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Where the action is: Towards a discursive psychology of "authentic" identity in soccer

fandom

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Abstract

Objectives: Fandom underpins a wide range of foundational sporting activities. The corpus of psychological research on the topic remains, however, largely concerned with (a) producing of formal taxonomies of fans, and (b) making the analytic distinction between authentic "fans" and mere "spectators." This work is premised on the classical - but problematic - social-cognitive assumption that identity itself both precedes and (largely) determines the manner in which it is communicated. As such, the core objective of this paper is to take provisional empirical steps towards a formal psychology of "authentic" sporting fandom that does not replicate this troublesome assumption.

Design: A Discursive Psychological framework is used to explore how self-identified soccer fans make "robust" cases for the authenticity of their own fan-identities.

Method: N=26 unstructured interviews are analysed to highlight the constructive and attributional techniques drawn upon by speakers when making cases, and the culturally-available knowledges and contextual reasoning procedures that these make apparent.

Results: Three models for legitimating fan-identity are described: (a) longitudinal endurance, (b) logical choice-making and (c) emotional imperative. It is noted how key issues that inform social-cognitive analysis are actually assembled as members' concerns in the service of persuasively accounting for particular claims in situ, and that this can facilitate a stronger understanding of the interrelation between sporting culture and social identity itself.

Conclusions: Until a stronger description of public procedures for self-identification is advanced, analytic abstractions made for the sake of "clarity" can guarantee no relevance to the social psychological lives of everyday fans themselves.

Where the action is: Towards a discursive psychology of "authentic" identity in soccer

fandom

Across the extant psychological corpus of literature on sporting fandom, there remains a broad reliance on classically social-cognitive explanatory mechanisms for supporter loyalties and behaviours. Such concerns as emotional catharsis, excitement-seeking, image-maintenance and the core social-cognitive theme of "connectedness" are often viewed as determining attractors for individuals in their support of a particular team (Jacobson, 2003; Melnick & Wann, 2011; Porat, 2010; Wann, Royalty, & Roberts, 2000; Wann, Weaver, Belva, Ladd, & Armstrong, 2015). Within most of this literature, there is a common (and often troublesome) precursory move to primordially define what a "fan" actually is, as opposed to, for example, a "spectator" (Wann, Melnick, Russell, & Pease, 2001).

In this paper, conversely, a formal analysis is advanced of the manner in which self-declared soccer fans organize accounts of their own fandom. Drawing chiefly on pertinent work in discursive psychology (henceforth DP - Locke, 2004; McGannon & Mauws, 2000; Miller, 2012) and allied studies in the field of conversation analysis (henceforth CA - Faulkner & Finlay, 2002; Groom, Cushion, & Nelson, 2012), opening sequences from unstructured interviews with supporters of a range of different soccer clubs are explored in order to take some precursory steps towards elucidating the range of systematic public procedures through which fans construct and manage their identities as real fans.

To the practicing sport psychologist, it may not be instantly apparent why a phenomenon such as "fandom" is directly relevant to traditionally core matters of participation and performance, even less so the ostensibly mundane, everyday business of "talking about it." There are, however, three key issues to consider here. Firstly, strong identification with a sport, team or athlete is acknowledged in many studies to be a key progenitor of enthusiasm for the sport on the wider scale and, thus, the springboard for

prospective and/or sustained engagement, especially during childhood (Lau, Fox, & Cheung, 2006; Mutter & Pawlowski, 2014). Few athletes of any order, and even fewer elite athletes, will not have had their primordial experience with their core sport of choice as a "fan." Moreover, "love" of a sport in general is often cited as a central motivational factor for individuals to pursue (and sustain) involvement in sport at higher levels, especially in difficult circumstances such as recuperation from severe injury (Iñigo, Podlog, & Hall, 2015; Podlog, Hannon, Banham, & Wadey, 2015). Thus, sport fandom underpins both the engagement and (re)invigoration of many sporting participants. Moreover, it is also highly-invested fans - especially those of the most commercialized mass sports, such as soccer - who ultimately fund a great deal of amateur and elite activity, through regular event attendance, the purchase of merchandise, the act of paying for TV subscriptions or simply being a viable target for advertisers (Quinn, 2009).

Secondly, understanding how individuals express their own fandom in conversation is not "simply" a matter of language. Rather, and as discussed in depth below, the manner in which individuals communicate any details about themselves can highlight a range of contextual, social and cultural constraints upon the normative order of self-expression (Potter, 2010) and, thereby, upon social identity itself (McGannon & Smith, 2015). At the most basic level, it can demonstrate what they might assume it is "okay" to be in interpersonal domains, and to whom, and what they reason needs to be downplayed or justified.

Thirdly, and as a corollary of the above, to understand how fandom is expressed by individuals in situ can help us analyze the broader culture(s) of sport as they manifest in particular circumstances, and their impact upon those individuals' sense of self and agency. In this respect, "fandom" might be seen as nothing short of a foundational concern at all levels of the sporting experience, and its expression instrumental to an understanding of the cultures and contexts therein. As McGannon and Smith (2015) note, DP is a highly apposite

method for addressing concerns relating to identity and culture in sport, and there is indeed a

growing body of contemporary psychological literature emerging in this domain (Cosh,

Crabb, Kettler, LeCouteur, & Tully, 2015; Locke, 2008; McGannon & Schinke, 2013;

McGannon, Gonsalves, Schinke, & Busanich, 2015). As such, and given the above, this paper

aims to take some provisional, empirical steps towards a wider analysis of the interpersonal

and cultural dimensions of the fandom phenomenon.

Sport, Identity and Fandom: Key Literature

In the most commonly-cited psychological studies on the issue, there has been a

pervasive concern with making the distinction between "serious" sports fans and more casual

observers, what Wann et al. (2001) classify as sport fans and sport spectators respectively. A

key differentiating point between the two ends of the assumed continuum here is taken to be

that true fans are "authentically" interested in, and follow, a particular sport, athlete or team.

Spectators, on the other hand, might well watch an event in person, or through various media

outlets (television, radio etc.), without having a specific "interest" in it (Wann, 1995). Jones

(1997), in a comparable vein, argues that spectators will watch a sporting event and then

"forget about it," whereas fans will exhibit greater intensity and actively invest parts of their

everyday lives in the team/athlete. Although these two terms are often used interchangeably

in sport literature, Wann et al. (2001) caution against this[1]. They cite the example of a

particular sports fan who might rarely (if ever) actually watch a sporting event at the venue,

while a spectator may be given a free ticket and attend, but this attendance would be for

purposes other than watching the match itself; in order to spend time with friends, for

instance.

Within such studies, there has been a similarly sustained emphasis upon the difference

between "lowly" and "highly" identified fans, couched as "team identification" (Real &

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[1] This criticism of the interchangeable use of the terms fans and spectators is, perhaps, undermined by the title of
the book in which it appears: Sport Fans: The Psychology and Social Impact of Spectators, which alludes to
fans and spectators in exactly those synonymous terms.

Mechikoff, 1992; Wann et al., 2000; Wann et al., 2015). Team identification is, at its core, the extent that a fan feels emotionally "connected" to a team (Melnick & Wann, 2011; Wilson, Grieve, Ostrowski, Mienaltowski, & Cyr, 2013), with the active following of that team deemed a central component in the identity of the highly identified fans (Wann et al., 2013). Such research is itself grounded in the Sport Spectator Identification Scale (henceforth SSIS - Wann & Branscombe, 1993), developed to measure team identification by providing an inventory of seven core Likert-scale indicators, with responses ranging from 1 to 8, where higher scores indicate correspondingly higher levels of identification. These items address a range of emotional and practical investments that might be made by an individual, and the extent to which they believe that their role as a follower of a team is a core element of their social identity. Although designed to be adapted to particular incidences, core questions target such matters as: "How important to you is it that [this team] wins?" and "How strongly do you see yourself as a fan of [this team]?"

Although such scaling procedures, also typified by (among others) the Team Identification Scale (Theodorakis, Wann, & Weaver, 2012), may seem to imply a relatively static "level" of fandom in individuals, there is acknowledgement that an individual's level of team identification can fluctuate, largely depending on the (perceived) success-level of their team. Fans can bask in the reflective glory (BIRGing) of sporting success by highlighting and publicizing their team identification, or they can cut off the reflective failures of a losing team (CORFing) by distancing themselves from that team (Spinda, 2011). BIRGing is generally regarded an enhancement tactic, while CORFing is an image-protection tactic (Ware & Kowalski, 2012).

In a more multi-dimensional attempt at characterizing fandom, Ben Porat (2010) argues that a fan's identity is composed of three clear "domains of experience." The first, the emotional-affective experience, addresses the quest for excitement, catharsis, and so forth.

The second, the cognitive experience, treats the gains and losses of being a fan as costs and benefits, like their own/their club's relationship to significant others. The third, the symbolic experience, meanwhile, pertains to the symbolic-cultural context of supporting a club, and assists the fan in answering the question "Who am I?" Examples given in this domain include Celtic FC embodying Catholicism in Scotland, and FC Barcelona representing Catalanism in Spain.

In sum, while fluctuation in variables such as the level of identification (Wann et al., 2013) and the level of involvement or participation (Pope, 2013) is acknowledged, a soccer fan's identity as a fan is ultimately taken to be a bounded and permanent phenomenon within this corpus of research. Indeed, as Ben Porat (2010) explicitly claims, a "true" fan supports their team from the cradle to the grave.

Fandom as Interpersonal Action

There is a wide body of work in the discursive and interactional sciences that problematises the core social-cognitive characterisation of identity underpinning studies such as those discussed above. The first tenet of this critique is that identity itself is simply not a self-identical property of a person that precedes its elucidation, by either the individual or the psychologist (McGannon et al., 2015). As Tannen (1990, p.86) asks, "[I]s it correct to see language use as expressing an identity which is separate from and prior to language? To put the point a little less obscurely, is it not the case that the way I use language is partly constitutive of my social identity?" The second tenet, meanwhile, is that the categories into which psychologists commonly "slot" individuals are not objective scientific tools for measurement, but indivisibly social artefacts, primordially used in real interactions by real people (McGannon & Smith, 2015; Miller & Cronin, 2013). As Antaki and Widdicombe (1998, p.2) summarise:

"[A] person's identity is their display of, or ascription to, membership of some social category, with consequences for the interaction in which the display or ascription takes place…Membership of a category is ascribed (and rejected), avowed (and disavowed) and displayed (and ignored) in local places and at certain times, and it does these things as part of the interactional work that constitutes people's lives."

Identity, from this point of view, is something which is "done" by people in situ, and the prime determinants of how an individual describes their affiliations or investments are (a) the interactional context in which the description itself is deployed and (b) their reasoning regarding the social implications of what is being said therein (Widdicombe & Wooffitt, 1995). How an identity is constructed at any given time and in any given place is, thus, not transparent evidence of what that identity fundamentally is (McGannon et al., 2015). This is not to propose, for one moment, that linguistic "construction" is all there is to soccer fandom - this would be naïve at the very least, and blithely disregarding of obvious evidence to the contrary at worst. Individuals plainly experience vivid emotional turmoil during games, dark anxiety about the state of the league table and exhilaration at avoiding relegation. Rather, the point being made here is a more fundamental one about the link between evidence and inference within the social-cognitive orthodoxy itself when it comes to exploring the practical business of self-identification.

For a relatively facile example, were a Tottenham Hotspur fan to find themselves on a train and surrounded by fans of arch-rivals Arsenal, and they reasoned that said Arsenal fans were not exactly in a joking mood, it might well be pragmatic to assert, if asked, that they are "Not really into soccer." This would not represent the individual's team affiliation, but rather indicates a reasoned desire for self-preservation. It might be argued that a research interview is somehow devoid of such pragmatic concerns, but this is a difficult assertion to uphold

given a strong body of academic evidence which indicates that speakers actively orient their talk to practical inferential concerns in all interactional contexts (Potter, 2010). Discursively speaking (as it were), no description given in-practice can ever be demonstrated to reliably index the absolute level, origin, character and/or totality of the described phenomenon itself (McGannon & Smith, 2015; Miller, 2012). Locke (2008), as a case in point, demonstrates how elite athletes (during televised interviews) use notions of "being in the zone" to manage personal accountability in talk about exceptional performance. Rather than treating The Zone as a discreet bio-psychological state, the "true" character of which can be extracted from participant accounts, Locke highlights how it is a discursive device that facilitates an inferred moral need to address success (extant or potential) "…without appearing to be making immodest claims." (2008, p.119). In short, in the cases analysed, to claim one was "just in the zone" provides a means of projecting a "humble" identity while simultaneously describing high levels of personal achievement for a mass media audience.

One might consider that the use of self-report scales such as the SSIS to some extent negates this quandary endemic to the more "natural" language that might appear in an interview or everyday conversation. Notwithstanding a wide array of standard critiques of such tools from within the cognitive sciences themselves (see Fulmer & Frijters, 2009, for a detailed critical review of scaling in studies of motivation), we would highlight two more that are particularly pertinent to the approach adopted herein.

Firstly, self-report scales are not themselves guaranteed to be completed naïvely or, indeed, outside of a context. For example, it is not beyond the realm of possibility that an individual filling-out a Beck Depression Inventory might well fear the social "stigma" that a diagnosis of depression might bring with it (see Cook & Wang, 2011). It is not a huge leap to then imagine that the same individual might "downscale" the responses they give in the inventory with respect to the way they are feeling, so as to avoid being "seen" in a certain

manner. Indeed, "social desirability" biases are a well-documented problem with self-report measures in general, especially when questions pertain to matters that are taken to be contextually sensitive or personal by the respondent (King & Bruner, 2000). In short, when completing Likert scale questionnaires and suchlike, respondents can often be seen to manage their social identity with reference to inferred outcomes in much the same way that they might in open discourse. We would not expect this to be any different when a self-identified fan responds to a scaled question such as the SSIS staple of "How strongly do you see yourself as a fan of [this team]?" Equally, how important it is to an individual that their team "wins" at any given time is likely not only contingent upon sporting matters (as embodied in such concerns as BIRGing and CORFing) but upon wider life circumstances. Simply put, sometimes other things take precedence.

Likert responses are, thus, no more easily reducible to "lies" and "truth" than spoken words, unless we are to assume there is a context-less situation in which our scales can be completed. To then adjust for these "biases," moreover, is to assume a full understanding of the respondent's own reading of social context, their motivations and circumstances, what is sensitive or personal to them and so forth. This is what David Silverman (1997) terms the "Divine Orthodoxy" in cognitive science: the assumption that the analyst can somehow deconstruct the participant's world so as know it better than they do. While this might, at an absolute push, be arguable at the level of a highly familiar individual case, to argue that the same analyst can then statistically control for these matters over a sufficiently broad population to make effective generalizations is somewhat less convincing.

A second, and perhaps more important, critique of the rationale behind statistical scaling with respect to identity-assessments is that in the attempt to "neutralize" an account of fandom (by reducing its components to tickable boxes) questions are asked – and responses mandated – in a way that an individual would never have to deal with in the real contexts of

their actual lives (Silverman, 1997). While this might be couched as an "ecological validity" problem, the argument goes further still. It is not uncommon to be asked about "who you support," in a pub discussion; to be asked to justify supporting Manchester United by a friend when you have never lived anywhere near Manchester; or to need to find ways of rebuffing your students' mockery of your team's weekend performance during a seminar. The need to rate microscopic aspects of your affiliation to that team in statistical terms is, however, fairly well a unique requirement of psychological tools. To paraphrase Harvey Sacks' (1992) critique of Robert Bales' famous "action categories," instruments such as the SSIS are tasked with categorizing supporter identities, certainly, but not within the activities and contexts during which the identities of actual fans are typically made relevant – i.e. conversations about fandom.

Instead, thus, of attempting to define and explain the phenomenon of fandom itself, or what abstractly delineates an "authentic" fan from a "mere" spectator (Wann et al., 2001), the focus of this paper falls upon (a) the centrality of local interactional context as a key driver in the formulation of fandom-claims, and (b) the kinds of details and culturally-available knowledges that are mobilized by everyday fans when emphasizing their own "authenticity" in these contexts. While these typically discursive psychological concerns may not provide the kinds of individualistic modelling traditionally sought within the psychology of sport, DP is nevertheless a rigorously systematic and empirical enterprise that can reveal a great deal about the culture of soccer fandom itself, and one that can answer some highly pertinent questions (McGannon & Smith, 2015). With respect to this study, the core issue of interest can be framed thusly:

1. What are the interpersonal methods, particularly attributions, used by self-identified soccer "fans" in contextually authenticating their own identities as fans?

From a DP point of view, this renders pertinent further three questions relating to the culture of soccer, answers to which will help illuminate the first:

2. What kinds of social and personal claim might be inferred by a fan to be persuasive evidence of their own authenticity?
3. What kinds of claim regarding fandom are inferred to require justification/mitigation?
4. What soccer-specific knowledge is taken to "count" as authentic capital in the legitimation of team allegiance?

Materials and Methods

A full manifesto for the value of DP as a viable approach for the investigation of sporting phenomena is not a necessary inclusion herein; full and balanced accounts to these ends are comprehensively articulated by Locke (2004), McGannon and Mauws (2000) and Miller (2012). Moreover, contemporary DP is (like any other branch of psychology) not beholden to a singular technical method. While some recent studies, including the current work, have remained relatively true to the micro-analytic empiricism of the progenitor approach of CA[2] (Cosh & Tully, 2015; Cosh, Crabb, Kettler et al., 2015; Locke, 2008), others have embraced a hybrid stance, embracing broader critical, post-structural concerns (for example, McGannon & Spence, 2012). Given the focus upon the local, contextual dynamics of identity formulation relevant to the research questions asked above, however, the model of DP operationalised below takes its core cues from CA in the manner unpacked by Wiggins and Potter (2008), who outline three key issues regarding the nature of language-in-use from which this form of the DP method builds: Firstly, any example of spoken discourse is concurrently a constructed phenomenon, and a constructive one. Secondly, talk is itself

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[2] A detailed examination of the core relationship between CA and the subsequent models of DP grounded in it can be found in Edwards (1995).

action-oriented. It is used in the service of a variety of interpersonal activities such as, for example, providing a convincing account of one's team loyalty. Thirdly, talk is always situated. It is produced and understood according to its position within a broader sequence of discourse.

The focus herein, thus, falls upon the acculturated methods through which knowledge (about things, self, others and so forth) is interpersonally mobilised, and what this tells us about a speaker's practical, tacit reasoning procedures within (and about) the specific interaction in which culturally-available knowledge is made relevant (Miller, 2012).

Participants

Participants (N=26) were recruited though advertising in various social media, across two university campuses and eight local amateur and semi-professional soccer clubs in the North West of England, via a request to sit for a short interview about the soccer team they supported. Details for the overall sample are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Participant demographics

N	Gender	Mean age (years)	Mean declared duration as "fan" (years)
18	M	28.2	19.2
8	F	26.4	14.9

Recruitment was ended at a point determined by the original conditions of ethics. All participant data was subject to informed consent, and handled in strict accordance with the conditions stipulated by the institutional ethics committee that granted clearance for the project.

Procedure

Although both CA and DP studies are traditionally concerned with "naturally occurring" language, the facility of the conversational interview format[3], as a means of exploring formulations of self and experience, has been well demonstrated in a number of domains (Cosh & Tully, 2015; Wooffitt, 1992). As such, open-ended, unstructured interviews were utilised as the core data collection method herein, consistent with the approach of Widdicombe and Wooffitt (1995). All proceeded from a single initial question (usually "So, tell me about your team?"), with the interviewer remaining as dormant as possible throughout, in order to elicit a largely unprompted account of the matters at hand. When engaged, the interviewer treated the interview itself as a conventional conversation, responding to the participants' own leads and, as such, there were no formal pre-determined "prompts." The average interview length was ten minutes.

In all cases, the participants were made aware of the interviewer's own soccer-related affiliation (West Ham United) during pre-interview "chat," to standardise a key interactional resource available among respondents at the starting point of each interview.

Analysis

Data were transcribed in line with standard Jeffersonian notation (see Atkinson & Heritage, 1984, and appendix 1). This method of presenting data is designed to foreground the sequential unfolding of interaction as an interaction, even when one speaker is ostensibly doing the bulk of the talking. In this respect, inclusion of such details as "minimal continuers" from the interviewer (such as "yeah," "right" and even laughter) encourage a sustained attention to the fact that all talk is oriented to inferences made about the context and recipient(s), and even an apparently dormant co-interlocutor remains a key part of the

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[3] See Potter and Hepburn (2005b) for a detailed critical investigation of the use of interviews in DP.

conversation (Faulkner & Finlay, 2002). Analysis proceeded in line with the approach outlined by Potter and Hepburn (2005a), in which all recordings were subjected to multiple hearings, and then transcripts were explored to identify recurrent methods used by participants in "authenticating" their claims.

For those unfamiliar with work in this CA-derived field of psychology, the issue of intentionality can become an issue, i.e. it might seem reasonable to propose, when exploring how speakers use constructive talk in situ, that they "…couldn't have thought that fast." (Sacks, 1992, p.11) and that, consequently, analysis thereof is spurious at best. However, and despite the ostensible odds against everyday language-use having a distinct and analysable order, people are still able to make persuasive arguments to specific others without pre-planning, ease the passage of a potentially difficult topic ad-hoc and resolve misunderstandings without a script. If this were not the case, basic social interaction could simply not operate (Miller & Grimwood, 2015). As such, we should:

> "... drop our worries about what individuals are thinking and attend rather to what they are visibly doing - excusing, blaming, reporting and so on...Participants in interactions are accountable to each other, and they know it; they tailor their words and deeds to the expectation that each is keeping various sorts of tabs on the other: legal, moral and general or contingent, localized and specific to this or that subculture, speech event or transient interest." (Antaki, 1994, p.39)

In order to systematically explore how constructions of self/identity were rhetorically organised by participants in the analysed accounts so as to be hearably "robust" (Cosh, Crabb, & Tully, 2015) against a backdrop of inferred cultural and contextual concerns, thus, pertinent transcribed passages were reviewed by both authors in order to identify key trends. Herein, methods of self-construction, and attributions for claims made therein, were the

central focus (Widdicombe & Wooffitt, 1995). These prototypical analyses were then developed into a more formal DP model by the first author, addressing the more microscopic aspects of each interaction (particularly the minutiae of language-selection in managing accountability). Observations were then related back to the overall corpus by both authors, and adjustments to the overall analytic direction were made accordingly. The highlighting of three specific extracts in the analysis below, given the number of data sets collected, is based on Edwards' (2000, p.348) method of selecting cases on the grounds of (a) usefulness and (b) brevity in illustrating and developing analytic themes that typify key trends within the wider sample. This selection was conducted by the first author, and verified by the second.

Results and Discussion

In this section, rather than attempt to define and classify "authentic" fans and fandom as discreet psychological (or sociological) phenomena, careful attention is paid to the specific contextual inferences being made by speakers regarding the kind of account that might be required in order to effectively accomplish authenticity. In these terms, disclosures of the speaker's soccer supporting orientation are termed "fan-identities" throughout, and the models for disclosing them are described as: (a) longitudinal endurance, (b) logical choice-making and (c) emotional imperative. These models embody typical patterns emerging from the total corpus, and those from which the others generally diverge (Edwards, 2000). In this sense, and as the paper's title clarifies, the purpose herein is to take steps towards a detailed understanding of the core discursive phenomenon. This is not to propose that these describe all techniques that participants used to self-identify in the 26 cases collected (as addressed in the conclusion).

Longitudinal Endurance: Though Thick and Thin…

While any person, thing or occasion can, in principle, be verbally represented in an incalculably vast number of ways, speakers do not actually settle on a given description "by accident," otherwise, communication itself would be an inherent disaster (Miller & Grimwood, 2015). Rather, the inclusion of particular details within any account is indicative of tacit situated reasoning pertaining to the potentially persuasive qualities thereof within the given interaction (Locke, 2004; 2008) - especially when a speaker tacitly reasons that the claims being made might be sceptically received. This requires careful attention on the part of the speaker to a host of locally-available interactional resources, including what is commonly "known" of the topic, who the co-interlocutor might be (and, thus, how they might hear the account) and the range of contextual implications of making particular disclosures or using particular framings (Cosh, Crabb, Kettler et al., 2015; Groom et al., 2012).

One key way in which individuals can often be seen to attend to the business of displaying a "genuine" group-affiliation (i.e. an authentic social identity) is through the deployment of very specific, task-focused autobiographical details (Widdicombe & Wooffitt, 1995). Consider extract 1, in which such concerns are central. Herein, and as throughout, a designation such as "I24" denotes the interviewer (I) and interview number (24) and "R24," thus, the respondent and interview number.

Extract 1: Int 24 <Chelsea; male; age 21 years; time as "fan" 16 years>

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1.    I24:   So (.) tell me about your ↑team (.) then?
2.           (1.5)
3.    R24:   Ahh: (.5) well (.) when ↑I volun:teered for this I ahh didn't know
             it was gonna be you↑ doing the inter:view °huh huh huh°
4.    I24:   Is that a problem?
5.    R24:   No (.) but I ahm (.) bet I'll never hear the end of this °huh huh°
6.    I24:   Why's that↑ then?
7.    R24:   Because I know you're a ↑West H[am] fan (.) and when I tell you who
             I↑ (.) support you're pretty mu:::ch gonna take the piss=
8.    I24:   =Er (.) wha::t makes you think that?
9.    R24:   Because I know >you'll think< fans of my club are just glory
             hunters (.) but I've been a fan all my li:fe even when they weren't
             any good↑ like (.)
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10.  I24:  Oh:: (.5) ££don't say Chelsea (.) please huh huh=
11.  R24:  =Yea::h (.) Chelsea (.5) °sorry° ((continues))
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As anecdotally observed by Miller (2012), when soccer fans provide accounts of their team affiliations in cordial environments, the claims they make often embed interpersonal strategies which concurrently account for their status as "genuine" fans. This is especially true of fans that support highly successful teams, around which there is a culturally-available knowledge regarding the team's attraction of "fair weather" affiliates[4]. In a commentary on Miller's article, Faulkner & Finlay (2012, p.639) expand on this observation with reference to their own lives:

> "Let's be upfront – we are Manchester United fans. For Faulkner, an Australian living in Toronto, Canada, who has never been to Old Trafford, this statement is followed by the explanation that his father was born in Manchester. For Finlay, a Canadian with no connection to Manchester, this statement includes reference to the fact that all three of her children are named after Man U players (specifically those directly involved in the goals scored against Bayern Munich in the 1999 Champions League Final)."

In short, orienting to the potential in situ contestability of their claims to true fandom, speakers can utilize discursive resources such as "ancestry and dedication" when interpersonally constructing "true fandom" for the benefit of a potentially sceptical recipient of the account.

Now, note how, in turn 7 of extract 1, R24 makes explicitly available an awareness of how the interviewer's own pre-disclosed fan-identity is "likely" to result in mockery when he discloses his own. He then proceeds, when called to account for this claim (turn 8), to utilise

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[4] Basically, those who only attach to the team as long as it is actually winning.

his own "long-standing" status as a fan – occasioning his dedication even when the club were not as successful as they are now – as a means of mitigating such potential criticism of his affiliation (turn 9). In this respect, he demonstrably orients to several core interactional possibilities:

1. A fan of West Ham United will likely hear his (as yet undisclosed) fan-identity as in some way "dubious," i.e. that the account of his affiliation will be received sceptically (likely as a case of BIRGing or CORFing);

    a. This is, in turn, grounded in an inferably shared knowledge that his club attracts "fairweather" fans, and that he could thus be identified as one of them, and;

    b. That fans of West Ham United are not likely vulnerable to the same charge, or at least not to the same extent.

2. The interviewer will (ideally) hear "ancestry and dedication" - in this case made as a "through thick and thin" argument (i.e. an acceptance of moments where others might CORF) - as persuasive counter-sceptical resources;

    a. This is, in turn, grounded in an inferably shared knowledge regarding what is commonly known to separate an "authentic" member of a social group from a part-time or "plastic" variant – in this case, lifelong commitment, sustained even through periods of ignominy. In short, a model of knowledge-capital is mobilised.

In this respect, R24 actively orients to the negative real-world interactional consequences of being seen to BIRG or CORF (Spinda, 2011; Ware & Kowalski, 2012), while a hybrid approach in which one openly embraces their club's failures is situationally operationalised as a badge of "true" commitment.

It is of note, moreover, and from a DP perspective, that it is not only the interactional resources used by R24 that are finely tuned to attend to the business of producing a compelling account of authentic identity, but also the organisation of his talk. Central to this is the fact that, in response to the initial question (turn 1), a germane self-identification is not forthcoming at the point of conditional relevance. Instead, a statement pertaining to the identity of the interviewer himself is made (a manner of friendly ad hominem chat). As a number of studies have demonstrated, when speakers reason that the direct completion of a question-answer pair might threaten the "local social solidarity" (Silverman, 1997), i.e. open them up to criticism or ridicule, then they will often use "insertion" methods (such as this) to generate conversational space so that further work can be done to pre-mitigate those exact possibilities before the question is finally answered - a form of "hedging" (Finlay & Faulkner, 2003). Moreover, such "avoidance" strategies can also hearably function as pre-announcements (Terasaki, 2004) of a potentially awkward disclosure, thus furnishing the co-interlocutor with resources from which to infer that the topic-point might need to be approached cautiously. In short, herein, autobiographical detail is utilised by R24 to (a) signal an "issue" around the hearable authenticity of his identity, (b) create conversational space in which to mitigate that issue, and (c) make a case for his authenticity before that identity is even disclosed.

Logical Choice-Making: "Irrational" to "Rational" Fandom

In extract 2, R5 displaces his identity-disclosure over a much wider series of turns, during which a much more extensive account of how he "came to support" his current team, rather than another, is constructed.

Extract 2: Int 5 <Tottenham Hotspur; male; age 50 years; time as "fan" 26 years>

1. I5:   …<u>tell</u> me about your football team ↑a::nd, (.) and your ↑history
           ↑with it and whatnot
2.   (1.6)
3. R5:   .hh peculiar, (0.4) as a kid I grew up (0.6) sup<u>port</u>ing <u>Chel</u>sea
4. I5:   right,
5. R5:   don't know <u>why</u>:
6. I5:   °huh huh huh°
7. R5:   and I've never liked <u>blue</u>: (0.4) o:r I just (.) supported <u>Chel</u>sea
8. I5:   ha [ha]
9. R5:   [as] as kid
10. I5:   yeah
11. R5:   just, <u>may</u>be my brothers s- (0.4) ↑two eldest brothers supported
           (Everton) and n- (0.4) another brother supported <u>Tot</u>tenham
12. I5:   right
13. R5:   <u>fan</u>atical (0.6) .hh a:::nd these were in the <u>days</u> of the nineteen
           seventies and Peter Osgood an-
14. I5:   mm
15. R5:   <u>Charlie Cook</u> and (0.6) °y'know° .hhhhh (.) all those sort of people
           a:nd u::::m, (0.8) .tch ↑I::, (0.6) <u>then</u> as I got ol↑de::r, (0.6) I
           <u>s</u>topped, (.) supporting them for some unknown reason >cos I< <u>play</u>ed
           so much
16. I5:   ↑mm
17. R5:   cos I played footba:ll and <u>play</u>ed cricket I (.) tended (.) n:ot to,
           (1.0) not to (support) and what I <u>ass</u>ociated <u>with</u> (0.6) sup<u>port</u>ing
           somebody (0.6) I si- associated with my <u>bro</u>ther who [is] a season
           ticket <u>hold</u>er at=
18. I5:   [mm]
19. R5:   =Tottenham (0.4) and he was a:::, (0.8) he was a sup<u>port</u>er e::r so
           you can be ↑<u>fa</u>::n of some[bo]dy (0.6) but not go=
20. I5:   ErR
21. R5:   =and watch them mm::but a su↑<u>pp</u>orter goes and sup<u>port</u>s the club and
           goes so ↑<u>I</u> have quite a distinction between
22. I5:   [mm]
23. R5:   .hh a <u>fa</u>:n (.) and a supporter
24. I5:   right .hhh
25. R5:   and then as I've got ↑<u>old</u>er (0.8) I tended to go more and more to
           <u>wa</u>:tch: (0.8) <u>just</u> football so I didn't really (.) <u>fol</u>low anybody
           un[↑til] probably <u>abo</u>ut (0.4) .hhh=
26. I5:   [↑mm:]
27. R5:   =probably about (0.6) >sort of< ten <u>years</u> ago when I started to go
           and watch <u>Tot</u>tenham a lot whe:n (.) <u>he</u> came up north [and] I lived
           up no:rth (.) >so I ended< up=
28. I5:   [mm]
29. R5:   =going to all the <u>Tot</u>tenham (.) <u>away</u> games up north (0.4) and so::
           (.) I would then sa::y (.) <I:: I'm a <u>fan</u>> of Tottenham

In producing an account of how he became a Tottenham Hotspur fan, however, R5

attends to a range of interactional concerns pertaining to the way the description might be

heard. Firstly, he formulates a competing fan-identity (Chelsea) that he assumed when he was a child, and accounts for this as "inexplicable" (turn 5), although then ventures an explicit "candidate diagnosis" (Stivers, 2006) of his condition back-then: it was an act of rebellion (turn 11). Using this, he begins to differentiate his "then" (read: irrational) identity from his "now" (read: analytic) self. He builds a narrative regarding how his interest in Chelsea waned equally inexplicably (turn 15), but how he was later inspired by his (Tottenham-supporting) brother's own commitment, which led him to support the same team as said brother. Finally, he makes an overt argument relating to how he is now a "true" Tottenham supporter, using a similar "dedication" narrative to that employed by R5, in turn 29, using the extreme case formulation (Edwards, 2000; Pomerantz, 1986) "all" to underscore his commitment to attending Tottenham's away-games[5].

It is of some note that the claim to have changed the team one supports could easily be inferred as one which challenges the vernacular "cradle to the grave" notion of authenticity (Porat, 2010). As such, the activity of R5 herein might seem peculiar given that he was only asked to provide an account of the team he actively supports. However, there are a set of culturally-available knowledges relating to the relationships between supporters of Tottenham Hotspur, Chelsea and West Ham United to which R5 is likely orienting. There is a long-standing (local) rivalry between Tottenham and West Ham fans, and to disclose affiliation to one in conversation with a supporter of the other has potentially negative interactional consequences attached (not least mockery, calls to account and so forth). There is also a more contemporary knowledge (and as illustrated with respect to extract 1) that Chelsea attracts fairweather fans, and certainly more so than either Tottenham or West Ham.

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[5] Extreme Case Formulations (ECFs) are not inherently a mode of "lying," or even necessarily exaggerating, but rather a persuasive and/or counter-sceptical device commonly used in conversation (Pomerantz, 1986). It is deeply unlikely that R5 goes to, literally, all of Tottenham's away games – some of which are further from his location in "the North" than Tottenham's London base. Rather, to use such an ECF in this case is an interpersonal means of impressing upon a listener that he attends as many games in the local area as he can.

Given these matters, R5 demonstrably works to establish circumstances for a more sympathetic hearing of his current identity from a West Ham supporter – i.e. by making available the inference that "it could have been worse."

Within this broad (and functional) account of his switch to Tottenham, however, R2 also provides a warrant (Locke, 2008; Wooffitt, 1992) for that very action: he actively constructs an inferably "logical account" for switching affiliations. By building a detailed state-formulation[6] of his childhood affiliation as ostensibly childish and unfounded, he provides for a hearing of his contemporary fan-identity as having formed for "good reasons" by contrast. Moreover, in doing so, he works to circumscribe a range of potential critiques of this switch: demonstrably, herein, that it is (a) arbitrary, (b) on a whim or (c) indicative of limited knowledge of soccer itself.

As regards (a), "good reasons" are not themselves taken as read here, but are live concerns within the account. In turns 17, 19 and 21, R5 attends to the moral business of differentiating a true supporter from a more basic "fan" (which has many properties of the abstract categorisations developed by Wann and colleagues (2000; 2001) through observations made pertaining to his brother's own supporting behaviours (attending, holding a season ticket etc.). He then uses these features to align his current identity with that of a "supporter" and his prior (recall: inexplicable and/or childish) identity with that of a mere "fan"[7]. In doing so, he further differentiates between an (irrational) Chelsea-supporting identity and a (rational) Tottenham one within a contrast-structure that makes available a progressive sense of change (Antaki, 1994). Regarding (b), duration is explicitly built into the

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[6] Effectively, a particularly-designed state of affairs description that provides for further pertinent interactional activity (Wooffitt, 1992). For a coach to formulate a soccer team's first-half performance primarily in terms of its failings, for example, creates an interactional context in which strong admonishment of the players is a hearably "logical" outcome, and can thus be used to legitimate such a more aggressive form of motivational activity in situ (Miller, 2012).

[7] Note: the exact terminology on this front is not an issue for the speaker in the same way that it is for psychological analysts of fandom.

account as a core feature of the identity-switch. His movement was not instant, but took place gradually, over a long period, and as a consequence of a dawning realisation regarding the nature of "true" fandom itself. In order to circumscribe the prospectively damning accusation of (c), meanwhile, note how the account explicitly embeds facts about "who was playing for whom" (turns 13 and 15) in the 1970s. As Wooffitt (1992) notes, the explicit deployment of particular (and usually unrequested) historical details are often used to manage the epistemic status of the speaker's memory (or expertise) within an account, especially where they reason that these qualities might be under local threat. This is also true of accounts that embed a process of reasoned realization (Wooffitt, 1992). In short, and as for R24, knowledge-capital of this order (and the process of reaching it logically) is inferred by R5 to be a feature of contextual persuasiveness.

In sum, thus, R5's account of his identity can be seen to be finely tuned, over a series of turns, to both forestall and mitigate a potentially negative reception of the disclosure (Finlay & Faulkner, 2003), while also constructing a "logical" account (Miller, 2013) – based on a sense of "reasoned observation" - for the interpersonal method used in doing so. It is of some note that while many contemporary psychological accounts pre-define "truly" authentic fandom via indicators such as emotional attachment (Melnick & Wann, 2011) and cradle-to-grave commitment (Porat, 2010), R5 makes a situated case for his as a "rational" choice borne of having held prior allegiances, within the situated demands of providing a persuasive in situ account of his own authenticity. This is not, however, always the case within the corpus of data collected. Indeed, the lexicon of "emotion" also figures as a regular means of warranting particular claims in particular circumstances. Extract 3 (below) is a typical example.

Emotional Imperative: Modalising Commitment

Classically, within psychological research, emotions are couched as a counterpoint to rationality (Edwards, 1999). They generally are deemed irrational, biological and impulsive rather than plannable and (thus) falsifiable and, as a consequence, usually viewed as more "authentic" than typically cognitive action. Within the discursive tradition, however, emotion-talk has been shown to perform a range of vividly persuasive functions (Locke & Edwards, 2003). Exactly because it is (culturally) difficult to contest a "feeling" as opposed to a "choice" or a "judgement," this order of discourse has particular import in the investigation of contestable or controversial claims. In extract 3, R21's emotion-talk is rendered situationally coherent as a set of normatively intelligible actions (Edwards, 1999) in the service of counteracting a potentially awkward critique of his authenticity as a fan, given that he no longer attends games "so often" (turn 9) any more:

Extract 3: Int 21 <Newcastle United; male; age 24 years; time as "fan" 19 years>

```
1.   R21:  Well (.2) ah: it's all about the too:n for me (0.2) though yous can
           probably hear tha=
2.   I21:  ↑°Newcastle°?
3.   R21:  =Yeah (.) to be fair (0.2) e::r (0.4) it's about love (.) eh?
4.   I21:  °Mm:?
5.   R21:  Ah: mean (.) mah family love Newcastle United and (.) ah love them
           ya know?
6.   I21:  °Yeah°
7.   R21:  Ah mean I knock around here with these dicks who support Man U and
           Chelsea and (.) °tha° (0.2) and ya know they'll win shit an tha
           (0.4) but they don't feel it the way we do ya know=
8.   I21:  °Yeah°
9.   R21:  =all of us (.) we'll tell yous that ah (.) once you've been to Saint
           Jameses (0.4) win or lose (0.2) it'll be in ya:h bones a:h mean I
           don't get there ah (.) so often no:w (0.4) I live over here an tha
           (.) but you never lose it na:h matter what any cunt says a::h sorry
           a:h (.) can y::a (0.2) can ya record that like?
10.  I21:  I've ££kinda recorded it £already[ huh huh
11.  R21:                                   [Ah: ££mean (.) ah play over here
12.        and tha but it's why ahd go back (0.2) for every game if ah could
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Herein, there is no deferral of disclosure; rather, R21 discloses his fan-identity in his first turn. This indicates that he infers this specific affiliation (Newcastle United) is itself unlikely to be heard as "controversial" in this context (Miller, 2013; Silverman, 1997). He then, however, provides an extended post hoc account for it. Firstly, he frames the entire disclosure itself within the wider narrative of "love" (turn 3), while also second-handing his affiliation to that of his family (turn 5). In doing so, he subsumes his own accountability for his fan-identity into a model of "indisputable argument." By orienting the listener to culturally-available knowledges about love and family connection (e.g. it is not proper to challenge them) in accounting for the claim, he modalises (Antaki, 1994) his fan-identity in such a way as to render available the inference that any denigration thereof is also a challenge to his "feelings" for the club and those for his family[8]. He buttresses this through a contrast-structure, building a case for how (implicitly fair weather) fans of two very specifically-selected high-success teams (Manchester United and Chelsea), could not "feel" the love of a team in the way he and his family do, despite their clubs' successes. He thus formulates a scenario that partitions "true" and "other" fans on the basis that the former are born to their clubs and allied through emotions and ancestry, while the latter are instrumentally-allied to theirs through choice, on the basis of material success (no matter how often they attend), i.e. on the basis of BIRGing (Ware & Kowalski, 2012). This sharply contrasts with the more pragmatic manner in which R5 (in extract 2) constructs a "real" fan – i.e. one who regularly attends – in the service of a very different argument.

As such, R21 demonstrably attends to the live (practical) concern that he may not be seen as a "true" fan because he does not attend games as regularly he might, by (a) occasioning his commitment to soccer itself (he can't go because he plays elsewhere – turn 11) and (b) developing a persuasive account of his emotional attachment (and that of his

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[8] This is a commonly utilised interpersonal device in situations of persuasion. Cf. "But it's just how I feel," or "I did it because I love you."

family) to Newcastle United. In these terms, reported strength of emotion is used to underscore the authenticity of his claim to commitment where he infers that a subsequent disclosure of a pragmatic concern (low attendance) might be heard to undermine the veracity of that very claim.

In the accounts addressed above, thus, we have seen that speakers can mobilise a "rational" model of supporter/fan identity as a choice when explicating their shift from one team to another (extract 2) – i.e. they came to understand soccer better than may have been apparent in their initial "childish" stance. This was premised on a mutual understanding of "what" the prior teams were, and how affiliations to them might "play" in the specific context. Also, in the service of various arguments about authenticity, we have seen strong emotional attachment (Melnick & Wann, 2011) and cradle-to grave affiliation (Porat, 2010) used as a warrant for limited attendance in the present (extract 3), and prolific current attendance used as a warrant for not having been a cradle-to grave supporter (extract 2). It has also been shown how a participant's inferences regarding the co-interlocutor's likely receipt of various claims can very openly (extract 1) or more subtly (extract 2) inform the fine detail of the manner in which disclosures are made, and when they are made within the interaction. Similarly, a sensitivity to the negative interactional implications of being seen to BIRG or CORF (Ware & Kowalski, 2012) when supporting Chelsea is highly visible in extract 1, while in extract 3 the act of BIRGing is itself formulated as the core reason that clubs such as Chelsea attract fans at all.

Conclusion

The manifest purpose of this paper has been to take some provisional steps towards a Discursive Psychology of "authentic" identity in soccer fandom. In doing so, it has been illustrated that a number of the concerns of psychologists who endeavour to taxonomically

define this phenomenon - typically using scaling procedures (Wann et al., 2015) - are, first and foremost, live issues for everyday fans in the rather more ecologically-germane business of authenticating themselves in interpersonal scenarios.

Three core manners of validating authentic identity have been discussed: the "through thick and thin" argument, the appeal to "logical choice," and the appeal to "emotional engagement." While these may be seen as "scalable" models, they are in no sense mutually exclusive, nor exclusive of context. For example, within the broader corpus, emotion discourse can permeate a "thick and thin" argument, and the "choice" discourse can permeate an emotion and logic case (i.e. a choice was sometimes constructed as an upshot of working with the better emotion – love, fear, loyalty or guilt). Moreover, both logical and emotional registers were used to verbally attribute (Potter, 2005) for historical "rebellion" cases (against parents, coaches or peers). Equally, unapologetic and direct formulations of fan-identity were occasionally a feature, usually when the speaker was demonstrably unconvinced that the interviewer was a supporter of a "better" team, but not strictly a significantly worse one either. Either way, it was clear that whenever a cradle-to-grave identity (Porat, 2010) argument could not be posited, nor a high practical investment argument made (Wann et al., 2001), a range of mitigatory structures were inferred to be necessary. All of these matters help direct us towards an understanding of the culturally-available knowledges that might enable or constrain the way identities can be constructed with respect to soccer fandom.

Restrictions of space preclude detailed investigation of the full variety of participant-techniques used across the full corpus. All analyses were conducted, however, with respect to the local business of making a case. Suffice is it to state that the exemplars addressed above are not simple statements of identity but context-anchored formulations that highlight the fluidity of fan-identity as constructed with relevance to a given argument (McGannon & Smith, 2015). In short, thus, issues of ancestry, emotional attachment, long-term

commitment, "glory-hunting" and pragmatic team choices in accounts of fandom are shown here to be primordially *members'* concerns that are made variably relevant within specific and context-functional activities (Widdicombe and Wooffitt, 1995). These findings are conversant with, and add to, the recent body of discursive psychological work on fluid identity in sport and exercise (e.g. Cosh & Tully, 2015; Cosh, Crabb, & Tully, 2015; Locke, 2008; McGannon & Schinke, 2013; McGannon, Gonsalves, Schinke, & Busanich, 2015). The overall enterprise described herein, furthermore, elucidating the facility of DP itself as a methodological tool for further enhancing the understanding of cultural phenomena within sport psychology, aligns closely with the precepts of the recent call from McGannon & Smith (2015).

In sum, thus, rather than attempt to abstract the elements of "authentic" soccer fandom from the social worlds that soccer fans themselves inhabit in the quest for cross-contextually relevant taxonomies, it is the contention above that fans' own accounts of their team-affiliations are where the action is (Antaki, 1994). To paraphrase Harvey Sacks (1963), it is imperative that we describe in detail how such issues can be operationalized, within the practical business of interaction, by the individuals to whom they are relevant. Until then, analytic abstractions made about identity for the sake of "clarity" cannot guarantee application to the everyday social psychological lives of sport fans themselves.

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Appendix 1: Standard Jeffersonian Transcription Symbols

(.5)	The number in brackets indicates a time gap in seconds (i.e. in this instance, five tenths).
(.)	A dot enclosed in brackets indicates a pause in the talk of less than two tenths of a second.
·hh	A dot before an 'h' indicates an in-breath by the speaker. More h's indicate a longer breath.
hh	An 'h' indicates an out-breath. More h's indicate a longer breath.
(( ))	A description enclosed in double brackets indicates a non-verbal activity.
££	Indicates laughter bubbling through the talk.
-	A dash indicates a sharp cut off of the prior word or sound.
:	Colons indicate that the speaker has drawn out the preceding sound or letter. More colons indicate a greater degree of 'stretching' of the sound.
( )	Empty brackets indicate the presence of an unclear fragment in the recording.
(guess)	The words within a single bracket indicate the transcriber's best guess at an unclear fragment.
.	A full stop indicates a stopping fall in tone, not necessarily the end of a sentence.
,	A comma indicates a continuing intonation.
?	A question mark indicates a rising inflection, not necessarily a question.
*	An asterisk indicates a 'croaky' pronunciation of the immediately following section.
↑↓	'Up' and 'Down' arrows represent a rising or falling intonation, respectively.
CAPITALS	With the exception of proper nouns, capital letters indicate a section of speech louder than that surrounding it.
º º	Degree markers indicate that the talk they encompass was noticeably quieter than that surrounding it.
<u>**underline**</u>	Indicates speaker emphasis
Thaght	A 'gh' indicates a guttural pronunciation in the word.
> <	'More than' and 'less than' signs indicate that the section of talk they encompass

was noticeably quicker than surrounding talk.

=   'Equals' indicates contiguous utterances.

[Square brackets between adjacent lines of concurrent speech indicate the onset and end of a spate of overlapping talk.