignment with primary issues but disagreement with secondary issues was understood as disagreement among football supporters, while disagreement and dis-alignment with primary issues resulted in grounds for possible exclusion from the community of football supporters. However as highlighted in the last data analysis, despite disagreement, the members proceeded to accept their opposing views without contestation of community membership and football identity as the community consensus of what it means to be a football supporter changed. This also

highlighted that community membership was not only used as a means to imply exclusion for the community but also used as a means of reducing conflict despite opposing positions.

Furthermore, the data revealed that previous interaction among respondents; indicating online community presence may result in inclusion in the community despite having dis-aligned positions with regards to a specific topic thread. Additionally a position in which other constructs are produced can create a position in which the preferred and aligned response is brought into question and thus the initially implied constraints for community membership are overwritten. Finally, mitigation for a disagreeing response can imply that the position is incorrect and thus by design imply questionable community membership and football supporter identity. This all highlights that agreement with the OP and the constraints implied is not the sole requisite for community membership or ones football supporter identity. Lastly, when members were implicitly threatened with exclusion from the community due to a disagreeing response, members simply ignored the response, did not understand, and instead continued to direct their replies at other online community members in order to legitimate their position by achieving agreement with other respondents.

Thus football supporter identity and community membership are constructed in the OP in which the poster provides constraints and resources in which respondents make their identity and status in the community known. However there are implicit or explicit constraints and resources that define preferred responses for continued inclusion in the community. As respondents agree with one another, this creates a community consensus of the expected behaviour. Therefore disagreeing responses in which dis-aligned positions are constructed have sequential implications for their football supporter identity and community membership and places themselves at risk of exclusion. As a result, respondents make use of a number of devices in which they negotiate and mitigate their position for continued community membership whether or not they are implicitly or explicitly threatened with exclusion. However, as more members express a disagreeing position, it creates a new moderate community consensus in which disagreement does not result in contestation of community membership and football identity. Thus highlighting the complexity and nuances for the boundaries for contestation of community membership; disagreements among football supporters within the community as opposed to disagreements that imply criteria for exclusion from the community of football supporters. Additionally, previous interactions and community presence also play an important role in community membership. Therefore,

football supporter identity and community membership are constantly changing and used depending on the context, thus highlighting how dynamic and flexible these processes are.

5.2. Limitations and Future Implications

A limitation of this study was that the data selected was taken from one thread and one forum as it was a case study. However, future research could benefit from investigating whether these process occur in the majority of threads and different thread type questions.

Future studies should include different teams and different forum types in which different topics are presented in order to investigate whether the processes identified occur similarly in these other forums. Additionally, future studies should include investigating these processes, and the possible variations that can occur with respect to them in different types of interactions.

Also, future studies can benefit from collecting data from different football teams and combining the ways in which identity is used in different fields, to illustrate how identity is used within different contexts. In other words, it is worth finding out whether these processes also occur in communities other than football supporter forums; that is, whether they are generic community-based processes, as opposed to being more specific to communities of football supporters.

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