A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD at the University of Warwick

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Team cohesion as a discursively negotiated process – An ethnographic study of a professional football team.

By

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Applied Linguistics

Centre for Applied Linguistics

University of Warwick

October 2020

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisors, Dr Kieran File and Dr Stephanie Schnurr, whose continued support and guidance has been absolutely crucial in shaping my PhD journey. Their unfailing encouragement and critical feedback helped me redefine my potentials time and time again. And all that without losing the fun of it. So, thank you.

My thesis would not have been possible without the football club allowing me access to one of their teams. I am thankful for the openness and friendliness of all the football players and coaches that made this research what it is.

This thesis was completed with the aid of the Cusanuswerk, for which I am truly grateful.

I would like to thank particular friends and colleagues from the department, who made me smile, challenged me for numerous debates and appreciated my brownie baking skills: Dr Dan Clayton, Dr Kristina Humonen, and Dr Sal Consoli. I am especially grateful to Sal and Dan for proof-reading my work and offering comments.

Thank you to my amazing family for their incredible support throughout my studies. In particular, I dedicate this thesis to my parents, Tatjana and Wolf-Rainer.

Finally, I could not have completed this thesis without the love and support of my soon-to-be husband Tim Pommerenke. Thank you.

Declaration

I confirm that this thesis has been composed by myself alone and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree at another university.

Abstract

A professional football team represents a unique social environment where team members have to negotiate the omnipresent competition for places while working together towards a common goal. In this exceptionally competitive and high-stakes environment team members have to navigate their individual as well as collective team goals – which do not necessarily overlap. With this regard, sport psychologists, coaches and the media have long established team cohesion to be a central impacting factor for success – hence, on the whole, something 'positive' and measurable.

However, the underlying conceptualisations of team cohesion in sports teams appear to lack empirical evidence in relation to what the phenomenon actually entails. Focusing on humour use and function, I offer concrete empirical evidence for the phenomenon in action illustrating it to be a dynamic, ever-changing process that is discursively negotiated by the interactants involved. To this end, this study provides a micro-ethnography of a male professional football team from Germany. Over 56 hours of audio-recordings of authentic interactions, 87 hours of observations and interviews with 13 players are used to analyse the ways in which team members discursively negotiate team cohesion among themselves. For this purpose, interactional sociolinguistics as an ethnographically led approach to discourse analysis is used.

Findings show that group membership management and identity construction are central impacting factors shaping the ways team cohesion is negotiated in and through language among members of the football team. The value of both an ethnographic research design and discourse analysis for unpacking some of the complexity of the phenomenon is shown. Moreover, I argue that humour constitutes a useful discursive strategy through which to study and unpack team cohesion – ultimately illustrating the link between team cohesion and communication. Thereby, I am bridging the gap between mostly quantitative studies and discourse analytical work on team cohesion.

1 Introduction

The club called it "the icing on the cake" (FC Bayern München, 2020a, para. 1) when Hansi Flick, coach of FC Bayern Munich, was honoured as UEFA Men's Coach of the Year in October 2020. Leading Germany's most successful football club to the second UEFA Champions League, Bundesliga and German Cup treble in its history, Flick became one of Europe's most celebrated coaches of current times (FC Bayern München, 2020a, Petersen, 2020, UEFA, 2020). During the rewarding season he repeatedly spoke about "keeping the team together" (FC Bayern München, 2020a, para. 1) as a central factor for their success. The teams' captain and goalkeeper, Manuel Neuer, as well highlighted the special team spirit as crucial for their winning streak (FC Bayern München, 2020b). For their new season, FC Bayern Munich even explicitly communicated the need for players fitting together to achieve teamwork and a good spirit as their strategy for signing new players (Holzner, 2020).

Team spirit, togetherness or "bonding" (FC Bayern München, 2009, para. 1) are only some of the often-used descriptors when speaking about team cohesion or cohesiveness among members of a sports team (e.g. Carron, Widmeyer & Brawley, 1985, Holt & Sparks, 2001, Kao, 2019). The conversation is overwhelmingly dominated by the understanding that team cohesion is, on the whole, something 'positive' and measurable – something that a team 'possesses' (e.g. Chu, 2017, DFB, 2013, Gilbert, 2018, Hardy, Eys & Carron, 2005, Hester, 2010, Jowett & Chaundy, 2004, Smith, 2015, Stakeholder Dialogues, n.d., Teehan, n.d., Turman, 2003, United Nations, 2017). The underlying conceptualisations are primarily derived from sports psychology. A vast amount of these quantitative studies connect team cohesion with higher success and enhanced performance which are central factors in a field largely determined by winning or losing (e.g. Beal, Cohen, Burke & McLendon, 2003, Carron, Brawley, & Widmeyer, 1998, Carron, Bray, & Eys, 2002, Light Shields, Gardner, Light Bredemeier & Bostro, 1997, Stashevsky, Burke & Koslowsky, 2006). From this, online resources designed for coaches and other sporting stakeholders put forward claims like sports teams that "possess […] cohesion have risen to the top of their chosen fields" (Teehan, n.d., para. 3) or, "if a team is more cohesive, it is more likely to

perform well, which in turn will lead to a more cohesive team" (Chu, 2017, para. 5). The argument that team cohesion is of vital importance for sports teams thus seems undeniable.

However, the prevailing definitions of team cohesion in sports teams appear to lack empirical evidence for what the phenomenon actually entails. With this thesis, I do not only take a step back and put current approaches to team cohesion under scrutiny, rather, by focusing on language use and function, I illustrate that the phenomenon can actually be understood as a *dynamic, ever-changing process that is discursively negotiated by team members in interaction*. Therefore, it is never fully completed and the context-specific norms of negotiating cohesion are shaped and reshaped in interaction by the members involved. To unpack this, I take an ethnographic and discourse analytical approach to provide concrete empirical evidence for largely theoretical debates.

1.1 Team cohesion and language

The motivation driving this study was my aim to empirically capture team cohesion among the members of a professional football team *in action*. I wanted to better understand what team cohesion actually means for the daily practices of the members of the team. How are the discursive practices among members of a team connected with the phenomenon of team cohesion? To approach this, I apply Interactional Sociolinguistics (henceforth: IS). Focusing on the ways team members communicate with each other, I illustrate the discursive negotiation of team cohesion as a dynamic and context-specific social process. Moreover, I explore the intrinsic associations between notions of group membership management and identity construction as central impacting factors shaping the ways team cohesion is negotiated in and through language among members of the football team under investigation. This will, in turn, illustrate the complexity and processuality of the phenomenon.

On one hand, sports psychologists acknowledge communication as an important influence on team cohesion – without providing empirical evidence thereof due to

their quantitative research strategy (e.g. Carron, 1988, Gilbert, 2018, Holt & Sparks, 2001, Martin, Paradis, Eys & Evans, 2013, Widmeyer & Williams, 1991). On the other hand, discourse analysts provide empirical evidence for discourse strategies which shape bonding and solidarity among interactants – without focusing on the context of sports teams (e.g. Dynel, 2008, Holmes, 2000, 2006, Holmes & Hay, 1997, Holmes & Marra, 2002a, Meyer, 2000, Schnurr, 2009, Wilson, 2010). This thesis therefore seeks to bridge the gap between mostly quantitative studies and qualitative discourse analytical work on team cohesion in the context of a sports team. Focusing on the humour practices of the team specifically, I approach and unpack team cohesion in action. I therefore aim to make a contribution to sports literature and relevant fields – primarily sports psychology, sports sociolinguistics and humour research – by providing empirical evidence for otherwise largely theoretical debates.

Like other social constructionist approaches to group dynamics, this study situates team cohesion within a community of practice (henceforth: CofP; unpacked in section 3.3; Wenger, 1998a, 1998b, 2000). In line with this paradigm and framework, I argue that team cohesion in a sports team is constructed by the members involved. This social construction is done through meaning-making and interpretation processes involved in the communicative practices between interactants. As such, discursive negotiation does not happen in a vacuum and context-specific reciprocal relationships with group membership management and identity construction are examined. Therefore, I unpack and make tangible some of the deeply complex and dynamic components of definitions and current conceptualisations of team cohesion in sports teams.

To this end, this study provides an ethnography of a male professional football team from Germany. Audio-recordings of authentic interactions are used to analyse the ways in which team members negotiate team cohesion through their use of humour – a core feature of the shared discursive repertoire of the CofP under investigation. For this purpose, IS as an ethnographically led approach to discourse analysis is used. Central to IS is the view that the context is crucial for the analysis of interaction. Using ethnography, the specific context of the team's behaviour and situated meaning-

making will be described. Importantly, if we understand a football team as an organisation resembling a workplace, the communicative practices among members can be "analysed in ways consistent with research on workplace language" (Wilson, 2011, p. 6).

1.2 The context: Professional football

With over 265 million active players worldwide (Hery-Moßmann, 2018) football is widely recognised as "the people's game" (Goldblatt, 2014, para. 1). Every season in Germany alone, the 36 professional football clubs from Bundesliga and the second tier of the Bundesliga invest over 100 million Euro in talent development at elite academies (DFL, n.d.a). Yet, on average, only 70 players from the 56 elite academies nationwide make the leap to playing for a team in the two highest leagues in Germany (DFB, n.d., DFL, n.d.b). Investigating (de-)selection and progression processes in German football talent promotion, Güllich (2014) maintains that the competition for places "has intensified and is principally global" (p. 535, see also Ramchandani, 2012). In this respect, in a study about the experiences of deselected former football players from elite academies in the UK, Brown and Potrac (2009) show that "despite spending up to nine years preparing in a professional club environment, the failure rate of elite youth players competing for a senior professional contract was 85%" (p. 144-145).

In this "highly pressurized climate for success" (Sagar, Busch, & Jowett, 2010, p. 217), the second team of a professional football club – often embedded in the club's academy – occupies a special role in the shadow of the first team (Börlein, 2011, Finn & McKenna, 2010). On the brink of making it to the first team, members compete for places not only with their own teammates, but also first team and junior players who need to pick up match practice (Börlein, 2011). Numerous studies have discussed different stressors and challenges inherent in this exceptionally competitive and high-stakes environment (e.g. Finn & McKenna, 2010, Hanton, Fletcher, & Coughlan, 2005, Nesti, Littlewood, O'Halloran, Eubank & Richardson, 2012, Sagar, et al., 2010). Fear of failure and the pressure to perform on the highest skill level, both individually and collectively, shape the daily experiences of professional football players (Hanton,

et al., 2005, Haugaasen & Jordet, 2012, Nesti, et al., 2012, Sagar, et al., 2010, Wilson, 2011). Players have to navigate their individual as well as collective team goals – which do not necessarily overlap (George & Feltz, 1995, Greenlees, Graydon, & Maynard, 2000). In many sport psychological studies, *working together to achieve the team goals and objectives* are associated with the notion of team cohesion (e.g. Carron, et al., 1998, Cota, Evans, Dion, Kilik & Longman, 1995, Holt & Sparks, 2001, Mach, Dolan & Tzafrir, 2010, Martin, et al., 2013, Widmeyer & Williams, 1991). Against this backdrop, the investigation of team cohesion among members of a professional football team becomes even more relevant.

1.2.1 The football team under investigation

In this thesis I conduct an ethnographic study on the second team of a professional football club from Germany – here called FC Anonymous II[1]. The team under investigation operates in the complex and competitive environment outlined above facing the challenges inherent in the very nature of being a second team: Players are on the verge of potentially making it to the more prestigious first team, being recognised by other clubs, or being dropped entirely.

Over the course of four months, I collected over 56 hours of audio-recorded interactions before, during, and after training sessions and matches, on the substitutes bench, in the locker room, in the gym, or on the sideline of the pitch. These recordings were later transcribed and analysed to reveal the discursive practices within the CofP concerned with the negotiation of team cohesion. The ethnographic observations enrich the data collected allowing me to also include non-verbal clues in communicating with each other. Furthermore, they offer a detailed understanding of the social structure of the team used to analyse the discursive data. Finally, interviews with players represent multi-layered accounts of the players' perceptions of the team and matters concerned with cohesion and communication. The ethnographic approach thus allows me to explore team cohesion within FC

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[1] All names used in this thesis are pseudonyms.

Anonymous II from different angles leading to a rich and holistic discussion of the phenomenon.

1.2.2 My suitability as the researcher

Previous background knowledge of the sport studied can be of great benefit to ethnographic researchers entering the field (Wilson, 2011, Wolfinger, 2002). While focusing on team cohesion in a smaller-scale project, as part of my master's thesis I already conducted an ethnographically informed study of a football team (Wolfers, 2016, Wolfers, File & Schnurr, 2017). Apart from gaining insights into discursive practices involved in negotiating team cohesion, I also gained valuable experiences regarding the practicalities of collecting data on a football pitch. Using the same methods of data collection in a similar context, the previous study can thus be framed as a pilot study providing me with useful insights into the daily lives of football players. The findings furthermore highlight that racialised humour – as a characteristic of the shared repertoire of the team studied – functions as a double-edge sword both enhancing team cohesion while also fragmenting the team – often simultaneously (Wolfers, 2016, Wolfers, et al., 2017). Since that project, I have been captivated with interactions between sports team members in a pressurised environment. I was fascinated to learn more about how athletes negotiate team cohesion in a context shaped by the tension between competition and cooperation. This PhD thesis then offered the opportunity to gain a better understanding of team cohesion as a social process – in a different team shaped by different norms and practices.

I myself have never played football – or any team sport for that matter. Yet, I have followed first handball, later football as a fan going to matches and watching television coverage. Therefore, I would argue that, together with my experiences gathered during previous fieldwork, I am both a football insider to some degree as well as an outsider in many respects, which, according to Hammersley and Atkinson (2007), is a suitable position for an ethnographer. Yet, the field relations were predominantly informed by my outsider status only sometimes being constructed as an insider (as will be discussed in the methodology, chapter 3).

1.3 Structure of the thesis

Chapter 2 draws together the literature examining relevant studies concerning team cohesion, IS and conversational humour. It also outlines more explicitly the gap identified for my own thesis. Chapter 3 represents the methodology chapter where the emerging research questions are outlined. The research strategy and paradigm are addressed, and the frameworks introduced. This is followed by detailing the ethnographic research design including the methods of data collection. In addition, ethical considerations and a rich description of the context under investigation are provided. Lastly, my approach to analysis and a brief self-reflection on my role as a researcher are presented. Chapter 4, as the first of three analysis chapters, lays the analytical groundwork for the subsequent chapters by providing an analysis of the shared repertoire of the football team. Using the teasing continuum introduced by Boxer and Cortés-Conde (1997), chapter 4 illustrates the normative humour style used to negotiate cohesion among members of the CofP to be rather biting and competitive. In chapter 5, I expand upon the biting humour style focusing on racialised humour as a means of negotiating cohesion while constructing boundaries. It shows how the construction of sub-, in- or out-groups forms part of the ways team cohesion is negotiated in this context. Chapter 6 focuses on the negotiation of team cohesion through failed humour where group membership claims are challenged. The failed humour continuum aiding in making the negotiation of failed humour attempts tangible is introduced. Chapter 7 brings all three analysis chapters together summarising the findings and discussing team cohesion as a discursively negotiated process more broadly and highlights the main contributions of my thesis. It will be shown that team cohesion appears to be negotiated through discursive interaction on a daily basis – never being 'finished' but rather an ongoing process. Finally, in chapter 8 I offer concluding remarks providing practical implications for the sporting world, discussing limitations of this study, as well as potential directions for future research.

2 Literature review

The primary aim of this project is to explore team cohesion as a discursively negotiated process among members of the German football team FC Anonymous II. Fundamental for this investigation is the focus on building an understanding of what team cohesion actually is and how it can be empirically approached and captured. In this chapter, I will present different viewpoints in order to contextualise the research and introduce relevant arguments that have guided this study from research design to the interpretation of findings.

I will begin this chapter by shedding light on multidisciplinary approaches to the phenomenon of cohesion (2.1) – with a special focus on team cohesion in sports teams (2.1.1). I will continue by discussing discourse analytical studies that have maintained cohesion to be discursively constructed (2.1.2). My approach towards the discourse analytical study of team cohesion is IS and will be presented in the subsequent section (2.2). Here, I will introduce work on professional communication in sports teams (2.2.1) as well as communication in football specifically (2.2.2). Part of communicative practice is humour – which has here emerged as the way into the data. Therefore, I will discuss research on conversational humour in section 2.3. Here, a brief taxonomy of humour types (2.3.1), followed by the connection between humour and team cohesion (2.3.2) as well as research on humour in sports teams (2.3.3) will be presented and unpacked. After addressing the three major strands of research relevant to my project, I will identify the research gap which my project addresses, thereby indicating the intended contributions to the field (2.4).

2.1 Understanding cohesion – Multidisciplinary approaches

Cohesion research found its upswing in the 1950s with Festinger, Schachter, and Back (1950) describing group cohesion as "the total field of forces that act on members to remain in the group" (p. 164). Most subsequent discussions of cohesion as "one of the most important variables in the study of small group dynamics" (Pescosolido & Saavedra, 2012, p. 744) use this definition as the basis of their work (e.g. Carron, et al., 1985, Dion, 2000, Hendry, Wiggins & Anderson, 2016, Martin, Bruner, Eys &

Spink, 2014, Carless & De Paola, 2000, Wendt, Euwema & Van Emmerik, 2009). Here, the two major areas of research are small group research and sport psychology (e.g. Beal, et al., 2003, Carron, et al., 2002, Hardy, et al., 2005, Mach, et al., 2010). Beal et al. (2003) argue that throughout the history of organisational research a central focus has been to ascertain the forces between group members that positively impact group performance (see also Stashevsky, et al., 2006). In light of the "theoretical and intuitive hypothesis […] that these forces create a bond, or cohesion, among the members of the group" (Beal, et al., 2003, p. 990), many meta-analyses of the mediators of cohesion emerged. The main aim of these studies is to define and measure cohesion – often in relation to different variables such as performance, success, leadership, coaching behaviour, conflict, and trust (e.g. Aoyagi, Cox & McGuire, 2008, Beal, et al., 2003, Bird, 1977, Carron, et al., 2002, Greer, 2012, Light Shields, et al., 1997, Mach, et al., 2010, Palmer, 2013, Tekleab, Quigley & Tesluk, 2009, Stashevsky, et al., 2006). Resultingly, the majority of such studies approach cohesion as something measurable employing quantitative methods of data collection (e.g. Carron, et al., 2002, Carron, et al., 1998, Carron, et al., 1985, Mach, et al., 2010, Murrell & Gartner, 1992).

The above questionnaire-based investigations are critiqued for their focus on the individual despite wanting to investigate cohesion as a *group* variable (e.g. Dion, 2000, Keyton, 1992, Mudrack, 1989). Following from this, Carron et al. (2002), for example, argue that their work indicates cohesion to be a "shared perception" (p. 119). Furthermore, in earlier studies cohesion is understood as "a *property* of the group as a whole rather than the individuals who compose it" (Dion, 2000, p. 19, my emphasis, see also Bruhn, 2009, Mudrack, 1989). This both implies that cohesion is a prerequisite for a group rather than an ongoing process whilst also contradicting the focus of exploring cohesion based on individual perceptions. Therefore, this reasoning is later countered by the description of cohesion as a complex and multidimensional process that cannot be simplified or generalised across groups (Pescosolido & Saavedra, 2012). As such, Pescosolido and Saavedra (2012) argue that "there is no such thing as a standard *cohesive group*" (pp. 753-754), making its investigation more intricate.

Reflecting on the body of literature about cohesion, Dion (2000) argues that the "conceptual distinction between task cohesion and social cohesion [...] has emerged independently from several models and lines of research" (p. 21) and is still broadly supported by cohesion scholars. *Social cohesion* is concerned with the individual attraction and personal relationships between members of a group, while *task cohesion* describes how group members work together to achieve a distinct and traceable task (Carron, et al., 1985, Hardy, et al., 2005, Holt & Sparks, 2001). One of the conceptual frameworks yielding this distinction has resulted in a definition that is widely used among cohesion scholars in varying contexts (e.g. Anderson & Dixon, 2019, Cota, et al., 1995, Hardy, et al., 2005, Holt & Sparks, 2001, Mach, et al., 2010, Martin, et al., 2013): the definition by Carron, et al. (1998) characterising cohesion in sports teams as

> a dynamic process that is reflected in the tendency of a group to stick together and remain
> united in the pursuit of its instrumental objectives and/or for the satisfaction of member
> affective needs (p. 213).

While this definition indeed conceptualises team cohesion as a *dynamic process*, there appears to be a lack in empirical evidence for this very notion. Also, Martin et al. (2013) highlight that the definition recognises four crucial characteristics of cohesion, as it describes the phenomenon as multidimensional, dynamic, instrumental and affective. Nonetheless, given its complexity, "and notwithstanding the considerable amount of empirical and conceptual work published on cohesion and its correlates" (Cota, et al., 1995, p. 573), there is much controversy on how to approach, measure and define the phenomenon (see also Hendry, et al., 2016, Mudrack, 1989). Other disciplines investigating cohesion – or cohesiveness, morale, and solidarity, often used synonymously (Dion, 2000, Turman, 2008) – are sociology, linguistics and organisational research (e.g. Beal, et al., 2003, Dynel, 2008, Hendry, et al., 2016, Holmes, 2006, Holmes & Marra, 2002a, 2002b, Tekleab, et al., 2009).

2.1.1 Cohesion in sports teams

In the context of sports, sports psychologist Carron and his colleagues can be seen as the pioneers of theory-driven approaches to cohesion in the 1980s. It has repeatedly been argued that sports teams appear to be a unique and distinct context to study social processes such as intra-team communication and cohesion – which is why cohesion research is dominated by studies in the sporting domain (e.g. Jowett & Chaundy, 2004, Mach, et al., 2010, Pescosolido & Saavedra, 2012, Sullivan & Feltz, 2003). Also, due to their unique "clarity and consistency in terms of member ability, goals, role definitions and relationships, team structure, the rules and procedures by which they must function, and other aspects of their context" (Pescosolido & Saavedra, 2012, p. 750) sports teams represent exceptional circumstances for studying group dynamics such as cohesion.

2.1.1.1 Measuring cohesion

Underpinning the widely used definition by Carron et al. (1998) cited above is "the highly influential measurement instrument developed in conjunction with [Carron's (1982) conceptual] framework, the Group Environment Questionnaire" (Holt & Sparks, 2001, p. 239) put forward by Carron et al. (1985). Resting upon interview-generated perceptions of sports group members as well as group dynamics literature and various analytical procedures, Carron et al. (1985) developed the 18-item Group Environment Questionnaire (henceforth: GEQ) to study individual perceptions of cohesion among sports team members. The conceptual model which the GEQ is based on views cohesion as an *outcome* of four primary constructs: "group integration-task, group integration-social, individual attractions to group-task, and individual attractions to group-social" (Carron, et al., 1985, p. 244).

Researchers employing the GEQ are mainly interested in different correlates of cohesion such as performance, trust, leadership, and success (e.g. Aoyagi, et al., 2008, Burke, Carron, Patterson, Estabrooks, Hill, Loughead, Rosenkranz & Spink, 2005, Hardy, et al., 2005, Heuzé, Raimbault & Fontayne, 2006, Mach, et al., 2010). All the insights about cohesion in sports teams derived from the GEQ are based on individual self-reports from questionnaire data. Resultingly, the above-mentioned

critique aimed at self-reporting instruments measuring cohesion focusing on individuals regardless of the endeavour of drawing conclusions about the group here surfaced as well (Hendry, et al., 2016, Mudrack, 1989). Furthermore, both Hendry et al. (2016) and Cota et al. (1995) argue that group cohesion has an insufficient conceptual basis varying across disciplines, which is why research "has tended to be in applied areas where it is measured by an outcome performance" (Hendry, et al., 2016, p. 181).

Since its introduction, the GEQ has vastly been applied to the quantitative investigation of cohesion aspects in the context of sports as well as the workplace (e.g. Aoyagi, et al., 2008, Burke, et al., 2005, Carron, et al., 2002, Dion, 2000, Martin, et al., 2013, Turman, 2008) only allowing inferences based on statistical evidence about the complex phenomenon of cohesion. Carron et al. (2002), for example, examine among others the relationship between team success and team perception of task cohesion in elite soccer and basketball teams. They find a strong relationship between team cohesion and success leading to the suggestion of promoting team building exercises in order to foster cohesion in sports teams (Carron, et al., 2002). Moreover, Kozub and McDonnell (2000) examine how perceived cohesion and collective efficacy are related in rugby teams while Terry and Carron (2000) in their study on rugby, netball and rowing teams add mood into the equation. Another such example is the work by Heuzé et al. (2006), who explore cohesion, collective efficacy and performance in professional basketball as interrelated aspects suggesting the promotion of a "high quality of group functioning, both *on* and *off* the basketball court" (p. 59). The GEQ has further been employed to explore the connection between coach behaviours and team cohesion (e.g. Carless & De Paola, 2000, Widmeyer, Carron & Brawley, 1993, Williams & Widmeyer, 1991) often highlighting the importance of communication between coaching staff and athletes.

Apart from the highly influential GEQ, other cohesion measurement tools in the area of sports have emerged as well with researchers interested in assessing cohesion within wider populations (e.g. Estabrooks & Carron, 2000, Eys, Loughead, Bray, & Carron, 2009, Heuzé & Fontayne, 2002, Martin, Carron, Eys, & Loughead, 2012,

Martin, et al., 2014). Most studies of cohesion are conducted in the context of team sports such as basketball, football, netball, rugby, and field hockey (e.g. Carron, et al., 2002, Jowett & Chaundy, 2004, Kozub & McDonnell, 2000, Murrell & Gaertner, 1992, Slater & Sewell, 1994, Terry & Carron, 2000).

There appear to be contradictory findings about the mediators of cohesion. For instance, with regards to performance, Anderson and Dixon (2019) argue that "there is likely an optimal level of cohesion" (p. 355). Too little team cohesion may produce "structural holes" (Anderson & Dixon, 2019, p. 355) as a form of disconnection between members (see also Burt, 2009). However, too much cohesion may induce "group think" (Anderson & Dixon, 2019, p. 355) with group members preserving harmony in the group at all costs (see also Janis, 2008, Milne, 2017, Stahl, Maznevski, Voigt & Jonsen, 2010, Ponton, Osborn, Thompson & Greenwood, 2020). Both would then decrease performance (Anderson & Dixon, 2019, see also Mullen & Copper, 1994, Widmeyer & Williams, 1991). Bruhn (2009) however argues for an optimum level of cohesion where "group identification is not so strong that it cannot appreciate differences in other groups and where the self-concept of individual members is not exclusively dependent upon one group" (p. 4). In a study about self-handicapping, Carron, Prapavessis and Grove (1994) suggest that cohesion may be perceived as both negative and positive by sports team members.

Surprisingly still, there seems to be a persistent consensus among journalists, practitioners, governing bodies and sport psychologists about high cohesion being, on the whole, 'positive' (DFB, 2013, Gilbert, 2018, Hardy, et al., 2005, Hester, 2010, Jowett & Chaundy, 2004, Smith, 2015, Stakeholder Dialogues, n.d., Teehan, n.d., United Nations, 2017). This suggestion, however, is challenged by Hardy et al. (2005) who investigate athletes' perception on potential negative effects of high team cohesion. They find that "approximately 56% of the respondents indicated that there could be disadvantages to high social cohesion" (Hardy, et al., 2005, p. 172), while nearly 31% see potential disadvantages to high task cohesion. While still relying upon individually generated data to make claims about cohesion, the study challenges the

commonly held perception of high team cohesion as something universally positive for sports teams (Hardy, et al., 2005, see also Milne, 2017).

2.1.1.2 Qualitative work into cohesion

A project my study comes closest to is an ethnographic study of a collegiate football team by Holt and Sparks (2001). Over a period of eight months the first author immerses himself into the field as first team player, coaching assistant and researcher simultaneously (Holt & Sparks, 2001). Data is collected via participant observation, writing of a field diary and reflexive journal as well as conducting formal and informal interviews (Holt & Sparks, 2001). The aim of the study is to better understand the dynamic nature of cohesion as linked to performance as well as influencing factors over time by comparing mid- and late-season results (Holt & Sparks, 2001). The authors identify four key themes affecting cohesion: "clear and meaningful roles, selfishness/personal sacrifices, communication, and team goals" (Holt & Sparks, 2001, p. 237). The longitudinal study design furthermore allows the authors to illustrate the "transitory, dynamic nature of cohesion over a season" (Holt & Sparks, 2001, p. 240). Also, Holt and Sparks (2001) find that with increasing cohesion the willingness to make sacrifices may rise which, in turn, strengthens the cohesive bond between team members. Furthermore, reflecting on the social environment in sport, Martin et al. (2014) identify the formation of cliques – defined as "tightly knit subgroups of individuals" (p. 99) – as an important factor influencing the perceptions of cohesion by the members of a team. Such sub-groups may form along linguistic or national lines and can potentially harm cohesion (e.g. Clayton, 2019, Fletcher & Hanton, 2003, Martin et al., 2014).

Despite acknowledging communication as an important influence on increased team cohesion and performance, neither the ethnographic study by Holt and Sparks (2001) nor the empirical studies on cohesion cited above do examine *how exactly* communication among team members is connected to cohesion as a multidimensional and complex process (see also Onağ & Tepeci, 2014, Smith, Arthur, Hardy, Callow & Williams, 2013). However, it is argued, that communication leads group members to share similar beliefs and attitudes thereby increasing the pressure

to conform to group norms (Carron, 1988). From this, Widmeyer and Williams (1991) draw the conclusion that communication would logically increase cohesion. And finally, Martin et al. (2013) argue that "[t]eam communication and interaction are imperative for team success and contribute to team cohesion" (p. 23). The recognition of both the relevance of discursive processes in relation to team cohesion as well as the idea that cohesion is a *process* rather than a group property leads to the next section where I discuss cohesion as *discursively constructed and negotiated*.

2.1.2 The discursive construction and negotiation of cohesion

According to different scholars, cohesion as a complex concept is constructed through discursive strategies among other factors (e.g. Holt & Sparks, 2001, Ladegaard & Cheng, 2014, Martin, et al., 2013, Widmeyer & Williams, 1991). By focusing on language use in interaction, it is therefore possible to draw conclusions about the emergence or negotiation of group cohesion by looking at forms of behaviour such as how interlocutors address each other, how the floor is managed, how out-group members are constructed, or how group norms are being negotiated (e.g. Holmes, 2000, 2006, Holmes & Hay, 1997, Holmes & Marra, 2002a, Meyer, 2000, Schnurr, 2009, Wilson, 2010).

A discourse strategy described as enhancing in-group cohesion for example is the construction of an 'us vs. them' dichotomy (Dynel, 2008, Holmes & Marra, 2002a, Ladegaard & Cheng, 2014). Speakers here construct themselves as in-group members in contrast with an out-group creating out-group boundaries and increased in-group solidarity and thus cohesion (Dynel, 2008, Holmes & Marra, 2002a, Ladegaard & Cheng, 2014). A related discursive strategy in the negotiation of cohesion is *othering*, which is the focus of a study on gossiping by Jaworski and Coupland (2005). They propose that othering and gossip "are discursive means of asserting and reinforcing group coherence and identity" (p. 687) and "achieved not so much by clear boundary marking as by playing with and negotiating around the unclear, fuzzy edges of social categories, norms, and acceptability". Therefore, discourse analysis appears highly relevant and beneficial for exploring complex social processes such as team cohesion in order to better understand how it is negotiated

and co-constructed through different discursive strategies in interaction in a given context. I will shed more light on the suitability of taking a discourse analytical approach to capturing team cohesion in section 2.2 below.

Moreover, in their discursive psychology research project on off-task interactions in problem-based learning groups Hendry, et al. (2016) argue that there appears to be "a lack of research to demonstrate how […] cohesion is constructed turn-by-turn in talk and interaction" (p. 184). Addressing this issue, the authors build on video-recorded interactions among students in order to demonstrate "how cohesion is established through a process of collective action against the 'other': highlighting the differences between 'us' and 'them'" (Hendry, et al., 2016, p. 180). Through the discursive construction of an outsider – especially when done collectively and through gossiping – cohesion emerges by displaying togetherness among in-group members according to Hendry et al. (2016).

Furthermore, the authors find cohesion to emerge through jointly teasing an outsider constructing them "as being a bit of a joke" (Hendry, et al. 2016, p. 189). In a study on workplace interactions, Holmes (2000) maintains that in all its' functions – such as, among others, creating and maintaining solidarity and collegiality as well as hedging criticisms – "humour contributes to social cohesion in the workplace" (p. 179). While many humour scholars are in agreement with the finding of humour as contributing to cohesion among interactants, to the best of my knowledge, there appears to be no sociolinguistic study primarily concerned with studying cohesion as discursively negotiated through humour in the context of sports teams. Nevertheless, other researchers as well have discussed the construction of cohesion through humour among members of a social group – which will be the focus of section 2.3 on conversational humour. Before delving into literature on humour, I illustrate where my study is positioned within the discourse analysis research arena below.

2.2 Interactional sociolinguistics

Sociolinguistics offer various theoretical approaches to discourse analysis with the major ones being "Critical Discourse Analysis, Variationist Sociolinguistics, Conversation Analysis, and Interactional Sociolinguistics" (Holmes, 2014, p. 177). In line with the aims of this research project, I have chosen IS. Especially in contrast to approaches such as conversation analysis that foreground the close examination of how a conversation is organised, the focus on meaning-making and interpretation processes within IS appears highly suitable for the endeavour of exploring the discursive construction and negotiation of cohesion among members of a specific football team (Bailey, 2015). In the following, I will elaborate on IS demonstrating the appropriateness of the approach for my project.

According to different scholars (e.g. Bailey, 2015, Gordon, 2010, Holmes, 2014, Tannen, 2005a, Schnurr & Mohd Omar, fc, Vine, Holmes, Marra & Pfeifer, 2008) the anthropologist Gumperz (1982, 2015) can be seen to have pioneered IS as a widely used approach to the analysis of social interaction. Gumperz (2015) himself maintains that IS "has its origin in the search for replicable methods of qualitative analysis that account for our ability to interpret what participants intend to convey in everyday communicative practice" (p. 309). IS scholars hence seek to explore discursive practices in distinct socio-cultural contexts where societal and interactive forces merge (Gumperz, 2015, Schnurr & Mohd Omar, fc, Tannen, 2005a, Vine, et al., 2008). The primary goal of IS is to understand how social meaning is created and negotiated in and through discursive interaction (Baily, 2015, Gumperz, 2015, Tannen, 2005a, Schnurr & Mohd Omar, fc). As well as concentrating on these meaning-making processes in everyday conversations, IS focuses on "taken-for-granted, background assumptions that underlie the negotiation of interpretations" (Gumperz, 2015, p. 313).

In particular, Bailey (2015) argues that through IS it is possible to "illustrate a way in which social background knowledge is implicated in the signalling and interpreting of meaning" (p. 4). Accordingly, in order to infer the meaning of *what* an interlocutor

says and *how* it is said, interactants have to make interpretive assessments (Baily, 2015, Gumperz, 2015, Vine, et al., 2008). Such

> interpretive assessments always build on local or context-specific background knowledge that takes the form of presuppositions that shift in the course of an encounter. Analysis focuses on conversational inference, defined as the interpretive procedure by means of which interactants assess what is communicatively intended at any one point in an exchange, and on which they rely to plan and produce their responses. (Gumperz, 2015, p. 313)

Inferences are thus dependent on the specific interactional context(s) where they are produced as well as the discourse itself (Bailey, 2015, Gumperz, 2015). Furthermore, it cannot be taken for granted that interactants share inferential procedures. Rather, it needs to be demonstrated through in-depth analysis of what transpires in language use in interactions (Gumperz, 2015). As a consequence, IS has been adopted in many studies focusing on intercultural and interethnic communication where the conversational inferential procedures are expected to vary between interactants (e.g. Bailey, 2015, Gumperz, 2015, Schiffrin, 2003, Tannen, 2005a). IS can then demonstrate how diversity affects interpretation and inferencing processes by identifying features of discourse indexing various kinds of contextual information, such as cultural background, age, status, or ethnicity (Gumperz, 2015, Holmes, 2014, Tannen, 2005a, Schnurr & Mohd Omar, fc).

Accounting for contextual presuppositions, Gumperz (2015) uses the term "contextualisation cues" (p. 315) which refers to linguistic and paralinguistic features contributing to the situated interpretation and signalling processes. He adds that contextualisation strategies emerge in distinct social groups where interactants share background knowledge and are confident that even indirect allusions such as a humorous frame will be understood (Gumperz, 2015, see also Bailey, 2015, Schnurr & Mohd Omar, fc). Contextualisation cues and inferential patterns thus vary from group to group which, in turn, depend on the socio-cultural setting(s) (Bailey, 2015). Furthermore, the contextualisation cues within the realisation of an utterance for example mark an utterance as humorous through verbal and non-verbal cues such as a change in pitch, tone of voice, a smile or laughter (Hay, 2001, Schnurr & Chan,

2011, Schnurr & Mohd Omar, fc). Yet, in actual interaction, cues are often of ambiguous nature as they occur in constellations of features making the inferential processes for the hearer (and researcher) difficult (Bailey, 2015).

Moreover, not just what is said but how it is realised – including use of pronouns, register shifts, pauses, tone of voice, as well as the sequential positioning of turns – are important factors for understanding what makes an utterance e.g. humorous and how it functions during an interaction (Bailey, 2015, Schnurr & Mohd Omar, fc, Tannen, 2005a, Vine, et al., 2008). As part of the micro-level analysis IS allows the researcher to identify instances of humour while taking into account the context specificity (Schnurr & Mohd Omar, fc). The researcher then combines this micro-level information with their knowledge of the macro-level to gain insights into the context-specific meaning-making processes of interactions (Schnurr & Mohd Omar, fc).

The detailed knowledge about the particular social context relevant for the analysis – such as relationships among interactants – is acquired through ethnographic approaches to data collection (Bailey, 2015, Gordon, 2010, Holmes, 2014, Gumperz, 2015, Schnurr & Mohd Omar, fc, Vine, et al., 2008). IS methodology hence includes the discourse analysis of audio- or video-recorded interactions, as well as observations and interviews with participants (Bailey, 2015, Gumperz, 2015, Holmes, 2014, Tannen, 2005a, Schnurr & Mohd Omar, fc, Vine, et al., 2008). As will be shown in chapter 3 – in line with the research aim of understanding team cohesion as discursively negotiated in interaction – I, too, have adopted an ethnographic methodology.

In summary, by combining the micro and the macro, IS appears to be an appropriate framework for analysing team cohesion as a relational process (Schnurr & Mohd Omar, fc, Vine, et al., 2008). The framework also allows for better understanding of the "ways in which relationships are negotiated and maintained through talk" (Vine, et al., 2008, p. 345), thus allowing me, the researcher, to draw conclusions about how members of the football team under investigation negotiate cohesion through every-day talk. A number of studies set in the IS realm have been conducted on

professional communication. Because I understand the professional football team as a workplace as well, I will now turn to professional communication in sports teams.

2.2.1 Professional communication in sports teams

Schnurr (2013) defines professional communication broadly as interactions of various forms taking place in a context broadly connected with work and involving "at least one participant who is engaged in some work-related activity" (p. 17). According to Holmes and Marra (2002b), among others, the culture of a workplace can be seen as being shaped through continued talk and action. Therefore, the language within a workplace can be seen as "an element in the growth of the social group identity and culture" (Gunnarsson, 2009a, p. 196). Hence, the culture of a workplace can be viewed as constantly being shaped through continued talk and action (Holmes & Marra, 2002b). The specific culture of a workplace can then impact on the aforementioned meaning-making processes as members of different social groups or work teams may draw on different assumptions and background knowledge (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). Communicative patterns such as swearing, the use of humour and familiarisers, or decision-making processes contribute to shaping distinct workplace cultures (Schnurr, 2013). Or, as Holmes and Marra (2002b) put it, these workplace cultures have their own distinctive mix of features. The corresponding workplace teams are then again characterised by their "own particular combination from the discursive resources available, within the parameters acceptable at that workplace" (Holmes & Marra, 2002b, p. 1707). In this respect, Gunnarsson (2009b) highlights the necessity of knowing the local language for not only career development but also for social integration through e.g. humour, anecdotes and small talk (see also Holmes & Marra, 2002b) – linking with the before-presented work on cohesion.

Apart from the organisational contexts where professional communication research usually takes place, a context that can be seen as a type of organisation and therefore explored from a professional communication perspective is professional sports teams (Cranmer & Myers, 2015). Despite the argument of scholars like Sullivan and Feltz (2003) who maintain that "teams within sports are a bona fide and salient social

group and represent a prime area to study […] social issues" (p. 1695), to the best of my knowledge in the IS literature to date, very few qualitative studies focus on communication within sports teams. Nevertheless, the study of communicative interaction within sports teams has great potential in providing valuable insights into social dynamics, such as team cohesion (Sullivan & Feltz, 2003, Wolfers, et al., 2017). Caldwell, Walsh, Vine and Jureidini (2017) for example highlight the value of an analysis of "language use in sport" (p. 6) as the communicative events provide insights into real-world issues of athletes and sports team members. Moreover, Rowe (2013) argues, that "[c]ommunication and sport are […] demonstrably indissoluble and of intrinsic importance as a focus of sociocultural organization, activity, identity, and affect as well as of capital accumulation" (p. 18). Moreover, the author suggests that

> the communication-sport nexus matters because whenever sport is brought into wider sociocultural spaces, it throws light on how [social class, gender, race, ethnicity, age, ability/disability, and so forth] are constructed and operate, while at the same time is itself a factor in their construction and operation (Rowe, 2013, p. 20).

The existing qualitative research on discourse within sports teams revolves around leadership as communicative practice, the use of familiarisers, athlete-coach communication, the construction of media identities and discrimination of individuals in different sports contexts among others (e.g. Bimper Jr, 2015, Brown, Jackson, Brown, Sellers, Keiper & Manuel, 2003, Cranmer & Myers, 2015, File, 2012, 2015, 2018, Jones, 2002, Schnurr, File, Clayton, Stavridou & Wolfers, fc, Wilson, 2010, 2011). Wilson's (2010, 2011, 2017) studies into address terms of familiarity and leadership practices within a rugby team from New Zealand are among the unique examples, where the intra-team discourse of a sports team is at the centre of discussion. Situated in IS, Wilson (2011, 2017) views the discursive practices of athletes as the vital focus point in how social phenomena such as leadership are done. Narrowing down the focus even further to football teams in particular, I will present linguistic research conducted in this specific context next.

2.2.2 (Professional) communication in football

In light of "its status as the world's number one sport as well as a mass cultural phenomenon" (Bergh & Ohlander, 2012, p. 19) and "ambiguous ability to unite and divide at the same time" (Anchimbe, 2008, p. 133), the lack of sociolinguistic research into football team contexts seems rather surprising. One of the exceptions of IS research into football is a study on linguistic features used in the negotiation of invitations to criticise referees in post-match interviews (File, 2016). Highlighting different "linguistic strategies that managers employ to negotiate potentially face-threatening aspects" (File, 2016, p. 89) in public-facing discursive interactions, the author provides empirical evidence for the in-situ negotiation of social aspects.

Apart from these studies, a number of other scholars have attempted to outline the linguistics of football researching, among others, football terminology, football language, football discourses, football and the media, and multilingualism in football (e.g. Bergh & Ohlander, 2012, Gerhardt, 2009, 2014, Giera, Giorgianni, Lavric, Pisek, Skinner & Stadler, 2008, Lavric, 2008, Lavric & Steiner, 2017, Penn, 2016). These examples illustrate "the richness of linguistic analysis in connection with football" (Lavric, 2008, p. 5). It has furthermore been argued that football teams comprising players and coaches of differing cultural backgrounds and possibly mother tongues can be described as "complex linguistic ecosystems" (Giera, et al., 2008, p. 375). A possible result of the multicultural nature of football teams can then arguably be linguistic and cultural barriers as well as problems with effective communication, which is argued to be "vital for efficient and goal-oriented interaction and co-operation at all times" (Giera, et al., 2008, p. 375). Giera et al. (2008) further argue that communication among football players works "as a means of facilitating integration in the team" (p. 379). Therefore, while disregarding the specific discursive patterns, communication among football players has been identified as fostering a sense of belonging as well as the formation of subgroups (Giera, et al., 2008, see also Clayton & Humberstone, 2006, Wolfers, et al., 2017) – tying in with the argument of team cohesion as a discursive process in section 2.1.2.

One particular discursive strategy that has been connected with the construction of group cohesion is humour. As indicated in the introduction, humour emerged as the way into exploring cohesion in my project as well, which is why I will turn to research on humour in the next section.

2.3 Conversational Humour

Due to the IS approach of this project, I will not offer an extensive historical overview of the different theories of humour (see Apte, 1985, Attardo, 2002, Hay, 1995, Krikman, 2006, Linstead, 1988, Meyer, 2000, Norrick, 1994, Raskin, 1985, Schnurr, 2008), but rather focus on the work most relevant to my own study. Understanding conversation as a social process in which both speakers and listeners are involved, conversational humour is described as a "joint construction involving a complex interaction between the person intending a humorous remark and those with the potential of responding" (Holmes & Hay, 1997, p. 131). Therefore, I will focus on humour that occurs 'naturally' in spoken interaction rather than for example scripted comedy (e.g. Bell-Jordan, 2007, Park, Gabbadon & Chernin, 2006). Describing humour – which has been argued to be notoriously hard to pin down (Hay, 2001, Holmes, 2000, Schnurr, 2008) – Linstead (1988) has called the phenomenon "complex and paradoxical" (p. 123). Further evidence for this complexity is the absence of one single definition of humour used across disciplines.

Still, among IS scholars the definition put forward by Mullany (2004) – which is based on an earlier study by Holmes (2000) – has found wider recognition (e.g. Petraki & Ramayanti, 2018, Schnurr, 2008, 2010) and is also used in this study:

> Humour is defined as instances where participant(s) signal amusement to one another, based on the analyst's assessment of paralinguistic, prosodic and discoursal clues. These instances can be classified as either successful or unsuccessful according to addressees' reactions. Humour can be a result of either intentional or unintentional humorous behaviour from participants. (Mullany, 2004, p. 21)

The definition has several benefits starting with the recognition of a range of potential response strategies by the audience (Schnurr, 2008). While laughter is

widely recognised as the most "obvious (though not unambiguous) clue" (Holmes, 2000, p. 163) to signal the hearer's acknowledgement of an utterance to be humorous (see also Bell, 2009a, Gerhardt, 2009, Hay, 1995, 2001, Schnurr, 2008, 2010, Schnurr & Chan, 2011) it is not without its problems. A study by Provine (1996), for example, shows laughter to occur independent of humour as well. Laughter may furthermore be feigned (Bell, 2015). For this reason, it is important to account for a number of other possible humour support strategies that may or may not occur in combination with laughter. According to Hay (2001), there are "four implicatures associated with full support of humor: *recognition* of a humorous frame, *understanding* the humor, *appreciating* the humor, and *agreeing* with any message associated with it" (p. 55). Resulting possible response strategies that indicate humour support range from echoing, producing more humour, overlapping and heightened involvement in the conversation to smiling and laughter (e.g. Hay, 1995, 2001, Holmes, 2000, Schnurr, 2008, 2010).

In addition, in contrast to the earlier definition by Holmes (2000), Mullany's (2004) definition of humour includes instances of unintended as well as failed humour. Dependent on the context-specific humour type and style, interlocutors may then respond in a variety of ways offering humour support, rejecting humour or ignoring it (Hay, 1995, 2001, Marsh, 2014, Schnurr & Chan, 2011, Schnurr, 2010). As a result, a humour attempt may be interpreted as successful or failed (Hay, 1995, 2001, Laineste, 2013, Mullany, 2004, Priego-Valverde, 2009, Schnurr, 2008, 2010, Schnurr & Chan, 2011). However, the boundaries between humour succeeding and falling flat are fuzzy and it is possible, for example, that a humorous utterance is responded to with both humour support and rejection at the same time causing humour to fall *partly* flat (File & Schnurr, 2019). Determining whether, when and how strongly a humour attempt falls flat depends on the humour norms of a social group (Marsh, 2014). In chapter 6 I will offer a more in-depth overview of research on failed humour and provide empirical evidence from my own data, where the phenomenon emerged as well. In addition, I will propose the failed humour continuum (6.1.1), which allows for a more comprehensive and systematic description of failed humour.

According to Schnurr (2008), the above definition could be understood to also cover "the 'dark' side of humour, that is, those instances of humour which are designed to put down or personally attack the addressee" (p. 7). Lastly, the definition recognises the role of the analyst. Due to the risk of misinterpreting or overlooking instances of humour in a given dataset, the means of identification are crucial to the analytical process (Holmes, 2000, Schnurr, 2008, 2010). Here again, the approach of IS proves exceptionally beneficial due to the aforementioned researcher's knowledge of contextualisation cues specific to the context under investigation (see 2.2). As noted above, contextual and linguistic cues relevant to identifying instances of humour may be the speakers' tone of voice and the audience's verbal and non-verbal responses (Hay, 1995, 2001, Holmes, 2000, Schnurr, 2010, Schnurr & Chan, 2011, Schnurr & Mohd Omar, fc). In methodology chapter 3 I will reflect on the ways instances of humour have been identified for this project specifically (section 3.8.1).

Furthermore, what is perceived as humorous in one group is found to vary across groups (Holmes & Marra, 2002b, Schnurr, 2008, 2010). Humour as well as response strategies therefore are inseparably linked to the context in which they occur (Holmes, 2000, 2006, Raymond, 2014, Schnurr, 2010). Consequently, the specific use and function of humour depend on the discursive norms of a given social group (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997, Schnurr, 2010) – which links with the research on context-specific ways of doing things in 2.2.1 on professional communication in sports teams. Schnurr (2010) argues that "which types of humour are typically used to signal group membership" (p. 319) and seen as an "acceptable means of reinforcing solidarity, largely depend on the discursive norms that characterise the group context in which the humour is to occur". Further social factors impacting on the specific ways humour is used and understood in an interpersonal encounter are the relationship between interlocutors and/or culture and ethnicity (e.g. Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997, Müller, 2009, Norrick, 2003, Schnurr, 2010, Wolfers, et al., 2017). Rather aggressive humour styles have largely been found between speakers of close relationships (e.g. Bell, 2009a, Kotthoff, 2003, Norrick, 2003, Schnurr, 2009, 2010, Walton, Priest & Paradies, 2013).

2.3.1 Brief taxonomy of humour types

The body of literature exploring conversational humour has identified several types of humour including teasing, insults, puns, fantasy humour, wordplay, roleplay, self-denigrating humour, sarcasm, irony, banter, and anecdotes (e.g. Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997, Dynel, 2008, Hay, 1995, 2001, Kotthoff, 2003, Schnurr, 2008). Importantly, the boundaries between these different humour types "are not always clear-cut, and some instances may be classified as belonging to more than one type" (Schnurr, 2008, p. 7). Also, as Hay (1995) notes, "[e]ach type of humour can be used for *strategies* which can fulfil a number of *functions*" (p. 97) such as constructing particular aspects of a speaker's identity – which will be discussed in the section 3.4 of the methodology chapter. Furthermore, the specific humour types identified in this project will be presented in the respective analysis chapters where appropriate.

2.3.2 Humour and cohesion – a "paradox of duality"

Humour as a linguistic strategy is found to serve a range of complex, multi-faceted and versatile functions (e.g. Hay, 2001, Holmes, 2000, Holmes & Marra, 2002a, Schnurr, 2008, 2010). According to Holmes (2000), the most basic function of humour is creating and maintaining solidarity, "a sense of belonging to a group" (p. 159, see also Schnurr, 2010, Schnurr & Chan, 2011, Wolfers, et al., 2017). In other words, and central to this study, humour contributes to social in-group cohesion (e.g. Hester, 2010, Holmes, 2000, 2006, Holmes & Marra, 2002a, Gockel & Kerr, 2015, Ponton, et al., 2020, Romero & Pescosolido, 2008). In this light, Holmes and Marra (2002a) argue that humour

> is widely recognised as an effective strategy for constructing group cohesion, cementing ingroup solidarity, and building team spirit. It typically exploits and strengthens shared attitudes, values and beliefs. But humour also contributes to ingroup vs outgroup boundary maintenance by making it safe to explore the nature and limits of the boundaries. (p. 395)

Humour as a "key strategy in interpersonal encounters" (Schnurr, 2010, p. 319) thus presents a valuable way into spoken data when the objective is to better understand how cohesion is actually constructed and negotiated in interaction. Humour is also used to signal and manage group membership emphasising belonging and promoting

solidarity among group members (e.g. Dynel, 2008, Greatbatch & Clark, 2003, Holmes & Stubbe, 2015, Plester & Sayers, 2007, Schnurr, 2010, 2013). Greatbatch and Clark (2003) note that "humour can promote the emergence and maintenance of group cohesiveness by, inter alia, clarifying and reinforcing shared values and social norms" (p. 1538). Moreover, constructing context-specific group boundaries through humour, interactants often jointly construct "a collaborative floor which mirrors the group's internal cohesion" (Holmes & Marra, 2002a, p. 395). Holmes (2006) adds that in humorous interactions such collaborative floor management may be achieved to varying degrees with participants drawing on a range of cohesive devices.

Then again, humour also functions as a boundary marker excluding outsiders (Hay, 2000, Holmes, 2000, Holmes & Hay, 1997, Holmes & Marra, 2000a, Linstead, 1988, Meyer, 2000, Schnurr, 2010). Such exclusion may for example be constructed along ethnic or cultural lines (e.g. Burdsey, 2011, Holmes & Hay, 1997, Schnurr, 2010, Sue & Golash-Boza, 2013, Wolfers, et al., 2017). Importantly, humour often unites and divides interlocutors and audiences simultaneously, highlighting its ambiguous nature (e.g. Apte, 1987, Meyer, 2000, Schnurr, 2009, Schnurr & Chan, 2011, Wolfers, et al., 2017). As indicated before, the findings of my own previous work illustrate that racialised humour for example works as a double-edged sword enhancing team cohesion while also fragmenting the team assigning and foregrounding racialised identities (Wolfers, 2016, Wolfers, et al., 2017). Meyer (2000) describes this as the "paradox of duality" (p. 329) inherent in humour, potentially both bonding and/or dividing participants as well as audiences – often simultaneously.

Gockel and Kerr (2015) argue that "[d]ue to its inherently social nature, put-down humor could strongly affect socio-emotional group processes and outcomes like cohesion" (p. 205). Put-down humour targeted at in-group members (in contrast to out-group members), however, would decrease cohesion when followed by laughter (Gockel & Kerr, 2015). Moreover, humour attempts that fall flat may cause group membership claims to be challenged and the aspired relationship among interlocutors to be questioned (Bell, 2015, File & Schnurr, 2019), which can then have

negative effects on the group's cohesiveness. Ponton et al. (2020), too, argue that developing cohesion through humour may exclude group members not able to contribute to the humour due to their hierarchical status or relationship boundaries. Furthermore, the foregrounding of cultural differences as manifest in the humorous use of stereotypes "functions to create positive cohesion and defuse potential conflict" (Ponton, et al., 2020, p. 50).

Humour scholars appear more or less in agreement with the finding that humour not only constructs but fosters cohesion and in-group solidarity among group members (e.g. Dynel, 2008, Hester, 2010, Holmes & Marra, 2002a, Lennox Terrion & Ashfort, 2002, Romero & Pescosolido, 2008, Ponton, et al., 2020, Snyder, 1991). Lennox Terrion and Ashfort (2002) add that despite humorous utterances often being equivocal, given a humour attempt being successful, the ensuing shared laughter reaffirms a sense of community signalling trust and inclusion among in-group members (see also Gerhardt, 2009, Greatbatch & Clark, 2003). Hence, by analysing the way humour is used as a discursive strategy to create meaning, cohesion as a discursively negotiated process can be better understood, and current understandings can potentially be enriched.

Crucially, apart from the cohering function, humour is also used, among others, to manage relationships and tensions, do power, as well as construct and assign identities (e.g. Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997, Holmes, 2000, Holmes & Marra, 2002a, Mullany, 2004, Rogerson-Revell, 2007, Schnurr, 2010, Van De Mieroop & Schnurr, 2018). As such, Rogerson-Revell (2007) maintains that "humour can be used strategically" (p. 5) to manage relations among interlocutors (see also Ponton, et al., 2020). In a study on job interviews, Van De Mieroop and Schnurr (2018) maintain that applicants often use humour to highlight shared aspects with the interviewers to construct co-membership.

Yet, "which specific functions a particular instance of humour performs is not always straightforward, and most instances of humour are multi-functional and serve different interpersonal functions simultaneously" (Schnurr, 2010, p. 311). To

approach and describe these complex ways of doing things – such as discursively negotiating team cohesion through humour – the specific context needs to be accounted for. Despite humour being described as a pervasive aspect of the sporting context (Snyder, 1991), most of the research cited in this section has been conducted on humour in workplace contexts (e.g. Hay, 1995, Holmes, 2006, Holmes & Marra, 2002b, Schnurr, 2009) – with a few exceptions (e.g. Burdsey, 2011, Chovanec, 2011, File, 2016, Hester, 2010, Kuiper, 1991, Ronglan & Aggerholm, 2014, Wolfers, et al., 2017).

2.3.3 Humour in sports (teams)

Apart from studies exploring humour use of managers, coaches and spectators (e.g. File, 2016, Gerhardt, 2009, Høigaard, Haugen, Johansen & Giske, 2017, Ronglan & Aggerholm, 2014), my own previous work investigating racialised humour among members of a football team (Wolfers, et al., 2017) is one of the few studies focusing on humour use among the members of a sports team (Hester, 2010, Kuiper, 1991). In his study on locker room talk among members of a New Zealand rugby team, Kuiper (1991) illustrates how banter forms part of the routine formulae between members of the team. He argues that the frequent use of banter and mockery among members of the team is used to create group solidarity and maintain team cohesion (Kuiper, 1991). Researching collegiate baseball players in the US, Hester (2010) as well maintains that much of the humour used among baseball players positively impacts team cohesion.

In contrast to these studies which highlight humour as fostering cohesion among sports team members, research into more biting forms of humour, such as racialised humour, describe "dressing room banter" (Long, Carrington & Spracklen, 1997, p. 258) as a way of normalizing and manifesting racialised stereotypes within English rugby language and culture. Similarly, Burdsey (2011) in a study on Western sport observes the downplaying of racist remarks as being 'just banter' by the butts (see also Pérez, 2017, Wolfers, et al., 2017). Minority ethnic research participants especially are "often pressured into denying or downplaying those forms of verbal discrimination" (Burdsey, 2011, p. 261) labelling them as just banter. Also, Müller

(2009) finds that due to the close bond between members of a football team, players being targeted with aggressive forms of humour may be forced to accept being targeted and not reject the humour as discriminatory. The consequential normalization and acceptance of racialised humour arguably contributes to "the normalization of discriminatory practices and the maintenance of white privilege" (Burdsey, 2011, p. 278) in sports. Studies like these provide further evidence for both the *paradox of duality* inherent in humour (Meyer, 2000) as well as the potentially dark side of humour (Schnurr, 2008). A more in-depth discussion of research into racialised humour will be provided in chapter 5. In the next and last section of the literature review I address the gap in research that this thesis aims to address.

2.4 Identifying a gap

Most of the work on team cohesion set in the sporting world employs a quantitative methodology. As a result, debates of cohesion remain theoretical without providing empirical evidence for team cohesion as an in-situ negotiation process. Consequently, I have argued that the definitions of cohesion as a result of such quantitative inquiries fail to provide empirical evidence for their conceptual underpinnings of the complex phenomenon. While some sport psychological studies do indeed acknowledge communication as an important influence on increased team cohesion, as well as describing cohesion as a dynamic process, there appears to be a lack of empirical investigation of how team cohesion is actually done and how it functions in interaction.

Therefore, I have moved away from studies focusing explicitly on cohesion to present IS work on (professional) communication in sports. Numerous studies examine social phenomena such as leadership and gender as constructed and negotiated through team-internal language use – such as conversational humour. Humour as a complex discourse strategy is also found to construct group cohesion, enhance solidarity and build team spirit. Despite this finding, to the best of my knowledge, no IS study has primarily focused on the specific discursive processes involved in the negotiation of team cohesion among sports team members.

With the current study I therefore address the gap between mostly quantitative studies on team cohesion and qualitative discourse analytical work on humour as contributing to the construction and negotiation of team cohesion. I will do so by providing empirical evidence for otherwise largely theoretical debates illustrating the complexity of the phenomenon. Furthermore, I will show how the processes of doing team cohesion can be captured in situ by employing IS to offer empirical evidence for what is being claimed in the quantitative inferences about cohesion. Using the team's shared humour norms as a characteristic discourse strategy of the CofP under investigation, I will ultimately unpack and expand the understanding of team cohesion as discursively constructed and negotiated through often ambiguous discursive processes of cohering. Having established where the current study sits within the research arena, I will now move to the methodology in the next chapter.

3 Methodology

In this chapter I present the methodological considerations as well as theoretical and analytical steps taken to address the research aims and objectives driving this project. First, I will illustrate the research questions (3.1), and continue with a discussion of the underlying research strategy and paradigm (3.2), followed by the theoretical frameworks used to explore team cohesion as a discursive construct: communities of practice (3.3) and identity theory (3.4). I then present the ethnographic research design used to investigate the context at hand (3.5). The methods of data collection will be articulated and reflected on. Ethical considerations for the conduct of this research project will follow in 3.6. Subsequently, I will describe in detail the research site including participants and context – also drawing a connection with cohesion (3.7). Hereafter, considerations with regards to the analytical approach will be given (3.8), followed by a self-reflection on my role as a researcher (3.9).

3.1 Emerging research questions

The emergent primary research questions (henceforth: RQs) for this thesis are as follows:

i. How can team cohesion among members of FC Anonymous II empirically be captured?

ii. What are the processes involved in the discursive negotiation of cohesion?

- How is group membership negotiated?
- How is identity construction done?

iii. How are processes of cohering affected when group membership claims fail?

For the duration of the entire PhD, I have seen the RQs as a work-in-progress and therefore constantly evolving and ever-changing (e.g. Agee, 2009, Magnusson & Marecek, 2015). This is also based on an inductive grounded theory approach deriving theory "from the data, systematically gathered and analysed through the

research process" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 12). The idea that RQs cannot be fully formed in advance of the meaning-making process in interplay with the research participants conforms both with the qualitative research strategy and the constructivist understanding of an existence of multiple realities (Robson, 2002) – both introduced in the subsequent section.

My earlier work (Wolfers, 2016), understood as a pilot study, has highlighted racialised humour to often simultaneously bond and divide members of an under-19 elite football team (see also Wolfers, et al., 2017). For the PhD project I wished to explore further this *paradox of duality* between team bonding and fragmentation as a discursive achievement. Being aware of the dangers of presuppositions with regards to again capturing racialised humour though, I initially aimed to capture the 'general' discursive practices specific to the football team under investigation when entering the field. In other words, I adopted a rather broad, explorative and open-ended research perspective to begin with (Forman, Creswell, Damschroder, Kowalski & Krein, 2008, Silverman, 2013, Stebbins, 2001).[2] An early version of RQ i thus was "How do the members of FC Anonymous II communicate with each other before, during and after football matches and trainings?". Through continued data collection, examination of the recordings, organising and coding of the data, humour (and racialised humour) again emerged strongly from the data as characteristic of the discursive practices of the team. Initial analysis (see 3.8) then brought to light the complex and often ambiguous ways of discursively constructing and negotiating solidarity and belonging through humour practices among members of FC Anonymous II – similar to the findings from the MSc project (Wolfers, 2016, Wolfers, et. Al., 2017).

In the course of the thesis write-up, I moved away from the idea of bonding and fragmenting and entered the field of cohesion research. Paired with my fascination for how people negotiate relationships and group membership as well as the

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[2] This explorative approach is also manifest in the ethical review process as well as the information sheet provided to the research participants (see 3.6).

significant gap in research on cohesion in sports teams, the data led me to focus on the discursive negotiation of team cohesion. My resulting research interest thus was to empirically capture how team cohesion is constructed and negotiated in interaction – using humour as the means to this end.

RQ iii especially attests to the emergent and bottom-up approach of this study, as it was formulated due to an unusual amount of failed humour instances in the dataset. Empirically capturing team cohesion as a dynamic and discursively negotiated process, I wish to identify and discuss some of the specific discursive ways the players of FC Anonymous II construct and negotiate cohesion among themselves. In doing so, I also wish to demonstrate the usefulness of discourse analysis in approaching team cohesion as a discursive process. Furthermore, by providing empirical evidence for the ways team cohesion is negotiated in and through language use, I want to substantiate what is being claimed in the definitions of team cohesion cited in 2.1. As with my previous work (Wolfers, 2016, Wolfers, et al., 2017), a particular focus of my analysis will be identity construction, and the discursive processes involved to construct and negotiate identities and manage group membership status.

3.2 Research strategy and paradigm: Qualitative inquiry and social constructivism

As discussed in the literature review, there appears to be a significant gap in research with regards to the discursive construction of team cohesion in sports teams, which according to Bryman (2016) suggests a more exploratory stance best approached with a qualitative research strategy rather than quantitative. Accordingly, I take a qualitative approach to understanding issues related to team cohesion in sports teams. Such qualitative inquiry aims to understand social behaviour in order to explore the meanings and meaning-makings of different social phenomena (e.g. Forman, et al., 2015, Kowalski & Krein, 2008). Contrastingly, the quantitative tradition dominating team cohesion research emphasises objectivity, measurability, controllability and generalisability and is often conducted as a controlled experiment (e.g. Bryman, 2016, Edge & Richards, 1998, Paltridge & Phakiti, 2015). Forman et al.

(2008) maintain that qualitative inquiries, however, are "discovery-oriented and holistic to understand processes and question underlying assumptions" (p. 765) – as is the aim of the current study. Furthermore, as stated by Paltridge and Phakiti (2015), the qualitative researcher within the field of applied linguistics takes the position "that human behaviours such as language […] use or actions are bound to the context in which they occur" (p. 13). This clearly links with the work introduced on IS (2.2) and humour (2.3) as well as the framework used to describe the context presented in section 3.3.

Guiding the conduct of this qualitative study is the constructivist paradigm. Apart from constructivism (also referred to as constructionism), viewing reality as being "actively constituted through representations and discourse as well as practices" (Waller, Farquharson & Dempsey, 2016, p. 11), the prevalent research paradigms within the social sciences include positivism, post-positivism, interpretivism, and critical-realism (e.g. Bryman, 2016, Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006, Paltridge & Phakiti, 2015). Constructivism views social realities such as e.g. values, cultures or artefacts as dependent on the people involved, what is being investigated, as well as the context in which it takes place (Creswell, 2003, Paltridge & Phakiti, 2015). Reality is therefore typically seen as being co-constructed by the social actors involved (e.g. Bryman, 2016, Paltridge & Phakiti, 2015, Schwandt, 1994). The understanding of team cohesion being socially and discursively constructed and negotiated by the interactants thus fits ideally with the constructivist paradigm.

Having introduced the underlying questions and orientations guiding the conduct of this project, I will now briefly introduce the framework of CofP and provide reasoning for why I am applying it to describe FC Anonymous II in the following section.

3.3 Communities of practice – A framework

The concept of CofP was first introduced by Lave and Wenger (1991) who were interested in the situated nature of learning in connection with the social context in which the learning emerges. Wenger (1998a, 1998b, 2000) then elaborated the CofP notion further ultimately developing a framework of learning through participation

in practices. He defines a CofP along three principles which are required to understand a social group as a CofP: A continually (re)negotiated *joint enterprise*, relationships of *mutual engagement* binding the members of a group together and a *shared repertoire* of collective resources developed by members over time (Wenger, 1998a, 1998b, 2000). Competency is understood through the successful combination of those three criteria (Wenger, 2000).

In many of the studies on professional communication scholars apply or discuss the CofP framework deeming it a promising theoretical approach for their research endeavours (e.g. Culver & Trudel, 2008, Hay, 2001, Holmes & Marra, 2002a, Holmes & Stubbe, 2015, Koester, 2010, Schnurr, 2013, Schnurr & Holmes, 2009). However, the framework has also found some criticism. Cox (2005), for example, argues that the CofP framework has found many divergences that ultimately outweigh the common ground highlighting the ambiguity of the meaning of a CofP. He furthermore maintains that 'community' tends to be understood as "a rather large, self conscious and externally recognized, all encompassing, tight knit, friendly, geographically situated group" (Cox, 2005, p. 536) while most studies suggest the opposite, i.e. comparatively small groups with a limited mutual understanding and relations that "are not necessarily harmonious". As, in line with Wilson (2011), I understand a CofP not as a discovery but rather a method of description, I believe that such findings are not in contradiction with the framework but rather a noteworthy finding in itself.

A frequently used alternative framework adopted to describe groups bound together by communication is discourse community – construed as a social group sharing communal conventions directed towards certain goals or purposes and communication as a means to achieving these (Borg, 2003, Flowerdew, 2000, Swales, 1988, 1990). While Flowerdew (2000) uses the concepts CofP and discourse community interchangeably seeing parallels in the aspect of learning, Borg's (2003) definition of the CofP framework "separates it from the more diffuse understandings that surround discourse community" (p. 399). Also, Swales (1988) has argued that "the discourse community can operate successfully even when the level of personal relationship remains low" (p. 213). As I am interested in how members of a group

relate to each other in the discursive negotiation of team cohesion in spoken interaction though, the discourse community framework has been deemed inappropriate for this project – in favour of the CofP framework. Also, as will be shown in the analysis chapters, the relationships between participants emerged to be of importance with regards to how cohesion was negotiated between members of the team.

Focusing on language use among members of a group, Schnurr and Holmes (2009) argue that the CofP framework accounts for "the ways in which people dynamically construct and negotiate their membership of certain groups" (p. 103). Moreover, through their specific discourse they "acquire the verbal practices that membership involves" (Schnurr & Holmes, 2009, p. 103). As the specific discourse and style which members of a CofP use to communicate with each other and express their membership is a central aspect of this study, I now discuss the shared repertoire and the connection with humour.

3.3.1 Humour as part of the shared repertoire

As stated by Wenger (1998a), the shared repertoire as one of the three defining criteria of a CofP includes

> routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions or concepts that the community has produced or adopted in the course of its existence, and which have become part of its practice. (p. 83)

The shared repertoire thus reflects the CofP's history of mutual engagement enabling the constant (re)negotiation of meaning (Culver & Trudel, 2008, Wenger, 1998a). Furthermore, new members of a CofP learn and adopt over time the shared ways of doing things including among others insider jokes, jargon, and shared stories (Clayton, 2019, Wenger, 1998a). Since its introduction, numerous researchers have focused on how group members do humour as an integral and unique part of the shared repertoire of various workplace CofPs (e.g. Hay, 1995, 2001, Holmes & Marra, 2002b, Koester, 2010, Schnurr & Chan, 2011). Schnurr and Holmes (2009), for example, argue that

[h]umor not only constitutes one aspect of a group's shared linguistic repertoire, but the type of humor which members typically use to convey different meanings as well as the style in which they deliver their humorous utterances are both influenced by norms developed among members of communities practice" (p. 104).

This theoretical framework therefore offers the opportunity to account for how humour as part of the shared repertoire of a CofP is done in differing ways in differing social contexts – such as sports teams like FC Anonymous II. In the next section I will briefly argue why it was decided to focus on humour for this project specifically.

3.3.1.1 FC Anonymous II's humour as part of the shared repertoire

Humour emerged as a regularly employed discourse strategy from the data and was therefore seen as a characteristic of the shared negotiated repertoire of discursive strategies among the members of FC Anonymous II. In their everyday talk the team members often used conversational humour when interacting with one another. As will be shown in the analysis chapters, in and through humour the players construct identities, negotiate group membership positions, do power, and – most relevant to this project – negotiate team cohesion. Also, in interviews, players placed great emphasis on the use of humour as a characteristic of their team communication.

Other discursive strategies relevant for understanding cohesion and its negotiation in this specific context include the use of different address terms (such as inter alia familiarisers, nicknames, and the use of full names), different ways of doing leadership, and game calls. The different strategies for addressing players especially appeared to have an impact on the negotiation of relationships, group membership status and team cohesion. Some players used nicknames among themselves, while they addressed others – mainly junior players – using their full first and last name. Apart from boundary maintenance, the doing of power and negotiation of hierarchy here emerged as well. As will be shown in the analyses below, hierarchical status and power also influence the negotiation of team cohesion through humour (and vice versa).

Furthermore, the non-verbal norm of using different individualised handshakes for greeting team members (see 3.5.1.1.3) also emerged from the data. These – often intersecting – characteristics of the shared negotiated repertoire could have been focused on as well. In actual interaction, the boundaries between different discursive strategies are much fuzzier and are often realised in combination or even simultaneously. But due to the extensive use of conversational humour in this context – as well as the framing of humour being a norm within the team during interviews – it was decided to focus on this specific discourse strategy in order to explore and better understand the negotiation of team cohesion as an interactional process.

3.3.2 Sports teams as CofPs

According to Culver and Trudel (2008), when applied to the field of sports, the aspect of joint enterprise often differs for various members of one CofP. Consequently, rather than coaches and athletes being members of one common CofP, there would be an alignment of differing CofPs within one sporting club (Culver & Trudel, 2008). Nevertheless, as stated by Wenger (2000), the boundaries between CofPs arising from differing enterprises are usually rather fluid and unspoken, yet still significant. Moreover, within many communities and boundaries, people identify with some communities strongly and not at all with others (Wenger, 2000).

Wilson (2010, 2011) rests his application of the CofP framework for analysing a rugby team on the assumption that the team members "share a common understanding of what it means to be a member of their CofP, which is negotiated through their shared interaction" (Wilson, 2011, p. 78). Wilson (2010, 2011) furthermore suggests that due to its complexity a sports club can be described as a constellation of several differing CofPs thereby arguing that athletes simultaneously construct multi-membership of different CofPs embedded in their team (see also Culver & Trudel, 2008).

3.3.2.1 FC Anonymous II as a CofP

FC Anonymous II as well can be described as a CofP. To begin with, the regular mutual engagement of the team is to play football competitively and to come together for this purpose, which marks the development of a team CofP (Wilson, 2011, Wolfers, 2016). Included in this endeavour is the players' commitment to routinely attend football trainings and perform at an appropriate skill level relevant to their positions (Wilson, 2011, Wolfers, 2016). The players engage in football practice five to six days a week with friendly as well as league matches adding to these regular meetings on a weekly basis. Furthermore, according to the players' statements during interviews and observations, the team members share the common goal of succeeding as a team in their league as well as making it to the first team of their club. One team member, for example, maintained in his interview that "we all have […] the same goal now individually but also together" ("wir haben […] alle das gleiche Ziel jetzt individuell aber auch zusammen", interview data, Fabian). This goal of individual and collective athletic success binds the team members of FC Anonymous II together into a social unit representing the joint enterprise (Wenger, 1998a, 1998b, Wilson, 2011, Wolfers, 2016).

As shown above, the development of a shared repertoire includes resources such as linguistic behaviours, artefacts and the ways of doing things (Culver & Trudel, 2008, Wilson, 2011, Wenger, 2000). Easily observable examples of FC Anonymous II's linguistic strategies manifest in their shared repertoire include the use of familiarisers such as "brother" and "bro" as well as specific nicknames for players and, – as will be shown in the analysis – a rather biting humour style. Displaying membership to the CofP through competent use of this shared repertoire among the other criteria, members of FC Anonymous II can be understood to build solidarity and construct a collective team identity (Wilson, 2010, Wolfers, 2016) – both arguably central aspects in the discursive negotiation of team cohesion (see 2.1.2).

Social identity theory nicely compliments the use of the CofP framework also becoming increasingly central within IS (Bucholtz & Hall, 2010, Schnurr & Holmes,

2009). In the next section I will present research on identity as the other guiding theoretical construct of my project.

3.4 Theorising identity

Considering the work introduced on professional communication in sports teams (2.2.1), a professional football team such as FC Anonymous II represents an important site of identity construction (Schnurr, 2013). In accordance with my constructionist stance, I understand identity as dynamically and collaboratively constructed and co-constructed by interlocutors orienting to each other in interaction negotiating their own and each other's roles and expectations (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, 2010, Paltridge & Phakiti, 2015, Schwandt, 1994, Wolfers, et al., 2017). Furthermore, identities are understood to be relational and socio-cultural as well as enacted and negotiated through local discourse rather than "as a stable structure located primarily in the individual psyche or in fixed social categories" (Bucholtz & Hall, 2010, p. 18, see also Benwell & Stokoe, 2006, De Fina, 2010, Sarangi & Baynham, 1996, Schnurr, 2013). Also, as argued by Bailey (2015), most of the "ways of 'doing' or 'performing' identity are indirect" (p. 13). In other words, instead of explicitly claiming identity categories such as gender or ethnicity, they are much more frequently *performed through communication* (Bailey, 2015).

One of the discursive processes through which identity is enacted and created is indexicality (De Fina, 2010, Schnurr, 2013). Indexicality relates to how interlocutors through language use index certain individual or collective stances, which again are implicitly associated with particular roles or identities (De Fina, 2010, Mullany, 2007, Schnurr, 2010). The specific discursive processes involved in negotiating interlocutors' identities in the workplace, in turn, shape the specific professional context where the interaction takes place (Schnurr, 2013).

The construction of identity is thus linked to the specific interactional norms and social context where the discursive interaction unfolds (Clayton, 2019, De Fina, 2010, Schnurr, 2013, Wolfers, et al., 2017). Also, as Schnurr (2013) maintains, "any identity is influenced and shaped by a variety of other identities, including collective/group

identities as well as personal or individual identities" (p. 112). Hence, the individual and the group are usually intertwined (Jenkins, 2008). With regards to group identities, Wolfers et al. (2017) argue that by "positioning themselves in relation to larger collectives, in which interlocutors either claim or reject membership, they at the same time construct their individual identities" (p. 85).

As indicated in 2.3 on conversational humour, numerous scholars have illustrated some of the complex ways identities are constructed and co-constructed in and through humour (e.g. Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997, Collinson, 1988, Westwood & Johnston, 2011). Humour allows interlocutors to make identity claims, assign identities to others, as well as negotiate sometimes competing identities (Schnurr, 2009, Schnurr & Van de Mieroop, 2017). In the analysis chapters I will show how these processes are closely linked to the negotiation of team cohesion through the CofP-specific humour.

According to Martin, et al. (2014) "[i]dentifying with a particular group is of direct relevance to the sport context" (p. 93). To the best of my knowledge, most studies investigating identity in the realm of team sports focus on fandom, feelings of belonging, matters of gender, media representations, and social value of the sporting community (e.g. File, 2015, 2018, Fink, Parker, Brett & Higgins, 2009, Heere & James, 2007, Kersting, 2007, Martin, et al., 2014, Mennesson, 2000, Walseth, 2006, Zucchermaglio, 2005).

Given the focus on team cohesion of this project, the investigation of individual and collective identities as well as in- and out-group marking appear particularly useful for approaching the discursive processes through which team cohesion is negotiated (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006). Having established my research paradigm and strategy as well as theoretical underpinnings, I now illustrate the research design including the methods of data collection.

3.5 Research design: An ethnographic study of FC Anonymous II

As shown in section 2.2 of the literature review, IS methodology typically includes audio-recordings of interactions between research participants, observations and interviews (Bailey, 2015, Gumperz, 2015, Holmes, 2014, Tannen, 2005a, Schnurr & Mohd Omar, fc, Vine, et al., 2008). Also, since I am interested in the co-construction of meaning within the social context of FC Anonymous II, an ethnographic design seems appropriate, as it "privileges the direct observation of human behaviour within particular 'cultures' and settings and seeks to understand a social reality from the perspectives of those involved in the observed interactions" (Starfield, 2015, p. 137).

The meaning of the term ethnography can vary and often refers to both the research method and the written product (e.g. Bryman, 2016, Gobo, 2008, Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). In the literature on social research methods there has been a shift from the term 'participant observation' to 'ethnography', although they are argued to be non-synonymous (e.g. Bryman, 2016, Wolcott, 1990). According to different sources, ethnography exceeds the sole participant observation as it entails a wider range of methods of data collection (Bryman, 2016, Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, Tedlock, 1991, Wolcott, 1990).

> In terms of data collection, ethnography usually involves the researcher participating overtly or covertly in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, and/or asking questions through informal and formal interviews, collecting documents and artefacts – in fact, gathering whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the emerging focus of inquiry. Generally speaking ethnographers draw on a *range* of sources of data, though they may sometimes rely primarily on one. (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007, p.3)

Due to the time constraints imposed by the football club (see 3.5.3 and 3.7), I did not conduct a full-scale ethnography entailing extensive time periods in the field (Bryman, 2016). Nevertheless, as proposed by Wolcott (1990), I conducted a micro-ethnography where I focused on a particular aspect of the chosen topic – in this case the discursive processes of cohering as part of the team's shared repertoire.

According to Gobo (2008), this entails participating in the social life of the people under investigation through observation among other techniques. With regards to this, there are two distinctions to be made: open (or public) versus closed settings to be researched and an overt versus covert role of the researcher (Bryman, 2016). The research setting at hand would be considered a closed setting as it is not publicly accessible (Bryman, 2016, Silverman, 2013). In addition, according to Bryman (2016) as well as the ethical conduct of research (discussed in 3.6), an overt role is desirable when conducting an ethnography.

Neither ethnography nor linguistic ethnography, viewing "language as communicative action functioning in social contexts in ongoing routines of peoples' daily lives" (Copland & Creese, 2015, p. 27), prescribe a set combination of data collection methods (e.g. Blommaert, 2007, Bryman, 2016). A range of different techniques are then feasible depending on the research interests and RQs (Bryman, 2016, Copland & Creese, 2015). Reflected in the RQs and literature review, the backbone of this study is to investigate the discursive practices involved in the negotiation of team cohesion among members of FC Anonymous II. According to Hughes (2015), "[s]poken discourse is at the heart of both the most sophisticated and the most mundane of human activities. Everyday conversation is the social glue which underpins all human relationships" (p. 283), which points towards the use of audio-recordings of interactions as a useful method of data collection among a combination of different research methods.

Inherent to an ethnographic approach employing two or more qualitative data collection methods is the potential for within-method triangulation (e.g. Bekhet & Zauszniewski, 2012, Thurmond, 2001). Apart from generating an etic and emic perspective on the given context – desirable for qualitative research (Olive, 2014) – applying triangulation is believed to counterbalance flaws inherent in one method by the strengths of another (e.g. Denzin, 1970, Jack & Raturi, 2006, Mathison, 1988, Thurmond, 2001).

3.5.1 Methods of data collection

The data for this project was collected over the course of 3.5 months with three phases of fieldwork, each one week long: 03.07. – 09.07.2017, 01.08. – 07.08.2017 and 09.10. – 16.10.2017. The three phases of data collection allowed me to listen to the recordings, take retrospective notes of what was happening and start to generate categories and codes between phases. Thus, each phase informed the next in that my focus became clearer and my experiences with the methodology and connected technological choices developed further. Also, by getting to know the players better, I was able to navigate their spaces – such as the locker room or team bus – more confidently and gradually minimise the physical distance between me and the players during recordings. Experiences such as these will also be presented in the next sections, where I discuss the three methods of data collection: observations (3.5.1.1), audio-recordings (3.5.1.2) and interviews (3.5.1.3). Within these sections, I will also provide critical reflections on the respective method and shed light on issues arising during fieldwork. In 3.5.2 an overview of the type and amount of data will be provided.

3.5.1.1 Observations

In the social science literature, a distinction is often made between participant and non-participant observation depending on the involvement of the researcher (Kothari, 2004). Others understand the method of observation as a spectrum between these two extremes allowing different degrees of participation when observing (e.g. Bryman, 2016, Copland & Creese, 2015, Waller, et al., 2016). In the course of my own ethnographic fieldwork, I adopted what Bryman (2016) calls a "minimally participating observer" (p. 436) role. I participated in the team's activities during my observations to a very small degree as I did not participate in the training activities but occasionally helped carrying materials such as vests or footballs and was sometimes included in conversations between players. Hence, I was present at the scene of action, clearly identifiable as the researcher, but only occasionally interacted with the team members and coaches (e.g. Bryman, 2016, DeWalt & DeWalt, 2010).

By only minimally participating in the daily lives of the members of FC Anonymous II, I intended to have as little influence on the field as possible (e.g. Bryman, 2016, Cooper, Lewis & Urquhart, 2004, DeWalt & DeWalt, 2010, Lindner, 1981). This can be seen as what Labov (1972) calls the "observer's paradox" (p. 113), as in order to observe how people speak and act 'naturally', the presence of the researcher would be seen as an impediment. In this vein, Cukor-Avila (2000) argues that "since characteristics of the interviewer (e.g., race, gender, age) may actually exacerbate the effect of the presence of the field-worker" (p. 253), the effects of the researcher on the field may take on multiple forms. An aspect possibly minimising the observer's paradox could be the fact that I wore the same training kit as the players arguably standing out less than if I had worn my regular clothes.

I observed the footballers before, during and after football training sessions and matches, all part of their daily lives as professional football players. The data gained through observations are generally field notes with the form varying greatly in terms of detail, form, depth and layout (e.g. Bryman, 2016, Copland & Creese, 2015, Geertz, 1994, Starfield, 2015, Waller, et al., 2016). Detailed field notes describing what is being observed, including the emotions and impressions of oneself as the researcher are crucial for the research process (e.g. Bryman, 2016, Geertz, 1994). Since walking around with a notebook in hand to write down field notes can make participants self-conscious (Bryman, 2016) – and because it did not prove practical given that I had to move around freely and often quickly – I decided to audio-record my field notes. By recording my notes during my observations, I was able to multi-task resulting in audio-descriptions of activities, locations, research participants and interactions (see appendix 10.5). In addition, I wrote retrospective field notes after each day of recording.

3.5.1.1.1 The researcher in the field

In line with Copland and Creese's (2015) idea that, embedded in an ethnography, the observational fieldwork is primarily aimed at building rapport and developing trust, I used the observation technique to familiarise myself with the specific context and the participants. I wanted to give the football players and coaches as well as any

other club staff time to get used to my presence and me as a person. In the first days of fieldwork I hence focused on observations. Also, at the beginning of fieldwork, I kept greater physical distance (Kmita, 2017), which apart from getting to know the players and learning their names also helped me in getting to know the surroundings of the training grounds. One of the insights from my fieldwork of the MSc project was that observing a whole football team – especially during trainings and matches when the players are scattered on the pitch – is nearly impossible due to the complexity of happenings. It had therefore proven successful to concentrate on smaller groups of players at a time – which I did again with FC Anonymous II.

3.5.1.1.2 Observing in the locker room

Given the discussions of the locker room being a special space for bonding, banter and performances of gender and power (e.g. Curry, 1991, Katz, 1995, Kuiper, 1991, Leone & Parrott, 2019) – arguably amplified by me being a female researcher and outsider in many respects (see 3.9) – I was both intrigued and anxious to negotiate access to the locker room of FC Anonymous II. Interested in the conversations taking place in "the intimate surroundings of the locker room" (Kuiper, 1991, p. 206), on the first day of research I knocked on the door before the beginning of training and asked if I was allowed to enter. On day three of fieldwork, several players including the captain, said there was no need for knocking and asking permission to enter anymore. Therefore, from that point onwards, I entered the locker room before every training session without hesitation.

The observations (and recordings) in the locker room turned out to be central data sources for this project. They were both rich in discursive data and much easier recorded than on the pitch, because the players were gathered closely in a smaller space (see figure 1 in section 3.7 for a sketch of the locker room layout). However, being present in the locker room also came with some challenges. For example, I felt that I could not observe 'freely' when players were getting changed. Naturally, I wanted to avoid at all costs to observe football players when being naked. Therefore, I developed a habit of looking at the floor, ceiling or the opposite direction, when I noticed a player starting to completely undress himself.

3.5.1.1.3 Towards becoming an in-group member

Being allowed – and sometimes not even noticed[3] – in the locker room felt like a milestone of acceptance, as I became part of the perceived private 'backdrop' of the players. Some other milestones were being called "bro" by one of the more distant players, who was pleased with me remembering a specific form of handshake and executing it correctly. Part of the shared repertoire of collective resources entailed the execution of personalised handshakes between certain players. Therefore, getting my own handshake marked me becoming more of an in-group member and gaining respect. This impression was exacerbated by the senior status of the player making up the handshake for greeting me in the mornings.

3.5.1.1.4 The researchers' need for flexibility

Limitations associated with the observation technique include a possible loss of objectivity to an extent of emotional involvement of the researcher as well as the unpredictable nature of observations (Kothari, 2004). The unpredictability of observing FC Anonymous II played a big part during my fieldwork but did not prove to be a disadvantage to the method. I was regularly uncertain what might happen during scheduled training sessions, as I was not provided with a detailed schedule of goalkeeper training, athletic training sessions or video analysis. Still, I was able to adapt to the circumstances as they unfolded and recorded my decisions about where to go and whom I would observe.

Crucially, as stated by Stebbins (2001), in order to effectively explore a given phenomenon such as the team's discursive repertoire, it should be approached with "two special orientations: flexibility in looking for data and open-mindedness about where to find them" (p. 6). Through observations, the recurring phenomenon of among others biting humour has been noted and helped in establishing a narrower focus (Stebbins, 2001). Supporting this claim, DeWalt and DeWalt (2010) argue that observations facilitate the development of new inquiries, as an increasing familiarity

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[3] As stated by some players during interviews.

with the context results in the emergence of new insights. I personally noted that the longer I observed the CofP specific practices, the more accustomed I became to these, thereby narrowing my research focus down to the humour practices through which team cohesion was constructed and negotiated.

All in all, the observations provided significant insights into not only what was happening in the daily lives of the professional football players of FC Anonymous II, but more importantly, *how* it was happening. Also, they proved helpful for planning and continuously improving the audio-recordings of these interactions, essential to answer my RQs. During the observations I carried the dictaphone with me the entire time to flexibly switch it on and off to record my own field notes as well as the discursive interactions taking place – discussed in the next section.

3.5.1.2 Audio-recordings

I audio-recorded interactions between the players before, during and after football trainings and matches. Based on my previous ethnographical experiences as well as the insights from the observations, I found that most of the communication taking place on the pitch during training sessions or matches was too distant to be recorded from where I was able to position myself (e.g. on the sideline). I therefore regularly moved around getting closer to groups of players engaged in exercises, where they were less scattered (such as 'piggy in the middle' during warm-ups) while being careful not to disrupt the exercise or distract the players. Establishing the right distance in order to generate good quality recordings while being as unobtrusive as possible thus was a processual achievement.

3.5.1.2.1 The researcher in the field

With reference to the theatrical idea of Goffman (1959), Kmita (2017) argues that supposed backstage behaviour may turn into frontstage behaviour due to the presence of the researcher. Here, again, like with observations, the presence of the researcher and the dictaphone having an impact on the field, is widely recognised within the literature (e.g. Bryman, 2016, Copland & Creese, 2015, Silverman, 2013). Still, a resulting difficulty could be what Wertheim (2002) calls "performance speech"

(p. 512) pointing towards the participants adopting a certain language as an attempt of portraying a certain image of themselves. This effect needs to be considered by taking into account "(1) the speaker's assessment of [the researcher's] social role, particularly as in-group or out-group member, and (2) [the researcher's] participant role in the speech event in question" (Wertheim, 2002, p. 512). The research process and outcome are therefore co-constructed by the researcher and the participants (Kmita, 2017). It can consequently be argued that the interactions recorded for this study are not per se 'natural' due to my presence and perceived characteristics such as gender, 'race'[4], social status, sexual orientation and age influencing the participants' behaviour (Copland & Creese, 2015).

Also, it has extensively been argued that, despite this possible limitation, audio-recordings add great value to the analysis of communicative action (e.g. Bryman, 2016, Copland & Creese, 2015, Schnurr, 2013, Silverman, 2013). The audio-recordings of the football team's language can thus deliver valuable insights into their social norms and practices despite my own presence (e.g. Bryman, 2016, Schnurr, 2013). Furthermore, reflexivity as a way of counterbalancing the 'undesired impact' of the researcher on the research outcome is well recognised and accepted in qualitative research (Kmita, 2017). My 'doing' of reflexivity can be seen by disclosing information about myself and the research situation possibly impacting the data collection process and outcome – both throughout the methodology (see also 3.9) as well as the analysis chapters.

3.5.1.2.2 Technical considerations

Inherent to the technique of audio-recordings are several technical considerations, such as where to place the dictaphone, to sufficiently charge it, how to handle background noise, as well as unforeseen technical issues (Bryman, 2016, Kmita, 2017, Silverman, 2013). After every day of audio-recording I safely stored the data on my laptop as well as a password protected external hard drive and checked the batteries

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[4] In order to signal the understanding of 'race' to be socially constructed I use scare quotes (see also Hylton, 2018).

(Copland & Creese, 2015). When listening to the recordings of the first day of fieldwork, I realised that the built-in wind protection of the dictaphone was insufficient for the outdoor recordings. Extensive background noise such as wind, rain, airplanes, and cars drowned a lot of the spoken interactions. I therefore purchased an additional wind shield and the quality of recordings improved. In addition, I had to use a plastic bag to cover the device when it was raining during outdoor training sessions.

3.5.1.2.3 The researcher, the players and the dictaphone

On different occasions players commented on my dictaphone or asked questions about its reach. Hence, at times the players seemed very aware of me recording their talk, but other times, they seemed to largely ignore me. Every now and then CofP members took the dictaphone from me and started recording themselves (e.g. pretending to interview teammates before a match, see also Wilson (2011)). Participants' humorous use of the recording can be interpreted as a form of familiarisation and relaxation with being researched. In addition, it may point to my process of becoming an in-group member, as the players felt comfortable enough to involve me in their humour (Kmita, 2017).

Both the practice of observations and audio-recordings provided me with valuable and rich insights into what was happening in the daily lives of the members of FC Anonymous II. As discussed above, the third method of data collection employed as part of my ethnographic study was the interview method.

3.5.1.3 Interviews

A common understanding of the method of interviewing is its goal of understanding the different meanings participants ascribe to experiences, interactions and social events (e.g. Magnusson & Marecek, 2015, Rabionet, 2009, Rapley, 2001, Turner III, 2010, Forman et al., 2008, Holstein & Gubrium, 2004, Silverman, 2013). With regards to 'effective' or 'good' interviewing, Waller et al. (2016) see a need for establishing sufficient rapport to make the interviewees feel comfortable enough to provide full and honest responses while still retaining the researcher perspective. Furthermore,

Mann (2011, 2016) sees sensitive reflective practice and reflexivity on behalf of the researcher as crucial to ensure quality in qualitative interviewing.

3.5.1.3.1 Interviews as interaction

Taking a social constructivist stance, I understand qualitative interviews as meaning-making processes between the interviewer and interviewee (e.g. Holstein & Gubrium, 2004, Mann, 2011, 2016, Rapley, 2001, Talmy, 2010, Talmy & Richards, 2010). Each interview can then be described as an artificial conversation set up by the researcher creating a new local context in which each utterance is embedded (Mann, 2011). This again implies that the interview is a social encounter of interactional practice where knowledge and meaning are co-constructed by both the interviewer and interviewee (e.g. Holstein & Gubrium, 2004, Mann, 2011, Potter & Hepburn, 2005, Rapley, 2001, Talmy, 2010).

Consequently, it is important to not only consider the *whats* but also the *hows* of an interview encounter (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004, Mann, 2011, Talmy, 2010). Being aware of the context and what constitutes the context is crucial to understand and analyse the talk (Rapley, 2001), which is why the researcher needs to reflectively and critically engage with the employed data collection method(s) (Cukor-Avila, 2000, Mann, 2011, 2016, Talmy, 2010). This reflective approach should exceed distinctive features of the interviewer (and the interviewee) such as age, gender, 'race' and issues of power.

Further potential shortcomings associated with the qualitative research interview include, among others, the possible bias of the interviewer and interviewee, problems associated with understanding, uncommunicative interviewees, performance speech, distorted lenses, and socially desirable responses (e.g. Becker & Geer, 1957, Kothari, 2004, Magnusson & Marecek, 2015, Wertheim, 2002, Williams & Heikes, 1993). One of the players' mother tongue for example was not German and we encountered several difficulties during the interview process due to problems of comprehension. In addition, participants may not have disclosed their opinions to

the researcher due to e.g. not wanting to comment on sensitive topics such as bullying (Becker & Geer, 1957, Magnusson & Marecek, 2015).

3.5.1.3.2 Practical considerations and managing the interview

Similar to audio-recordings, several practical considerations including checking the technical equipment, deciding on an appropriate appearance, setting up the interview times, and selecting a location were necessary (Bryman, 2016, Magnusson & Marecek, 2015, Mann, 2011). I interviewed 13 players face-to-face before and after training sessions during the last week of fieldwork (09.10.2017 – 17.10.2017). Most interviews took place in different cafés close to the training grounds or respective homes of players in an attempt to create a comfortable atmosphere arguably facilitating rich talk (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015). For reasons of rapport I invited each player to a soft drink or coffee and after some small talk I opened the interview with of the aim of downplaying the dictaphone by stating that they were most likely used to it by the time – to which many responded with laughter. Most players appeared to be rather relaxed and gave detailed accounts on e.g. their perceived role on the team.

Finding interviewees willing and able to share "useful things" (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015, p. 30) proved relatively easy, as every player I approached, except for one, was willing to be interviewed. The choice of interviewees was based on the insights gained during the first two phases of data collection: I selected players with differing levels of participation in the humour practices of the team such as regular 'humourists' and butts as well as players of different hierarchical statuses. Due to time constraints imposed on me by the club as well as scheduling difficulties, I was not able to interview more players.

3.5.1.3.3 The interview guide

Interviews can be seen as a continuum with regards to the degree of structure, "with structured interviewing at one end and unstructured interviewing at the other end" (Waller, et al., 2016, p. 77).

> In between these two extremes is the semi-structured interview […]. […] The extent to which the direction of the interview is guided by what the research participant has to say, rather than the researcher's questions, depends both on the researcher's interest in giving voice to the participant and in the amount of knowledge that the researcher has about the topic. (Waller, et al., 2016, p. 77)

Also, while having a rough structure the semi-structured interview still maintains "quite a bit of flexibility in its composition" (Turner III, 2010, p. 755) thus allowing to go into more detail or clarifying answers where necessary and appropriate (see also Barriball & While, 1994). Building on the observations and audio-recordings as well as aiming to address my RQs, the interview guide here focused on the players' perceptions of the team and their role within the team (Bryman, 2016, Magnusson & Marecek, 2015, Turner III, 2010). I formulated open-ended questions with the purpose of inviting participants to "tell stories about experiences, relate memories, and offer reflections and opinions" (Magnusson & Marecek, 2015, p. 47). The guide was written in German, as all the interviews were conducted in German (a translated version is available for review in appendix 10.1).

3.5.1.3.4 Piloting the interviews

Probing or pilot-testing the interview guide helps refine the questions, their order, identify weaknesses and also potentially support the interviewer in feeling more confident throughout the experience (Barriball & While, 1994, Magnusson & Marecek, 2015, Turner III, 2010). I refined the interview guide with the aid of repeated feedback from my supervisors as well as through a pilot-test with my boyfriend who is a sports journalist and football player himself. Based on the feedback from piloting the interview, I revised the wording of some of the questions to make them easier to digest and prompt a narrative. Also, he advised me to use less academic and more accessible language for the questions.

3.5.2 Amount and nature of data collected – An overview

Having presented and reflected on the methods of data collection employed in this ethnographic study, I now provide an overview of the data collected including time period, type of data, location, length of recordings as well as brief comments:

Time period	Type of data	Location	Length of recordings	Comment
03.07. – 09.07.2017	• Observations and audio-recordings before, during and after training sessions • Observations and audio-recordings before, during and after a preparation match	• Locker room • Training pitch • Forest • Gym • Away pitch • Substitutes' bench • Captain's car	16h 12:51mins	• The first week of data collection took place during early pre-season • Observations have partly been conducted simultaneous to the recordings • Self-reflective field nots have been recorded
01.08. – 07.08.2017	• Observations and audio-recordings before, during and after training sessions • Observations and audio-recordings before, during and after a friendly as well as one league match	• Locker room • Training pitch • Gym • Away pitch • Home pitch • Substitutes' bench • Team bus • Captain's car	23h 19:37mins	• The second week of data collection took place the beginning of the season 2017/2018 • Observations have partly been conducted simultaneous to the recordings • Self-reflective field nots have been recorded
09.10. – 16.10.2017	• Observations and audio-recordings before, during and after training sessions • Observations and audio-recordings before, during and after a league match • Interviews with 13 players	• Locker room • Training pitch • Gym • Away pitch • Substitutes' bench • Team bus • Restaurant	16h 44:32mins + 9h 26:49mins (interviews)	• The third week of data collection took place during the season 2017/2018 • Self-reflective field nots have been recorded • Observations have partly been conducted simultaneous to the recordings • The interviews varied in length between 13:43mins and 1h 12:26mins
• **Total length of audio-recordings: 56h 17mins** • **Total length of observations approximately: 87h 30mins** • **Total length of interviews: 9h 26:49mins**				

Table 1: Data collection overview

In summary, the ethnographic approach has provided me with over 56 hours of audio-recorded material, over 87 hours of observations and interviews with 13 players of over 9 hours in total length. While the amount of data collected offers a rich account of the context-specific ways of doing things among members of FC Anonymous II, the restrictions imposed on me by the club still had an impact not only on the amount but also the nature of the data collected. I will therefore offer a brief discussion of the impact of these restrictions on the project.

3.5.3 Impact of data collection restrictions

As will be discussed in more detail in 3.7, I negotiated access with the head of the elite academy, who allowed me to spend three weeks in total with the team. Due to these time constraints, as well as the relatively short periods between each phase of data collection (see table 1), I was not able to conduct a full-scale ethnography (see 3.5) and was somewhat limited in focus. More hours spent with the team naturally would have allowed for even greater familiarity with the norms of behaviour negotiated among the members of the team. Also, if I would have had more time between phases of data collection, a closer analysis of the data in-between phases of data collection would have been possible and would have potentially informed the following phases of data collection more directly. For instance, the interviews during the last week of data collection could have been more directed towards the emergent focus on team cohesion. Nevertheless, the focus on humour as a characteristic of the shared discursive repertoire of the CofP clearly emerged as significant from the recordings, observations, as well as interviews with players – and subsequent analysis.

Furthermore, because of restrictions from the club, I was not able to use video-recordings of interactions. For multi-modal aspects I therefore had to rely solely on my recordings of observations, as well as fieldnotes taken right after the observations. Video data would have allowed for a much more in-depth and rich account of non-verbal cues and paralinguistic features specific to the CofP under investigation. A more holistic understanding of the negotiation of team cohesion would have been possible as a result.

In addition, I would have loved to include focus groups where I would have shown players some transcripts to discuss among them. This way, I would have been able to integrate respondent validation (see also 3.8.1). Still, I believe that the time spent with the team and the resulting ethnographic data collected offers a rich account of the discursive processes involved in the negotiation of team cohesion as an interactional process among members of FC Anonymous II.

Before starting data collection, I went through an ethical review to get clearance for the conduct of my research. The ethical considerations and steps taken for the current study will be laid out next.

3.6 Ethical considerations

The University of Warwick provides ethical guidelines, which are put down in writing in the Centre for Applied Linguistics Research Students' Handbook (Centre for Applied Linguistics, 2019). In order to meet the highest possible ethical standards, the following actions were taken (Centre for Applied Linguistics, 2019, The British Association for Applied Linguistics, 2016):

- A research ethics form has been filled out and approved prior to the fieldwork (see appendix 10.2).
- An information sheet has been handed out to the participants (see appendix 10.3).
- A consent sheet has been signed by the participants (see appendix 10.4).

As discussed above, I entered the field with a relatively open-ended and exploratory research agenda with my specific research focus on team cohesion emerging from the data later during analysis stage. In order to avoid the ethical risk of deception (Liong, 2015), both the research ethics form and the participant information sheet reflected this open-ended and inductive approach of my study (Bryman, 2016, Lingard, Albert & Levinson, 2008). I therefore informed the ethics committee, the football club and the research participants about my general interest in the communication between players of the football team. I received consent from all

players involved in my project, as well as the coaches and other staff associated with the club prior to any recordings.

Given that the landscape of German professional football clubs with teams playing in the Bundesliga and the second tier of the Bundesliga is comparably limited, there is a heightened need for sensitive handling of any potentially identifying features. Therefore, in order to keep the club and the players on the team unidentifiable, some information had to be made deliberately vague in order to protect the participants. Identifiable aspects such as the club's location, participants' national and cultural backgrounds as well as the exact age of players have been left out or made deliberately obscure. Also, participants' names and the name of the football club have been changed to preserve anonymity (Centre for Applied Linguistics, 2019).

The following sections introducing the research site of FC Anonymous II will therefore remain relatively vague in order to guarantee the anonymity of participants. Yet, where necessary and important for analysis, details will be provided according to the ethical guidelines.

3.7 Laying out the context and research site: FC Anonymous II

Having collected data with an elite football team from Germany in the past (Wolfers, 2016, Wolfers, et al., 2017), for my PhD project I decided to 'aim higher' – both for reasons of personal interest in the high-stakes environment of professional football and IS studies in professional sports teams being scarce. Thanks to personal links to football clubs in Bundesliga and the second tier of the Bundesliga acting as favourable gatekeepers I was able to approach key figures within four football clubs within the first six weeks of my PhD. Two of the four clubs got back to me offering the opportunity of pitching my project. While both clubs appeared interested in my research, only FC Anonymous allowed me to conduct my study with them.[5]

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[5] The other club denied access after a follow-up meeting between me and the newly employed sport psychologist of the junior teams of the club. While I was not given any particular reasoning, it was communicated that the psychologist felt I may become a burden on his time. Due to the constraints in scope I will not offer more information on the negotiation process with the club but concentrate on FC Anonymous.

3.7.1 Negotiating with FC Anonymous

As a response to the very brief email asking for an opportunity to discuss a possible research project, Frank, the head of FC Anonymous' elite academy, invited me for a meeting in May 2017 to pitch my research idea. As maintained earlier, I entered the field with a rather open-ended research perspective wanting to capture the discursive processes among members of a team – which is what I discussed during the meeting with Frank. According to Bryman (2016), offering something in return to participation in a research project helps in gaining trust and building rapport. Therefore, I offered to use the knowledge gained to develop concepts which may add value to the practical training of the footballers summarised in a written report and applied in a tailored training session. Furthermore, I stated that, ideally, I would like to collect data at three different points in time over the period of one season (see Gallmeier, 1988, Horn, 1997). I asked whether it would be possible to receive a training kit, so that I could 'blend in' better with the players (see 3.5.1.1). To my delight, Frank accommodated all of my suggestions and promised access to one of the club's professional football teams during the meeting already: FC Anonymous II. FC Anonymous II is the club's second team playing in a lower division than the first team. It is here classed as professional, as all players earn their living playing for the team.[6] The team will be introduced in detail below (see 3.7.2).

3.7.1.1 Getting started

After receiving ethical approval from the university (see 3.6), the 3rd June 2017 was agreed on as the first day of fieldwork. I was told to arrive an hour ahead of the start of training to meet with the coaching team of FC Anonymous II: Holger (head coach) and Samir (2nd coach). I explained my research interest as well as methodology to the coaches, who appeared slightly reserved yet friendly and interested assuring me that they would help me in any way they could. In the end of our conversation, I was then given the club's training kit to change into. Subsequently, Holger introduced me to

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[6] Only one of the players also did an apprenticeship next to his job as a professional football player.

the team for the first time giving me the opportunity to say some words about me and my project as well as hand out the information and consent sheets.

3.7.1.2 The elite academy grounds

As indicated in table 1 most of my fieldwork took place on the premises of the elite academy, where the team's training sessions take place. Part of the grounds are two pitches, several locker rooms, one gym, one conference room, one kiosk, and offices for the coaches and other staff (e.g. psychologists and physiotherapists).[7] As discussed in my methodological reflections above, the locker room was a suitable location for the audio-recordings, as there was little background noise, players were gathered in a small area and in addition, they spoke about more private matters than during training. See below for a sketch of the layout of the locker room.
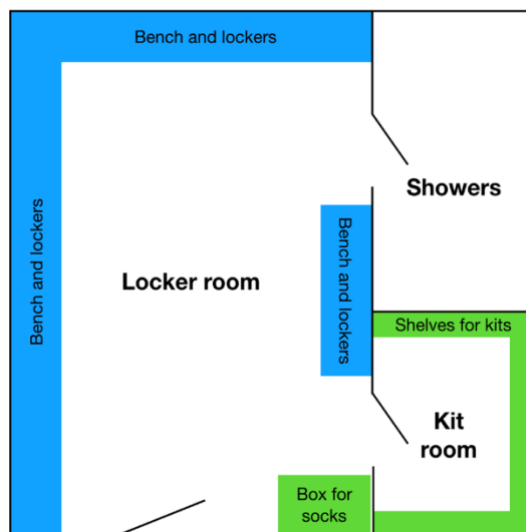
Figure 1: Locker room layout FC Anonymous II

In the next sections I will provide a detailed overview of the research participants and the special context of FC Anonymous II. Given the research aims of this study, I will describe the team with a specific focus on aspects related to team cohesion.

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[7] For reasons of identifiability I am not providing a sketch of the layout of the elite academy and training grounds.

3.7.2 Participants and context: Introducing FC Anonymous II

Different factors play a role when looking at the team from a cohesion point of view. They help provide a more detailed context to support analysis and better attribute meaning to linguistic action. Being the second team of the football club for example has far-reaching implications for the lived experiences of the players on the team (see also 1.2). As mentioned in 3.3, the players share the goal of wanting to join the first team of the club which both in interactions and interviews members of the CofP refer to as "the pros" ("die Profis"). Despite playing for their own team professionally (meaning occupational), the members of FC Anonymous II overwhelmingly constructed their team identity in relation to the first 'more professional' team that plays in a higher league. This self-denigrating way of constructing the team will also be illustrated in section 4.2.2 of the first analysis chapter. In what follows, I will summarise the main aspects about FC Anonymous II potentially becoming relevant in the negotiation of team cohesion.

3.7.2.1 Diversity on FC Anonymous II

In order to give a more detailed overview of the CofP, I here provide a table of all teammates providing names[8], years having played for FC Anonymous II, the previous team, national and/or cultural background as well as additional comments where relevant for the project.

Name	Years with FC A II	Previous Team	Background	Comment
Rouven	1	FC A II	German	
Andre	0	FC A U19	Eastern European	Junior player
Tim	0	FC A U19	German	Junior player
Daniel	2	FC A II	East African	Senior player
James	1	FC A II	German	
Leonardo (Nardo)	0	FC A U19	German	Junior player
Simon (Simi) Mohamad	3	FC A II	Middle Eastern	Captain of the team Senior player
Henning (Henni)	1	FC A II	German	

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[8] As with all other names in this study the names provided are pseudonyms.

Jakob	0	FC A U19	German	Junior player
Fabian (Fab)	0	FC A U19	German	Junior player
Pascal	1	FC A II	German	
Ahmet	0	FC A U19	Middle Eastern	Junior player
Osman (Osi)	2	FC A II	East African	Senior player
Vitali	0	FC A U19	Eastern European	Junior player
Edwin (Eddy)	0	FC A U19	South American	Junior player
Narek (Nari)	1	FC A II	Middle Eastern	
Conor	0	FC A U19	East African	Junior player
Dae-Jung	1	FC A II	East Asian	
Ecem (Eci)	1	FC A II	Middle Eastern	Left the team
Kevin	0	FC A I	Central European	Senior player Came down from the 1st team Constructs himself as 'German'
Torsten (Torte)	0	External	German	Joined the team after a trial period Newcomer
Eymen	0	External	Eastern European	Joined the team after a trial period Newcomer

Table 2: Team overview FC Anonymous II

As can be seen, FC Anonymous II varied in size with 20 and 21 players during the course of data collection. Five trialists from external German and American football clubs joined training sessions and matches at different points in time, of which two (Torsten & Eymen) signed with the club joining FC Anonymous II. One player (Ecem) left the team quitting his contract and another player who was signed with the first team of the club was downgraded to the second team (Kevin). At the beginning of the season 2017/2018 the team was therefore composed of ten players having played for the team before and nine players from the club's own younger under-19 (U19) team – here labelled as junior players. Team members who have played for the team for over 2 years are labelled senior players. This categorisation into junior and

senior was very apparent during the fieldwork and strongly shaped the players' hierarchical status, further discussed below.

Furthermore, the table shows the diverse make-up of the team with 13 players having a migration background – which is more than half of the team. As indicated, for reasons of anonymity, I cannot disclose the exact national backgrounds of the players. Most of the players with migration background were born and raised in Germany and therefore second or third generation migrants. Not all of the backgrounds of the players are reflected in a dual citizenship but were made relevant discursively during the course of the project in interactions between players or during interviews.

3.7.2.2 A young team

I have not provided the age or years of birth of the players because the low average age was often mentioned during interviews as a defining characteristic of the team – especially in comparison to the other teams playing in the same league. Therefore, to protect the identity of the players, I will remain rather vague, providing only general information. During my fieldwork the average age of players was 19.76 years. Referring to this relatively young team composition, three players (Fabian, Kevin and Dae-Jung) described the team as childish and immature during their interviews. Others, however, emphasised that the young age was a positive, as they felt they were in similar phases of their lives.

Despite the little age differences between players, during observations and interviews, hierarchy was first and foremost constructed along age. This was not only visible in the use of space with e.g. the younger players often huddling together or doing warm-ups in groups but also with regards to task allocation. Regularly, when a task like carrying a goal across the pitch or collecting balls was given and not all junior players followed suit, older players called for the younger players to either participate or do it alone – often explicitly mentioning age as the reason for giving these directives. The doing of power was hence very much observable with regards to age differences. Other less significant factors concerning the construction of

hierarchy were levels of experience playing for FC Anonymous II and other higher-ranking teams. These brief deliberations can already be seen as evidence that cohesion is discursively constructed and that the specific processes through which cohesion can be achieved can sometimes be threatened by certain discursive rights and strategies.

3.7.2.2 A team in constant transition

Apart from trialists joining training sessions another factor impacting on team composition during training concerned injuries which often kept players from joining trainings and matches. During my time with the team several players (Rouven, Edwin, Dae-Jung, James, Tim, Jakob) suffered injuries and had to either rest or attend individual training and physiotherapy. During an interview, Rouven reported the negative effects of being segregated from his team members due to his own injury. He complained that he was not 'up to speed' on what was going on in the team, which nicely highlights the importance of mutual engagement and use of the shared repertoire of the CofP. The feeling of exclusion from the team when not attending training has further implications for team cohesion in that cohesion appears to be a collective achievement with team members needing to interact for it to be negotiated.

Another critical factor related to team size and make-up during training and matches was owed to the nature of a second team: Those players signed with the first team of the club who did not get enough play time on their own team, went 'down' to the second team for matches. Also, the best players of the under-19s often got the chance to play for FC Anonymous II during matches – both as a reward for them as well as assistance of the team in high stakes games where some of their own leading players were injured or not in their best shape. These circumstances caused regular players on the second team FC Anonymous II to lose their spot on the starting eleven and sit on the bench instead. Losing a spot even as a substitute resulted in players missing out on bonus payments for involvement in match play or the opportunity to prove themselves to coaches and scouts. Having high status players coming down to the lower team of FC Anonymous II therefore significantly changed the dynamics

within the team. Such a transitional nature of the team has the potential of putting pressure on cohesion as it created seismic shifts in the hierarchical structures of the team.

Moreover, when performing exceptionally well during matches and training sessions, some players (e.g. Dae-Jung, Osman and Pascal) were allowed to train with the first team or even join for matches and pre-season training camp as a reward. As moving up to the first team reportedly was every player's goal, this was another factor adding to the already existing rivalry and status negotiations among team members.

All these characteristics of the team caused stark competition for places not only within the team itself but also the wider club structure, progression up (and down) the team hierarchies as well as the possibility of being released from their contract. In sum, players on FC Anonymous II were not only competing with each other for places on the first team, but also places within their own team – with rivals being their own teammates, as well as players from the under-19s, the first team and trialists. A competition to this high degree certainly has the potential to put pressure on cohesive goals of the team (Murrell & Gaertner, 1992, Prapavessis & Carron, 1996). It furthermore shapes cohesive practices with players needing to balance team success and personal success – which appear intertwined and therefore hard to navigate.

3.7.2.3 Cliques within FC Anonymous II

The observations unearthed the formation of differing 'cliques' on the team (see also Martin, et al., 2014) – or, different CofPs embedded in the overarching team CofP (Wilson, 2011). During interviews, too, several players showed an awareness of having sub-groups or cliques on the team but did not describe their formation to be negative adding that there was no exclusion or bullying of anyone. The sub-groups of players who got together in their spare time for a range of activities such as having lunch together between training sessions were:

- Simon, Narek, Osman, and Daniel
- Fabian and Leonardo

- Pascal, Henning, (and later also Torsten)
- Edwin, Vitali, and Andre

The seating arrangements in the locker room appeared to be reflective of these cliques (see figure 2).
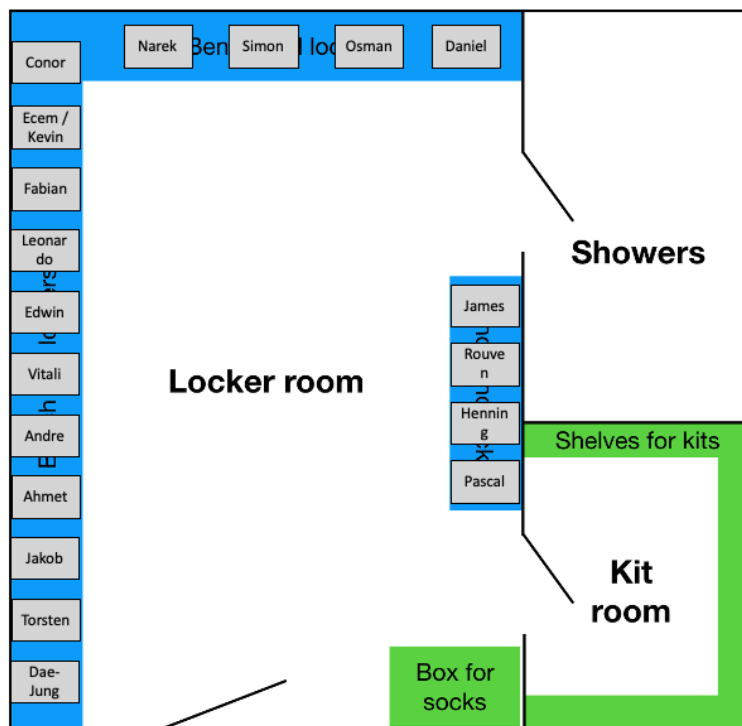
Figure 2: FC Anonymous locker room seating arrangement

The players not observed to belong to specific cliques still appeared to have good relations with their teammates. Dae-Jung and Jakob seemed to be the only players showcasing observable physical distance to the team during training and on the team bus appearing somewhat marginalised. Having said that, it was my impression, that in contrast to Jakob, Dae-Jung made an observable effort in trying to integrate himself in the team e.g. laughing along when humorous episodes occurred or participating in antics. The language barrier, which he mentioned during his interview, may have been one of the reasons for his apparent marginalisation. Yet, Dae-Jung's introspection somewhat differed from my observations of him being marginalised as he emphasised during the interview that he was one of the players

laughing the most: "[…] you know however I laugh most in team" ("[…] du weißt doch ich lache am meisten in Mannschaft", interview data, Dae-Jung).

Also, during the interviews some CofP members stated that they already spend enough time together, which is why in their spare time, they did not need to see more of each other. It thus became apparent that players like Rouven and Edwin understood football more as their occupation with their teammates being colleagues, while others described the team more like family and friends.

3.7.2.4 Players' descriptions of the team

Apart from family and familial (both mentioned numerous times during interviews), words used to describe the team included: friends, young (mentioned multiple times), good teamwork, uncomplicated, funny (mentioned multiple times), 'multiculti' or diverse (mentioned multiple times), easy going, collegial, friendly, good team spirit, cohesive, young & fresh, hierarchical, childish, and amicable. Overall, the team was described in positive terms associated with cohesion and teamwork. The only negative associations concerned the young age and a lack of professionality at times. The latter referred to occasional laughter as a sign of lacking professionalism. Interestingly, as mentioned before and as will be demonstrated further in the analysis chapters, humour emerged as a characterising aspect of the shared repertoire of the team.

When asked to describe FC Anonymous II and what they liked about it, among the young average age most players mentioned the 'cultural diversity' as a positive feature of the team. In this respect, three interviewees (Rouven, Edwin and Torsten) explicitly named sub-groups including "the Germans" ("Die Deutschen")[9], "the foreigners" ("die Ausländer"), and "the Blackies"/"the Blacks" ("die Blackies"/"Die Schwarzen") bringing national background as well as skin colour to the fore when

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[9] While not being from Germany originally, in interactions Kevin constructed himself as belonging to the group of 'Germans' as well. This is likely due to the geographical proximity of his place of origin and his German language skills. Where relevant, his 'Germanness' appeared co-constructed by the interactants involved.

describing sub-groups on their team. The players constructed as different to the Germans through the use of racialised humour (see analysis chapter 5) will be described using the same terminology used by the players themselves (see table 1).[10]

3.7.2.4.1 Biting humour as part of the CofP

Most interviewees revealed that the humour and 'laughing together' were important characteristics of FC Anonymous II and reason why they felt so comfortable with each other. My observations and audio-recordings of interactions reflect this description of the team with a high amount of laughter and humour in the data. As will be shown in chapter 4, the CofP specific humour moved along the continuum of bonding to nipping to biting and can be described as mostly competitive in nature (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997) – possibly mirroring the highly competitive environment.

When speaking about the rough tone and the teasing of one another, Edwin stated that "everyone knows how it's meant" ("jeder weiß wie das gemeint is", interview data) pointing to the nonseriousness of it. Other players made similar statements in the interviews adding that the teasing of one another was always light-hearted and "never meant seriously" ("nie ernst gemeint", interview data, Edwin). Even Dae-Jung, who appeared to be the butt of the humour a lot of the time, said that he didn't take offence as his teammates did not mean any harm by teasing him. Moreover, Fabian explained "with us it is somehow all amicable when one teases another one or so constitutes a team I think" ("bei uns ist das irgendwie so freundschaftlich alles wenn einer den ärgert oder so das macht auch ein Team aus find ich", interview data). Therefore, the humorous targeting of individual players was overwhelmingly framed as 'no bullying' and 'just banter'.

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[10] I am aware that among others the term BIPOC standing for "Black, Indigenous and People of Color" (Garcia, 2020, The BIPOC Project, n.d.) would be more appropriate from an ideological point of view. Still, I have decided against the use of this terminology, as I (especially being white myself) would have to be the one choosing and assigning a 'category' based on perceived differences in skin colour among others – which appears highly problematic. Therefore, I will use the terms used by the members of the team themselves: Blacks, foreigners and Germans.

Then again, Kevin mentioned "that exists in every team […] one always laughs about one two players but those know it [I] think just don't show it [laughs] ("das gibt es in jeder Mannschaft [...] man lacht immer über ein zwei Spieler aber die wissen das glaub auch zeigen's nur nicht [lacht]", interview data) adding "but one cannot wear'em out the whole time or so […] some just can't help it [laughs] tough talk but it is what it is" ("aber man darf nicht irgendwie die ganze Zeit fertig machen oder so [...] paar können ja auch nichts dafür [lacht] hart gesagt aber ist so", interview data). Kevin therefore described the singling out of certain players to be normalised practice and part of how any team worked. Edwin, too, spoke about players who did not say much in the locker room or were being picked last "like in school" ("wie in der Schule", interview data) adding, "no one hates them or so but they don't make an effort themselves I find" ("keiner hasst die oder so aber die bringen sich auch nicht selber ein so find ich", interview data). He thus showed an awareness of some players being less integrated into the core of the group or even being marginalised.

What most of the players are saying and what they are actually doing does raise some questions about the validity of interview research. The claim that there is no bullying or exclusion, but my dataset includes some interactional examples that could be interpreted as such, constitutes an interesting contradiction that is further explored in the analysis chapters. Also, it may be that the norms of what counts as bullying differ in the context of sports teams, or, the interviewees cited above are not aware that their actions could be construed as such.

These descriptions about the team – especially in connection with cohesion – offered by the players will be unpacked in the analysis chapters where relevant. I will now turn to my approach to analysis.

3.8 Analysis

As indicated in 3.1, I have taken an inductive grounded theory approach towards the data collected (Bryman, 2016, Cooper et al., 2004, Strauss & Corbin, 1998, Lingard, et al., 2008). This bottom-up approach allowed the emergence of themes and categories – as well as the research focus and the corresponding RQs – from the data.

I did not transcribe the entirety of the data but listened to the recordings of the interactions after each phase of fieldwork and took notes on what was happening. This way, I generated an extensive table using Excel noting the recording code, the length of the recording, as well as general and specific comments (see appendix 10.5). The general comments included the location and occasion such as athletic training or warm-ups, the players involved as well as some brief notes on what was said and done based on both the recordings as well as observations. Additionally, researcher's reflections – both audio-recorded field notes as well as retrospective comments about feelings and impressions – were added in this column where relevant. The specific comments then concentrated on the activities of the CofP members and the communication taking place in more detail.

Subsequently, I generated categories and themes based on both the content as well as distinct and recurring discourse strategies. Here, humour and laughter emerged strongly from the data. Initially, I had not planned to focus on humour, this discourse strategy came through strongly in the data when I started the analysis, though (see 3.1 and 3.3.1.1). Therefore, I decided to concentrate on humour as one of the characterising linguistic strategies of the shared repertoire of FC Anonymous II. I went through the data again – this time with a focus on instances of humour (how these were identified will be laid out in 3.8.1). Having identified numerous humorous episodes in the dataset, I drafted another table using Excel solely focusing on instances of humour (see appendix 10.6). Based on the notes of what each humorous conversation or utterance was about, as well as who was involved, I created categories about humour type and style, audience response, and content of the humour. I thus coded the data refining and reviewing categories throughout the process (Bryman, 2016, Cooper et al., 2004).

Initial analysis showed the emergence of team bonding and fragmentation developing into the discursive construction of team cohesion as the main research focus – as reflected in the RQs stated in 3.1. For a first selection of suitable examples of interactions, I orientated myself by the composition of the CofP and the shared

repertoire. In other words, I selected examples representative of the communication taking place at FC Anonymous II – thus, including speakers of different relationships and levels of seniority. The observation that some players were more active in shaping the team talk of the CofP (based on audio-recordings and field notes these were e.g. Simon and Kevin) is also reflected in the selection of examples including these players more often than quieter ones. As not all of the examples could feature in the thesis due to constraints in scope, I narrowed the selection of interactional examples down to the ones best illustrating the construction of team cohesion as reflected in the three analysis chapters:

- humour instances from bonding to biting in style to build an understanding of the normative ways of discursively constructing team cohesion as a process among members of the CofP (chapter 4),
- racialised humour as an example of the mainly biting humour style in the negotiation of cohesion (chapter 5) and lastly,
- instances of partly failed humour with complex implications for the construction and negotiation of cohesion (chapter 6).

The selected examples were then transcribed and translated into English trying to remain as close as possible to the colloquial language used in German. Still, it has to be acknowledged that especially with regards to humour, the translation of the original can be problematic, as "the combination of […] linguistic and culture-specific features […] creates one of the most arduous challenges" (Chiaro, 2010, p. 1) for the researcher (see also Vandaele, 2002). I have attempted for the translated utterances to "bear as much likeness to the original as possible" (Chiaro, 2010, p. 6). To approach this difficulty further the translations were checked by one of my supervisors who is a German native speaker. Also, I am offering both the German original as well as the English translation in the transcripts. In line with my research aims and IS approach, I employed the transcription conventions used by Schnurr (2013) (see appendix 10.7).

For the 13 interviews with players I as well took rough notes after the first round of listening to the tapes and subsequently transcribed and translated sections relevant for analysis. Through the interviews I mainly explored how the interviewees reflected on the team, the team talk, and matters connected with cohesion.

I am not providing quantification of the data because firstly, the categories and codes that emerged are not mutually exclusive (Bell & Attardo, 2010) and secondly,

> counting instances of humour is not straightforward but is inherently difficult, and poses a range of questions, such as how to count extended sequences of conjoint humour, which typically contain numerous instances of different types of humour. (Schnurr, 2010, p. 310)

Furthermore, quantifying instances of humour – especially given that I am taking a qualitative approach – loses much of its interest in light of the guiding RQs (Bell & Attardo, 2010).

3.8.1 Identifying instances of humour

Like defining and translating humour, the identification of instances of humour poses another challenge to the analytical process (Holmes, 2000, 2014, Priego-Valverde, 2009, Rogerson-Revell, 2007, Schnurr, 2008, 2010). Importantly, the clues used to identify humour were originally found in German and then translated into English. As those

> [i]nstances of humour which are not identified, or which are misinterpreted by the analyst, will obviously be excluded [...] [i]t seems important [...] to take account of the clues used by the analyst (Holmes, 2000, p. 163).

Also, since humour is context-bound and thus varies between groups (e.g. Holmes, 2000, 2014, Schnurr, 2008, 2010), the IS approach again appears to be beneficial as it accounts for the CofP-specific contextual and linguistic clues indexing humour (Hay, 1995, 2001, Holmes, 2000, Holmes & Marra, 2002b, Schnurr, 2010, Schnurr & Chan, 2011). According to Priego-Valverde (2009), this is a "distinct advantage of ethno-methodographical studies in humor" (p. 166) like the project at hand.

In line with the humour definition provided in 2.3 that also accounts for instances of failed or partly failed humour, I do not only include utterances identified as intended to be humorous by the speaker and at least one other participant (Holmes, 2014, Holmes & Marra, 2002b). Rather, I draw on a number of paralinguistic, prosodic and contextualisation cues "such as the speaker's tone of voice, and the audience's auditory as well as (where possible) gesticulatory responses" (Schnurr, 2008, p. 7, see also Holmes, 2000, Mullany, 2004, Schnurr, 2010). Thanks to the (audio-) recording of field notes during and after observations, it was possible to also include details about facial expressions including smiles as indicators for humour (Holmes, 2014). Having spent three weeks with the players of FC Anonymous II, it was possible to identify the use of "smile voice" (Holmes, 2000, p. 163) in the recordings as an empirical basis for identifying humorous intent. The term 'smile voice' will be used throughout the transcripts to index a particular tone of voice and smiling delivery associated with humorous intent of the speaker of an utterance. Besides, formulations like '[…] sounding tone of voice' will be used in the transcripts to describe a particular tone of voice of a speaker which has been interpreted as sounding a particular kind of way (e.g. aggressive) based on contextualisation cues and the familiarity with the CofP members gained through the ethnographic approach.

Furthermore, as suggested by Rogerson-Revell (2007), "the use of humour is frequently related to shifts in style from formality to greater informality, and is often associated with clusters of interactive strategies" (p. 12) such as the use of humour support strategies. Due to the constraints of being allowed three weeks only with the team, I was not able to conduct respondent validation (Barbour, 2001, Johnson & Waterfield, 2004, Torrance, 2012) to confirm the identification of humour in the data. However, utterances in this study were interpreted as being humorous based on the perceived speaker intention as well as the context-specific responses such as humour support or rejection. Based on other researchers' work as well as my own immersion in the context, I therefore believe to have sufficient empirical basis for identifying humorous intent. Utterances identified as humorous are underlined in the transcripts.

Before proceeding to the actual analysis chapters, I will now offer a reflexive account of my role as the researcher.

3.9 Self-reflection on my role as a researcher

As stated by Lumsden (2009), "[a]dopting a reflexive approach helps to overcome the problems associated with the representation and legitimation of ethnographic data" (p. 498). This is important in relation to the wider goals of this study because my "methodological choices, interests, and [subjectivity] influence the data collected" (Mann, 2016, p. x). As discussed, the relationships with the football players evolving during my research process are not only contextually situated, but also influenced by the histories and identities of myself and the participants including features such as gender, class, 'race' and age (Arendell, 1997, Green, Barbour, Barnard & Kitzinger, 1993, Lindner, 1981). The nature of the relationships with the players ranged from amicable to distant shaping my ethnographic experience accordingly. Therefore, it is neither possible nor my aim to claim 'total objectivity', but as Lindner (1981) argues, by creating awareness of the effects of my presence in the field, possible influencing factors are disclosed. Also, as stated by Lumsden (2009), an

> awareness of these interactions does not undermine the data but instead acknowledges that the researcher and the researched are embedded within the research. Hence, they shape the ethnography while also being shaped in turn. (p. 497)

During the three phases of fieldwork I felt welcomed and for the most part respected by the participants, which, on reflection, may be related to several influencing factors including the small age difference between me and the research participants (between two to nine years), the similarity in generational style choices (such as tattoos and trainers, as stated by Edwin during our interview), as well as me wearing the same club-owned training kit.

However, at the beginning of the research process I felt some scepticism from the majority of players towards me and, in informal conversations with the team captain,

I learned that some younger players especially initially did not fully understand my intent and role, which is why they were 'slightly wary'. In her research about the police force, Horn (1997) comes across some similar feelings of being seen as a spy – in my case for the coaches or head of the elite academy. However, after some time had passed and sufficient rapport was built, the players seemingly accepted me more and more with me becoming a 'part-time in-group member'. In this vein, Ergun and Erdemir (2010) argue that the researcher is "often suspended in a betwixt-and-between position, usually end[ing] up with a fluid status that does not lead to either inclusion or exclusion" (p. 34). The role and status of the researcher can thus be described as "fluid, non-static, permeable, and dialectic" (Ergun & Erdemir, 2010, p. 34) and is constantly negotiated during fieldwork. Intersecting factors such as me being female, white, in my late twenties, and from an academic background all have implications for how the members of the CofP perceived me and interacted with me (Arendell, 1997, Ergun & Erdemir, 2010, Gurney, 1985, Green, et al., 1993, Horn, 1997, Pini, 2005).

After initial analysis of my data looking for recurring themes and shared behaviours, it became apparent that participants predominantly related to me in terms of gender and sex. In audio-recordings of group interactions in particular, many players constructed a gendered and/or sexualised identity for me by using flirtatious banter or making sexist remarks (Wolfers, under review). Researchers across disciplines have described the field of sports and especially football as being characterised by such notions of hegemonic masculinity and a normalised ideology of gender relations based on male domination over women and other non-heterosexual men (e.g. Anderson and McGuire 2010, Burgess, Edwards, & Skinner, 2003, Connell 1990, Connell & Messerschmidt 2005, MacDonald 2014, Messner 1990). Especially when such explicitly "gendered" (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992, p. 463) contexts are studied by female researchers, it can be challenging for the research process and outcome, as gendered roles and expectations, as well as notions of hegemonic masculinity may be constructed as normative (e.g. Arendell, 1997, Easterday, Papademas, Schorr & Valentine, 1977, Ergun & Erdemir, 2010, Grenz, 2005, Gurney, 1985, Sallee & Harris III, 2011). Furthermore, such contexts can be described as

"heteronormatively constructed" (Liddicoat, 2009, p. 192) which again has implications for the construction of identities of both the researcher and the researched.

Despite acknowledging the probable advantage of female researchers being stereotypically seen as non-threatening, it is argued that as a result of the construction of the masculine context, participants may fail to recognise the professional role of female researchers (Gurney, 1985, Lumsden, 2009, Pini, 2005). Rather, female researchers may be marginalised, patronised, and assigned subordinate roles by the participants (Arendell, 1997, Gurney, 1985, Green, et al., 1993, Horn, 1997, Pini, 2005). In addition, they are often confronted with sexist remarks and behaviours, which they might have to tolerate in order to not endanger the good relations essential for successful conduct of fieldwork (Arendell, 1997, Gurney, 1985, Horn, 1997, Lumsden, 2009, Pini, 2005).

Due to the constraints in scope but also the focus of this thesis, I am not including a discussion of empirical evidence of interactions where participants assigned a sexualised and/or gendered identity to me. As this shaped both my MSc and current project profoundly though, I have written a research paper (currently under review with *Gender & Language*) that critically reflects on the indexing of gender and sexual identities when conducting ethnographic research in explicitly gendered contexts (Wolfers, under review). Using examples of interactions where research participants construct a gendered and sexualised identity for me, I illustrate how the choices of tolerating or challenging sexist treatment by research participants may affect the research process and outcome. I believe that critical reflection on sexist behaviour (albeit often humorous) by research participants towards the researchers is of great relevance to current methodological discussions and deserves more scholarly attention, as it shapes the research itself.

I will now proceed to the critical analysis and interpretation of relevant examples from the audio-recordings of interactions between members of the CofP, positioned in relation to literature in the field and analysed in light of the guiding RQs. The

transcripts will be presented in present tense for better readability and flow. Where relevant, the analysis will be supported with primary data from observations and interviews to support the argument. The analysis consists of three chapters with the following chapter laying the groundwork for better understanding how team cohesion as a discursive process can be captured, approached and unpacked using instances of humour as part of the team's shared repertoire.

4. Unpacking team cohesion – An analysis of shared humour practices

In this chapter I address both RQs i and ii asking how team cohesion among members of FC Anonymous II can empirically be captured as well as what the processes involved in the discursive negotiation of cohesion are. As has been established in 2.1.2, team cohesion is understood as discursively negotiated with processes of cohering delineating the ways team cohesion is done in and through context-specific discursive interaction. Therefore, by focusing on the shared negotiated repertoire – which includes the specific discourse and styles performed by members of a CofP to communicate with each other and express their membership (Wenger, 1998a) – the discursive processes involved in the negotiation of team cohesion can be approached and better understood. In 3.3.1 it has been established that humour emerged as part of these shared discursive practices among members of the CofP.

Building on the work of Boxer and Cortés-Conde (1997), revisited in 4.1, I will address the question of how team cohesion is constructed and negotiated among the team members of FC Anonymous II. I will do so by taking a closer look at the teasing practices within this CofP in the first section of the chapter (4.1). Here, I will unpack the normative humour style by which members of the team manage group membership status and construct identities as processes of cohering with one another. This is followed by a focus on self-directed humour as a means of building solidarity among team members (4.2). Providing an understanding of the shared negotiated humour norms lays the groundwork for better apprehending how team cohesion is negotiated among members of FC Anonymous II. The different ways of using and responding to (different types of) humour will therefore be analysed with regards to the guiding RQs. In both sections of this first analysis chapter representative interactional examples will be analysed, interpreted and discussed with the aim of better understanding the social phenomenon of team cohesion. Where suitable, interview and observational data will be incorporated to support the argument. Finally, I will briefly summarise and discuss the findings from the analysis (4.3) and use this discussion to set up the subsequent analysis chapters.

4.1 Between bonding and biting: Constructing team cohesion through teasing

In this first section I will analyse and discuss four different examples of conversational humour that have been categorised as teasing. According to Hay (1995) teasing "can not be formally identified by any criterion" (p. 11), which makes it rather hard to pin down as a humour type, strategy or genre. However, looking at the literature, I will attempt a description of teasing in order to unpack how the examples discussed in this section were classed under the umbrella term of teasing.

Due to its inherent ambiguity, teasing enables speakers to provide clues indicating that an utterance is to be understood as non-serious – such as a playful tone of voice – while also expressing potentially aggressive insults or provocations (Alberts, 1992, Dynel, 2008, Keltner, Capps, Kring, Young & Heerey, 2001, Schnurr, 2010, Schnurr & Chan, 2011, Wolfers, et al., 2017). As such, teasing – similar to jocular abuse – is described as a confrontational or challenging type of humour tending to occur in close relationships, where interlocutors are rather certain not to cause any offence (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997, Dynel, 2008, Kotthoff, 2003, Schnurr, 2010, Schnurr & Chan, 2011). While "still remaining jocular, conversationalists challenge each other, wishing to outwit one another" (Dynel, 2008, p. 244).

Marsh (2014), among others, argues that within different workplaces characterised by close relationships and intimacy between interlocutors, distinct humour cultures of varying boundaries of appropriateness emerge. In a football team, where "people seem to prefer to tease those with whom they feel secure enough to practice 'playful biting'" (Kotthoff, 2003, p. 1400), the social distance between members of the CofP appears to allow the use of confrontational forms of humour such as teasing (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997, Schnurr, 2010, Schnurr & Chan, 2011, Wolfers, et al., 2017). Teasing is also understood as a common humour strategy employed in banter (Schnurr, 2010). Similar to teasing, banter is characterised by "deflating someone else's ego to bring them to the same level as others" (Plester & Sayers, 2007, p. 158). Crucially, for a tease to become banter it needs to be a conjoint construction of multi-turn teases (Dynel, 2008, Plester & Sayers, 2007).

Moreover, as established by Boxer and Cortés-Conde (1997), teasing "runs along a continuum of bonding to nipping to biting [and b]ecause this is a continuum, these constructs are not mutually exclusive and the boundaries are not always clear" (p. 279). Summarising the continuum, Schnurr (2009) writes:

> "Biting" refers to rather aggressive and challenging teasing remarks which are primarily aimed at putting down the addressee. "Bonding" teasing has the opposite function: rather than challenging or dividing interlocutors, it emphasises common ground and reinforces solidarity. "Nipping" is the most ambiguous term: positioned in the middle of the continuum, it combines elements of "biting" as well as "bonding". (p. 1127)

In other words, due to its ambiguous nature, teasing has the potential of creating solidarity and enhancing cohesion among members of a CofP on the one hand but also of exclusion and fragmentation on the other (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997, Dynel, 2008, Schnurr, 2009, Wolfers, et al., 2017). While Boxer and Cortés-Conde (1997) describe bonding, nipping and biting as functions of teasing, Schnurr (2009) understands them as different teasing *styles* performing different functions such as enhancing solidarity or strengthening team cohesiveness. Describing the ways in which interlocutors comprehend and respond to each other's humour attempts, it appears beneficial to understand these categories in line with Schnurr (2009) as styles rather than functions. Furthermore, since the players of FC Anonymous II display a range of teasing styles, the use of the teasing continuum appears to be a suitable approach to analyse how team members normatively express membership and negotiate team cohesion.

Having unpacked the concept of teasing, I will now move on to the description and interpretation of four examples chosen for analysis. There are numerous other examples of teasing in the dataset that would have been suitable for analysis as well. The following extracts (4.1.1 – 4.1.4) have been selected in light of their position on the continuum between bonding and biting in order to cover a broad spectrum representative of the teasing norms among the members of FC Anonymous II, which in sum lie closer to the biting end. I will start with interactional examples of a biting humour style moving towards nipping and bonding.

4.1.1 Example 1: "Pretending to be broad now?"

In this first example, some of the players of FC Anonymous II are in the gym after their training session to cool down and care for their muscles. Simon is on a bike cycling which makes a lot of noise drowning parts of the conversation. Dae-Jung, Narek and some other players are stretching and using black rolls on the floor. Simon asks Dae-Jung about the jersey that he is wearing.

1. Simon: Dae-Jung warum hast du Nummer 20 ?
              Dae-Jung why do you have number 20 ?

2. Dae-Jung: [unverständlich] Narek's
              [inaudible] Narek's

3. Simon: [unverständlich] is S ? Hast du kein S ? [Verweisend auf die
              Kleidergröße Small]
              *[inaudible] is S ? Don't you have S ? [referring to the clothing
              size small]*

4. Dae-Jung: Ich hab M [Verweisend auf die Kleidergröße Medium]
              I have M [referring to the clothing size Medium]

5. Simon: [in verwirrt klingendem Tonfall] Warum nimmst du denn
              nicht S ? [kurze Stille, dann lächelnd in neckisch klingendem
              Tonfall] Du bist dumm // ne ? \
              *[in a confused sounding tone of voice] Why don't you take S ?
              [short silence, then smilingly in a playful sounding tone of
              voice] You are dumb // right ? *

6. Dae-Jung: / [in neutral klingendem Tonfall] Ja \\
              */ [in a neutral sounding tone of voice] Yes *

7.   [Gemeinsames Gelächter exklusive Dae-Jung]
              [Joint laughter excluding Dae-Jung]

8. Simon: Narek hast du S genommen ?
              Narek did you take S ?

9. Narek: Ja
              Yes

10. Simon: [In lächelndem Tonfall] Machst du jetzt auf breit ? [Strafft demonstrativ seine Schultern]

[using smile voice] Pretending to be broad now ? [tautens his shoulders ostentatiously]

11. Narek: [in neutral klingendem Tonfall] Ich bin doch breit …

[in a neutral sounding tone of voice] I am square after all …

12. Simon: [laut und in lächelndem Tonfall] Vierzehn Prozent [vermutlich bezogen auf den Körperfettwert von Narek]

[loudly and using smile voice] Fourteen percent [presumably referring to the body fat result of Narek]

13. [Gemeinsames Gelächter, Narek lächelt]

[Joint laughter, Narek smiles]

14. *[Topic of body fat results is further being discussed with Simon entering a self-directed humour episode]*

As can be seen in the abstract above, Simon inquires about the jersey Dae-Jung is wearing as it appears to belong to Narek whose jersey number is 20 (line 3). Relevant in this interaction is the observational information that Dae-Jung has a rather slim and toned physique (with Narek's jersey in the size small "S" fitting him perfectly), while Narek appears to be among the least well-toned players on the team. Although there is a lot to be said about this excerpt, I will focus on the humorous utterances underlined in the transcript as well as the respective responses.

While initially sounding confused about Dae-Jung for not choosing a size small for himself (line 3), Simon after a short pause smilingly adds "You are dumb right?" (line 5). He is therefore humorously questioning Dae-Jung's intellectual abilities as he appears to have chosen the 'wrong' size for his own jersey. As Simon is presumably not really thinking of Dae-Jung as 'dumb' – hence not literally meaning the utterance – it can be argued that he is jocularly insulting Dae-Jung by using irony (Hay, 1995, Kotthoff, 2003, Ridanpää, 2014). Strengthening the claim that Simon is using irony is the fact that he is smiling and using a playful sounding tone of voice when uttering the question (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997, Dynel, 2008, Hay, 1995).

Furthermore, by addressing Dae-Jung in a confrontational way and making him the butt of the humour in front of fellow team members (Apte, 1987, Dynel, 2008, Hay, 1994, 2001, Snyder, 1991), Simon is positioning him as an out-group member excluding him from the group of present players (Vine, Kell, Marra & Holmes, 2009). The out-group position is strengthened by Dae-Jung who does not object to the tease performed by Simon (Wolfers, et al., 2017). In contrast, he affirms the confrontational question in a neutral sounding tone of voice (line 6), which could be seen as him accepting the marginalisation and insult, further degrading himself. However, as it is unlikely that Dae-Jung really thinks of himself as 'dumb', it could be argued that he may be playing along with the biting humour frame initiated by Simon, thereby supporting it by adding more humour, hence being ironic himself (Hay, 2001).

On the contrary, Dae-Jung can also be understood to corrupt the humour frame by expressing annoyance through a neutral sounding tone of voice as well as refraining from laughing in the subsequent joint laughter in line 7 (Hay, 2001, Marsh, 2014). Here, the other present players support Simon's humour attempt with joint laughter (Bell, 2009a, Dynel, 2008, Hay, 1995, 2001, Schnurr, 2010). According to Zajdman (1995), being laughed at "is known to be one of the most powerful social threats" (p. 332) and in order to avoid this, the butt may behave "according to the norms of behavior of the group of his [sic] reference" (p. 332). As Dae-Jung is not laughing along with his team members, he is essentially denying humour support, which would likely aid in enhancing solidarity and reinforcing team cohesion (Hay, 2001). Thus, the claim that here Dae-Jung does not support the humour becomes an even more likely interpretation. As a result of the biting teasing style, the team is here fragmented with group cohesion being negotiated excluding Dae-Jung who is positioned as an out-group member (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997, Schnurr, 2009). Importantly, Dae-Jung and Simon are both senior team members having played together for more than a year leaving enough time to establish a "joking relationship developed through a history of interaction" (Norrick, 2003, p. 1348). The audio-data shows that Dae-Jung often appears to be the butt of the humour frequently

responding with "unlaughter" (Marsh, 2014, p. 135). The absence of humour support will be discussed in depth in chapter 6 which focuses on failed humour among FC Anonymous II members.

Subsequently, Simon moves on from teasing Dae-Jung and addresses Narek – another senior team member and friend of Simon – whose jersey Dae-Jung is wearing. He asks whether Narek chose the size small for himself (line 8), which Narek confirms (line 9). As established in the previous turns, the jersey with back number 20 belonging to Narek is indeed a size small, and Simon's question can thus be interpreted as rhetorical or possibly even confrontational by implying that Narek should have chosen a bigger size for himself. This interpretation is supported by Simon's next utterance where using smile voice he adds the question whether Narek is pretending to be "broad now" (line 10) referring to a lack of a muscular or 'ripped' upper body physique emphasized by wearing tight clothing such as the small jersey. Again, Simon bitingly teases a present player making him the butt of the humour in a challenging way by "taking the piss" (Plester & Sayers, 2007, p. 158). Whereas he was initially challenging Dae-Jung's intelligence, Simon now attacks Narek's masculine identity by making a reference to his lack of square shoulders, which could be interpreted as a marker of physical masculinity in this context (Fogel, 2011). Once more, Simon is othering another player by attacking him humorously placing him as an out-group member (Jackson, 2014, Ridanpää, 2014).

In contrast to Dae-Jung, Narek objects to Simon's teasing thereby rejecting to provide humour support and stating in a neutral sounding tone of voice that he is "broad after all" (line 11). Narek therefore refuses the out-group position and claims back a masculine identity for himself which Simon attempted to deny him (Fogel, 2011). After a brief pause, Simon loudly and using smile voice says "fourteen percent" (line 12). Here, he is presumably making reference to an earlier conversation about the players' body fat results, where Narek was discussed as the player with the highest result of 14%. By stating the percentage without any further explanation, Simon is here alluding to in-group knowledge drawing on and at the same reinforcing group identity (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997). On a content level he objects to the

statement by Narek of 'being broad after all' through bitingly teasing him with his comparably high body fat result and effectively rejecting the previous claim for masculinity. Additionally, as Simon is speaking up, it is likely that his utterance is meant to be heard by everyone present, again othering Narek as the butt in a biting teasing style in front of an audience (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997, Jackson, 2014, Ridanpää, 2014). As a result, Narek is positioned as an out-group member further manifested by the subsequent joint laughter in line 13. Now, Narek is not challenging Simon's confrontational humour attempt but smiles along thereby supporting Simon's biting teases (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997, Hay, 2001, Schnurr, 2010). Solidarity and group cohesion consequently appear to be negotiated through members' shared sense of humour (Hay, 2001). In other words, players align with each other through shared laughter, while both Dae-Jung and Narek appear to align with the biting humour style not accepting the out-group position assigned to them. As such, group membership management, identity construction and alignment appear to be performed in the processes of cohering in this interaction.

4.1.2 Example 2: "You're the star here now, aren't you?"

The second example of biting teasing illustrates how Torsten, who joined the team only a month before this interaction, is learning the limits of appropriateness within FC Anonymous II. He is being 'put into his place' through biting humour thereby learning about the interactional norms of the shared repertoire of the CofP. After a running session, some players including junior players Ahmet, Fabian, and Conor are in the locker room changing into different shoes before heading to the gym. Importantly, all of the junior players have been playing for the club's under-19 team before joining FC Anonymous II. Torsten, however, joined the team coming from another club. He walks into the locker room and seems agitated when talking about physio appointment slots.

1. Torsten: [in aggressiv klingendem Tonfall und mit weit aufgerissenen Augen] Wer is'n Bernard man ?
[in an aggressive sounding tone of voice and with eyes wide open] Who is Bernard man ?

2. Ahmet: Wie bitte ?

Come again ?

3. Torsten: [in wütend klingendem Tonfall] Wer is' Bernard ? Wer is'n das ?

[in an angry sounding tone of voice] Who is Bernard ? Who's that ?

4. Fabian: Is das nich der Jüngere da ? Der da im Kraftraum war da vor uns // äh [unverständlich] \

*Isn't that the younger one ? The one who's been in the gym before us // erm [inaudible] *

5. Torsten: [in aggressiv klingendem Tonfall] / Was is'n mit dem ? \\

*[in an aggressive sounding tone of voice] / What's with him ? *

6. Fabian: Warum ?

Why ?

7. Torsten: [in aufgebracht klingendem Tonfall] Der steht jeden der schreibt sich jeden Tag zwei Mal rein

[in an enraged sounding tone of voice] He is every he signs his name twice every day

8. Fabian: [in defensiv klingendem Tonfall] Ja wenn er verletzt war // und \

*[in a defensive sounding tone of voice] Yes when he was injured // and *

9. Torsten: [in aggressiv klingendem Tonfall] / Ja und Alter ? \\

*[in an aggressive sounding tone of voice] / So what dude ? *

10. Fabian: Ja // DU darfst gar nichts \

*Yes // YOU are allowed nothing whatsoever *

11. Player 1: [in leiser Stimme] / Oder bist du jetzt \\ was // besseres oder was ? \

*[in a low voice] / Or are you now \\ something // better or what ? *

12. Torsten: [in aufgebracht klingendem Tonfall] / Was laberst du Alter ?
\\

*[in an enraged sounding tone of voice] / What're you talking
about dude ? *

13. Conor: Musst du Pro musst du Profi sein und dann kriegst du
Behandlungen und ansonsten musst du dich hier //
durchkämpfen \

*Gotta be pro gotta be professional and then you get
treatments otherwise you gotta cut your // way through *

14. Torsten: [laut, in frustriert klingendem Tonfall] / Kein Problem man !
\\ Aber der sagt zu mir ich soll um 20 Uhr zu ihm kommen

*[loudly, in a frustrated sounding tone of voice] / No problem
man ! \\ But he says to me to come to him at 8pm*

15. Fabian: Das is Quatsch

That's nonsense

16. Torsten: [in aggressiv klingendem Tonfall] Weil Bernard zwei Mal
drinsteht ich glaub ich spinn !

*[in an aggressive sounding tone of voice] Because Bernard's in
the list twice I think I'm bonkers !*

17. Conor: [in ruhig klingendem Tonfall] Sag ihm das

[in a calm sounding tone of voice] Tell him that

18.   [Überschneidende Konversation]

[Overlapping talk]

19. Fabian: <u>Bist jetzt Star hier ne ? [schnaubt and grinst]</u>

<u>*You're the star here now aren't you ? [snorts and smirks]*</u>

20.   [Keine Reaktion von Torsten, der angefangen hat mit
jemandem anderem zu reden]

*[No reaction from Torsten, who started talking to someone
else]*

Immediately on arrival inside the locker room, Torsten uses an aggressive and angry
sounding tone of voice to ask who Bernard is (line 1). He has a bewildered facial

expression (reflected in the transcript as having his eyes wide open) and speaks loudly which underlines his angry emotional state. Ahmet and Fabian engage with Torsten both in a neutral sounding tone of voice seemingly not reacting to the aggressiveness in Torsten's repeated questions about Bernard, a younger player from a different team playing for the same club (lines 1-6). Both Ahmet and Fabian have been playing on a team with Bernard before joining their current team. After being interrupted by Torsten, Fabian asks why Torsten wants to know who Bernard is (line 6).

Using the same enraged sounding tone of voice, Torsten states that Bernard "signs his name twice every day" (line 7). By only giving partial information, Torsten seems to expect the present players to know what he means by 'signing his name' and is therefore constructing his utterance as group knowledge thereby constructing an in-group (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997). The observational data has shown that there is a list in the office of the club's physiotherapist, where players can put down their names when they require treatment. Based on the contextual information of this interaction, I would therefore argue that Torsten is here referring to Bernard's name frequently appearing on this list for physio treatments. In a defensive sounding tone of voice Fabian replies that Bernard has been injured (line 8). Again, Torsten cuts him off and asks sounding aggressive "So what dude?" (line 9). By speaking in a confrontational and enraged sounding tone of voice repeatedly interrupting others, Torsten appears to be redirecting his anger about Bernard and projecting it onto the other players in the changing room. Arguably, as a result of this face threat, Fabian himself raises his voice stating that Torsten is allowed nothing whatsoever emphasising the word "YOU" (line 10). Fabian is therefore arguably denying Torsten the right to speak poorly about other players of the club due to his relative newcomer status. He is therefore othering Torsten and reminding him of his place – possibly based on his relatively short membership in the team (Wilson, 2011). As Wilson (2011) argues, not "all members of a CofP have equal negotiation or 'meaning making' rights […] with higher status individuals having greater influence over what is accepted as shared practice" (p. 33).

Fabian's utterance overlaps with Player 1 (remaining unidentified due to the heightened volume in the interaction), who asks whether Torsten thinks he is "something better or what" (line 11). As Player 1 is uttering his question in a particularly low voice it can be argued that his confrontational statement is not intended to be heard by Torsten. Thus, it appears that Torsten is placed as an out-group member based on both the confrontational content of Fabian's as well as Player 1's utterances (lines 10 and 11) as well as the volume of speech of the latter. Possibly having overstepped the context-specific boundaries of appropriate behaviour, Torsten is not only being othered, but again reminded of his low status within the CofP (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997, Schnurr, 2009, Wilson, 2011).

The interview data shows that there appears to be sort of a 'code of conduct' for new players entering the team. Different team members expressed an according awareness, including Rouven who stated that when entering the team there was a need "to eat humble pie first and once one is integrated then one can gradually possibly say more and level criticism against others" ("Erstmal kleine Brötchen backen und wenn man sich dann integriert hat, dann kann man nach und nach vielleicht ein bisschen mehr was sagen und halt auch Kritik an anderen üben", interview data, Rouven). Although Torsten himself made a similar statement during his interview – "One shouldn't shout around right from the start but first become comfortable with everyone" ("Man sollte halt jetzt nicht rumgrölen so direkt am Anfang sondern erstmal mit allen warm werden", interview data) – he here appears to have misjudged how 'comfortable' he already became with the players of FC Anonymous II at this point in time.

As a reaction to the exclusion and lack of support by his teammates – with whom he fails to form an in-group here (see also lines 12 and 13) – Torsten appears to become more and more frustrated and shows this by repeatedly uttering angry sounding statements. Then, for the first time in this exchange, he receives backing from Fabian, who reacts to his statement about having an 8pm appointment (line 14) by referring to the late hour of the appointment as "nonsense" (line 15). As Torsten reacts to this with further aggression (line 16), the interpretation that he feels he is being treated

unfairly by the physio, by Bernard and by the present players is likely. The present players appear to 'gang up' on Torsten marginalising him as an out-group member (Wilson, 2011).

After a brief episode of overlapping talk signalling heightened involvement in this conversation (line 18), Fabian attacks Torsten's status again ironically questioning whether he is "the star" (line 19) on the team now (Eisterhold, Attardo & Boxer, 2006). As it is highly likely that Fabian does not think of Torsten as the star on the team – especially due to him being the newest addition – Fabian's utterance can be construed as ironical and biting (Boxer & Cortes-Condé, 1997, Hay, 1995, Kotthoff, 2003, Ridanpää, 2014). The snort at the end of his utterance in combination with a smirk on his face supports this claim for using a biting teasing style to put Torsten in his place (Dynel, 2008, Hay, 1995, Holmes & Stubbe, 2015). As no one is reacting to Fabian's humour attempt, it can be argued, that the humour has either failed or the other present players do not feel the need to engage further as Torsten has been reminded of the team-specific boundaries through a biting teasing style employed by Fabian (File & Schnurr, 2019, Schnurr, 2009, Hay, 2001).

The argument is therefore dropped, and the conversation moves on. While Torsten unsuccessfully attempts to create an in-group by drawing on team solidarity and in-group knowledge, the other present players strengthen in-group cohesiveness by putting Torsten in his (out-group) place. Thus, while the participants distance themselves from Torsten, they simultaneously showcase group-inclusive behaviour through a biting teasing style (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997, Schnurr & Chan, 2011, Dynel, 2008). Furthermore, the players countering Torsten's aggressive behaviour negotiate in action the rule of not vilifying other players from the club – especially when being a newcomer of low hierarchical status.

4.1.3 Example 3: "Hold the cereal bowl really straight"
The third example of teasing takes place before a friendly away game and lies on the other end of the continuum, namely bonding (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997). After checking out the quality of the away pitch, the players of FC Anonymous II walk back

into the locker room in small groups. At first, Torsten and Fabian are walking together, shortly after Leonardo catches up with them. The three players make reference to utterances frequently used by their new conditioning coach Samir, who for example uses the metaphor of a cereal bowl to refer to the pelvis during coaching. Samir started to work with the team only a few days before this conversation replacing a predecessor that had been popular with the team.

1. Torsten: [lacht, verstellt Stimme] <u>immer'n Arsch anspannen</u>

                [laughs, changes his voice] <u>always tense up da arse</u>

2. Fabian: <u>Und dein deine Cornflakesschale</u> [unverständlich] <u>gerade halten damit nix vorne und nix hinten rauskippt</u>

                <u>And your your cereal bowl</u> [inaudible] <u>keep straight so nothing spills in front and back</u>

3. Fabian: [dreht sich um und spricht Leonardo an, der direkt hinter ihm geht] <u>Nardo denk dadran heute</u>

                [turns around and addresses Leonardo, who walks right behind him] <u>Nardo remember it today</u>

4. Leonardo: [Leonardo schließt auf; <u>lächelnd</u>] <u>An die Cornflakesschale ?</u>

                [Leonardo catches up; <u>smilingly</u>] <u>The cereal bowl ?</u>

5. Fabian: <u>[in gestellt ernst klingender Stimme] Wenn du heute zum Kopfball hochgehst Arsch anspannen und die Cornflakesschale richtig gerade // halten \</u>

                <u>[in a false serious sounding tone of voice] When you are rising for a header today contract arse and hold the cereal bowl // really straight \</u>

6. Leonardo: / Und gestreckt bleiben \\

                */ And stay stretched *

7. Fabian: [lächelt]

                [smiles]

8. Leonardo: (Dass die Beine gerade bleiben)

                (That your legs stay straight)

9.　　　　　　　[Überschneidende Kommentare in verstellt klingenden

　　　　　　　　Stimmen; andere Spieler schließen auf]

　　　　　　　　[Overlapping comments in changed sounding voices; other

　　　　　　　　players are catching up]

10. Pascal:　　[in verstellt klingender Stimme] (und der Ball) muss da

　　　　　　　　zwischen drin bleiben

　　　　　　　　[in a changed sounding tone of voice] (and the ball) has to

　　　　　　　　stay in between

11. Fabian:　　Ja das auch

　　　　　　　　Yes that too

12.　　　　　　[Überschneidende Konversation]

　　　　　　　　[Overlapping talk]

13. Pascal:　　[in verstellt klingender Stimme] Und denk dran alles

　　　　　　　　anspannen

　　　　　　　　[in a changed sounding tone of voice] And remember contract

　　　　　　　　everything

14. Fabian:　　Und die Cornflakesschale gerade halten

　　　　　　　　And keep the cereal bowl straight

15.　　　　　　[Holger steht neben dem Trainer des gegnerischen Teams;

　　　　　　　　die Spieler begrüßen diesen im Vorbeigehen mit Handschlag]

　　　　　　　　[Holger is standing next to the opposing team's coach; the

　　　　　　　　players are greeting him in passing shaking his hand]

Walking back to the locker room Torsten laughs and changes his voice uttering "always tense up da arse" (line 1) likely ventriloquising the new conditioning coach Samir who gave similar forms of directives during athletic training sessions to the players prior to this interaction (Messerli, 2017). Ventriloquism or say-foring describes the phenomenon of putting "words in another's mouth" (Goffman, 1974, p. 534) when speaking on behalf of someone else. This can then be understood as borrowing the identity of someone else (Tannen, 2010, Messerli, 2017) – in this case the absent other being coach Samir. The observational data supports the claim of Torsten ventriloquising Samir, as during the first training session with the new

conditioning coach, several players laughed and giggled at Samir's first introduction of the cereal bowl metaphor (standing for pelvis) as well as other comparisons. Since that training session numerous players ventriloquised Samir using his words including the cereal bowl metaphor on different occasions. Furthermore, as Torsten fantasises about a possible scenario of interacting with Samir, he makes use of fantasy humour teasing an absent other thereby othering him (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997, Hay, 2001, Wolfers, et al., 2017).

Subsequently, Fabian joins Torsten in ventriloquising Samir making use of the metaphor of keeping "your cereal bowl" straight (line 2) and thereby builds on Torsten's utterance entering the fantasy humour frame of mocking Samir. Making fun of an absent other here by ventriloquising "assists the players in creating an in-group for themselves" (Wolfers, et al., 2017, p. 89). Fabian then turns around in an attempt to also include Leonardo, who walks a few steps behind them at this point. He calls Leonardo by his nickname "Nardo" (line 3) – indicating familiarity and a close relationship (Wilson, 2010, 2011) and tells him to "remember it" (line 3) without providing further context. Fabian therefore expects Leonardo to have been listening to the conversation between him and Torsten, as well as having the in-group knowledge of Samir's metaphors and the fact that as an in-group they are making fun of these metaphors. Leonardo is thus invited to the in-group of collaboratively ventriloquising the conditioning coach in a bonding humour style (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997). Leonardo catches up and fact-checks whether his reliance on the in-group knowledge is correct by playing along and smilingly asking for the missing piece of context "the cereal bowl ?" (line 4). He thereby supports the fantasy humour of ventriloquising Samir.

After that, Fabian changes his tone of voice again speaking in a serious sounding tone of voice when giving Leonardo a fantasised complex directive – again ventriloquising their new conditioning coach (line 5). The fantasy humour episode of teasing Samir in a bonding style by ventriloquising him continues with heightened involvement and overlaps illustrating a collaborative and harmonious joking relationship among the interlocutors (lines 6-14) (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997, Norrick, 1993, 2003, Marsh,

2014, Schnurr, 2009, 2010, Schnurr & Chan, 2011). While Fabian and Leonardo are both junior players and close friends (see 3.7.2.3), Torsten is the newest addition to the team and Pascal a senior player who has played for the team for over a year. These relational differences are made irrelevant through their collaborative humour style here.

Presumably due to the presence of their own head coach Holger and the coach of the opposing team (line 15), the players end their humorous episode and refrain from further ventriloquising Samir. It can be argued that the players are aware of their mockery of a member of coaching staff being 'against the rules' for reasons of power. Teasing Samir thus appears to be an in-group activity reserved for the members of the CofP only – which excludes Holger and the opposing coach. This awareness of context-specific rules of appropriateness reinforces the bonding teasing style of this excerpt (Holmes & Hay, 1997, Lennox Terrion & Ashfort, 2002, Wolfers, et al., 2017). Moreover, the collaborative teasing can be seen to perform several functions with regards to team cohesion as "it signals and reinforces [the players'] close relationship, and it also creates a sense of belonging among interlocutors" (Schnurr, 2009, p. 1132). It is arguably for these reasons that Dynel (2008) called multi-turn teases or banter "an interactional bonding game" (p. 246).

Moreover, according to Boxer and Cortés-Conde (1997) joking about an absent other has the potential of binding those participating in the humour together. This is further supported by a heightened involvement of the players in the whole exchange evidenced by the repeated completion of each other's turns, as well as overlaps and smiles as humour support (also in lines 6-14) (Hay, 1995, 2001, Schnurr, 2010). In consequence, the teasing of an absent other who is not part of the CofP appears to be an effective bonding strategy, as it constitutes an outward differentiation and is collaboratively realised creating a strong in-group identity for the players (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997, Dynel, 2008, Holmes & Stubbe, 2015). Therefore, solidarity among the players in this interaction is enhanced and team cohesion thereby negotiated.

4.1.4 Example 4: "Can't even make that goal"

The last exchange categorised as teasing – now in a nipping style – takes place on the substitutes bench where six players (Conor, Ahmet, Daniel, Pascal, Kevin, Simon) are sat during an away friendly match. Edwin and Daniel are among the starting line-up playing on pitch. When there is an opportunity to score for Edwin, the substitute players comment on the happenings on pitch.

1. Conor: [laut rufend] Edwin

[yelling loudly] Edwin

2. Ahmet: [laut rufend] Komm … Ja komm Junge

[yelling loudly] Come on … Yes come on lad

3. Player 1: [laut rufend] Jetzt

[yelling loudly] Now

4. [Edwin schießt aufs Tor, aber sein Schuss wird von einem gegnerischen Spieler abgefälscht, das Spiel geht weiter; zeitgleich gucken die Auswechselspieler gespannt zu und schweigen kurz]

[Edwin shoots at the goal, but his ball is deflected by an opposing player, the game continues; simultaneously the substitutes are watching tensely not talking for a short time]

5. Daniel: [auf dem Feld, laut rufend] Weiter weiter

[on pitch, yelling loudly] Keep it up keep it up

6. Player 2: [auf dem Feld, laut rufend] hinter der Linie

[on pitch, yelling loudly] behind the line

7. // [Edwin schießt erneut aufs Tor, aber trifft daneben] \

*// [Edwin shoots at the goal again but misses] *

8. / [Leises gemeinsames Gelächter auf der Bank, einige Spieler schauen kichernd runter] \\

*[Low joint laughter on the bench, some players are looking down giggling] *

9. Pascal: [in schockiert klingendem Tonfall] Das gibt's nicht

[in a shocked sounding tone of voice] Not for real

10. [Stille, Auswechselspieler kichern und gucken runter]

[Silence, substitutes are giggling and looking down]

11. Pascal: [in lächelndem Tonfall] Was war das denn ?

[using smile voice] What was that ?

12. Kevin: Unser Edwin [lacht] Kann nicht mal das Tor machen

Our Edwin [laughs] Can't even make that goal

13. Ahmet: / [kichert, in lächelndem Tonfall] Er is richtig sauer ich schwöre \\

*/ [giggles, using smile voice] He is really angry I swear *

14. Simon: [laut rufend] Komm Osi ey … Weiter weiter

[yelling loudly] Come on Osi ey … Keep it up keep it up

Forming the basis of this particular interaction – as is the case during any match situation – is the division of the team into starting line-up and substitute players. The CofP is therefore split into two embedded CofPs within the overarching CofP ab initio, which in itself has implications for the construction of collective identities here (Wilson, 2011). In the beginning of this episode, Conor, Ahmet and Player 1 (unidentified substitute out of the present players on the substitutes' bench) are loudly rooting for Edwin who is playing on pitch by yelling his name and cheers of encouragement (lines 1-3). The substitute players appear to thereby bridge the gap between pitch and bench demonstrating support and constructing team unity for the overarching CofP. While being spatially and hierarchically segregated, the collective identity of the entire team is discursively strengthened as a consequence. In what follows, the substitutes appear to be engrossed in the match watching tensely and quietly how Edwin misses a shot (line 4). On pitch, Daniel and Player 2 (unidentified player of starting line-up) loudly cheer Edwin on and give a directive (lines 5 and 6) – again constructing a collective identity showcasing support and team spirit.

Then, when Edwin shoots at the goal a second time, missing once more (line 7), the situation appears to shift, as his mistake is responded to by low joint laughter on the bench, with some substitutes looking down giggling (line 8). The low volume of laughter as well as the fact that some substitute players are looking down trying to

hide their faces can be interpreted as the perceived need to hide their amusement because they are supposedly breaking the unspoken rule or etiquette of supporting one's own team members no matter what (Lennox Terrion & Ashfort, 2002, Zajdman, 1995). Another contributing factor to their attempted hiding of amusement likely is the fact that the coaches are in ear-shot. Therefore, in order not to be scolded for their behaviour, the substitute players have to keep the volume down. As a result, the substitutes create their own in-group laughing about the mistake of one of the players in the starting line-up (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997). Apart from having a bonding function, the amusement may also be interpreted as a coping mechanism for not being on the starting line-up themselves, as the substitute players find themselves in a difficult situation with potentially conflicting feelings of wanting individual and collective success – which are not always compatible. Therefore, the team-internal rivalry comes into play adding another dimension to the interpretation of the interaction. While there is a lot to be said about such power dynamics, I will concentrate on the aspect of team cohesion negotiated through humour only.

Pascal, in a regular volume indicating that his utterance is meant for the players on the substitute's bench only, states his disbelief about the miss in a tone of voice suggesting shock (line 9). He is thus distancing himself from Edwin and the happenings on the pitch drawing on the in-group of substitute players. After a short moment of silence, the substitute players giggle again and look down hiding their faces in support of Pascal's utterance hence strengthening the in-group (Hay, 1995, 2001). Presumably encouraged by this reaction, Pascal using smile voice questions Edwin's move further (line 10). His smile indicates a humorous intention allowing the interpretation that he is ridiculing Edwin for entertainment (Hay, 2001, Holmes, 2006). In response, Kevin first positions Edwin as part of the bigger team using the pronoun "our" (line 11). The positioning is here potentially significant on a different level as well, as Kevin just joined the second team coming down from the first and is thus still negotiating his own place. Therefore, by saying "our Edwin", Kevin constructs himself as part of the team, too. He laughs and adds that he "can't even make that goal" joining Pascal in mocking Edwin effectively othering him (Jackson, 2014, Ridanpää, 2014). Pascal's and Kevin's teasing style here can be described as

nipping because the players are mocking Edwin's performance as opposed to not attacking him directly through humour (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997, Schnurr, 2009). In addition, they are constructing a collective identity for the substitute players using a collaborative humour style (Schnurr, 2009). However, Kevin's attempt at mocking Edwin can be interpreted as partly failed, as Ahmet is the only player employing the humour support strategies of giggling and building on Kevin's turn (line 13) (File & Schnurr, 2019).

Both the observational and audio-recorded data suggests that the mockery of absent as well as present players when a mistake is made appears to be common practice and part of the team's shared repertoire. It is thus not out of the ordinary to be making fun of Edwin's mistake. Nevertheless, Simon does not join in the mockery but rather interrupts it by continuing with loud cheers for the team on the pitch (line 14), thereby rejecting the in-group of mocking Edwin. It can only be assumed that Simon does not join in othering Edwin further (other than giggling and laughing) due to him being the first captain. As explicitly mentioned during the interview, he is well aware of having a role model function as captain of FC Anonymous II and sees his task in bringing the team members together – not fragmenting them into sub-groups as is happening here. Then again, the observational data of the day of the recording shows that Simon is adamantly against having been made a substitute player in the first place. On the car ride home, he angrily speaks about the head coach Holger making him a substitute, which he doesn't feel is right due to his captaincy. Through cheering, Simon is therefore demonstrating unity constructing a 'selfless' identity for himself distancing himself from the 'bitter' substitute players on the bench and positioning himself closer to the starting line-up.

In contrast to example 4.1.3, where the interlocutors are teasing an absent other who is *not* part of the CofP (namely, conditioning coach Samir), the teasing of an absent other who *is* part of the CofP (i.e., Edwin) appears more complex with regards to the effects on team cohesion – placing the teasing style here between bonding and biting namely nipping (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997).

Generally speaking, the four examples discussed in this section support Boxer and Cortés-Conde's (1997) argument that teasing "runs along a continuum of bonding to nipping to biting" (p. 279) with the boundaries being fuzzy. However, while the authors see the presence of the butt of a tease as a requirement for an exchange to be identified as teasing, I include the possibility of teasing someone absent as well. As outlined in 4.1, multi-turn teases are understood as banter, and in banter it is possible to target an absent other (Dynel, 2008, Plester & Sayers, 2007, Schnurr, 2010). I would therefore argue that when interpreting teasing, one must consider who is on the receiving end, how and whether the humour is being supported and who contributes to it. Within this specific CofP, this rather challenging way of using humour is typically used to signal group membership in what I would call *temporarily embedded* CofPs within the overarching team CofP aiding in the construction of sometimes competing individual and collective identities (Schnurr, 2010, Wenger, 1998a, Wilson, 2011).

Furthermore, the varying teasing styles displayed by this team of players illustrate how the discursive norms in negotiating team cohesion of this particular team CofP are constantly being re-negotiated and re-developed (see also Schnurr, 2009). When a member oversteps the "boundaries of what is perceived as acceptable and normative behaviour" (Schnurr & Chan, 2011, p. 25) among members of this particular CofP (supported by interview data as evident in 4.1.2), the team is split into temporarily embedded sub-groups potentially fragmenting the interactants. All in all, the vast majority of humour instances collected with FC Anonymous II can be regarded as nipping to biting in style. The normative way of using humour within this CofP is then characterised by a rather 'rough tone', which was also reported by some of the players during their interviews. Constructing a rough tone as part of the shared repertoire in action as well as reproducing this observation during interviews determines how team cohesion is negotiated in this specific context. The phenomenon of team cohesion among members of the team thus appears more complex than the definitions introduced in the literature review allude to. A seemingly more forward humour strategy with regards to its' implications for team

cohesion and identity construction appears to be self-directed humour – also part of the team's shared negotiated repertoire.

4.2 Building solidarity through self-directed humour

Due to its regular occurrence among the members of FC Anonymous II, self-directed humour is also regarded as an integral aspect of the team's shared negotiated repertoire of discursive strategies used to negotiate cohesion. Describing the phenomenon of humorous utterances directed at the speaker themselves, the terms self-denigrating and self-deprecating humour have also been used – sometimes interchangeably (e.g. Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997, Dynel, 2008, Hester, 2010, Saucier, O'Dea & Strain, 2016, Schnurr & Chan, 2011, 2017, Vine, et al., 2009, Zajdman, 1995). However, in order to include not only self-denigration but also ironic self-praise, I prefer to employ the impartial wording self-directed humour.

As with other forms of humour, self-directed humour is used to manage relations, do identity work and create solidarity and commonality among other functions (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997, Raymond, 2014, Schnurr & Chan, 2017, Zajdman, 1995). Self-directed humour can further be directed at the speaker alone or target a group that the speaker is member of (Raymond, 2014, Zajdman, 1995). It has been established that all humour instances including self-directed humour are "potentially face-threatening for both speaker (because the humour may fail) and listeners (because they may fail to understand the humour)" (Schnurr & Chan, 2011, p. 21, see also Zajdman, 1995). In addition, according to Zajdman (1995), choosing to humiliate oneself with an audience present can be very beneficial in the management of relations. In support of this, Schnurr and Chan (2017) argue that by making oneself the butt of the humour laughing at one's own mistakes or shortcomings may make the speaker seem more approachable or modest. It consequently helps in downplaying status differences and reinforces solidarity (Schnurr & Chan, 2017).

I will now move on to the description and interpretation of two self-directed humour extracts chosen for analysis. Again, there are numerous other examples of self-directed humour in the dataset that could have been selected as well. The following

two examples (4.2.1 and 4.2.2) have been deemed representative of the self-directed humour norms within this CofP as they illustrate two differing effects of self-directed humour common within this context: targeting oneself individually and as part of a collective.

4.2.1 Example 5: "Mine may have been sold once"

The first self-directed humour episode to be analysed takes place before the start of a training session with some players including Kevin, Conor, and Simon assembled in the locker room. During their conversation some are changing into their training kit, others are sitting on their seats. They talk about the famous professional football player Neymar Jr, who officially transferred to Paris Saint-Germain for a record-sum only three days before the conversation takes place.

1. Kevin: Neymar's neues Trikot wurde schon 10.000 mal verkauft
[schnaubt lachend]
Neymar's jersey has been sold 10,000 times already [snorts laughingly]

2. Conor: [in beeindruckt klingendem Tonfall] // Echt ? \
[in an impressed sounding tone of voice] *// For real ? *

3. Simon: / Neymar's ? \\
*/ Neymar's ? *

4.   [Überschneidende Gespräche]
[Overlapping talk]

5. Simon: Die holen alles wieder rein // (der kostet ne) \
*They recoup everything // (he costs right) *

6. Kevin: <u>[in lächelndem Tonfall] / Ich spiel seit zwei Jahren bei Anonymous und meins wurde vielleicht ein Mal verkauft \\</u>
<u>*[using smile voice] / I've played two years for Anonymous and mine may have been sold once* \\</u>

7. Conor: [lacht laut]
[laughs loudly]

8. Kevin: [in lächelndem Tonfall] Simon seit 2 Jahren spiel ich bei

Anonymous meins wurde ein Mal von meinem

[using smile voice] Simon for two years I'm playing for

Anonymous once mine has been

9. Simon: // [lacht] \

*// [laughs] *

10. Kevin: / [lacht] \\ ah ne das hab ich ja geschenkt das zählt gar nicht

/ [laughs] \\ oh no I gifted that that doesn't count

11. Simon: [lacht]

[laughs]

12.   [Gespräch über welche Trikots der Spieler der ersten

Mannschaft wohl am besten verkauft werden]

[Talk about which jerseys of the 1st team players may be sold

best]

In the beginning of this episode Kevin, Conor and Simon express their disbelief and deference about the sales figures of Neymar Jr's jersey since transferring to Paris Saint-Germain only three days prior to the conversation (lines 1-5). In line 6 Kevin then states in a smiling tone of voice that despite having played for Anonymous (here referring to the first team, thus the 'pros') for two years already, his jersey has been sold only once thereby humorously contrasting himself with Neymar Jr. Kevin employs self-directed humour of derogatory nature making fun of his own poor sales figures presumably due to his lack of fame and success (as evident in observational data). His utterance can also be understood as tongue-in-cheek therefore not meant literally, which points to the ambiguous nature of humour (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997, Crawford, 2003, Haugh, 2016, Schnurr, 2009, Schnurr & Chan, 2017). Kevin's self-directed humour performs a range of interpersonal functions possibly deriving from him coming down to the second team (as discussed in 4.1.4). He is creating solidarity among interlocutors while downplaying his own status and minimising possible status differences among the players (Schnurr & Chan, 2017).

Also, as has been argued by Zajdman (1995), "[p]aradoxically, the apparent inferiority presented […] may also bear a message of superiority" (p. 338). By drawing attention to a possible weakness such as his lack of fame evident in the low jersey sales, Kevin may construct a strong identity for himself, as "[w]hen you laugh at yourself, you are in control of the situation" (Zajdman, 1995, p. 338) leaving the other players to figure out whether the humorous utterance "was meant seriously and how to interpret and respond to the inherent face-threat" (Schnurr & Chan, 2011, p. 21). While Conor loudly laughs (line 7) supporting Kevin's self-directed humour, the others remain silent (Bell, 2009a, Dynel, 2008, Hay, 1995, 2001, Schnurr, 2010) – possibly revealing their difficulties in interpreting the utterance by Kevin.

Explicitly addressing team captain Simon, Kevin then reiterates his humorous comment directed at himself (line 8). The recordings show that during my time of fieldwork Kevin predominantly addresses Simon when speaking in the locker room. I would argue that this is connected with Kevin trying to earn his place within the second team. By addressing the captain of the team, he is engaging with the person of the highest formal status within the CofP – and therefore possibly the gatekeeper – in order to gain respect and negotiate his membership. Despite being a former first team player, Kevin thus appears to have to work his way up within the close-knit CofP by conforming with the group norms and – as evidenced in this example – by presenting himself as likeable which is another possible effect of self-directed humour (Zajdman, 1995, Schnurr & Chan, 2017). His second attempt of self-directed humour is here interpreted as successful because Simon supports his humour with laughter (line 9) (Bell, 2009a, Dynel, 2008, Hay, 1995, 2001, Schnurr, 2010).

Possibly encouraged by this humour support, Kevin laughs and adds more self-directed humour 'slagging' himself even further (Hay, 1995, 2001). Through his utterance "oh no I gifted that that doesn't count" (line 10), he is taking back the before-mentioned single jersey sale denying himself success and fame. By doing so, Kevin conforms with the group's discursive norms of ironically using humour to make oneself the butt. It can further be argued that by constructing an unsuccessful identity for himself, Kevin is distancing himself from the first team in an attempt to

gain stronger in-group status to the second team (Vine, et al., 2009). As Simon reacts again with laughter (line 11), he once more supports the self-directed humour by Kevin with the effect of enhancing solidarity and accepting Kevin as an in-group member (Bell, 2009a, Dynel, 2008, Hay, 1995, 2001, Schnurr, 2010). By distancing himself from his former team and using self-directed humour, Kevin constructs himself as an in-group member negotiating cohesion. Group membership management and identity construction here can be seen as conducive to the processes of cohering.

4.2.2 Example 6: "They had such hopes that Anonymous professionals would come"

The next example of self-directed humour ridiculing the status of FC Anonymous II as the club's second team 'only' happened twice during the recordings. Here, before playing an away match, some players walk across the pitch talking about why there are so many stalls and spectators for a what they call an 'undistinguished friendly game' in a rather remote area. Involved in the following exchange are Player 1 (unidentified), Daniel, Simon, and Vitali.

1. Player 1:   Was machen die ?

   What're they doing ?

2. Daniel: Jubiläum

   Jubilee

3. Simon: Ja man 50 Jähriges

   Yes man 50 years

4. Vitali: [lachend] Junge die hatten so Hoffnung dass Anonymous
   Profis kommen oder so safe
   *[laughingly] Lad they had such hopes that Anonymous
   professionals would come or what not safe*

5. Simon: [lächelnd] Ja is richtig die haben schon alles abgesperrt da an
   der Straße und so
   *[smilingly] Yes's true they have barred everything there on the
   street and what not*

6. Vitali: [lächelnd] Das is nur wegen [Demo Name] hier

7.   [Gemeinsames Gelächter inklusive Vitali]

        [Joint laughter including Vitali]

In lines 1 to 3 Player 1, Daniel and Simon establish that the football club they are playing against is celebrating its 50-year jubilee, which is the reason for the festive setup of the pitch and surrounding area. By referring to the opposing team with "they" (lines 1 and 4), Player 1 is creating an 'us vs. them' dichotomy discursively distancing himself from the opponent (Dynel, 2008, Yuval-Davis, 2010). Thereafter, Vitali laughingly states that 'they' were hoping for the "Anonymous professionals" (line 4) to be the opponent, which is how members of FC Anonymous II regularly refer to the first team of their club (as evident in observational and audio data). Vitali hence uses self-directed humour to ridicule the second team as a whole by suggesting that they are not as desirable and glorious as an opponent as the first team. Vitali hence suggests that the entire festive set-up would make more sense if the more prestigious first team would have come to play at the time of the jubilee in comparison to their own team. His laughter in the utterance underlines his humorous intention supposedly mitigating the face threat towards the players on his team (Holmes & Stubbe, 2015). A second other is established throughout the interaction, as Vitali distances his team not only from the opponents but also his own club's first team (Jackson, 2014, Ridanpää, 2014). According to Raymond (2014), self-directed humour "is often used within groups to [...] show commonality and solidarity, emphasizing that all parties present have membership in the group being made fun of" (p. 108). On an interpersonal level Vitali's utterance emphasises that they are 'all in the same boat' reinforcing solidarity among members of the CofP (Schnurr & Chan, 2017). Another possible interpretation would be that Vitali uses self-directed humour as a coping mechanism for not being on the first team himself (Saucier, et al., 2016). However, not wanting to denigrate himself only – which would position him as an out-group member – he draws on the collective identity of FC Anonymous II as the collective butt of his humour attempt.

Subsequently, Simon smilingly agrees by suggesting that this is indeed the reason why everything is barred (line 5). The captain therefore supports the self-directed humour by adding to the play frame of junior player Vitali (Attardo, 2001, Laineste, 2013, Marsh, 2014). But as no one apart from him supports Vitali's self-directed humour attempt, it can be speculated that Vitali may have crossed a line by denouncing the second team as a whole (Burdsey, 2011, File & Schnurr, 2019, Holmes & Hay, 1997) – possibly intertwined with his junior status. Supporting this claim is further audio-data of self-directed humour aimed at the collective, where similar to this extract the humour is only partly supported, hence partly fails as well – again possibly due to CofP specific boundaries of appropriateness (File & Schnurr, 2019, Holmes & Hay, 1997, Marsh, 2014). This effectively splits the interlocutors into sub-groups of humour supporters and those denying their support through unlaughter highlighting and promoting disagreement.

As a reaction to Simon's utterance, Vitali states that the reason for the barred streets is a rally (line 6) – referring to a rally happening the same day in the city where FC Anonymous II is situated. He is therefore drawing on group knowledge of having spoken about this rally before (evident in observational data). As Vitali is not likely to mean the utterance in a literal sense, it can be interpreted as irony (Hay, 1995, Kotthoff, 2003, Ridanpää, 2014). "Among close friends, irony very often alludes to group knowledge" (Kotthoff, 2003, p. 1390) – as is the case with this utterance. Vitali is thus constructing a collective team identity positioning himself as part of the team. As every present player reacts to Vitali's utterance with laughter (line 7), his humour attempt is interpreted as successful (Bell, 2009a, Hay, 1995, 2001, Schnurr & Chan, 2011). As a result, harmony and unity appear reinstalled and solidarity among team members is enhanced (Hay, 1995, 2000, 2001, Holmes & Stubbe, 2015, Plester & Sayers, 2007).

Directing humour at the individual self appears to be less risky than directing it at a collective that the audience is part of, as the inherent face threat is minimised. Therefore, as long as the limits of appropriateness are not breached, both self-directed humour cases arguably enhance solidarity and construct team cohesion

among interlocutors (Hay, 1995, 2000, 2001, Holmes & Stubbe, 2015, Plester & Sayers, 2007).

Furthermore, both in this example and in 4.1.1 above we observe the possibility of a humour attempt falling partly flat (Bell, 2009a, Hay, 2001, File & Schnurr, 2019, Zajdman, 1995). While not being understood as a humour category such as teasing or self-directed humour itself, failed humour too has important implications for the construction of identities as well as the negotiation of cohesion among members of the CofP (File & Schnurr, 2019). As such, it illustrates how the group's shared discursive norms are being negotiated in action, which is why I will turn to the analysis of failed humour in analysis chapter 6.

4.3 Discussion: Confrontational humour and the negotiation of team cohesion

In this chapter I have undertaken a micro-analysis of one specific aspect of the shared negotiated repertoire of FC Anonymous II, namely the team members' use of different kinds of conversational humour. As discussed before (see 3.1), humour has emerged as a characterising element of the shared repertoire due to its regular occurrence. The focus on humour allows the examination of how team cohesion can empirically be captured and approached as discursively constructed and negotiated within this specific CofP – hence addressing RQs i and ii. Moreover, the analytical observations of this chapter show how the players construct and negotiate their individual and collective identities and manage group membership positions as processes of cohering in this particular context.

Applying the teasing continuum introduced by Boxer and Cortés-Conde (1997), I have examined four interactional examples of different teasing styles common among the members of the CofP under investigation (4.1). With humour being ambiguous in nature, teasing has the potential to bind and fragment the team – often simultaneously (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997, Dynel, 2008, Schnurr, 2009, Wolfers, et al., 2017). Despite analysing four examples along the teasing continuum, the most

widespread and commonly used humour type among members of this CofP appears to be characterised as rather challenging including *biting teasing* (Boxer & Cortés-Conde 1997, Schnurr, 2013). Based on the above analysis, it appears that when directed at a present team member, teasing takes on a rather challenging tone with the addressee being put down. Such a biting teasing style is usually supported by the present team members – although not necessarily by the butt of the tease. Good relations among team members 'sharing a laugh' are consequently maintained and solidarity is enhanced (Hay, 2001, Holmes, 2006). At the same time, the butt often not supporting the biting tease – evident in unlaughter – is placed as a temporary out-group member (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997, Marsh, 2014).

A bonding teasing style has been identified when players target an absent other who is not part of their CofP. Rather than challenging or fragmenting present team members, this teasing style reinforces solidarity and accentuates common ground (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997, Schnurr, 2009). Lying in the middle of the continuum combining both bonding and biting is the nipping teasing style, which here occurs when directed at an absent team member. While the butt of the tease is typically being othered and marginalised, the members engaged in the banter bond through collaboratively performed humour (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997, Dynel, 2008, Holmes & Stubbe, 2015). When engaged in teasing the players position themselves and others through discourse and construct sometimes competing individual and collective identities resulting in temporarily embedded CofPs within the overarching team CofP (Schnurr, 2010, Wenger, 1998a, Wilson, 2011).

The range of teasing styles of FC Anonymous II further illustrates a constant re-negotiation of the discursive norms of this particular CofP. Moreover, the responses to the teasing allow to draw conclusions about the socially accepted limits of humour within this CofP (Hester, 2010, Laineste, 2013, Marsh, 2014). Overstepping these boundaries often splits the team into sub-groups with team fragmentation as a possible function (Schnurr & Chan, 2011). This also applies to the second section of the analysis focused on self-directed humour as a means of building solidarity among team members (4.2). Similar to teasing, the responses to such humour have

detrimental effects on team unity and identity construction (Schnurr & Chan, 2017). Within this CofP it appears common to direct humour at oneself on an individual level as well as on a collective level including one's team members as butts of the humour. The self-directed humour analysed is of self-denigrating nature making fun of the speaker's individual and collective shortcomings (Schnurr & Chan, 2017, Zajdman, 1995). Using such humour has been shown to be useful to minimise status differences, portraying oneself as likable and creating solidarity (Schnurr & Chan, 2017). Similar effects could be observed in the football team analysed here, where cohesion among interlocutors is negotiated and good relations are maintained with the limits of appropriateness not being breached (Hay, 1995, 2000, 2001, Holmes & Stubbe, 2015, Plester & Sayers, 2007). However, overstepping these limits can cause the self-directed humour to fall partly flat – here often when targeting the collective (Bell, 2009a, Hay, 2001, File & Schnurr, 2019, Zajdman, 1995). In these cases, the speaker makes claims for a collective identity which (parts of) the audience may not endorse and consequently may not support the self-directed humour including them as butts.

With its detailed analysis of different uses of humour among team members, this chapter has laid the groundwork for the following two analysis chapters by providing an understanding of the normative general tone of the shared repertoire among members of FC Anonymous II. Through different humour strategies, styles and responses, team cohesion among members of the CofP is dynamically negotiated and constructed in interaction. At the same time, identity claims are made by and for participants on the individual as well as on the team level. Also, players negotiate their group membership through humour – all part of the discursive processes of cohering. I have shown how team members cohere with one another as well as how members may have to accept being constructed as butts or out-group members at times.

In what follows, I will focus on an accepted and common humour strategy that can be described as particularly biting as it marginalises interlocutors based on differences in their racialised backgrounds – namely racialised humour. I will

demonstrate how players of FC Anonymous II regularly draw on stereotypes along racialised lines as part of their normative ways of humorously engaging with each other and how this impacts on the processes of cohering.

5. Racialised humour as a means of negotiating team cohesion?

In the preceding chapter it was established that among the members of FC Anonymous II the normative and accepted way of interacting includes a competitive and biting humour style. It forms an integral part of the shared negotiated repertoire and demonstrates how team cohesion is constructed and negotiated in this CofP. As has been argued, the negotiation of team cohesion can be better understood by examining processes of alignment with the shared norms within this CofP. Therefore, the shared use of a confrontational humour style can be described as a process of cohering among members of FC Anonymous II. But what about a humour strategy that explicitly draws on what differentiates members rather than unites them? How does such a humour strategy impact on the processes of cohering in this specific context? This chapter explores these questions.

In this chapter I will focus on racialised humour due to the prominence of the distinct humour strategy in this CofP, its complex implications for identity construction, and ways in which group membership claims are being managed. Racialised humour, briefly discussed in 2.3.3, foregrounds differences in 'race', culture, national background, and language skills thereby talking boundaries into being (Holmes & Marra, 2002a, Park, et al., 2006, Vine, et al., 2009, Wolfers, et al., 2017). As a consequence, racialised humour may create "distinctive subgroups thereby fragmenting the team and assigning and foregrounding racial identities" (Wolfers, et al., 2017, p. 83) while – often simultaneously – it may facilitate, maintain or enhance team cohesion.

Analysing six interactional examples, I will demonstrate that team cohesion as a discursively negotiated process is more complex than previous research shows. I will consider how the use of racialised humour impacts on processes of cohering by shedding light on players' discursive alignment with racialised ideologies. Here again, a particular focus will be put on the construction of identities and the management of group membership status.

I will start by outlining my understanding of racialised humour as well as the terminology used (5.1). I will also discuss the connection between racialised humour and the negotiation of team cohesion as presented in the literature. The analysis is divided into two parts based on the interactants involved in the racialised humour interactions: self-directed (5.2) and other-directed racialised humour (5.3). Self-directed racialised humour is argued to have an empowering function fostering in-group cohesion while other-directed racialised humour has the potential to marginalise and other players based on (perceived) differences in their respective racialised backgrounds (e.g. Hylton, 2012, 2018, Juni & Katz 2001, Saucier, et al., 2016). Therefore, the question of who initiates the humorous remark and who is targeted strongly impacts on the construction of identities as well as processes of cohering (e.g. Gockel & Kerr, 2015, Haugh, 2016, Schnurr, 2010). To approach the ambiguity between bonding and separation, I will analyse six examples of interactional data. To bring an interpretative lens to the behaviour and help shape a broader interpretation of the ways racialised humour functions, players' perspectives from the interview data will be introduced in addition (5.4). Lastly, the analyses will be discussed in light of the focus of the thesis more broadly to make claims about how racialised humour is used to align with certain ideologies negotiating team cohesion as a discursive process (5.5).

5.1 Racialised humour and aspects of team cohesion – an overview

The term *racialised humour* is used here in a broader sense to describe any humorous utterance that draws on 'race'-based stereotypes and narratives, as well as national, cultural or ethno-religious categories directed at a collective or individual self or other (e.g. Hylton 2017, Pérez 2017, Sharpe & Hynes 2016, Wolfers, et al., 2017). Racialised thus refers to processes of discursively reproducing ideas, ideologies and stereotypes based on the concept of 'race' and beyond. I have decided in favour of this relatively broad understanding to take account of the different categories made relevant through humour within this CofP. In addition, as was established earlier in section 3.7.2.4 of the methodology chapter, members of the team themselves have identified sub-groups based on differences in nationality, culture and ethnicity ("the

Germans", "the Blacks"/"the Blackies", and "the foreigners") – and co-construct these in and through the use of racialised humour.

While I am aware of both the tendency of researchers to shy away from calling the potentially discriminatory humour strategy *racist* (Pérez, 2017, Sue & Golash-Boza, 2013) and the fact that many instances of the data collected could be read as such, I decided to use the more neutral term *racialised*. The reason for this is that I am also including 'race'-based humour among members of minority groups within FC Anonymous II with which they are targeting their own in-group. Racialised humour naturally has the potential to be racist as it is linked to ideologies of racial oppression, but it also allows speakers of BIPOC backgrounds to reclaim racialised ideologies and stereotypes and humorously use them to target their own racialised in-group. If the term racist would be used instead, the right to self-determination for socio-historically and present-day marginalized and discriminated-against groups would be neglected. For this reason, I believe the term racialised allows for the humour strategy to also work as empowerment and resistance with prosocial effects for the speakers directing 'race'-based stereotypes at their own in-group (Juni & Katz 2001, Saucier, et al., 2016). Still, when a minority group within FC Anonymous II is targeted by e.g. white players using racialised humour, the humour strategy will additively be described as racist in the analysis.

These deliberations point to the above-mentioned contradictory functions inherent in racialised humour – often realised simultaneously. In his study on disparagement humour in a multi-ethnic all-male fraternity, Raymond (2014) highlights this ambiguity of racialised humour dividing und unifying the different ethnicities, cultures and religions within a CofP. He argues that one group

> targeting another with its humor could reflect the former's supposed or perceived superiority over the latter; and this, in turn, can serve to simultaneously *divide* the two groups as well as *unify* in solidarity the members within each separate group. (Raymond, 2014, p. 97)

Similarly, researching members of Maori and Pakeha groups in New Zealand, Holmes and Hay (1997) note that humour is used to both highlight similarities by drawing on

shared experiences and maintain boundaries between groups to signal the respective group membership status of the interactants. Racialised humour can therefore be understood as a means of marking boundaries by positioning interactants as in- and out-group members based on their racialised backgrounds (Holmes & Marra, 2002a, Pérez, 2017, Sharpe & Hynes, 2016). At the same time speakers agree "on the existence and significance of such boundaries, [and consequently] strengthen connections between themselves" (Holmes & Hay, 1997, p. 148) through their shared amusement in the case of successful humour.

As discussed in the literature review, this tension between unification and separation has been called the *paradox of duality* (Meyer, 2000). Another common metaphor used for describing stereotype-based humour such as racialised humour is the *sword and shield* paradox (Caparoso & Collins, 2015, Saucier, et al., 2016). In the case of racialised humour, targeting an in-group the speaker him- or herself belongs to is understood to work as a defence mechanism, hence as a *shield* (Caparoso & Collins, 2015, Hylton, 2018). It then helps to enhance bonding between members of this in-group and arguably also challenges and defends against prejudice (Saucier, et al. 2016). The *sword* however describes racialised humour that attacks, victimises, stigmatises or belittles minority groups (Caparoso & Collins, 2015, Saucier, et al., 2016) and thus constructs marginalised out-groups fragmenting the CofP.

This dilemma of interpreting racialised humour raises interesting questions about whether and/or to what extent (self-directed) racialised humour constitutes racism or not (Plester & Sayers, 2007, Sharpe & Hynes, 2016, Walton, et al., 2013, Wolfers, et al., 2017). An aspect often discussed in the literature is the question of whether racialised humour is being challenged or not – either by the butt(s) or someone else from the audience (Sue & Golash-Boza, 2013). According to Sue and Golash-Boza (2013) it is problematic when racialised humour remains unchallenged in that it helps to legitimise the connected stereotypes and as a consequence reinforces the view that it and they are harmless (see also Wolfers, et al., 2017).

A number of scholars have discussed racialised humour as contributing to the normalisation and manifestation of both the use and existence of racialised stereotypes among sports team members (Burdsey, 2011, Long, et al., 1997, Wolfers, et al., 2017). Most of these studies discuss racialised humour as a humour strategy that reproduces certain ideologies with the effect of constructing sub-groups based on racialised factors. However, to the best of my knowledge, how exactly the use of racialised humour among members of a group impacts on team cohesion as a discursive process has neither been examined in-depth nor has it been the primary focus of a study. The concepts of group membership claims and status are, however, mentioned repeatedly (e.g. Holmes & Marra, 2002a, Pérez, 2017, Sharpe & Hynes, 2016, Van De Mieroop & Schnurr, 2018, Wolfers, et al., 2017). In this chapter, I will add to the existing body of literature and illustrate how racialised humour used among members of FC Anonymous II impacts on processes of cohering.

As discussed in the methodology chapter (see 3.7.2.4) I will be using the terminology used by the members of FC Anonymous II themselves to describe racialised interactants. I will start by analysing three examples of self-directed racialised humour focusing on how team cohesion is negotiated in these interactions in the next section.

5.2 *Self-directed* racialised humour and the negotiation of team cohesion

In order to better understand the process of in-group marking through self-directed racialised humour, I analyse three examples of spoken data and discuss how they constitute processes of cohering in this CofP. All three examples involve minority players who make humorous remarks about their own in-group. In the first two examples, the speakers initiate the racialised humour themselves, while in the third example the speaker is put on the spot reacting with self-directed racialised humour. In the next section I will focus on two questions: Firstly, how does the alignment with racialised ideologies constructed through humour impact on identity construction? And secondly, how does it inform us about the negotiation processes of team cohesion?

5.2.1 Example 1: "Three Blacks is too much"

The first example of self-directed racialised humour occurs before the start of a training session. Some players sit in the locker room and speculate about who may be appointed to the starting eleven during their match on the following day. The three main interactants in the below exchange are senior players Osman, Daniel and Narek who have a close relationship (see 3.7.2.3). Osman and Daniel are both Black while Narek belongs to the group of foreigners ("Ausländer"). 'Race' is made relevant by reference to skin colour in lines 4 and 5.

1. Player 1:   Und du ?

    And you ?

2. Narek: Ich spiel [3 Sek Pause] Weiß nicht ob Simon // spielt \

    *I'm playing [3 sec silence] Dunno whether Simon's // playing *

3. Osman: / Ich weiß nicht \\ ich glaub das irgendwie nich also kann's mir nich vorstellen ... Warum denn ? Warum will er was ändern ? [2.5 Sek Pause]

    / I don't know \\ I kinda don't think so anyway I can't imagine it ... Why then ? Why does he want to change anything ? [2.5 sec silence]

4. Daniel: [in neutralem Tonfall] Er is Schwarzer [1,5 Sek Pause] Ja okay Schwarzer reicht ...

    [in a neutral tone of voice] He's a Black [1.5 sec silence] Yes okay Black is enough ...

5.   [in lächelndem Tonfall] aber wär zu doll drei Schwarze is zu doll [lächelt breit]

    [using smile voice] but it'd be too much three Blacks is too much [smiles broadly]

6. Osman: // Achso ja \ [unverständlich]

    // I see yeah \ [unintelligible]

7. / [Mutmaßungen darüber, welche Spieler eingesetzt werden, werden fortgeführt] \\

    */ [Speculations about which player will be appointed continue] *

The players involved in the above conversation speculate about who will likely be playing during the match the following day (lines 1-3). Narek in line 2 states that he does not know whether Simon, who is the captain of the team and thus usually among the starting eleven, will be playing. Osman responds that he cannot imagine "he" – likely referring to the head coach Holger who is the main decision maker – would want to make changes about the typical line-up that would include Simon as an outfield player (line 3).

Countering Osman's argument, Daniel in a neutral tone of voice utters "He's a Black" (line 4). To clarify, the player who would be appointed in Simon's place is Black. Daniel is thus making differences in skin colour explicit and uses them as an argument for or against being appointed to the squad. He is furthermore othering the absent player through his use of the pronoun "he" (Holmes & Marra, 2002a, Jaworski & Coupland, 2005). After a pause of 1.5 seconds Daniel adds "Yes okay Black suffices" (line 4). As Daniel is Black himself, he is making reference to an in-group he as well as Osman are members of and therefore creates boundaries based on differences in 'race'. During the time of data collection both Daniel and Osman made humorous comments about the number of Black players on the starting eleven. Based on this knowledge of the context I would argue, that here Daniel makes reference to in-group knowledge based on 'race' specific to him and Osman which strengthens their in-group status. Furthermore, the use of racialised stereotypes about athleticism and fitness of Blacks has been found to be part of the shared repertoire of the team (see also Anderson & McCormack, 2010). Daniel's remark can hence be interpreted as implying that being Black would be reason enough for being appointed to the starting line-up in Simon's place. In other words, being Black provides his constructed in-group with superiority over the out-group of non-Blacks (including Simon) consequently justifying the appointment of the absent Black player.

Using smile voice indicating humorous intent (Holmes, 2000), Daniel adds "but it'd be too much three Blacks is too much" (line 5) followed by a broad smile. As apart from the use of smile voice and a broad smile, Daniel is likely not literally meaning

that three Black players on the starting eleven would be "too much", the utterance is interpreted as being ironic (Bell, 2015, Kotthoff, 2003, Pexman & Olineck, 2002). With "three Blacks" he refers to himself, Osman and the absent Black player and aligns with the racialised group of three. By implying that for the head coach three Black players would be "too much" to appoint to the squad, Daniel's utterance can be interpreted as criticism of the "disempowered status of many Black men in [...] sport" (Anderson & McCormack, 2010, p. 949). Or, Daniel may build on his utterance in line 4 making another implicit reference to the racialised stereotype about the athletic prowess and muscularity of Black players (Anderson & McCormack, 2010). Then, three Black players would be "too much" to handle for the remaining group of non-Blacks on the team. Irrespective of what Daniel may be indexing here, he is discursively reinforcing the boundaries between the in-group of Blacks and the out-group of non-Blacks as well as authoritative figures from the football club marking the latter as potentially discriminatory. Claiming co-membership with the racialised in-group of Blacks (Van de Mieroop & Schnurr, 2018), Daniel is constructing in-group solidarity through alignment with the racialised ideology of Black athleticism. Consequently, his humorous utterance can also be read as an expression of resistance or a coping mechanism (Hylton 2017, 2018, Saucier, et al., 2016, Schnurr, 2010) by contrasting himself and his constructed in-group with the predominantly white players on the team.

In line 6 Osman supports Daniel's utterance by stating "I see yeah" which overlaps with further speculation about which player may be selected to play the following day (line 7). Osman therefore appears to accept the constructed in-group position of a Black athletic football player by supporting Daniel's humorous utterance aligning with the reference to stereotypes about 'race'. As a result of co-constructing membership of the racialised in-group solidarity among Daniel and Osman appears enhanced (Holmes & Hay, 1997, Pérez, 2017) which impacts the processes of cohering. Discursively constructing a racialised minority in-group embedded in the overarching team CofP however creates boundaries that fragment the team (Wolfers, et al., 2017).

Based on the observations during my fieldwork it can be added that Osman and Daniel have been othered as 'the Blacks' on several occasions without challenging the remarks directed towards them. Thus, they are aligning with a normalised racialised ideology of their CofP which could be understood to construct cohesion on a team-level. Additionally, through self-directed racialised humour solidarity among members of the (co-)constructed in-group of Blacks is being fostered as a process of cohering. In this example, Narek and Player 1 do not support the humour resulting in it falling partly flat (File & Schnurr, 2019). They are thus not taking part in the cohering processes in this interaction but by implication of passivity may inadvertently construct the use of such boundary-marking self-directed humour based on differences in 'race' as a way of negotiating cohesion among sub-group members embedded in the team.

5.2.2 Example 2: "Brother for us two months is … like two years for you"

The second example of self-directed racialised humour takes place during an athletic training session in the gym. The entire team executes different muscle building exercises while speaking to each other in smaller groups. Simon who has a Middle Eastern background and identifies as Muslim speaks with Henning who neither has a migration background nor voices any religious affiliation during data collection. Narek, who is present during the interaction, also identifies as Muslim and has a Middle Eastern background. Music is playing which drowns out a lot of the talk.

1. Simon: Hast du ne Freundin ?

   Do you have a girlfriend ?

2. Henning: (Hm)

   (Hm)

3. Simon: Ehrlich ? [unverständlich] seit zwei Monaten ?

   Really ? [inaudible] for two months now ?

4. Henning: [unverständlich]

   [inaudible]

5. Simon: [unverständlich]

   [inaudible]

6. [Unverständliche überlappende Gespräche]

   [Inaudible overlapping talk]

7. Simon: Bruder bei uns ist zwei Monate … so wie bei euch zwei Jahre

   (bei uns) [zeigt mit dem Kopf auf Narek] (is jetzt) eigentlich

   bist du jetzt verlobt schon

   Brother for us two months is … like two years for you (for us)

   [points his head at Narek] (it's) actually you are engaged now

   already

8. // [Gemeinsames Gelächter] \

   *// [Joint laughter] *

9. Simon: / [lachend] Allah Allah \\

   */ [laughingly] Allah Allah *

10. Player 1:   [in lächelndem Tonfall] Tschüüüss

    [using smile voice] Byyeee

11. Simon: Bei uns bist du zwei Monate verlobt sechs Monate Hochzeit

    For us you are two months engaged six months wedding

12. [Einige Spieler lachen]

    [Some players laugh]

13. [Gespräche und Training werden fortgeführt]

    [Talks and training continue]

While a lot of the talk is drowned by the music, in lines 1 to 6 Simon and Henning establish that Henning has had a girlfriend for two months. Asking a personal question (line 1) suggests that Simon and Henning are both close enough to speak about personal topics but also at the same time that they are not close enough so that Simon would know about Henning's relationship status. In line 7 Simon then sets up the play frame stating, "Brother for us two months is … like two years for you". There are many different aspects to this utterance that I will unpack here. Firstly, Simon starts his utterance with the familiariser "brother" that constructs a close relationship between him and Henning (Wilson, 2010). However, the familiariser 'brother' is being used daily among all members of the CofP which could also suggest that it is conventionalised and not necessarily a sign of particular closeness. Simon

continues his statement by setting up an in-group labelled "us", and an out-group labelled "you". Using these pronouns Simon marks himself as part of the in-group as opposed to the out-group, that he places Henning with (Holmes & Hay, 1997). Simon hence draws boundaries between both groups enhancing in-group cohesion by setting up an 'us vs. them' dichotomy (Dynel, 2008, Hendry, et al., 2016, Holmes & Marra, 2002a, Ladegaard & Cheng, 2014) while also creating solidarity by use of the familiariser aligning with shared team norms (Wilson, 2010).

Furthermore, apart from the pronouns, at the content-level Simon constructs the in- and out-group as having different views on the implications of the two-month duration of a relationship. By adding "(for us it's) actually you are engaged now already" (line 7) Simon constructs the in-group as having different expectations with regards to the transition of a relationship to different stages of commitment in comparison to the out-group. Simon's utterance may be interpreted as an ironic exaggeration to tease Henning (Schnurr, 2008, Vine, et al., 2009), rather than a factual statement. According to Vine et al. (2009) "[t]he use of an exaggerated stereotype as a source of entertainment is a well-attested feature of minority group humor" (p. 126). The minority group is constructed by Simon pointing his head at Narek when uttering "for us" assigning co-membership to him (Van De Mieroop & Schnurr, 2018). Because Simon and Narek have their national background as well as religion in common, it can be argued that Simon is referring to ethno-religious differences between the two constructed groups – thus, using racialised humour.

While the present players including Narek react with joint laughter (line 8) supporting the humour attempt and fostering solidarity (Hay, 2001, Holmes & Hay, 1997, Laineste, 2013, Marsh, 2014), Simon laughingly utters "Allah Allah" (line 9). He thereby adds to his own humour supporting the above interpretation that his humour attempt in line 7 refers to ethno-religious differences and associated stereotypes. Using the Arab word for God, Simon constructs a Muslim and Arab identity for himself and the in-group contrasting them with the predominant white ideology. By making an explicit reference to religion that adds another delimitative characteristic to the in-group, Simon further constructs the in-group as potentially

god-fearing thereby arguably reinforcing the boundary-marking function of his humour by foregrounding differences (Holmes & Marra, 2002a).

In reaction, an unidentified Player 1 smilingly replies with the commonly used hence normalised expression within this CofP "Tschüüüss" ("Byyeee", line 10). Among members of FC Anonymous II the expression is usually used to humorously express disapproval with the said (interpretation based on data collected) and can therefore be interpreted as humour support through adding more humour (Hay, 2011, Schnurr, 2010, Schnurr & Chan, 2011). In addition, as the expression is part of the shared repertoire, Player 1 is drawing on group knowledge constructing team cohesion (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997, Hendry, et al., 2016, Kotthoff, 2003). At the same time, he may be criticising Simon for reinforcing the boundaries set up. Then again, Player 1 here may be rejecting the notion of a committed relationship based on the constructed 'Muslim model'.

In line 11 Simon again adds to his humour frame by stating "For us you are two months engaged six months wedding". The constructed ethno-religious in-group of "us" is reinforced through the use of pronoun as well as another alleged characteristic of the in-group with regards to the implications of the duration of a relationship. Compared to the joint laughter in line 9, the restrained laughter of the audience in line 12 points towards the difficulties of interpreting self-directed humour that makes use of cultural stereotypes (Juni & Katz, 2001). Here again, the ambiguity of humour becomes tangible (Caparoso & Collins, 2015, Schnurr & Chan, 2011). Juni and Katz (2001) however argue that "despite overt appearances, self-directed humour adopted by an oppressed group is adaptive and beneficial to the group's integrity and emotional well-being" (p. 120) which could point towards Simon using racialised self-directed humour as a process of cohering with members of the racialised in-group. Based on my time spent with the team and especially Simon, I would argue here that he is ridiculing his own ethno-religious in-group in order to criticise the potential strictness of Islam rather than constructing the out-group in opposition to his own in-group as too casual. By contrasting himself with what he assumes to be Henning's or 'the Germans'' position he appears to align with

the dominant group of whites and the assumed connected ideology. Regardless of such speculation, Simon discursively fragments the team by talking the different sub-groups into being while at the same time reinforcing solidarity with Narek as part of his in-group as well as Henning by use of the familiariser 'brother' (Holmes & Hay, 1997, Pérez, 2017, Wilson, 2010). Team cohesion and group unity are ultimately negotiated through shared laughter (Gerhardt, 2009, Marsh, 2014, Wolfers, et al. 2017). After this humour episode the topic is changed and the conversations as well as the training continue.

The self-directed racialised humour here can again be understood to serve processes of cohering between the racialised in-group members first and foremost. Furthermore, self-directed racialised humour may help minority members feel empowered and as a consequence serve the entire team in that it creates a harmonious environment despite or while foregrounding differences. Therefore, having minority sub-groups embedded in a CofP construct solidarity and cohesion among them – often through aligning with common stereotypes about their own in-group – may be interpreted as part of how team cohesion is negotiated on a broader CofP level. In other words, here they may be doing unity in diversity by constructing a smaller CofP embedded in the main team CofP.

5.2.3 Example 3: "All Black dude with hood"

The last example of self-directed racialised humour happens before a friendly away match. Having arrived separately at the host ground, some players of FC Anonymous II gather on the pitch and talk about riots happening in their city. As reported by the players, during the previous night the 'black bloc' vandalised the area in which junior players Andre and Vitali live. The 'black bloc' is a loose formation of protestors united in an anti-capitalist sentiment and a willingness to use violence (Arte, 2019). According to media reporting they are usually white and wear black clothing including a hood and other identity-concealing items of black colour (Arte, 2019). The below conversation takes place between four players of whom all have migration background: Daniel East African, Andre and Vitali Eastern European, and Simon Middle Eastern. Daniel is therefore the only Black player present during the below

interaction. The players speculate about the next steps with regards to the riots in their hometown. In contrast to the two preceding examples of self-directed racialised humour, 'race' is here introduced as a reaction to another player initiating the humour frame. In addition, Daniel as the only Black player involved in this conversation directs the humour at himself only – not a present collective he is part of like in examples 5.2.1 and 5.2.2.

1. Daniel: Aber machen die weiter heute oder was ?
   But do they continue today or what ?

2. Andre: Ja heute wird richtig richtig // schlimm gestern Abend \
   *Yes today is going to be really really // bad yesterday evening *

3. Simon: / Heute wird glaub ich \\ // noch schlimmer \
   */ Today is going to be even \\ // worse I think *

4. Daniel: / Jaa jaa \\
   */ Yees yees *

5. Simon: // Heute Samstag \
   *// Today saturday *

6. Vitali: / [in lächelndem Tonfall an Daniel gerichtet] Gehst du ? \\
   */ [towards Daniel using smile voice] Are you going ? *

7. Daniel: [in lächelndem Tonfall] All Black Digga // mit Kapuze \ [lächelt]
   [using smile voice] All Black dude // with hood \ [smiles]

8. / [Gemeinsames Gelächter] \\
   */ [Joint laughter] *

9. [Daniel, Vitali, Andre und Simon scherzen weiter gemeinsam darüber, wie sie bei den Protesten mitmachen würden)
   [Daniel, Vitali, Andre and Simon collectively further joke about how they would take part in the riots]

In lines 1 to 5 Daniel, Andre and Simon speculate about how bad the riots are going to be that day. Based on both contextual cues and observational data, I argue that

the words "bad" (line 2) and "worse" (line 3) here refer to the destruction caused by protestors. According to reports of the media the players have previously been speaking about, the vandalism was mainly caused by the 'black bloc'. During the turns in lines 1 to 5, there are a lot of overlaps pointing towards a heightened involvement in the conversation (Schnurr, 2009, 2010, Schnurr & Chan, 2011). Furthermore, the turn-taking suggests collaborative floor management pointing towards a harmonious team environment mirroring processes of cohering (Holmes, 2006, Holmes & Marra, 2002a).

Having established that the riots may become even worse than the previous day, Vitali enters the conversation and asks Daniel using smile voice "Are you going ?" (line 6). With this suggestive question, Vitali singles out Daniel framing him as potentially joining the protestors to participate in the riots. Vitali thus others Daniel, which is softened by the use of smile voice indicating humour (Bell, 2015). In addition, Vitali presumably is aware that none of his team members would participate in the riots, which is why his nipping question is here interpreted as being ironic (Bell, 2015, Kotthoff, 2003, Pexman & Olineck, 2002). Strengthening this interpretation is the fact, that the previous day the players have already had a humorous conversation about the riots joking about what they would steal if they were to participate in the raids during the riots. Moreover, during that earlier conversation Daniel had already been targeted by Kevin with racialised humour suggesting he would take part in the riots (see example 5.3.1). Vitali therefore likely draws on group knowledge which, while othering Daniel, also aligns with a shared humour history (File & Schnurr, 2019, Holmes & Hay, 1997, Kotthoff, 2003) thus cohering with the team as a whole.

Being put on the spot, Daniel then enters the humour frame initiated by Vitali and responds with the humour support strategy of adding more humour by uttering "All Black dude with hood" (line 7) and smiling (Bell, 2009a, 2015, Hay, 2011, Schnurr, 2010, Schnurr & Chan, 2011). He also likely uses irony as he presumably does not really approve of joining the riots but rather links back to the humorous conversation of the previous day (Bell, 2015, Kotthoff, 2003, Pexman & Olineck, 2002). Hence,

Daniel both aligns with group knowledge and accepts being the butt of this racialised humour theme. He thereby co-constructs his out-group position of being a protestor cohering with Vitali's humour frame and suggestive remark. As in his German utterance Daniel also uses the English words "All Black", it cannot be said whether he refers to lowercase *b*lack representing the black clothing of the 'black bloc' or capital *B*lack representing Black skin colour. His smile voice and subsequent smile indicate that his humorous utterance is meant ambiguously though (Haugh, 2016, Raymond, 2014, Schnurr & Chan, 2011) therefore referring to both – which sets up the humour. As a consequence, the out-group position is further characterised by skin colour with Daniel constructing a racialised identity for himself contrasting himself with the predominant white ideology of the 'black bloc'. This again points towards the ambiguity of humour in that Daniel positions himself as part of the team based on shared knowledge as well as an outsider to the present team members based on skin colour and taking part in the riots. It furthermore illustrates how team cohesion may be negotiated through ambiguity and multi-layered group formations: while the self-directed racialised nature of the humour suggests a fragmentation of the team by exclusion of Daniel, team cohesion is being negotiated through shared reference points as well.

Amplifying the latter is the joint laughter of the present football players (line 8) who already start laughing during Daniel's utterance, thus supporting his self-directed racialised humour through laughter (Hay, 2001, Holmes & Hay, 1997, Laineste, 2013, Marsh, 2014). The early laughter points towards the audience recognising the possible reference to the humorous conversation of the previous day therefore aligning with Daniel's humour. Unity and solidarity are enhanced as a result of the shared amusement (Holmes & Hay, 1997, Rogerson-Revell, 2007, Schnurr, 2009).

Moreover, subsequent to the extract above, Daniel, Vitali, Andre and Simon collectively further joke about how they would take part in the riots (line 9) turning them into a "team celebration" ("Mannschaftsfeier", Simon). The racialised component of the humorous conversation hence is dropped and the remaining three players construct themselves as parts of the out-group of rioters as well – thereby

claiming co-membership with Daniel who has already accepted his out-group rioter position (Van De Mieroop & Schnurr, 2018). By that, they reinforce group unity and engage in a collaborative fantasy humour episode as a means of negotiating team cohesion now aligning with Daniel (Hay, 2001, Holmes, 2006, Holmes & Stubbe, 2015, Rogerson-Revell, 2007).

Even when no other racialised in-group member Daniel can align with is present he chooses to use self-directed racialised humour in reaction to being targeted by a humour attempt. He is hence on one hand accepting and co-constructing his marginalisation while on the other hand he aligns with the shared humour history characterised by racialised humour and common reference to him being Black. Cohering with the speaker and shared norms therefore may involve putting oneself in an out-group position. The inclusive group membership management of the pursuing conversation (line 9) can then be understood as a process of cohering on the superordinate team level irrespective of any racialised differences. This is a phenomenon further explored in the next chapter on failed humour where such processes of re-alignment arguably become even more crucial to the negotiation of team cohesion (chapter 6).

5.3 *Other-directed* racialised humour and the negotiation of team cohesion

While all three of the self-directed racialised humour instances presented above are supported through laughter or other humour support strategies, the below examples of humour targeting an individual or collective other than the speaker range from successful to failed. This will be further elaborated on in chapter 6 where focus is placed on (partly) failed humour as a general pattern within the CofP. The different hearer reactions have an impact on identity construction as well as how team cohesion is negotiated and constructed in these interactions. Park et al. (2006) argue that the background of the person making a racialised humour statement can dictate whether or not the utterance is racist. Therefore, especially when looking at other-directed racialised humour, what counts as acceptable in a given environment depends on who is speaking to what audience (Park, et al., 2006).

To begin with, I provide an example of one player who is particularly often targeted in a racialised manner by his teammates. As the only East Asian player on the team, Dae-Jung is often constructed in terms of ethnic stereotypes associated with 'Asianness' or his German language speaking skills. While Dae-Jung's responses to being targeted range from support to rejection (e.g. laughter, eye-rolling and giving the speaker the finger), he did not voice any frustration with the rough tone of the team's humour during his interview. On the contrary, when asked about a specific recurring stereotype-based humour theme about him eating cats, he laughed and reiterated "yes that was isn't important so I know it's fun but yeah I don't eat [giggles] […] therefore no problem" ("ja das war das ist nichts das ist nich wichtig also ich weiß dass Spaß ist aber ja ich esse nicht [kichert] […] deswegen kein Problem", interview data, Dae-Jung). Although Dae-Jung's assessment downplayed the humour as non-serious and unproblematic, he still clarified to the researcher that he did not really eat cats. This points towards a perceived need to put the humour into perspective which is interpreted as rejecting the racist stereotype used for teasing him.

When asked about such instances involving Dae-Jung as the butt and mainly Kevin as the speaker, junior player Fabian in his interview stated that in the beginning he took it more serious when Kevin targeted Dae-Jung. But after a while he reportedly knew Kevin's humour better and did not take it serious anymore. Burdsey (2011) calls this a "tolerance zone" (p. 278) where "certain forms of racism are trivialized or ignored, and particular epithets or actions are exonerated". Kevin was observed using aggressive forms of humour frequently – especially along racialised lines. This normative confrontational interactional style paired with Kevin's senior age status supports an interpretation that junior players such as Dae-Jung may not challenge the racialised humour for reasons of power and rapport (Burdsey, 2011, Sue & Golash-Boza, 2013). As Rogerson-Revell (2007) maintains "one person's 'bullying' might be interpreted by someone else as 'good-natured bantering'" (p. 23) contributing to the normalisation of such potentially boundary-crossing humour. Moreover, Sue and Golash-Boza (2013) maintain that

> [a]fter repeatedly being subjected to racial jokes or humorous namecalling, many targeted individuals either develop a tolerance for the humour or perfect their conforming tendencies, convincing others that they are unfazed by such humour (p. 1590).

In most instances of racialised humour directed at Dae-Jung his reaction involves either laughs, smiles or doing nothing. The three different humour categories he is confronted with on a near daily basis are teasing him with the above stereotype of eating cats (e.g. "Did you have cat for breakfast today ?", "Hast du heute Katze gefrühstückt ?", audio-data, Kevin), calling him "China" while knowing he is from another Asian country, and mocking him for his German language skills and accent. When talking about how the players on the team got along Dae-Jung in his interview stated "all funny yes but sometimes too much so yes [...] we are young team that's why I think" ("alle lustig ja aber manchmal zu viel also ja [...] wir sind junge Mannschaft deswegen glaub ich", interview data). This quote points towards him seeing the boundaries of acceptance crossed at times while describing the team as young and fun. Besides, Dae-Jung made a point about how much he appreciated having two fellow countrymen in the wider club structures that he could speak to in his mother tongue. In his narrative about the team and club he thus appeared to construct himself as part of the club as much as part of the team which points towards the multi-layered nature of processes of cohering. In addition, it supports the argument of Wilson (2010, 2011) describing a sports club as a constellation of several differing CofPs with athletes constructing multi-membership of different CofPs.

Dae-Jung is not the only subject of such instances of humour where racialised stereotypes are utilised to target him though. To dig deeper and see what is happening on a discursive level when racialised humour targets other minority groups or individuals, I will now analyse three interactional examples. I will again shed particular light on identity construction and how the interactions impact the negotiation of team cohesion as a discursive process.

5.3.1 Example 4: "Don't even need to put on a mask"

The first example of other-directed racialised humour takes place during a recovery running exercise the day after an away match. The entire team jogs through natural surroundings close to the academy grounds. Coaches Holger, Sinan and I are riding bikes provided by the club. During the below extract I am riding alongside junior player Vitali (foreigner, "Ausländer") and senior player Daniel (Black) who humorously speak about the aforementioned riots accompanied with raids of local stores (see example 5.2.3). Before the transcript below starts, the two joke about wanting to clear out a famous electrical store naming different product like games, mobile phones and consoles they would potentially steal. Up until the below extract, junior player Fabian and senior player Kevin (Germans) who are jogging behind Vitali and Daniel listen to the humorous conversation between the latter two. In comparison to example 5.2.3 which takes place one day after the below extract, 'race' is here not made relevant by the minority group members themselves, but by a member of the dominant group of Germans.

1. Daniel: [lachend] Hier neuer Kühlschrank Mama [in verstellter Stimme] // neuer Kühlschrank jaa dann wär sie zu glücklich \
   *[laughingly] Here new fridge mum [in changed voice] // new fridge yees she'd be too happy then *

2. / [Gelächter] \\
   */ [Laughter] *

3. Daniel: [in verstellter Stimme] Neuer Kühlschrank [lacht]
   [in changed voice] New fridge [laughs]

4. Kevin: <u>[schließt leicht zu Vitali und Daniel auf; in lächelndem Tonfall] Daniel war auch in Demo ne ?</u>
   <u>*[slightly closes up on Vitali and Daniel; using smile voice] Daniel was also in riot right ?*</u>

5. Fabian: [lacht]
   [laughs]

6. Kevin: <u>[etwas lauter] Muss man aufpassen … Bei der (Name Stadtviertel) hab ich ihn gesehen … Ne Daniel ?</u>

		[slightly louder] One's gotta watch out … Saw him at (area name) … Right Daniel ?
7.	Daniel:	Was ?
		What ?
8.	Kevin:	Musst nicht mal Maske anziehen [lächelt]
		Don't even need to put on a mask [smiles]
9.	Daniel:	[in lächelndem Tonfall] Chiller Cappie reicht Cappie und Kapuze
		[using smile voice] Chiller cap's enough cap and hood
10.	Kevin:	[lacht]
		[laughs]
11.		[Konversation endet und die Spieler sprechen leiser miteinander]
		[Conversation ends and players start talking in lower voices]

In the beginning of this extract, Daniel successfully adds to the humour between him and Vitali with further irony about wanting to steal a fridge for his mother (lines 1-3). Up until this point in the conversation the fantasy humour between Vitali and Daniel was very collaborative and bonding in style (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997, Hay, 2001, Holmes, 2006, Holmes & Stubbe, 2015, Rogerson-Revell, 2007). Kevin then – slightly closing up on Vitali and Daniel who jog in front of him – enters the conversation for the first time asking "Daniel was also in riot right ?" (line 4) directed at no one in particular. Because he does not address Daniel directly but rather inquires *about* him, Kevin positions Daniel as an outsider (Holmes & Marra, 2002a, Jaworski & Coupland, 2005). This marginalisation is reinforced by Kevin suggesting that Daniel took part in the riots constructing a violent and potentially criminal identity for Daniel (see example 5.2.3). As he does not utter his nipping humour attempt very loudly and is still positioned behind Vitali and Daniel, it cannot be said whether Daniel takes notice of Kevin's utterance as he does not react. Fabian who jogs beside Kevin supports the humour attempt through laughter (line 5) (Hay, 2001, Holmes & Hay, 1997, Laineste, 2013, Marsh, 2014).

In line 6 Kevin makes a second attempt at humorously targeting Daniel and says in a slightly louder voice "One's gotta watch out … Saw him at (area name) … Right Daniel ?". He again starts his utterance by speaking about Daniel in the third person othering him as an out-group member positioning him in opposition to the implied in-group of non-protestors (Holmes & Marra, 2002a, Jaworski & Coupland, 2005). After a short pause he addresses Daniel directly by asking a question using his name likely to grab his attention. Again, Kevin positions Daniel with the protestors adding that he saw him in the respective area. As he very likely did not literally see Daniel taking part in the riots, his nipping humorous utterance is interpreted to be ironic (Bell, 2015, Kotthoff, 2003, Pexman & Olineck, 2002). Daniel again may not hear or listen to Kevin, as he simply asks "What ?" (line 7). Then again, he may hear and understand the humour but reject it pretending not to have understood (Priego-Valverde, 2009).

In responding, Kevin adds to his own humour uttering directed at Daniel "Don't even need to put on a mask" (line 8) and smiles underlining his humorous intention. By making this suggestive humorous comment, here Kevin implicitly makes 'race' relevant by insinuating that Daniel does not need to use face concealing black clothing to fit in with the rioters – likely referring to both the 'black bloc' (see 5.2.3) and Daniel's Black skin colour. Kevin thereby becomes more biting in his humour style othering Daniel based on perceived differences in 'race' (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997). As a result, a racialised identity is being constructed for the butt, Daniel, who is again placed as an out-group member.

Daniel supports the humour by stating "Chiller cap's enough cap and hood" (line 9) using smile voice. He thereby aligns with Kevin's other-directed racialised humour that targets him by adding to the humour himself. Taking up the topic of skin colour, he suggests that he only needs a cap and hood to belong to the 'black bloc' that has been the topic of many media reports as well as conversations between the football players. As usually black hoodies, dark sunglasses and black scarves are part of the face concealing gear worn by the protestors of the 'black bloc' (Arte, 2019), Daniel may here humorously suggest that his face does not need 'black concealment' in order to fit in with the protestors. As has been discussed in section 5.1, members of

marginalised and discriminated against groups may use self-directed humour in order to reclaim stereotypes used against them (Juni & Katz 2001, Saucier, et al., 2016). Hence, Daniel may here support the racialised humour targeting him to align with the racialised ideology constructed in the humour and not appear 'humourless' (Bell, 2009a, 2015, Hylton, 2018). By showing humour support through adding more racialised humour, Daniel on one hand accepts the out-group position based on both skin colour and consequently belonging to the protestors, but on the other hand claims co-membership with the humour supporters (Van De Mieroop & Schnurr, 2018).

Apart from once again illustrating the ambiguity of humour, this example furthermore illustrates how a minority player – exacerbated by being the only Black player present during the conversation – may decide to accept the constructed outsider position along racialised lines by entering the racialised humour frame himself. This discursive alignment can be understood as a way of cohering with the dominant group and connected ideology in the interaction. Instead of challenging the suggestive remark by Kevin in line 8, Daniel aligns with the racialised ideology made relevant by Kevin thereby discursively cohering with him. The negotiation processes of team cohesion may thus include conforming tendencies such as the alignment with racialised ideologies ridiculing one's own in-group as humour support (Sue & Golash-Boza, 2013).

5.3.2 Example 5: "Obviously the two Blacks would take cake"

The next example takes place before an away match with the players of FC Anonymous II changing into their kits in the locker room. A buffet with fruit, energy bars, dextrose, water and cake has been set up. Some players change while others use black rolls to loosen their muscles or eat something off the buffet. Different conversations between players take place simultaneously which results in overlapping chatter. While speaking to an unidentified Player 1, senior player Daniel (Black) takes cake from the tray, wraps it into a napkin and starts putting it into his backpack. Senior player and team captain Simon (foreigner, "Ausländer") is engaged in a different conversation but observes what Daniel is doing. The below extract

shows Simon's reaction to Daniel wrapping a piece of cake in a napkin and putting it into his backpack. Senior player Osman (Black) does not engage in the conversation at first but in line 12 contributes to the dialogue non-verbally.

1. Simon: [in empört klingendem Tonfall] Daniel hast du kein // Respekt ? [Gespräche verstummen] \ entspann dich mal
   [in an indignant sounding tone of voice] Daniel don't you have no // respect ? [conversations fall silent] \ calm down

2. Daniel: / [lacht kurz] \\ [laut] Hä ?
   / [laughs briefly] \\ [loudly] Huh ?

3. Simon: Die // Leute wollen in der Halbzeit \ was essen und
   People // want to eat during \ halftime and

4. Player 1:   / Was ist mit dir ? \\
   */ What is with you ? *

5. Daniel: [Hebt seine Hände zu den Seiten und weitet die Augen; laut quietschend] Hää ? [lächelt breit]
   [Raises his hands to his sides and widens his eyes; in a loud squeaky voice] Huuh ? [smiling broadly]

6. Kevin: Kuchen in der Halbzeit ?
   Cake during halftime ?

7. Simon: Ja ich schwör // ich ess in der Halbzeit einen \ Ich schwör ich ess in der Halbzeit einen ich schwör
   Yes I swear // I'll eat one during halftime \ I swear I'll eat one during halftime I swear

8. Daniel: / [laut quietschend] Hä ? … Hä ? \\ Was das denn kein Respekt ?
   / [in a loud squeaky voice] Huh ? … Huh ? \\ What's that no respect ?

9. Simon: Hör ma auf Digga ich kauf dir einen Kuchen
   Stop it dude I'll buy you a cake

10. Daniel: Nein
    No

11. // [Überlappende Gespräche, unverständlich, Gelächter] \
    // [Overlapping talk, incomprehensible, laughter] \

12. / [Osman holt ein Stück Kuchen aus seinem eigenen Rucksack und zeigt es
    lächelnd Daniel] \\
    / [Osman takes a piece of cake out of his own backpack and smilingly shows
    it to Daniel] \\

13. Daniel: [lacht und klatscht in die Hände]
                   [laughs and claps his hands]

14. Simon: [lachend] das war so klar dass die zwei Schwarzen Kuchen mit
                   nach Hause nehmen
                   [laughingly] that was so obvious that the two Blacks take
                   home cake

15. Daniel: [lacht]
                   [laughs]

While there is a lot to be said about the social dynamics being negotiated in this
conversation, I will try and only briefly interpret lines 1 to 12 to then focus on the
other-directed racialised humour episode in particular (line 14). Seeing Daniel wrap
the cake and put it into his backpack, Simon in an indignant sounding tone of voice
addresses Daniel and asks whether he has no respect (line 1). Daniel briefly laughs
(line 2) and all conversations fall silent (line 1). By asking the rhetorical question of
whether Daniel has no respect, Simon singles out Daniel and confronts him based on
an action he labels disrespectful. Daniel therefore is being othered by Simon who
adds "calm down" (line 1) presumably showing disapproval of his actions to stop
Daniel from taking more cake off the buffet to put it away. Daniel loudly utters "Huh
?" which likely expresses his discomfort and/or amusement about being caught red-
handed. The "huh" may work as a defence mechanism or diversion tactic as it is
typically associated with a lack of understanding for what was previously said. Daniel
therefore presumably pretends to not understand what Simon's issue is and thus
does not accept the disrespectful identity constructed for him portraying himself as
innocent.

Reiterating his negative assessment of Daniel taking cake, Simon adds that people want to eat during halftime (line 3) overlapping with an unidentified Player 1 who poses the confrontational question "What is with you ?" directed at Daniel (line 4). Consequently, Daniel is being marginalised through disapproval now being constructed as disregard towards his teammates' needs as well. As a consequence, his out-group position is reinforced. Daniel again – this time in a loud squeaky voice and what can be described as a 'feigned innocent' facial expression (reflected in the transcript as widening his eyes) supported by raising his hands to his sides – utters "Huuh ?" (line 5). He thus makes another attempt at denying the out-group position constructed for him and constructs himself as innocent and clueless to the allegations made against him.

Kevin then enters the conversation directing an utterance towards Simon which calls Simon's reaction in line 3 of wanting to eat cake during halftime into question (line 6). This ambiguous utterance can potentially have various effects: it may on one hand challenge Simon undermining his status and professionalism. On the other hand, it may challenge the severity of packing cake in the first place therefore siding with Daniel which mitigates his out-group position. Moreover, Kevin may be constructing Simon's argument of others wanting to eat cake during halftime as irresponsible from an athletic point of view which again undermines Simon and threatens his professional and leader identity. Simon then turns to Kevin countering his challenging question with "Yes I swear I'll eat one during halftime I swear I'll eat one during halftime I swear" (line 7). By repeating both "I swear" and that he will indeed eat cake during halftime, Simon reacts strongly to the challenge by Kevin defending his position by entering what can be described as conflict also reflected in several overlaps signalling heightened involvement in the entire conversation (Hay, 1995, 2001, Schnurr, 2010, Schnurr & Chan, 2011). Simon therefore constructs a leader identity for himself as well as being entitled to call Daniel out for something, he deems disrespectful to the team (Wilson, 2011).

Daniel only now appears to react to Simon's implicit accusation of having no respect in line 1, as he utters "Huh ? … Huh ? What's that no respect ?" (line 8) – again in a

loud squeaky voice. He thus calls into question whether packing cake is indeed a disrespectful act and thus adds to his self-portrayal as being innocent and not understanding Simon's construction of him as disrespectful. His out-group position appears mitigated as a consequence. In line 9 Simon responds with "Stop it dude I'll buy you cake", which once more expresses his disapproval of Daniel who put the wrapped cake into his backpack. Apart from still assigning an outsider position to Daniel, Simon also constructs himself as more resourceful than Daniel who instead of buying cake wraps cake to take home with him. Daniel bluntly refuses the likely ironic offer (line 10) (Bell, 2015, Kotthoff, 2003) and overlapping incomprehensible chatter as well as laughter ensue (line 11).

During the chatter and laughter, Osman smilingly takes a piece of cake out of his own backpack and shows it to Daniel (line 12). Through this non-verbal communication, Osman aligns with Daniel and signals solidarity by showing him that he did the same thing as an activity of co-membership management (Van de Mieroop & Schnurr, 2018). Osman therefore non-verbally constructs himself and Daniel as an in-group which arguably mitigates the othering of Daniel through Simon. Therefore, this non-verbal communicative act constitutes an instrument of cohering. Osman's accompanying smile suggests that he finds it amusing, that they both did something constructed as disrespectful by their captain and – as has been established in 3.7.2.3 – close friend Simon (Bell, 2015, Gockel & Kerr, 2015, Schnurr, 2010, Schnurr & Chan, 2011). Osman's act can therefore be understood as a non-verbal humour attempt likely used for "comic relief" (Snyder, 1991, p. 123) to counteract the arising tensions between Simon and Daniel. Daniel shows appreciation and humour support through laughter and clapping his hands (line 13) (Hay, 2001, Holmes & Hay, 1997, Laineste, 2013, Marsh, 2014). By that, he co-constructs the in-group position and offsets his marginalisation by cohering with Osman who now positions himself as a member of his in-group.

Simon, who sees Osman's gesture, laughingly states "that was so obvious that the two Blacks take home cake" (line 14) connecting 'race' to what in the course of the conversation he framed as an impudent action. Simon accordingly constructs Osman

and Daniel as a racialised out-group based on skin colour as well as disrespectful behaviour. Explicating "the two Blacks" Simon marginalises both Osman and Daniel as the only present Black players in the locker room contrasting them with the in-group of non-Blacks which creates racialised boundaries that discursively fragment the team (Holmes & Marra, 2002a, Raymond, 2014, Wolfers, et al., 2017). Moreover, Simon makes use of a racist stereotype that associates Blacks with 'criminal' behaviour (Bergmann, 2006) assigning a disrespectful outsider identity to both players. It can be argued, that the laughing delivery of the utterance points towards humorous intent mitigating an otherwise confrontational statement (Holmes & Stubbe, 2015). Then again, as has been maintained by Bell and Attardo (2010), "teases often mask criticisms" (p. 425), which may then be used to regulate the behaviour of others (see also Bell, 2009b). As Simon indeed appears to condemn the taking away of cake, this interpretation becomes likely.

Daniel responds with laughter (line 15) supporting Simon's racialised humour attempt targeting him and Osman (Hay, 2001, Holmes & Hay, 1997, Laineste, 2013, Marsh, 2014). He thus appears to accept the out-group position assigned to him through humour support and effectively aligns with the racialised ideology constructed in the humour strategy by Simon. Osman however does not react with laughter which means that the humour attempt is only partly successful (File & Schnurr, 2019) with the effect of boundary maintenance. As a result, the marginalised out-group of Daniel and Osman as constructed by Simon is split based on humour support and denial of such. (Partly) failed humour and the effect on how team cohesion is negotiated among members of the CofP will be explored in greater depth in chapter 6.

This example shows the complex and dynamic negotiation of team cohesion through the negotiation of conflict (Finn, 2008) which is reacted to with and partly resolved through (racialised) humour. In the course of the interaction, differing in- and out-groups are constructed impacting the processes of cohering. Racialised humour – albeit inherently boundary-marking in nature, as it foregrounds differences between interactants – is used here as a way of resolving tensions in communication within

the group. Given that a biting humour style is a shared norm in this CofP, the shared repertoire may include rather aggressive forms of humour with racialised minorities being targeted. Importantly, Simon, Daniel and Osman are constructed by others and themselves (in the observations, audio-recordings and interviews) as close friends (see 3.7.2.3). As a study on lay understandings of everyday racism by Walton, et al. (2013) shows, racialised humour "was considered to be more acceptable if the person was a close friend" (p. 87, see also Bell, 2009b, Dynel, 2008, Schnurr, 2010). The potential for harsh out-group membership management may thus be mitigated by the close friendships among CofP members even allowing for other-directed racialised humour as a means of negotiating team cohesion. The interpretation that racialised humour may be a form of doing intimacy and performing a close relationship, where the otherwise unsayable can be said because of the relationship some of the team members have with each other (e.g. Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997, Dynel, 2008, Raymond, 2014) will further be discussed in section 5.5.

5.3.3 Example 6: "You are no real Blacks ey"

The last example also makes reference to skin colour targeting a minority group. After a running exercise the players of FC Anonymous II are in the gym stretching. Having gone through lactate and fitness tests for the upcoming season during the last couple of days, some of the players discuss their body fat results. Before the extract below starts, some players already compared their results with teases being exchanged. The players participating below are team captain Simon (foreigner, "Ausländer"), senior players Osman and Daniel (both Black) and junior player Edwin (foreigner, "Ausländer").

1. Simon: [an Osman gerichtet] Du hast zehn Komma acht ne ?
              [towards Osman] You've got ten point eight right ?
2. Daniel: [lächelnd] Malle ne ?
              [smilingly] Majorca right ?
3. [Unverständliche überlappende Gespräche]
   [Incomprehensible overlapping talk]
4. Simon: Osi hat zehn Komma acht // ... wie ist das passiert ? \

		*Osi's got ten point eight // … how did that happen ? *
5.	Daniel:	/ Zehn Komma acht ? Fettsack Digga \\\\
		*∕ Ten point eight ? Fatso dude *
6.	Simon:	Was da passiert ?
		What's happened ?
7.	Osman:	Ja Mallorca is passiert
		Yes Majorca happened
8.	Daniel:	[nickt lächelnd Richtung Fabian] Er hat acht Komma vier [lächelt]
		[smilingly nods towards Fabian] He's got eight point four [smiles]
9.	Edwin:	<u>Digga was (da los eigentlich) ihr seid gar nicht echte Schwarze … ich schwör</u>
		<u>*Dude what's (going on) you are not real Blacks … I swear*</u>
10.	Daniel:	Nö
		Nope
11.	Simon:	Ich mein [unverständlich] hat vier oder fünf
		I think [incomprehensible] had four or five
12.	Daniel:	Ich hatte auch letztes Mal sechs Komma vier oder sieben Komma 4 ich glaub oder so
		I also had six point four or seven point four last time I think or something
13.		[Gespräche über vergangene Ergebnisse werden fortgeführt]
		[Talk about past results continues]

In line 1 Simon asks Osman whether his body fat result is 10.8 which has already come up in the course of the preceding conversational turns and is therefore likely a rhetorical question not awaiting a reaction (Frank, 1990). Simon may attempt to tease Osman, although his result is better than average for a professional footballer (Wittich, Oliveri, Rotemberg & Mautalen, 2001). Before Osman can react, Daniel smilingly asks "Majorca right ?" (line 2). The question can be interpreted as both suggestive and teasing, as Daniel connects Osman's holidays on Majorca previous to

the start of pre-season to the body fat result of 10.8. As Daniel humorously suggests that Majorca – particularly famous for being a party holiday destination (Holidaycheck, n.d.) – had a negative impact on the body fat result of Osman, it is likely that his past result was lower. Osman is therefore being teased by Simon and Daniel in a nipping style (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997) resulting in an unathletic identity constructed for him, which is undesirable for a professional football player (Fogel, 2011).

Incomprehensible overlapping talk ensues (line 3) before Simon – now not addressing Osman directly anymore – says "Osi's got ten point eight … how did that happen ?" (line 4). Using the nickname "Osi" references a shared history and close relationship which constructs solidarity between interactants (File & Schnurr, 2019, Wilson, 2010). Nevertheless, Simon speaks in the third person about Osman repeating his body fat result of 10.8 thereby othering him through his use of pronoun (Holmes & Marra, 2002a, Jaworski & Coupland, 2005). While asking how the result happened, Daniel overlaps with his utterance also inquiring about the result (line 5). By asking a similar teasing question, Daniel supports Simon's humour by adding more humour and the overlap points towards a heightened involvement in the conversation (Hay, 1995, 2001, Schnurr, 2009, 2010). The question is understood to be a nipping tease because Daniel already heard that the result is indeed correct. Reinforced by adding the insult "fatso" that constructs an unathletic identity for Osman, Daniel moves the nipping humour style along the teasing continuum towards the biting end (Bell, 2009b, Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997, Dynel, 2008, Schnurr, 2009). As a result, Osman appears further marginalised. Still, Daniel uses the familiariser "dude" commonly used among members of this CofP creating solidarity among interactants (Wilson, 2010, Wolfers, et al., 2017). This again mitigates the severity of othering Osman.

While Osman does not yet react to any humorous utterance or question directed at him, Simon again asks what happened (line 6) arguably suggesting that something must have negatively influenced Osman to get a body fat result of 10.8. He therefore stays in the humour frame of teasing Osman, who responds with "Yes Majorca

happened" (line 7). Osman as the butt of the humour does not appear to take offence and aligns with Daniel's teasing question in line 2 blaming his result on his holidays in Majorca effectively supporting the humour (Bell, 2015, Hay, 1995, 2001, Marsh, 2014). Osman thus also accepts the out-group position based on being constructed as less athletic than before aligning with the dominant group humorously targeting him. While accepting the outsider position he simultaneously constructs himself as part of the humourists making fun of his body fat result also aligning with an athletic ideology – pointing towards the already mentioned 'double-edged sword' nature of humour (Meyer, 2000, Rogerson-Revell, 2007). In reaction to Osman's humour support, Daniel smilingly nods towards Fabian who is out of earshot declaring that "He's got eight point four" (line 8) and smiles. By comparing Osman's result of 10.8 with the better result of Fabian who has 8.4, Daniel continues to tease Osman by reference to his body fat (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997). Up until this point, the humorous conversation can overall be described as good-natured banter in a nipping to biting humour style targeting Osman as the butt (Bell, 2009b, Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997, Schnurr, 2009).

In line 9, Edwin, who before then only listened to the exchanges, enters the conversation and brings 'race' into the conversation by stating "Dude what's (going on) you are not real Blacks … I swear". By entering the humorous conversation, Edwin makes a claim for co-membership with the humourists (Van De Mieroop & Schnurr, 2018). While he begins his utterance with the same familiariser Daniel uses in line 5 drawing on in-group knowledge creating solidarity (Wilson, 2010), by use of the plural pronoun "you" Edwin now positions Osman and Daniel as the only Black conversationalists involved in this interaction as out-group members. He also uses a prevalent stereotype in the sporting context about Black athletes being particularly muscular and athletic (Anderson & McCormack, 2010, Van Sterkenburg & Knoppers, 2004). However, he constructs the racialised out-group of Osman and Daniel in opposition to that stereotype. In other words, Edwin constructs them as bad representatives of Black athletes based on their body fat results – likely with reference to Fabian's very good result mentioned in line 8. Osman and Daniel consequently appear marginalised in a multi-layered way which even given the biting

humour norms may be seen as crossing the boundaries of acceptancy as their racialised as well as athletic identity – identity categories arguably salient to a professional football player (Clayton & Humberstone, 2006, Fogel, 2011) – are being threatened.

Daniel responds with a simple "Nope" (line 10) rejecting the identity categories assigned to him and Osman implying that they indeed are "real Blacks" rejecting alignment with the racialised ideology. He thus denies "recognition of the attempted shift in discourse mode" (Crawford, 2003, p. 1420) towards racialised humour and rejects the humour attempt by Edwin causing it to fall flat (Bogdan, 2014, Priego-Valverde, 2009). Priego-Valverde (2009), identifies the difference in mode of speech as one major reason for rejecting humour. In addition, Daniel – by implication of his negation – constructs the in-group of him and Osman as both athletic and being 'good representatives' of Black athletes. The interpretation of humour failure appears reinforced when looking at lines 11 and 12 where Simon and Daniel continue discussing past results with Daniel stating that he "had six point four or seven point four last time" (line 12). Daniel thus adds to his rejection of the identity categories constructed by Edwin and constructs himself as athletic. The interactants Simon, Daniel and Osman therefore ignore Edwin's attempt at cohering with them by entering the humorous exchange and continue their conversation.

This last example of other-directed racialised humour illustrates how a humour episode initially about body fat results, changes in dynamics as soon as 'race' is made relevant. The racialised humour directed at Daniel and Osman in this example falls flat by rejection, which has great implications for membership claims, group formation, and processes of cohering. By disagreeing with Edwin who directs a racialised humour attempt at him, Daniel and also Simon who displays unlaughter, "kill the play frame" (Marsh, 2014, p. 133) and implicitly criticise the speaker. Edwin – both being of junior status and not Black – may thus have been confronted with the boundaries of how his teammates accept to negotiate team cohesion among themselves which they show through humour rejection.

The six examples above have provided empirical evidence for how self- and other-directed racialised humour contributes to the negotiation processes of cohering among members of this CofP. It has been shown how in most cases minority members of the team align with racialised ideologies targeting their own in-group. As a result, they are cohering with both their racialised in-group members as well as the norm of being able to take confrontational humour along racialised lines as part of what it means to be on the team. Before discussing the implications in more detail in section 5.5, I will now introduce emic perspectives from the interviews to help shape a broader interpretation with regards to the negotiation of team cohesion.

5.4 "No one is ever getting bullied" – Emic perspectives on racialised humour and team cohesion

As indicated in 3.7.2.4, the 13 players interviewed for this project were asked to describe their team in their own words. The majority of interviewees mentioned the intercultural and multi-ethnic make-up as well as the young average age as characteristic of FC Anonymous II. Edwin – part of the constructed group of "foreigners" ("Ausländer", interview data) himself – for example described FC Anonymous II as "multiculti" ("Multikulti", interview data). Highlighting the diversity as a positive aspect of the team, he added that everyone brought "their own way of life or their own style […] and you notice that on the pitch" ("ihre eigene Lebensart oder ihren eigenen Style […] und das merkt man dann auch aufm Platz", interview data). Edwin among others therefore framed the ethnically and culturally diverse environment as beneficial to the team as a whole, which may have interesting implications for the presence and use of racialised humour.

Conversely, more than one player also spoke about a divide within the team with regards to having a migration background or not. Counting the different nationalities represented on the team including his own, Edwin added the humorous comment of having "barely any Germans" ("kaum Deutsche", interview data) on the team but immediately relativised it by laughingly adding "we are many Germans too" ("wir sind auch viele Deutsche", interview data). By using the inclusive third person

pronoun "we", Edwin, who himself carries dual citizenship from South America and Germany, constructed himself as part of the in-group of Germans as well as claiming CofP membership. This brief example already shows how the racialised identities claimed and assigned by the players are complex, multi-layered and dependent on the situation and context.

When describing the formation of racialised sub-groups, junior player Rouven for example explicated the three before-mentioned sub-groups "the foreigners, the Germans, the Blackies" ("die Ausländer, die Deutschen, die Blackies", interview data) as distinct groupings within FC Anonymous II. Apart from basing sub-groups on skin colour and national background, the formation of sub-groups has also been connected with the seating order in the locker room and whom the players spend their lunch breaks with. All in all, the interviewees showed an awareness for different sub-groups on their team but framed these as normalised and not harmful to team unity. More explicitly, Ahmet stated "There are some smaller groupings I'd say but […] but the groupings aren't in a way that one excludes one another […] no one is ever getting bullied" ("Es gibt halt auch so kleine Gruppierungen sach ich ma aber [...] aber die Gruppierungen sind jetzt nicht so dass man sich gegenseitig ausschließt […] es wird nie jemand gemobbt", interview data). He showed the above-mentioned awareness of sub-groups within the CofP, while adding that these were non-threatening to team cohesion. In addition, he explained that there was no bullying on the team – which, when looking at the audio-recorded data only, could potentially be interpreted differently at times.

Indeed, if we consider that Dae-Jung – the only player on the team who moved from East Asia to Europe to play competitive football – is repeatedly being othered and mocked through racialised humour (as discussed in section 5.3). Frequently being targeted for his language skills or accent, as well as ethnic looks and cultural background, he is discursively made an outsider more often than any other player or minority group on the team. Borrowing the words of Priego-Valverde (2009), especially given the "high level of frequency of mockery and teasing" (p. 171) Dae-Jung may be subjected to "a sort of humor in which benevolent humor and sour

mockery lie close together". Still, in his interview Dae-Jung himself framed the humour targeting him along racialised lines to be unproblematic. However, as will be shown in the next analysis chapter on failed humour, his form of rejection of some racialised humour instances suggests otherwise.

As has been illustrated in chapter 4, despite many humorous instances being very biting and potentially aggressive – especially when making reference to differences in 'race' – the speakers as well as the butts claim that the utterances are of a non-serious nature and 'just fun' (see also Sue & Golash-Boza, 2013, Pérez, 2017, Wolfers, et al., 2017). They thereby construct the boundary-marking racialised humour as well as the existence of sub-groups as part of what it means to be a member of the 'multiculti' team of FC Anonymous II. This may have interesting implications for the processes of cohering within this CofP in that it may encompass certain means of alignment that previous research would have labelled as indicative for 'low cohesion' (Jowett & Chaundy, 2004, Widmeyer & Williams, 1991).

In the next section I will discuss whether and how cohering in this CofP is dependent upon aligning with shared norms of behaviour as well as the racialised ideologies invoked through humour by members of the CofP. I will first summarise the findings from the above analyses to then connect the interactional examples with the emic perspectives provided by the players. Lastly, I will discuss the issues of cohering through racialised humour on a broader sports team level.

5.5 Discussion: Racialised humour use as a process of cohering?

The analyses of the six examples above have shown that the rules of cohering in this CofP may mean that players take on different interactional roles such as being the butt of the humour or to perform particular identities as constructed in and through racialised humour. In section 5.2 of this chapter three examples of self-directed racialised humour were analysed. The first two examples have shown how speakers of minority backgrounds initiate racialised humour thereby fostering solidarity among their constructed in-group (5.2.1 and 5.2.2). It has been argued that marginalised in-groups aligning with racialised ideologies made relevant by

themselves through self-directed humour may be interpreted as an instrument of cohering as minority group members reclaim stereotypes about their own in-group which creates solidarity among themselves. The third example differs in that the self-directed racialised humour used is prompted by a white speaker humorously targeting a Black player who decides to support the humour by racially ridiculing himself bringing 'race' to the fore (5.2.3). In this example, the minority speaker on one hand co-constructs his marginalisation – but bases it on an identity category of his own choosing, here racialised – while on the other hand he aligns with the shared humour history of the CofP and predominant white ideology. Self-directed racialised humour may thus constitute a process of cohering through alignment with racialised ideologies as made relevant by minority speakers to initiate racialised humour or as a humour support strategy. Minority players within this CofP then cohere with their own constructed in-group members but also with the predominant white ideologies and humour norms on a broader team level.

The focus of section 5.3 has been on racialised humour initiated by speakers targeting a butt of a different racialised background than themselves – with varying reactions of the racialised players targeted. In the first example the butt does not challenge the marginalisation but aligns with the racialised ideology constructed in the humour supporting it with more racialised humour (5.3.1). A process of cohering may therefore include the use of conforming tendencies accepting an out-group position for the benefit of solidarity enhancement among all interactants (Sue & Golash-Boza, 2013). The second example contains racialised humour as a means of tension relief between three close friends (5.3.2). Firstly, the close bond between interactants impacts on what counts as acceptable humour behaviour in a given situation (Bell, 2009b, Dynel, 2008, Schnurr, 2010, Walton, et al., 2013). Secondly, the fact that the speaker belongs to a minority group himself reduces the constructed power imbalance inherent in racially targeting two Black players (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller & Thomas, 1995, Hylton, 2010, Long & Hylton, 2002). Still, the humour attempt is only supported by one of the butts causing the humour to fall partly flat (File & Schnurr, 2019) again impacting the processes of cohering. The last example shows how targeting senior teammates along racialised ideologies may fail by rejection of

all the people targeted (5.3.3). While the butts cohere with one another by rejecting alignment with the racialised ideology consequently fostering in-group solidarity among themselves, the junior speaker appears to have crossed the lines of the accepted processes of cohering with his team members and ends up marginalised himself. The reason for this could be the differences in hierarchical status further discussed below.

Emic perspectives on how players of FC Anonymous II describe their team and racialised humour have been provided in section 5.4 to enable a more broad and rich discussion of the processes of cohering as evident in the use of racialised humour among members of this CofP. The contrast between what is being reported about racialised humour use and what is actually happening on a discursive level highlights the importance for ethnographic approaches like this. In summary, the players describe their team as fun, young and diverse constructing a corresponding ideology of the team in and through their narratives. The formation of sub-groups especially along racialised factors was also mentioned alongside the notion of the humour targeting these sub-groups being non-serious and non-threatening.

Importantly, most of the interactional examples of racialised humour in the dataset are other-directed with only around a quarter involving self-directed instances. In addition, only twice are 'the Germans' on the team and an out-group-member labelled 'whitey' explicitly targeted with racialised humour during my fieldwork. Racialised humour thus appears to primarily be used to mark non-whites and non-Germans as different among members of this CofP. Similarly, in a study on racist and sexist banter among students, Lowe, Byron, O'Hara, and Cortez (2020) find that "white masculinity, which is rarely the focus of racist and sexist jokes, is rendered almost invisible in the joking" (p. 20), despite those embodying white masculinity actively engaging in the described humour practices. Furthermore, the authors argue that "given the types of stereotypes and slurs that are readily available about [...] people of color, they are often exposed to the most denigrating jokes" (Lowe, et al., 2020, p. 21) – as is the case in the current study.

5.5.1 The discursive alignment with racialised ideologies as processes of cohering

Bringing the audio-recordings and interview data together, it is possible to argue that the analyses of instances of racialised humour show that the negotiated rules of cohering are influenced by members aligning with racialised ideologies constructed through humour in interaction as well as in the interviews. When racialised humour is used to target one's own racialised in-group, players are usually aligning with the dominant ideology of, for example, whiteness and thereby simultaneously cohere with members of their own in-group as well as the team as a whole. In other words, minority players target themselves by reference to what makes them different in comparison with the majority of team members with the effect of claiming dual group membership as multi-layered processes of cohering. Besides, as has been argued before, players of minority backgrounds may humorously mobilise racialised stereotypes targeting their own constructed in-group for reasons of empowerment and resistance (Juni & Katz 2001, Saucier, et al., 2016). Moreover, the in-group alignment strategy of racialised humour targeting one's own in-group may help members negotiate cohesion in smaller sub-groups which can then contribute to processes of cohering on bigger levels such as the team CofP or even the entire club structure. More research would need to be done to further explore the latter.

When describing their team during the interviews, some players also mentioned the club's values and mission statement. By describing what their club 'stands for' the players appeared to be buying into the club and team ideology as among others anti-racist and open reproducing such ideologies in their narratives. The acceptance and reproduction of the anti-racist agenda of the club potentially also impacts the evaluation of the team's racialised humour as unproblematic. Although the racialised humour often draws on discriminatory stereotypes, it is described as 'just banter' as the speakers cannot *really* mean the racist stereotypes inherent in some of the humour due to the club's values.

5.5.2 The construction of racialised humour as unproblematic

Constructing racialised humour as unproblematic in the interviews as well as in interaction may consequently put pressure on racialised sub-groups to align with the

dominant 'race' on the team and the resulting racialised ideologies. In addition, by foregrounding racialised identities of self and other, the players of FC Anonymous II cohere with their own perception of the team as 'multiculti' as reflected in the interviews. Constructing their team identity as diverse, the use of racialised humour as a means of aligning with the self-reported team identity represents a process of cohering. The resulting pressure to align or conform with racialised ideologies (Sue & Golash-Boza, 2013) may be illustrated by the use of self-directed racialised humour as well as the audience reactions when being constructed as the butts of racialised humour attempts. The shared norm as evident in the data appears to be the acceptance of being racially marginalised and othered for the benefit of cohering with other CofP members. Therefore, the negotiation processes involved in constructing team cohesion among members of FC Anonymous II may include conforming tendencies such as aligning with racialised ideologies ridiculing one's own in-group as humour attempt or support (Sue & Golash-Boza, 2013).

5.5.3 Status, relationships and racialised humour

Importantly, the personal relationships and differences in hierarchical status between the interlocutors involved in the above examples appear to have an impact on how the humorous interaction unfolds. In five out of the six interactions analysed above, it is senior members of high hierarchical status who make 'race' relevant through self-directed humour or as humour support (5.2.1, 5.2.2, 5.2.3, 5.3.1, 5.3.2). In these cases, the hearers reacting with humour support strategies are either of similar or lower hierarchical status as the speaker. Only one of the examples involves a junior player targeting senior players using racialised humour (5.3.3). Here, the humour falls flat. The inclusion of only one such instance of low-status speaker and high-status butt mirrors the rarity of such power constellation with regards to racialised humour in the data. The other way around, involving high-status speaker and low-status butt, occurs rather often though (see 5.3). Therefore, the data illustrates that racialised humour is usually used and supported among CofP members of similar hierarchical status. Targeting high-status senior players thus appears to be reserved for players of similar status. Status and relationship of players are usually intertwined in this CofP, as the longer the team members play together,

the more likely they are to build close relationships while moving up the hierarchical team structure together.

In this CofP, the mobilising of racialised ideologies through humour, the accepting of racialised out-group positions as well as the alignment with the dominant 'race' on the team may all represent processes of cohering. These processes appear influenced by not only the constructed image of the club and team, but the relationships between speakers and who initiates the use of racialised categories. As has been shown, biting humour such as racialised humour may not necessarily be 'fully' supported with implications on the rules of cohering as negotiated in the CofP. What happens to the negotiation of team cohesion when humour attempts fail – for example due to status differences of interactants – will be the focus of the next chapter.

6. Negotiating team cohesion through failed humour?

As "no theory of humour can be complete without taking into account its failure" (Bell, 2015, p. 6), in this last analysis chapter, I will describe and analyse six examples of humour attempts that are interpreted as falling (partly) flat based on different factors described below (see 6.1.3). Particular emphasis will be on the discursive processes of cohering involved in these interactions where membership claims fail.

Failed humour especially has the potential to illustrate the boundaries of what counts as acceptable humour behaviour among members of the team and what does not, thereby pointing to the discursive negotiation of team cohesion in interaction. For example, when a humour attempt is met with a strong rejection on the hearer's side, the negotiation of team cohesion may potentially be threatened. When humour fails because the speaker is not fully accustomed to the team's humour norms, it can reveal the status and degree of integration of the player, which in turn points to the negotiation of cohesion. Therefore, what counts as failed and successful humour is not only dependent on the context and content of the humour, but also the interlocutor's status. Moreover, the boundary between failed and successful humour is not fixed but rather variable and depends on the discursive negotiation within the specific context (e.g. Bell, 2009a, 2015, File & Schnurr, 2019, Laineste, 2013).

Before going into the micro-analysis of the selected interactional examples (6.2.1 – 6.2.6), I will give an overview of the varying conceptualisations of failed humour and their connection with team cohesion (6.1). I will then conclude with the proposition of the failed humour continuum (6.1.1) which enriches the description and interpretation of failed humour instances. Moreover, I will offer an in-depth discussion by referring to examples from interviews with players (6.1.2) and shed light on how instances of failed humour were identified (6.1.3). Lastly, I will discuss the selected examples on a macro level whilst locating them on the continuum drawing conclusions about the discursive negotiation of team cohesion through failed humour (6.3).

6.1 Failed humour – an overview

Despite its usefulness in examining social processes (e.g. Bell, 2009b, Bogdan, 2014, File & Schnurr, 2019), failed humour has not received extensive scholarly attention. This is due to many difficulties in accessing instances of failed humour in 'authentic' interaction and the relatively difficult identification process among other things (e.g. Bell, 2015, Bell & Attardo, 2010, Rogerson-Revell, 2007). The limited literature that focuses on failed humour offers varying definitions of the phenomenon (e.g. Bell, 2009a, 2009b, 2015, Bell & Attardo, 2010, Bogdan, 2014, File & Schnurr, 2019, Hay, 2001, Laineste, 2013, Priego-Valverde, 2009). In this regard, File and Schnurr (2019) note that "the concept of failed humour is highly contested and [...] what counts as failed humour is anything but straightforward" (p. 10).

Bell and Attardo (2010) define failed humour as

> any instance of speech production in a communicative setting in which any of the participants fails to notice the (potential) perlocutionary intention to amuse (be funny, elicit mirth, etc. as per Raskin 1985), or fails to process the text/situation in such a way as to be able to access the information whereby one of the other participants considers the situation (to have been intended or be potentially interpretable as) funny (p. 426-427).

In other words, and as Bell (2015) argues, failed humour would be any utterance intended to amuse, but that is "not negotiated 'perfectly'" (p. 4) due to environmental, contextual or interlocutor factors. This understanding of failed humour as 'imperfect' negotiation includes both the speaker and the audience potentially involving the butt and highlights that humour can fail at different points. Additionally, in her work on humour support, Hay (2001) claims that in order for "full support" (p. 55) of a humour attempt, hearers must *recognise* the humour frame, *understand* the humour, *appreciate* it and ultimately, *agree* with the message associated with it. Her examples suggest that both humour support as well as the failure of a humour attempt may be partial (Hay, 2001). It is thus possible that a humorous utterance is for example recognised and understood but not appreciated (Hay, 2001). Or, a humour attempt is recognised, understood, and appreciated, but without agreement on the hearer's side which makes analytical identification

difficult. This could be the case with e.g. sexist humour that the hearer finds amusing despite disagreeing with the message. Such a mitigated response allows the hearer to display full joke and humour competence, while expressing disagreement with the message (Bell, 2015). Bell (2015) further argues that "[d]isplaying recognition of a joke demonstrates a sense of humor, but displaying taste preferences demonstrates a 'good' sense of humor, if only through not expressing appreciation" (p. 32). It is thus possible to express appreciation and support for a humour attempt and simultaneously disassociate oneself from the message expressing disagreement (Bell, 2015).

Priego-Valverde (2009) and Bogdan (2014) make another distinction describing failed humour based on the eventualities of being unperceived or rejected. While unperceived humour may lead to misunderstandings such as interpreting an intended humorous utterance as a verbal attack, rejected humour is "perceived but purposely ignored by one or several of the listeners, for instance in order to continue the discourse as planned" (Priego-Valverde, 2009, p. 165). The main reason for failure, as identified by Priego-Valverde (2009), would then be the mode of speech shifting the 'point of failure' to the speaker. Bogdan (2014), however, argues that humour "is generally unsuccessful when there is incongruity between the interlocutors' speaking styles, resulting in an opposition between what is meant and how it is perceived" (p. 37). In recent work on failed humour, File and Schnurr (2019) discuss the possibility of humour falling *partly* flat. More explicitly, a humour attempt may be perceived by the entire audience but only supported by some, leaving the others to let the humour attempt fall flat (File & Schnurr, 2019). Thus, the authors mention an "extent to which […] humour attempts fail" (File & Schnurr, 2019, p. 141), suggesting – but not explicating – a more nuanced and therefore non-binary view (failed vs. successful) on the phenomenon.

Also, scholars appear to be more or less in agreement that for humour to be regarded as failed, there must be a certain degree of unappreciation by the audience or parts of the audience (Bell, 2009a, 2009b, 2015, Bell & Attardo, 2010, Bogdan, 2014, File & Schnurr, 2019, Hay, 2001, Laineste, 2013). This unappreciation can result from,

among others, a negative evaluation of the humorous attempt (e.g. deeming it rude or inappropriate), misjudgement of the relation with the audience, disruption of serious conversation, lack of contextualisation or negative presentation of someone from the audience (Bell, 2009b, Bogdan, 2014, File & Schnurr, 2019, Hay, 2001, Laineste, 2013, Priego-Valverde, 2009). Failed humour could therefore signal a lack of understanding for the context-specific discursive norms of using humour appropriately (Bell, 2015, Bogdan, 2014, Dynel, 2008, Plester & Sayers 2007, Schnurr, 2009, 2010, File & Schnurr, 2019). Little miscommunication such as failed humour can arguably be understood as an indicator of the harmonious negotiation of team cohesion.

Consequently, failed humour – just like successful humour – is dependent on the context in which it occurs. Furthermore, members of a CofP negotiate in interaction the most appropriate humour style of the context they constitute, the behavioural conventions as well as what humour support strategies to employ (Bell, 2009b, Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997, Hay, 2001). The more competitive the humour style and the closer the interlocutors, the more liberty members of the CofP take in rejecting humour causing it to fall flat (Priego-Valverde, 2009). As Bell (2009a) maintains, the closeness of interactants reduces the risk of humour being misperceived with irreparable offense. Correspondingly, this "same closeness also seems to allow the hearers of a poor attempt at humor to communicate their lack of appreciation directly and even aggressively" (Bell, 2009a, p. 1835, see also Bell, 2009b, 2015). Culpeper (1996), too, suggests that among close friends counterattacks as opposed to mitigating responses are a common reaction.

As established in section 2.1 of the literature review, cohesion scholars have argued that close personal relationships between team members indicate social cohesion (Carron, et al., 1985, Hardy, et al., 2005, Holt & Sparks, 2001). Also, as argued in section 2.3.1, humour on one hand is a way of discursively constructing group cohesion and solidarity among members but, on the other hand, it contributes to the creation of in- and out-groups by negotiating boundaries (Holmes & Marra, 2002a). As a result, *failed* humour can threaten the membership claims of interlocutors,

thereby jeopardising the negotiation of team cohesion (Bell, 2015, File & Schnurr, 2019). Summarising the various characteristics and dynamics of failed humour, Bell (2015) aptly labels failed humour as "a complex and multifaceted phenomenon" (p. 3). I will illustrate and unpack this complexity further with the aid of my suggestion for a failed humour continuum.

6.1.1 A new framework: the failed humour continuum

In the attempt to approach the complex and multifaceted phenomenon of (partly) failed conversational humour for my own project I combine the above-presented differing conceptualisations of failed humour to propose the *failed humour continuum*. The failed humour continuum offers a more systematic counter-narrative to a mostly binary view on humour, i.e. failed vs. successful. The continuum primarily builds on the close study of the failed humour literature as well as my own examples of failed humour discussed in this chapter. Despite having gone back and forth between literature and data in the development of the continuum, I introduce the model prior to the analysis of the examples (6.2.1 – 6.2.6) in order to apply the continuum to these excerpts and facilitate analysis and evaluation of the continuum (6.3).

'imperfect' negotiation of an utterance intended to amuse

rejected				unperceived
Recognition	Recognition	Recognition	~~Recognition~~	~~Recognition~~
Understanding	Understanding	~~Understanding~~	Understanding	~~Understanding~~
~~Appreciation~~	Appreciation	Appreciation	~~Appreciation~~	~~Appreciation~~
~~Agreement~~	~~Agreement~~	~~Agreement~~	Agreement	~~Agreement~~
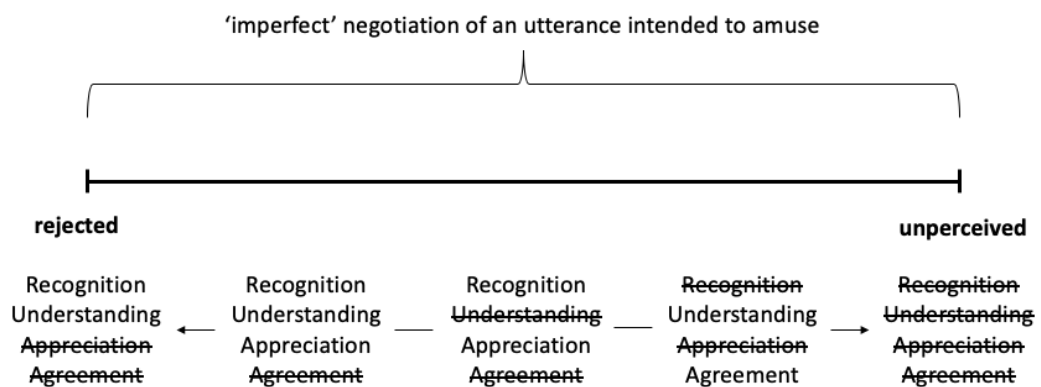
Figure 3: Failed humour continuum. (Primarily based on the work of Bell (2015), Hay (2001) and Priego-Valverde (2009))

The failed humour continuum illustrates different degrees of 'imperfect' negotiation of utterances intended to amuse (see Bell, 2015). Imperfect negotiation on the one hand concerns interpersonal goals which are not fully achieved – such as amusing

and being amused for the sake of constructing membership in a (cohesive) team. On the other hand, imperfect negotiation also refers to the scope for partly failed humour where humour is supported only by parts of the audience (File & Schnurr, 2019). Furthermore, making use of Priego-Valverde's (2009) work on failed humour, the continuum ranges from unperceived to rejected humour – with fuzzy boundaries and space for variances between these two extremes.

Following Hay (2001), on one end of the continuum humour is rejected, meaning it was recognised and understood but neither appreciated nor endorsed (Recognition, Understanding, ~~Appreciation~~, ~~Agreement~~). This can happen through either purposely ignoring a humour attempt causing it to fall flat or signalling disagreement (non-verbal or verbal). Moving slightly away from the rejection end, humour may also be recognised, understood and appreciated but not endorsed (Recognition, Understanding, Appreciation, ~~Agreement~~). Furthermore, it is possible for humour to be recognised, but not (fully) understood and still appreciated without being able to agree with the message – moving to the middle section of the continuum (Recognition, ~~Understanding~~, Appreciation, ~~Agreement~~). Moving closer to the unperceived end, humour may not be recognised, but the message may still be understood and agreed with, but as the humorous intention is not recognised, it cannot be appreciated with humour support strategies either (~~Recognition~~, Understanding, ~~Appreciation~~, Agreement). Lastly, for humour to not be perceived, it is neither recognised, nor understood, appreciated or agreed with (~~Recognition~~, ~~Understanding~~, ~~Appreciation~~, ~~Agreement~~).

As established earlier, how the hearer – or possibly butt – reacts to a humorous utterance also depends on contextual, environmental, interlocutor and linguistic factors (Bell, 2015). Accordingly, the failed humour continuum is an idealised description of the possible scenarios of failed humour. In actual interaction, the boundaries are much fuzzier and the above categories therefore neither clear-cut nor mutually exclusive, which makes the idea of a continuum of failed humour more appealing, as a continuum leaves room for partly failed humour as well as different degrees or extents of failure, rejection, understanding and so forth. To provide an

example, depending on the interactional norms of a given context, it is possible that the more biting or face-threatening the humour style gets, the more likely is the hearer to reject the humour strongly by taking offense and voicing disagreement. Also, where a failed humour instance lies on the continuum is dynamic and may shift during a conversation based on different turns and the conversational process (as will be shown in the analysis 6.2 below). Thus, the failed humour continuum proposed here implicitly and explicitly combines different approaches to failed humour (Bell, 2009a, 2009b, 2015, Bell & Attardo, 2010, File & Schnurr, 2019, Hay, 2001, Priego-Valverde, 2009) and, as a result, calls for a more comprehensive and systematic description of the phenomenon. This again comprises a valuable tool for drawing conclusions about the social and context-bound construction of group dynamics such as team cohesion facilitating the sense-making of this phenomenon.

As demonstrated and discussed in the preceding chapters, team cohesion is understood as discursively negotiated by the interactants involved. A theoretical tool such as the failed humour continuum that helps better illustrate and understand failed humour thus helps us make claims about team cohesion as a discursive process, too. This connection will be revisited and explored in greater depth in the discussion part of this chapter (6.3), where I apply the selected examples to the continuum in order to discuss them from a more nuanced perspective. Also, as I aim to use the continuum to make claims about the discursive negotiation of cohesion, I will shed further light on this connection in the analysis and discussion parts as well (6.2 and 6.3). For now, I will continue with outlining emic perspectives on the normative ways of humour behaviour among members of the team by offering some interview data (6.1.2).

6.1.2 Emic perspectives on (boundaries in) humour use: Interview data

Against the backdrop of previous research as well as the introduction of the failed humour continuum, the relative frequent occurrence of failed humour in the CofP under investigation becomes even more worthwhile, as in the majority of the interviews the players reported an awareness of boundaries in humour use within their team (see 3.7.2.4). Ahmet, for example, stated, "One needs to know the

boundaries" ("Die Grenzen muss man kennen", interview data). In addition, Rouven argued "mostly everything is connected with fun […] that's just not to be taken or meant personally" ("Meistens ist alles mit Spaß verbunden […] das ist halt nicht persönlich zu nehmen oder gemeint", interview data). However, in the same interview he also made the statement "Sure there are power struggles from time to time but that's part of it" ("Klar sind ab und zu Machtkämpfe, aber das gehört dazu", interview data, Rouven) showing an awareness of potential conflict among team members while framing these "power struggles" as part of the context and their careers as professional football players. With regards to team relations, Ahmet asserted "we all get along really well and no one ever gets excluded no one is ever bullied" ("wir verstehen uns alle mega gut und da wird nie jemand ausgeschlossen es wird nie jemand gemobbt", interview data) distancing himself and the team from any malicious behaviour that would result in the exclusion of team members. As argued in 3.7.2.4, while most players frame the team-specific biting humour as 'just banter' and 'no bullying' their discursive interactions could be interpreted as bullying at times (see chapter 5).

Then again, as demonstrated in chapters 4 and 5, singling out certain players to make fun of them appears to be part of the shared negotiated repertoire of the CofP of FC Anonymous II. It is thus also possible to argue that what counts as bullying may differ from context to context. Among members of FC Anonymous II the biting humour used to exclude CofP members (e.g. Dae-Jung) is then not considered bullying, but indeed 'just banter'. However, the othering of team members may still result in a threat to the negotiation of team cohesion, as it constructs in- and out-groups fragmenting the team. This leads me to infer that the balance act between playfulness and aggression inherent in humour (see Bell, 2015) may result more often than not in boundary-crossing or aggressive humour with the potential to fall flat.

In sum, players of FC Anonymous II repeatedly stated in the interviews that the team's internal humour is 'just fun' and hence not to be taken to heart by anyone. Nevertheless, given the reported awareness of boundaries and the amount of failed humour in the data set, the question arises whether the construction of butts or out-

group members as part of the hierarchical structure of the CofP is part of the discursive negotiation of team cohesion rather than a factor threatening it (Hardy, et al., 2005, Hester, 2010, Jowett & Chaundy, 2004).

6.1.3 Identifying instances of failed humour

Before I go into the analysis of examples of failed humour along the proposed failed humour continuum, I illustrate how I identified instances of (partly) failed humour and explain why I selected the six excerpts below (6.2.1 – 6.2.6). Identifying failed humour appears far more challenging than identifying successful humour (see 3.8.1) – especially when concentrating on laughter as an easily identifiable humour support strategy (see Schnurr, 2010). As argued in 3.8.1, instances of humour were identified by drawing on a number of paralinguistic, prosodic and discoursal clues (Bell, 2015, Holmes, 2000, Mullany, 2004, Rogerson-Revell, 2007, Schnurr, 2008, 2010). Once a humorous intent of an utterance has been identified with the help of contextualisation cues, failed humour can be recognised by examining subsequent reactions of both the audience and the speaker (Bell, 2015). Possible reactions may include rejection through explicit negative evaluation of the utterance such as a verbal (counter-)attack, silence, eyerolling or passing over the humorous utterance (Bell, 2015, File & Schnurr, 2019).

Similar to my own experience in the present study, Priego-Valverde (2009) was a participant-observer in her study on failed humour, which is why she was arguably able to "discern supposedly humorous utterances as well" (p. 166). Despite being positioned as a part-time in-group member of the CofP, at times (see 3.9), I was still an outsider in many respects and therefore not fully acquainted to the humour norms of the team. Accordingly, I probably missed additional instances of failed humour in the data which suggests that there may well have been even more failed humour that went undetected. Another difficulty about identifying failed humour is the fact that responses signalling recognition, understanding and appreciation through e.g. laughter may be feigned (Bell, 2015). Some forms of laughter can be easily recognised as fake or staged through emphasis of each syllable of 'stereotypical' expressions of laughter ("ha ha ha"), but others may have falsely been

identified as successful humour support (Norrick, 1993, Sacks, 1974). Having acknowledged all these difficulties, I now concentrate on instances of failed humour that were rather straightforward in identification, based on contextualisation cues – especially the normative ways of humour behaviour discussed in chapter 4. Moreover, the following six examples have been chosen based on where they lie on the proposed humour continuum and their resulting effect on the negotiation of group cohesion (6.3).

6.2 Analysing failed humour instances and the negotiation of team cohesion

I will now move on to the analysis of six (partly) failed humour examples. Just like in the two preceding analysis chapters, I will offer contextual information for each extract of data, describe the excerpts and then interpret them with reference to the negotiation of team cohesion. I have here underlined both the <u>utterances containing humorous remarks</u> for better readability as well as the <u>respective responses</u> pointing towards the interpretation of (partly) failed humour. While there is a lot to be said about all of the examples, in what follows I mainly concentrate on the utterances relevant for the focus of this chapter: failed humour and negotiating team cohesion. I will therefore offer an interpretation of the humour attempts as well as responses focusing on the negotiation of group membership in order to make claims about team cohesion as a discursively negotiated social process. I will begin with the example closest to the rejection end of the failed humour continuum working my way towards the unperceived end.

6.2.1 Example 1: "Not such a fat kid like you"

The first example of failed humour entails a situation of conflict resulting from rejecting humour. This case shows that repair work is employed to reinstall solidarity among interactants. After a training session junior players Ahmet, Andre and Torsten stand in an ice bath thigh down. They wear their full training kit with rolled-up shorts' legs. Vitali walks over from the pitch and stands on the outside of the ice bath wanting to get inside the ice bath, as well. The club's laundress Kathrin stands in earshot watching the players with a smile on her face.

1. Ahmet: Mein Gott ist kalt ah

             My god is cold ah

2. Torsten: Lauwarm

             Lukewarm

3. Andre: [lacht] Das ist lauwarm

              [laughs] That's lukewarm

4. Vitali: Ey passen da vier Leute rein ?

             Ey do four people fit in there ?

5. Andre: Ja

             Yes

6. Kathrin: // Immer \

             *// Always *

7. Andre: <u>/ [In aggressiv klingendem Tonfall] Aber nich so'n fettes Kind</u>
             <u>wie du Digga \\</u>
             <u>*/ [In an aggressive sounding tone of voice] But not such a fat*</u>
             <u>*kid like you dude* \\</u>

8. Vitali: <u>[ungeduldig klingend] Passen vier Leute rein ?</u>
             <u>*[sounding impatient] Do four people fit in ?*</u>

9. Ahmet: Ja aber das Wasser kippt dann über

             Yes but then the water will spill

10. Andre: Is doch // egal \

             Doesn't // matter

11. Vitali: <u>[in angegriffen klingendem Tonfall] / Okay is \\ schlimm Digga</u>
             <u>*[in an offended sounding tone of voice] / Okay is* \\ *fatal dude*</u>

12. Ahmet: Is doch egal

             Doesn't matter

13.   // [Vitali fasst lächelnd ins Eisbad und spritzt Wasser auf
             Andre] \
             // [Vitali smilingly reaches into the ice bath and splashes
             *water at Andre] *

14. Andre: [in überrascht klingendem Tonfall] / Was macht er ? [lauter]
                Ey Ey Vitali \\
                [a surprised sounding tone of voice] / What's he doin ? [more
                *loudly] Ey Ey Vitali *
15. Vitali: Du weißt bei sowas hör ich nich auf ne ? [spritzt erneut
                Wasser auf Andre]
                You know I'm not gonna stop stuff like this right ? [splashes
                Andre with water again]
16: Andre: Nich bei [lachend] ne warte bis ich raus bin ey chico
                Not with [laughingly] no wait until I am out ey chico
17. Vitali: [lächelnd] Okay [hört auf Wasser zu spritzen]
                [smilingly] Okay [stops splashing water]

The players inside the ice bath discuss the water temperature when Vitali asks whether four people fit inside (line 4). Vitali is therefore attempting to become a member of the spatially segregated in-group inside the ice bath. While Andre and Kathrin both affirm (lines 5 & 6) discursively allowing Vitali to become an in-group member by stepping inside, Andre in an aggressive sounding tone of voice utters that "a fat kid" like him would not fit inside (line 7). Despite rather aggressive humour being the norm in this CofP, the utterance is understood to be a severe attack towards Vitali – arguably exacerbated by the aggressive delivery and absence of prosodic cues signalling humorous intent. Apart from calling him "kid", the reference to body shape threatens Vitali's masculine identity, manhood as well as athleticism, which are argued to be salient identity categories to a professional football player (Cushion & Jones, 2006, Fogel, 2011). On the one hand, it can be argued that both the fact that Vitali indeed appears to be the 'heaviest' player on the team (evident in the observational data) and the aggressive delivery of the utterance potentially increase the damaging effects of the utterance (Zajdman, 1995). On the other hand, the exaggeratedly aggressive sounding tone of voice and confrontational humour style being a group norm within this context suggest that the utterance is intended to be humorous and thus as per the ambiguous nature of humour does not

necessarily have to be taken seriously (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997, Crawford, 2003, Haugh, 2016, Schnurr, 2009).

According to Laineste (2013), at what point the "boundaries between humour and verbal aggressiveness" (p. 29) are crossed is a matter of controversy and dependent on the CofP norms. Furthermore, the interviews indicate that most of the players are aware of a rough tone being part of the game with, for example, Andre stating, "that's football" ("das is Fußball", interview data). Yet, the dataset from FC Anonymous II shows different instances of humour failing when players threaten another team member's status (as will be shown in the following examples), which implies that this kind of verbal attack is generally not appreciated within this CofP. Furthermore, Andre others Vitali excluding him from the in-group of 'fit' players inside the ice bath and marginalising him as an out-group member due to his body shape (Snyder, 1991). As a result, the negotiation of cohesion among the interactants seems threatened.

Andre's humour attempt is met with unlaughter of the audience and Vitali repeating his question effectively disregarding Andre (line 8). It is therefore interpreted to have failed. Andre presumably crosses the team-specific line of appropriateness by aggressively insulting a present player's body shape which causes his humour to fall flat (File & Schnurr, 2019, Hay, 2001, Schnurr, 2010). By not supporting Andre's aggressive humour attempt, Vitali rejects the out-group position assigned to him and makes a second attempt at becoming an in-group member effectively thriving for cohesion among the four players.

In what follows, Ahmet affirms but adds that the water will spill (line 9). While not denying in-group status as aggressively as Andre, Ahmet still appears wanting to stop Vitali from coming inside – therefore placing him as an out-group member too. As a result, Vitali's marginalisation appears reinforced with the negotiation of cohesion at risk once again. In contrast to line 7, where Andre attempts to humorously insult Vitali, he now objects to Ahmet by implying that the water spilling is not an issue (line 10). This can be interpreted as 'repair work' in order to re-establish harmony after

his failed humour attempt (Billig, 2001, Holmes & Stubbe, 2015). Andre thus distances himself from denying group membership to Ahmet and sides with Vitali with the effect of creating a new sub-group (Vine, et al., 2009). Importantly, the dataset shows more failed humour examples where players attempt to do repair work using a more collaborative and inclusive tone to reinstall good relations subsequent to an instance of (partly) failed humour.

Interrupting Andre, Vitali reacts to Ahmet stating in an offended tone of voice that the spilling of water would be "fatal" (line 11). The tone of voice suggests an annoyance with the denied group membership and being made an outsider (Spencer-Oatey, 2000). But as Vitali probably does not mean his utterance literally it can be argued that he is using irony to mitigate the severity of his reaction to being othered and denied in-group status (Hay, 1995, Kotthoff, 2003). It has been claimed that the closeness of the interlocutors not only reduces the risk of misperceiving humour, it also "seems to allow the hearers of a poor attempt at humor to communicate their lack of appreciation directly and even aggressively" (Bell, 2009b, p. 1835). The confrontational utterance of Vitali may hence also be a delayed reaction to the attack inherent in the failed humour attempt by Andre in line 7. In response to Vitali, Ahmet, too, switches approaches and echoes Andre taking his denial of access back (line 12). This way Ahmet makes an attempt at damage control himself now including Vitali in the in-group (Billig, 2001).

Vitali then smilingly reaches into the ice bath and splashes water at Andre's upper body (line 13). He thus appears to playfully tease and challenge Andre (Dynel, 2008, Keltner, et al., 2001). The observation that Vitali is here only splashing water at Andre not Ahmet reinforces the above interpretation of his annoyance being a reaction to the jocular abuse by Andre threatening his masculine identity and athleticism in line 7. Sounding surprised about the water splashing Andre asks what Vitali is doing (line 14). Moreover, by saying "he" (line 14) instead of directly addressing Vitali in the beginning of the utterance, Andre distances Vitali from the in-group of players in the ice bath – again constructing him as the other (Schnurr, 2013). Vitali then threatens Andre stating that he does not stop "stuff like this" (line 15) and continues to splash

him. By adding "you know" (line 15), he is drawing on in-group knowledge about his own common behaviour thus constructing a collective identity enhancing unity including himself in the in-group (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997, Kotthoff, 2003). After the negotiation of cohesion is repeatedly threatened by all interactants through othering processes, at this point in the conversation cohesion is being negotiated by indexing in-group knowledge and hence common ground (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997, Kotthoff, 2003).

Andre then objects to the water splashing but starts laughing (line 16), hence supporting the tease by Vitali (Hay, 1995). He adds "chico" (line 16), which is a Spanish word meaning 'boy' but has been used as a loanword implying that 'all is well' in this CofP which can thus be interpreted as waving the flag of truce in the 'water war' (Fink, 2004). Vitali smilingly replies and stops the splashing of water (line 17). The smile can be interpreted as a sign of triumph but, more importantly, the resolution of the situation reinstating harmony and solidarity (Spencer-Oatey, 2000, Wenger, 1998a). The before-disrupted collective identity and the formation of different in- and out-groups thus appear revoked and solidarity re-established (Vine, et al., 2009).

The example illustrates how failed humour can have damaging effects on the relations between interlocutors making a certain amount of repair work necessary in order to reinstall harmony and ultimately negotiate group cohesion collectively (Hay, 1995, 2000, 2001, File & Schnurr, 2019, Holmes & Stubbe, 2015, Schnurr & Chan, 2011, Plester & Sayers, 2007). The excerpt also shows how the attempts of negotiating cohesion (by Vitali) may be met with rejection through biting humour. A discursive push and pull situation ensues with differing interactants positioning each other as in- and out-group members. Ultimately, the interactants appear to discursively achieve the construction of team cohesion through the use of repair work and construction of a collective identity.

6.2.2 Example 2: "Looking nice'n sexy"

The second example of failed humour takes place in the locker room before training with some team members including junior player Andre and senior players Kevin and Simon changing and chatting. Prior to this event, Kevin teased several players already and received mixed responses (as can be seen in example 6.2.5 where Kevin teases James about having a "sexier ass than any woman"). Like the first example this interaction is interpreted as rejected humour.

1. Kevin: [lächelnd an Andre gerichtet, der gerade sein langärmeliges Torwarttrikot anzieht] Gibt's das noch noch kleiner ?
   [smilingly towards Andre who is changing into his long-sleeved goalkeeper's kit] Does that exist in even even smaller ?

2. Spieler 1: (Zu eng)
   (Too tight)

3. Andre: [Schnauft] // schön eng man \
   *[Wheezes] // nice'n tight man *

4. Kevin: / Hast du \\ da (damals) immer bei Hot or Not gebraucht // ne ? \
   */ You have \\ th (then) always needed that for Hot or Not // right ? *

5. Simon: / [kichert] \\
   */ [chuckles] *

6. Kevin: [in lächelndem Tonfall] Schön sexy aussehen zu eng
   [using smile voice] Looking nice'n sexy too tight

7. [Einige Spieler exklusive Andre lächeln; 5 Sek]
   [Some players excluding Andre smile; 5 secs]

8. Kevin: Aber sag jetzt mal ehrlich hat es so Bewertungen [bei Hot or Not] gegeben ?
   But seriously now say were there such assessments [in Hot or Not] ?

9. Andre: // Ja \

*// Yes *

10. Kevin: / (unverständlich) \\ waren gut Bewertungen ?

   / (incomprehensible) \\ were good assessments ?

11. Andre: [schaut runter und lächelt] Schon gut

   [looks down and smiles] All right

12. Kevin: [lacht laut] Oah … (unverständlich) die sollen die Bilder löschen ich schwör

   [laughs loudly] Oah … (incomprehensible) they should delete the pictures I swear

13. Spieler 2: [lacht]

   [laughs]

14. Kevin: Sag das is Missbrauch

   Say that is abuse

15. Andre: [in genervt klingendem Tonfall] Man das is so lustig

   [in an annoyed sounding tone of voice] Man that is so funny

16. [6 Sek; man hört Spieler, die sich vor der Tür der Umkleide begrüßen; Transkript 6.2.3 schließt hier an]

   [6 secs; players who are greeting each other can be heard in front of the locker room door; transcript 6.2.3 links here]

While Andre changes into his long-sleeved goalkeeper's kit, Kevin smilingly asks whether "that" exists in "even smaller" size (line 1) referring to the close-fitting long sleeve Andre changes into. The observational data shows Andre to indeed appear to struggle a little whilst putting on the top. Kevin teasingly comments on this observation and uses it for humorous purposes (Dynel, 2008, Gordon, 2010, Keltner, et al., 2001). His nipping tease is underlined by his smile signalling amusement (Bell, 2015, Holmes, 2014) about the seemingly too small jersey of Andre. Moreover, the observational data suggests that Kevin does not really want to know whether the long sleeve is available in smaller sizes but rather wants to ironically tease Andre for choosing something he deems too small (Hay, 1995, Kotthoff, 2003, Ridanpää, 2014). Making Andre the butt of the humour in front of mutual teammates, Kevin positions

Andre as an out-group member threatening cohesive goals (Apte, 1987, Dynel, 2008, Hay, 1994, 2001, Snyder, 1991, Vine, et al., 2009).

An unidentified Player 1 appears to utter "too tight" in line 2, therefore echoing Kevin's humour attempt, which is understood to be supportive of such humour (Bell, 2009a, Hay, 2001). Andre wheezes – presumably due to his struggle of putting the top on properly – and adds "nice'n tight man" (line 3). His tone of voice as well as blank face do not give any indication of whether he supports Kevin's humour attempt by adding more humour or whether he rejects it by stating that the top is fine as it is therefore voicing disagreement letting the humour fail (Bell, 2015, Hay, 1995, 2001, Priego-Valverde, 2009).

Kevin then adds to the previously-initiated humour frame asking Andre "always needed that for Hot or Not right ?" (line 4). The reference to 'Hot or Not'[11] occurs several times during my fieldwork – usually in the form of a tease initiated by Kevin targeting Andre who has had a profile on the rating platform called Hot or Not in the past. The reference to Hot or Not can thus be understood as part of group knowledge with Kevin constructing a collective identity claiming membership to the CofP (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997, Kotthoff, 2003) while at the same time marginalising Andre as the butt of the humour (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997). Connecting tight clothing with having 'hot looks' qualifying for the rating platform, Kevin's tease becomes slightly more nipping than before, as he threatens Andre's gendered as well as sexualised identity through mockery.

As a response to the tease, Simon chuckles supporting the humour in line 5 (Hay, 1995, 2001). Kevin repeats his tease using smile voice and utters "Looking nice'n sexy too tight" (line 6). Therefore, he, too, mocks Andre and his "sexy" choice of clothing reinforcing the constructed outsider position and sexualised identity assigned to him.

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[11] Hot or Not is a website and app that can be viewed as the predecessor of the popular dating app "tinder", as people upload photographs of themselves and have their 'hotness' rated by strangers (DatingScout, 2019). When people 'match' each other, they can then proceed and have an online conversation (DatingScout, 2019).

Kevin is furthermore constructing Andre as wanting to appeal sexy to others by wearing figure hugging clothes which threatens his masculine identity (see also 6.2.5). The tease in line 6 is responded to by some players (excluding Andre) smiling and a very long pause of 5 seconds (line 7). While the smiles indicate amusement and therefore are understood as a humour support strategy (Holmes, 2014, Schnurr, 2010), the silence and unlaughter of the others indicate partly failure of this humour attempt. This again fragments the group into supporters and non-supporters of the tease (Bell, 2009b, Marsh, 2014, File & Schnurr, 2019).

Nevertheless, Kevin does not drop the topic and probes Andre further by asking him whether there were assessments involved in Hot or Not (line 8). Although he says, "but seriously now" his nipping question does not suggest seriousness but rather 'mock seriousness' (Dynel, 2008, Haugh, 2016, Pexman & Olineck, 2002). As Haugh (2016) argues, "[j]ocular mockery is a form of teasing where speakers figuratively cut down or diminish the target in some way but do so within a non-serious or playful frame" (p. 123). Kevin here also repeatedly attacks Andre and, as a result, diminishes his masculine identity. Andre replies with a simple "yes" (line 9), which is immediately interrupted by Kevin who is moving on to tease him further by asking whether the assessments were positive (line 10). The inherent attack in the question is evaded by Andre who looks down and smiles before stating that they were "all right" (line 11) appearing slightly proud of being rated positively by the people using the platform. This is possibly the strongest position Andre has in the course of the interaction so far, as he gets the opportunity to portray himself in a positive light constructing a desirable masculine identity for himself – which Kevin repeatedly attacks.

In line 12, Kevin then laughs loudly exclaiming "Oah" which sounds like both an expression of appreciation and mockery. Because he continues with "(incomprehensible) they should delete the pictures I swear" (line 12), Kevin does not seem to appreciate Andre's stronger position and teases him more aggressively. By stating that the pictures should be deleted, Kevin suggests that the pictures are not flattering, thereby countering Andre's remark about receiving positive feedback

from the Hot or Not community. Kevin's humour style becomes more biting and corroborates the construction of Andre's identity as unattractive and an outsider.

Only one player laughs supporting Kevin's aggressive tease (line 13) which shows the humour to partly fail (File & Schnurr, 2019). Kevin adds to his own humour uttering "Say that is abuse" (line 14), which may be interpreted as another aggressive tease by Kevin attacking Andre and his old pictures on Hot or Not. By saying that the provider should delete the pictures because they count towards abuse, Kevin implies that the pictures are damaging for Andre.[12] In an annoyed sounding tone of voice conveying frustration, Andre counters "Man that is so funny" (line 15). The combination of contextual cues including tone of voice, facial expression, and the repeated targeting of Andre point towards an annoyance and humour rejection by Andre. Not having appreciated but tolerated the first nipping then biting teases for a while, he now voices his disagreement by sarcastically labelling Kevin's humour attempts as "funny" (Hester, 2010, Pexman & Olineck, 2002). His tone of voice points to him not meaning the utterance literally, hence sarcastically (Dynel, 2008, Gockel & Kerr, 2015, Norrick, 1994, Pexman & Olineck, 2002). Hay's (2001) research, too, shows that explicit declarations of unappreciation or ironic comments of enjoyment, like the one reported here, can indicate lack of amusement. Andre ultimately rejects the humour by voicing his disagreement and unappreciation. It can be asserted that the extract dynamically moves along the failed humour continuum ending up in the full rejection end. This arguably has a negative impact on the constructed bond between Kevin and Andre – further supported by the long succeeding silence after Andre's turn (line 16). The interaction thus moves from light-hearted teasing to nipping and biting teases which end in a conflict situation (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997, Hay, 2001).

In this example especially, the dynamic nature of negotiating the social phenomenon of team cohesion as a process becomes very tangible. By drawing on group

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[12] The archived profile of Andre shows a younger version of the football player in three different mirror selfies, not wearing a t-shirt in one of the pictures.

knowledge and employing a nipping teasing style, Kevin first constructs a collective identity for the in-group marginalising Andre as the butt of the repeated teases. Then again, since the butt identity needs to be earned, it can also be understood as a sign for in-group status. I would argue that here Andre's marginalisation does not appear to damage the negotiation of cohesion at first – particularly as he claims back control of his sexual identity in line 11, thereby taking part in the humorous interaction. However, this changes again when Kevin adopts a more biting humour style to attack Andre, who then counterattacks using sarcasm to reject the continued teases towards him. Also, because no one reacts to Andre's remark in line 15, the group of present CofP members appears fragmented in this situation which threatens the negotiation of team cohesion. The status of the interactants may also affect the proceedings. As Andre is seen by himself and constructed by others as a junior player (evident in observations and interview data), he may initially refrain from rejecting the teases by Kevin who is more senior than him. However, when the teases build up, he rejects the humour despite the age and status difference.

6.2.3 Example 3: "Always the younger one"

The third example of this chapter moves further towards the middle part of the failed humour continuum. Some players, including Fabian and Kevin, are in the locker room changing into their training kits which they collect from the walk-in closet and storage room adjacent to the locker room (see figure 1). As Kevin only joined FC Anonymous II shortly before the interaction takes place, he did not have his own dedicated spot in the locker room for a while. On the day of the interaction, he is told by the coaches to take over the empty seat and locker of a player who left the team. Kevin sits on this newly acquired spot located between junior players Fabian and Conor (see figure 2).

1. Kevin: [Flezt demonstrativ auf seinem Platz; an Fabian gerichtet] Du weißt ne du musst jetzt immer meine Wäsche rüberbringen
[Demonstratively lazing about on his seat; towards Fabian]
You know right you always have to bring over my laundry now

2. Fabian:	Ich ?
	Me ?
3. Kevin:	Ja immer der wo neben mir sitzt (das ist) immer der Jüngere weißt du
	Yes always the who sits next to me (it's) always the younger one you know
4.	[Stille, Fabian schaut weg und zieht sich weiter um]
	[*Silence; Fabian looks away and continues changing*]

Sitting in a demonstrably relaxed position on his newly acquired seat, former first team player Kevin turns towards junior player Fabian who is changing next to him and tells him that from now on he has to fetch his "laundry" (referring to training kit) for him (line 1). As Kevin starts his utterance with "you know" he constructs the directive and implication that Fabian needs to comply as group knowledge, thereby constructing an in-group including himself and Fabian (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997, Kotthoff, 2003). However, by formulating his humour attempt as a directive, Kevin does power thereby positioning himself above Fabian threatening the latter's status (Dynel, 2008, Fogel, 2011, Schnurr, 2013). Since Kevin arguably does not mean his utterance literally, it is interpreted as an ironic tease (Hay, 1995, Kotthoff, 2003, Ridanpää, 2014). In response, Fabian asks the clarifying question "Me?" (line 2) indicating that either he is not sure whether he is being addressed or does not appreciate the content of Kevin's utterance.

Kevin then adds to his humour attempt by explaining that "always the younger one" sitting next to him has to do it, again adding "you know" (line 3). Once again, he draws on in-group knowledge about the team-internal hierarchy based on age. Observations show that despite FC Anonymous II's hierarchical structure based on age and experience, doing power by giving directives with the explicit reasoning of age seniority is usually accepted for training-related directives only (like fetching balls as instructed by the coaches). Also, it is typically done in a more indirect and less threatening way. Therefore, ordering about Fabian to fetch his laundry seems inappropriate for Kevin, which is in line with the irony play frame initiated in line 1.

Fabian does not react to Kevin's second humour attempt, looks away and silence occurs. Due to this lack of humour support it is interpreted as humour failure (Bell, 2009b, Bogdan, 2014, File & Schnurr, 2019, Hay, 2001, Laineste, 2013, Priego-Valverde, 2009). I would argue that, based on his clarifying question in line 2, Fabian has recognised and understood the humorous intention, but does not appreciate it as he is likely to disagree with the message (Priego-Valverde, 2009). The humour attempt by Kevin thus arguably fails by rejection (Bell, 2015). Furthermore, by denying humour support, Fabian also rejects the in-group position based on 'false group knowledge' with possible damaging effects to the negotiation of cohesion by denying Kevin in-group membership. "As a consequence, social distance between interlocutors rather than solidarity is created" (File & Schnurr, 2019, p. 134), which in this case highlights Kevin's low status aggravated by the face loss associated with failed humour (Bell, 2009b, Bogdan, 2014, Schnurr & Chan, 2011).

While due to his age and also experience Kevin has been described as a senior player, he at the same time occupies a newcomer role, as he only recently joined the team FC Anonymous II. I would therefore argue that, given his relative newcomer status, Kevin may have misjudged the relationship with Fabian and tried to gain membership of the close-knit CofP through competitive humour too early (Hay, 1995, Wilson, 2011) – as can be observed in the previous failed humour example 6.2.2 involving Kevin as the humourist, too. He appears to have overstepped the context-specific boundaries of appropriate behaviour pointing towards his marginal status within the CofP (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997, Wilson, 2011). This failed humour interaction thus highlights the differences in status of the CofP members impacting the negotiation of team cohesion. When constructing himself as a senior player allowed to tease junior players, Kevin's humour falls flat which illustrates that his claimed high status is not co-constructed by the butt of his humour attempt, Fabian.

6.2.4 Example 4: "The girl writes with Eddie"
Example 4 lies in the middle of the failed humour continuum and also takes place in the locker room before training. Junior player Ahmet and senior players Osman and

Narek arrived well before the start of a training session and sit on the benches. Ahmet and Osman discuss their night out after a successful away match the previous day. Narek, who did not join the party, does not join the conversation. Osman seemingly lazes about on his seat which seems to be underlining a tired impression.

1. Ahmet: Du hast doch nur in der Lounge gechillt Digga
   You just chilled in the lounge dude

2. Osman: [flezt auf seinem Platz; murmelt langsam] Ich (war) auch tot
   [lazing about on his seat; murmuring slowly] I (was) just dead

3. Researcher: [lacht]
   [laughs]

4. Ahmet: [lacht]
   [laughs]

5. [2 Sek Stille]
   [2 secs silence]

6. Ahmet: [in lächelndem Tonfall] Eddie hatte sein Chick ich guck äh in der Schlange // bin ich \
   *[using smile voice] Eddie had his chick I look eh in the queue // I am *

7. Osman: / [lacht] \\
   */ [laughs] *

8. Ahmet: [in lächelndem Tonfall] und hör zu das Mädchen is ganze Zeit neben mir … er sagt so da is so ein Mädchen die kommt auch gleich rein und dann guck ich neben mir so'n Mädchen guckt auf sein Handy und das Mädchen schreibt mit **Eddie** … [lächelnd] weil ich seh das Mädchen schreibt das Mädchen das mit Eddie die ganze Zeit (skribbelt) stand in der Schlange **die ganze Zeit** neben mir **die ganze Zeit** ich guck auf ihr Handy [lächelnd] sie schreibt ganze Zeit nur Eddie und so [lachend] und ich schreib auf meinem Handy mit Eddie Digga … [lachend] (unverständlich) Digga

*[using smile voice] and listen the girl is next to me the whole time … he says there's such a girl she'll come inside soon too and then I look next to me such a girl looks at his [sic] phone and the girl writes with **Eddie** … [smilingly] because I see the girl writes the girl that (scribbles) the whole time with Eddie stood in the queue **the whole tim**e next to me **the whole time** I look at her phone [smilingly] she only writes Eddie the whole time and such [laughingly] and I write on my phone with Eddie dude … [laughingly] (incomprehensible) dude*

9. Osman: [lacht gekünstelt klingelnd und schaut zu Boden]
                        [laughs sounding contrived and looks to the floor]

10. [3 Sek Stille, gefolgt von Themenwechsel durch Ahmet]
     [3 secs silence followed by change of topic by Ahmet]

Ahmet addresses Osman stating that he "just chilled in the lounge" (line 1) and uses the familiariser "dude" which displays membership in this CofP and constructs solidarity among the interactants (Wilson, 2010, Wolfers, et al., 2017). Osman, who seems to be lazing about on his seat slowly murmurs that he was "dead" (line 2), underlined by his 'floppy' body language and slow speaking pace. He therefore enacts the content of his utterance, which could be understood as humorous (Bell, 2015, Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997). As a reaction, both the researcher and Ahmet employ the humour support strategy of laughter (lines 3 and 4).

A silence of two seconds follows the joint laughter, before in line 6 Ahmet starts telling an anecdote about the night out, which Osman interrupts with laughter (line 7). The use of smile voice by Ahmet suggests an upcoming humorous story (Tannen, 2005b), which could be the reason for Osman's early laughter. Ahmet then continues to uninterruptedly tell the anecdote about how Eddie who had already been inside the club exchanged messages with a girl who, Ahmet realised, was standing next to him in line so he was able to secretly read the conversation she and Edwin were having on her phone (line 8). Ahmet uses many cues to signal his humorous and entertaining intention while telling the anecdote (Bell, 2015, Boxer & Cortés-Conde,

1997, Haugh, 2016, Hay, 1995, Schnurr, 2010, Schnurr & Chan, 2011): he smiles in between sentences, uses a smiling and sometimes even laughing tone of voice, emphasises words through stretching them (in bold) and repeats utterances such as "the whole time" (line 8), which he says five times. In so doing, Ahmet constructs several identities for himself ranging from a knowledgeable person who had more insights into the narrated situation than Edwin, "the girl" and the rest of the team, to an entertainer persona managing the floor. In addition, he constructs himself as an in-group member of the team using the nickname "Eddie" for Edwin signalling a close relationship and indicating familiarity (Holmes, 2006, Wilson, 2010, 2011). Furthermore, he constructs various identities for the targets in his humorous anecdote ranging from the gendered identity of a womanizer for Edwin to clueless characters unaware of the situation concerning both Edwin and "the girl". Also, speaking about an absent member of the CofP in a non-threatening way whilst not targeting any specific butt in his humorous anecdote makes his utterance bonding in style (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997). By constructing a collective identity including a CofP member who is not present during the interaction Ahmet negotiates cohesion.

Osman appears to have recognised the humour attempt within the anecdote of Ahmet as he displays humour support through laughter (Hay, 2001). However, his laughter in line 9 is not interpreted to be genuine – marked as "laughs sounding contrived" in the transcript for a lack of better denoting the kind of laughter displayed here. Given my own familiarity with the team as well as instances of laughter by Osman in the data, his laughter in line 9 can be described and interpreted as sounding rather feigned and 'half-hearted'. This interpretation of feigned humour support appears emphasised through Osman directing his gaze at the floor indicating indifference and detachment (Mondada, 2014). It can therefore be argued that Osman recognises, understands and seemingly appreciates the humour attempt, but does not necessarily agree with the 'humorousness' of the anecdote.

According to Bell (2015), showing that one recognises and understands the humour demonstrates humour competence. Then again, by not offering full humour support, a lack of appreciation is expressed which demonstrates a 'good' or implied 'better'

sense of humour (Bell, 2009b, 2015, Bogdan, 2014). Accordingly, this intricate partly failed humour instance lies in between unperceived and rejected on the failed humour continuum. Also, the seemingly half-hearted reaction of what I argue to be feigned humour support may have been an attempt at managing rapport and saving Ahmet from face loss (Schnurr & Chan, 2011, Spencer-Oatey, 2000). Following this interpretation, Osman appears to be invested in the construction of an in-group identity and displays membership to the CofP by minimising face loss for Ahmet (File & Schnurr, 2019, Spencer-Oatey, 2000). Furthermore, it could be maintained that Osman is concerned with co-constructing Ahmet as part of the CofP, who made such identity claims in and through the anecdote, thereby negotiating cohesion among them both.

The ensuing rather long silence of three seconds (line 10) as well as the following change of topic initiated by Ahmet indicate that this instance of failed humour does not result in serious miscommunication outcomes such as the formation of strong in- and out-groups. It is thus interpreted as a 'minor' failed humour instance unthreatening to group membership claims and the negotiation of cohesion. Especially so, because Osman arguably demonstrates an awareness for the damaging effects of failed humour by feigning humour support.

6.2.5 Example 5: "Sexier ass than any woman"

The next interaction recorded in the locker room follows on from example 6.2.2 where Kevin teases Andre in a nipping style constructing a sexualised and gendered identity for him. James, who approaches the locker room, can be heard greeting some team members in the hallway. He then enters the locker room where several players are getting changed and is greeted by Kevin. The interaction is understood to lie in the middle part of the failed humour continuum between unperceived and rejected humour.

1. Kevin: [in freudig klingendem Tonfall] Hallo James

    [in a happy sounding tone of voice] Hello James

2. James: Hallo (unverständlich) // [begrüßt alle Spieler und Forscherin mit Handschlag] \

   *Hello (incomprehensible) // [greets every player and researcher by shaking hands] *

3. Kevin: / Alles fresh wie geht's ? … [lächelnd] Alles gut ? \\

   */ Everything fresh how are you ? … [smilingly] All good ? *

4. [unverständliche überlappende Gesprächsfetzen]

   [incomprehensible overlapping snippets of conversation]

5. Kevin: <u>/ [leise] der hat einen Arsch man Wahnsinn [auf James deutend] \\ … [lauter und in lächelndem Tonfall] Der hat einen geileren Arsch als jede Frau</u>

   <u>*/ [quietly] he's got an ass man crazy [pointing towards James] \\ … [louder using smile voice] He has a sexier ass than any woman*</u>

6. <u>[Leises Kichern mancher anwesender Spieler; James lächelt; 5 Sek Stille]</u>

   <u>*[Quiet snickering by some of the present players; James smiles; 5 secs silence]*</u>

7. Kevin: <u>[in lächelndem Tonfall] Wahnsinn … (unverständlich) [pfeift]</u>

   <u>*[using smile voice] Crazy … (incomprehensible) [whistles]*</u>

8. <u>[2,5 Sek Stille]</u>

   <u>*[2,5 secs silence]*</u>

9. Kevin: [streckt sich, stöhnt und spricht die Forscherin an]

   [stretches, groans and addresses the researcher]

In lines 1 to 3 Kevin loudly greets senior player James who greets him back and says hello to other players and the researcher. After a brief episode of incomprehensible overlapping chatter, the transcript picks up again with Kevin quietly uttering "he's got an ass man crazy" (line 5) and point towards James. By using the pronoun "he" Kevin speaks about James rather than address him directly thereby othering him as an outsider (Holmes & Marra, 2002a, Jaworski & Coupland, 2005, Schnurr, 2013). He furthermore objectifies James by teasingly referring to his "ass" constructing a sexualised identity for him (Haugh, 2016).

After a short pause, Kevin speaks up and using smile voice indicating humour adds "He has a sexier ass than any woman" (line 5) objectifying and sexualising James further. Also, he now overbids his first statement by comparing James' to women's backsides, which is here interpreted as a sexualised ironic compliment (Pexman & Olineck, 2002) and thus works as an attack towards James' masculine identity (Fogel, 2011). His nipping humour style is underlined by his tone of voice as well as the gendered and sexualised play frame he already initiated in the conversations preceding the extract above (Bell, 2009b, Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997).

Among others, contextual cues are therefore essential to interpret the interaction as humorous by Kevin. Giving an ironic compliment to a male teammate in such a masculine environment like the locker room of FC Anonymous II can be understood as rather risky for Kevin, as he is constructing a potentially non-heterosexual identity for himself by complimenting James' bottom in a sexualised manner. According to Pexman and Olineck (2002), there are situations in which speakers wish to compliment someone without losing status themselves, and an ironic compliment would then be a possible way of accomplishing this interactional goal. In addition, using a rather low voice when making a humorous comment and then repeating it more loudly appears to be a normative way of behaviour with Kevin, which has been observed several times in the data collected (see for example 4.2.1). A possible explanation for this is provided by Norrick (1993) who describes a "testing function of humor" (p. 109) that takes place when a speaker checks "the audience's willingness to laugh about the subject matter in question". Especially given the relative newcomer status of Kevin it is possible that he is testing the limits of appropriateness within the CofP by first testing his humour with a smaller audience – hence in a quieter voice – before raising the stakes and speaking louder.

As a reaction to Kevin's humorous utterance, some of the players present during the interaction snicker quietly, James smiles and a silence of 5 seconds follows (line 6). Both the snickering and the smile are interpreted as humour support strategies (Hay, 2001). Yet, the majority of the audience does not show any reaction to this humour

attempt, causing it to fall partly flat (File & Schnurr, 2019). In addition, snickering and smiling can be understood as 'less involved' humour support strategies than for example laughter or adding more humour – which have been shown to be rather common humour support strategies among members of FC Anonymous II. The interpretation of the humour falling partly flat is reinforced by the long ensuing silence which, following Bell (2009b), can also serve to make speakers uncomfortable when rejecting humour. At this point in the conversation I would argue that the audience very likely perceives the humorous intention by Kevin due to his delivery, the ironic and sexualised content as well as the snickering response by parts of the audience (Hay, 2001, Priego-Valverde, 2009). The humour thus fails partly despite being recognised. However, whether it is understood cannot be determined with certainty.

After the long pause of 5 seconds, Kevin adds to his own humour, and using smile voice, utters "crazy" most likely referring to James' backside again (line 7). The whistle in the end of his utterance manifests the interpretation of adding to the previous sexualised tease, as whistling after someone is typically associated with catcalling women and sexist behaviour (Bowman, 1993, Fisher, Lindner & Ferguson, 2017). Whilst targeting James as the butt of his nipping teases, Kevin continues to both construct him as the outsider and threaten his masculine identity (Fogel, 2011). Now, James does not smile but seems to ignore the utterance and whistle by Kevin not showing a reaction – like all other team members present (line 8). Having partly failed first, the second humour attempt thus falls flat with the entire audience who appears united in non-support of Kevin's humour attempt. Given that James has been on the team for a year already and, despite his seniority in age, Kevin is a rather new addition to the CofP, James' fleeting humour support is interpreted as a threat to Kevin's status. Through his regular humour attempts, Kevin may be striving for validation from the (more senior) players on the team in order to find his place within FC Anonymous II (see also 4.1.4, 4.2.1, 5.3.1, 6.2.2 and 6.2.3). He repeatedly attempts to claim not only CofP membership but also senior status by doing power through humour. Also, as no other conversation is taking place simultaneously in this instance, it is likely that most players perceive the humour attempt, but still do not

offer humour support. Again, it is not possible to determine whether all players in the audience recognise and understand the attempt though, which places the failed humour instance in the middle of the continuum.

After the silence of 2.5 seconds, Kevin stretches, groans and changes topic by speaking to the researcher in a non-humorous way. With regards to team cohesion, it can therefore be concluded that despite Kevin's attempts at constructing James as the outsider and himself as the in-group humourist, Kevin ends up being marginalised himself as he gradually loses humour support during the course of the conversation. His resulting outsider position does not appear too damaging because he continues to manage the floor in the locker room by addressing the researcher (Van De Mieroop & Schnurr, 2014). However, by taking the floor he may have also attempted to save face and downplay his marginalisation.

6.2.6 Example 6: "Idiot test"

The last interaction discussed dynamically moves along the failed humour continuum from the middle part to the unperceived end and takes place during pre-season. The players of FC Anonymous II have to pass particular performance and health condition tests examining their fitness in order to be admitted to the league they are playing in. In the locker room some players discuss their lactate tests. The lactate test is a performance diagnostic method to determine the endurance ability of an athlete (fussballtraining.de, 2017). The test is usually held in the form of a running test, where the running speed is gradually increased – typically starting with 10 km/h until the athletes reach their limit of performance (fussballtraining.de, 2017). Edwin had his test the previous day and is being asked about how he performed.

1. Fabian: Eddie wie war ?

   Eddie how was?

2. Edwin: Beim Test ? (Unverständlich) Also ich bin 18 eine Minute
   gelaufen

   With test ? (incomprehensible) So I ran 18 for one minute

3. Player 1:   Ch !

Ch !

4. Edwin: [2 Sek] Meine Werte // sind top … \ ich kann nicht meckern

[2 secs] My results // are top … \ I can't complain

5. Simon: / Ich ich freu \\ mich wenn ich morgen 12 schaff [lächelt]

/ I I am happy \\ when I manage 12 tomorrow [smiles]

6. Fabian: Echt gelaufen ?

Really ran ?

7. Edwin: Hä aber ich war so lange da ne dieser kognitive Test ne

danach der Kopf

Huh but I was there for so long right this cognitive test right

afterwards the head

8. Simon: Was was für'n Test ?

What what kinda test ?

9. Andre: Junge (lacht) dieser // diese \

*Mate (laughs) this // this *

10. Edwin: / Da musst \\ du so Brücken auf so // Dinger (zählen) \

*/ There you \\ gotta like (count) bridges // on thingys *

11. Simon: / [in lächelndem Tonfall] Ah hör auf \\

*/ [using smile voice] Ah stop it *

12. Andre: Hä das is so anders

Eh that's so different

13. Simon: Ist das so'n so'n (lächelnd) so'n Idioten Test ?

Is that such an such an (smiling) such an idiot test ?

14. Player 1: Nein

No

15. Player 2: // Nein \

*// No *

16. Andre: / Nein \\ das ist so ein kognitiver // da musst du so \

*/ No \\ that is such a cognitive // you gotta *

17. Edwin: / Nein das \\ sind deine Reaktionen und so

/ No it's \\ your reactions and such

18. Simon: (schmunzelnd) Ach so

(with a grin) I see

19. [Edwin und Andre führen Unterhaltung über Laktattests fort]

[Edwin and Andre continue conversation about lactate tests]

Until line 4 of this interaction, Fabian and Edwin have a non-humorous conversation discussing the performance of Edwin who has already completed his lactate test. When Edwin adds that he is happy with his results (line 4), Simon interrupts him stating that he would be happy if he managed to run 12 during his test (line 5). Based on his subsequent smile as well as 12 km/h being a very low peak running speed in the setting of a lactate test, Simon's utterance is interpreted as irony (Hay, 1995, Kotthoff, 2003, Ridanpää, 2014). He thus ridicules his own alleged poor fitness. As discussed in 4.2, self-directed humour is an essential characteristic of the team's shared negotiated repertoire and commonly used to build solidarity and negotiate team cohesion among members of the CofP (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997, Raymond, 2014, Schnurr & Chan, 2017, Zajdman, 1995). By using self-directed humour, Simon therefore shifts the conversation from a serious to a playful frame attempting to 'share a laugh' with his present teammates and engage in the interactional bonding game that is multi-turn humour (Dynel, 2008).

As reflected in the two subsequent lines 6 and 7, the humorous mode is not picked up or responded to, as Fabian and Edwin continue their conversation without reacting to Simon's self-directed humour attempt. Audience members may purposely ignore a humour attempt to carry on with their conversation (Priego-Valverde, 2009, see 6.1). Simon's first attempt at humour therefore fails by rejection (Priego-Valverde, 2009).

In line 7, Edwin mentions a cognitive test which, according to him, had taken its toll. When Simon inquires about the test (line 8), both Andre and Edwin respond to him (lines 9 and 10) with Edwin interrupting Andre explaining what the cognitive test entails. Again, Simon appears to make a humorous remark by objecting to Edwin with "Ah stop it", in line 11. His dissent and use of smile voice suggest that he does not accept the explanation of Edwin of needing to "(count) bridges" (line 10) during the

cognitive test. Simon may thus interpret Edwin's utterance as playful and ironic thereby returning to his own play frame initiated in line 5. It could further be argued that Simon attempts to invite the present players to collectively criticise or ridicule the cognitive test, which he implicitly frames as absurd. Thereby, he stops Edwin from explicating further and constructs himself as an in-group member reversing his slight marginalisation (Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997, Hay, 1995, 2000, 2001, Holmes & Stubbe, 2015, Kotthoff, 2003). Yet again, his humour attempt is not responded to and Andre continues the conversation by calling the test "different" (line 12). "Different" is a commonly used expression among members of the CofP to describe something out of the ordinary, surprising or exceptional. From the audience responses it is not possible to make claims about whether Simon's humour attempt is not recognised and therefore unperceived or if it is recognised and purposely ignored here (Hay, 2001, Priego-Valverde, 2009). Nonetheless, it remains an 'imperfect' negotiation; in other words, a failed humour attempt (Bell, 2015).

In line 13, it appears that Simon makes another attempt at a humorous utterance. His smile, repeating the start of his utterance three times showing a heightened involvement on his side as well as the arguably non-serious content of his speech act all indicate humorous intent (Haugh, 2016, Holmes, 2014, Schnurr, 2010, Schnurr & Chan, 2011). As captain Simon is the most senior and among the most experienced players on the team who would know of the annual tests, his question about an "idiot test" (line 13) is interpreted as irony (Hay, 1995, Kotthoff, 2003, Ridanpää, 2014). The re-introduced play frame is again not responded to, as two players immediately deny his question categorically (lines 14 and 15). This is followed by both Andre and Edwin contradicting Simon and adding explanatory detail respectively (lines 16 and 17). The overlaps in these four turns show a heightened involvement in the conversation which points to a strong adverse reaction to Simon's question. It cannot be concluded from the data why Simon's humour attempt fails, but the reactions of the players suggest that they either do not recognise the humour and take his question literally resulting in four contradictions or they argue against him not taking the conversation seriously, therefore recognising and rejecting his humour attempt. Despite the uncertainty of whether this humour attempt fails because it is unperceived or

rejected, both, or in between these two extremes, the 'imperfect' negotiation here results in Simon's out-group position being manifested and the in-group of contradictors being strengthened.

Despite repeatedly not receiving any humour support and as a result being constructed as an outsider, who is ill-informed about the customary condition tests, Simon does not appear to be too bothered and grinningly utters "I see" in line 18. His grin may point toward him being amused about Edwin, Andre and the other two players engaged in the conversation not perceiving his attempts at being humorous thus constructing them as not having a 'good' sense of humour (Bell, 2009b, 2015, Bogdan, 2014). In addition, his own senior status as captain of the team as well as humour being a common way of interacting within the CofP of FC Anonymous II potentially aid Simon in not harming his own identity or the team's co-constructed bond. Edwin and Andre ultimately continue the conversation (line 19).

Similar to how Simon's humour attempt fails in the above extract, some other examples of failed humour are recorded in which the conversation is continued effectively ignoring someone else's humour attempt. The data suggests that in most cases of failed humour the audience recognises and understands the humour but does not proceed with appreciation or agreement – thus rejecting the humour by 'non-reaction'. Nevertheless, looking at the audio-recorded data only, it cannot be said for certain whether the audience perceives the humour attempts in these cases at all.

In the following section, I discuss in greater depth how failed humour in interaction impacts on the discursive construction of team cohesion among members of FC Anonymous II. Also, I revisit the failed humour continuum to reassess its usefulness for the investigation of team cohesion as a discursively negotiated process.

6.3 Discussion: Failed humour as part of the negotiation of team cohesion

In this last analysis chapter, I have introduced the failed humour continuum which adds to the current scholarship on failed humour and constitutes a systematic way

of accounting for different degrees and realisations of failed humour in interaction. I have conducted micro-analyses of six different examples of failed humour among members of the team under investigation. By shedding light on humour attempts that fall (partly) flat, it is possible to examine how team cohesion is negotiated and constructed discursively within this specific CofP. Furthermore, the analyses have shown how the players construct and negotiate group membership status as well as identities for themselves and others in interaction which, in turn, impacts on the processes of negotiating team cohesion. Despite a biting humour style being the normative way of humour behaviour in this CofP, players appear to fail surprisingly often with their conversational humour attempts – especially when comparing the amount of failed humour to other researchers' work (e.g. Bell, 2015, Bogdan, 2014, Priego-Valverde, 2009, Schnurr, 2009).

In chapter 4, I argued that the butt of a humour attempt is placed as a temporary out-group member impacting on the negotiation of team cohesion (see also Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997, Dynel, 2008, Holmes & Stubbe, 2015, Wilson, 2011). This marginalisation is arguably aggravated when the butt is unsupportive of the humour – especially when the butt is being outnumbered by the constructed in-group of humour supporters. Now, if the group rejecting or not perceiving a humour attempt is larger than the group of supporters, it becomes likely that instead of the butt, the person uttering the failed humorous remark is marginalised and constructed as an outsider in opposition to the in-group of 'non-supporters' – as illustrated in this chapter. The identity claim of having a 'good' sense of humour is then being rejected, which has an impact on the speakers' identity and group membership status – ultimately impacting the construction of a cohesive social environment as well as solidarity among members of the CofP (Bell, 2009b, 2015, Bogdan, 2014, Hay, 2001).

In addition, the speaker is constructed as among others being relatively unfamiliar with the acceptable humour norms within the CofP and, as a consequence, placed as an out-group member (Bell, 2015, Bogdan, 2014, Dynel, 2008, Plester & Sayers 2007, Schnurr, 2009, 2010). This conclusion is supported by the data analysed in this chapter, as the player least familiar with the shared repertoire – likely due to his

newcomer status (Kevin) – fails relatively often with his humour attempts (see 6.2.2, 6.2.3, and 6.2.5) – especially in comparison with Simon, a senior player, captain and long-time member of the team, whose humour fails once only in my dataset (see 6.2.6). Apart from the frequency of failing, other factors appear to be at play as well, as Kevin's humour attempts and thus attempts at constructing himself as an in-group member of the CofP appear to receive stronger rejection than Simon's. In addition, when there is a power imbalance between speaker and hearer (e.g. junior speaker and senior hearer; see 5.3.3), the degree of failure or rejection varies, as well. While one possible explanation may be the relationship and interactional history of the interlocutors (see Bell, 2009a, 2009b, 2015, Culpeper, 1996, Priego-Valverde, 2009, Zajdman, 1995), the question remains: How are these deliberations connected with the failed humour continuum and finally the discursive negotiation of cohesion? I will address this question in the following section.

6.3.1 The dynamic negotiation of team cohesion through failed humour

For better clarity when reading the discussion section, I offer a visualisation of the thought process behind my argument (figure 4). Figure 4 is based on the findings of the analyses as well as the above initial deliberations. The sketch can be revisited by the reader for orientation, as the negotiation of team cohesion through failed humour calls for a rather complex discussion.
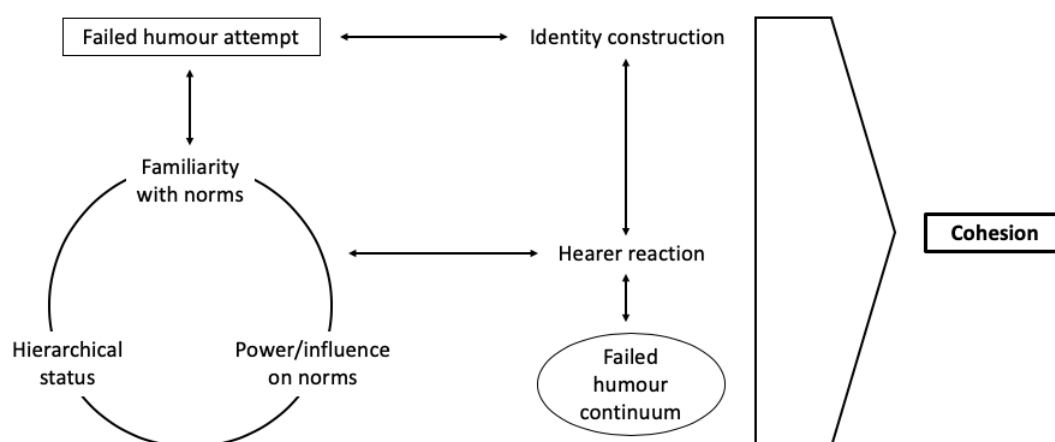

Figure 4: The dynamic negotiation of team cohesion through failed humour

The analyses of the six examples show that, when intending to examine the connection between team cohesion and failed humour, several components and influences need to be taken into account. I start by shedding light on a specific aspect of failed humour attempts that runs like a common thread through all three analysis chapters: the humour style. Given that a humour attempt is recognised by the audience and still fails, the humour style can play an important role in the degree of failure (see also Bogdan, 2014). Looking at the data, it seems likely that the more biting a humour attempt – or as Bell (2009b) frames it, the more "disruptive [the] nature of humor" (p. 143) – the more face-threatening the humorous utterance towards both the butt and the speaker potentially becomes (Bell, 2009b, File & Schnurr, 2019, Schnurr, 2010, Schnurr & Chan, 2011). Again, this is dependent on the context (Holmes, 2000, 2014, Holmes & Marra, 2002a, Schnurr, 2008, 2010). Furthermore, the more face-threatening the humour, the more likely it becomes that the hearer reacts with a strong rejection to the attempt of alignment (Bogdan, 2014). Naturally, this is also dependent on the interactional norms of the respective CofP. Among members of FC Anonymous II it appears that rejecting a humour attempt causing it to fail is rather common – evident in the unusual amount of failed humour in the dataset.

The analyses of the examples have shown that the interaction interpreted as the most biting in style (6.2.1; "Not such a fat kid like you") lies closest towards the rejection end of the continuum, while a more nipping example of failed humour (6.2.5; "Sexier ass than any woman") lies in the middle of the continuum with the humour presumably being recognised but not understood and therefore it becomes unlikely that it is rejected strongly. Here, it is important to reiterate that the normative humour style in any given context is negotiated by the members of the CofP in interaction (Bell, 2015, Wenger, 1998a) and – as demonstrated in chapters 4 and 5 – in the case of FC Anonymous II a competitive humour style is negotiated as the normative way of using humour appropriately. The close bond between members then allows for a competitive interactional style constructing team cohesion differently from other contexts where a bonding style constitutes the

normative way of humour use. This normalisation of a biting, and sometimes even aggressive, humour style then impacts on whether, when and how strongly a humour attempt fails (or not). What would count as too biting in one context would therefore be acceptable in another (see also Bell, 2009b, 2015, Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997).

6.3.1.1 Rejecting humour to negotiate cohesion?

However, the considerably high amount of failed humour suggests, that despite the normative biting humour style among members of FC Anonymous II, the interactionally negotiated boundaries are breached relatively often with the potential of threatening the negotiation of team cohesion. Then again, it is also worth considering whether failed humour by rejection can be regarded as part of the shared repertoire. As most examples lie closer to the rejection end of the failed humour continuum, it is possible to argue that rejecting humour when for example not agreeing with the message or funniness, may be a normative way of behaving for the members of this CofP – just as biting humour is. Rejecting humour attempts may then be a way members of FC Anonymous II further contribute to the competitive norms of behaviour. Is it then still reasonable to argue that failed humour threatens the negotiation of team cohesion or is rejecting humour rather part of the processes of cohering in this context as players are making use of the shared repertoire that includes rejecting someone's humour attempt? I would argue that both interpretations can be supported by the data and thus have substance which is why they need further discussion. The dilemma of competitive humour being the norm among FC Anonymous II members on one hand and the often boundary-overstepping humour on the other hand can be approached by further exploring the status of the CofP member uttering the failed humour attempt as well as the constructed identities of the interactants (see also figure 4).

6.3.1.2 Interlocutor, contextual, environmental and linguistic factors for humour failure

Having established that a failed humour attempt – especially when biting in style – brings about the marginalisation of the speaker resulting in the construction of various sub-, in- and out-groups, a direct connection with team cohesion can be

drawn as in-group membership claims are being denied (Holmes & Marra, 2002a). Yet, for the discussion of the discursive construction of team cohesion more influencing factors come into the equation, which is why I will continue with interlocutor factors interwoven with contextual, environmental and linguistic factors (Bell, 2015). The degree of familiarity with the shared negotiated norms of using humour appropriately is connected with both the constructed hierarchical status of a player as well as the power over the negotiation of these norms. The higher the status – in this specific context based on among others age and time spent with the team – the more influence a player arguably has on the negotiation of the shared humour norms and as a result the familiarity with these rises. These three factors therefore appear to be interconnected and interdependent (see figure 4). In other words, senior players have greater authority over the negotiation of the discursive norms than junior players and even less so newcomers or short time members such as trialists.

The senior players therefore constitute the core of the CofP of FC Anonymous II which comes with greater influence on the negotiation of the discursive norms manifest in the shared repertoire. With decreasing hierarchical status, the influence on the negotiation of this shared repertoire and consequently familiarity with it decreases. Naturally, over time newcomers become junior players (or senior players) and junior players become senior players. As discussed in chapter 4, some players claim in the interviews themselves, that as a player of low hierarchical status one needs to gradually integrate into the team until a level of comfort is established. Only then can one be more vocal and express critique – even if it is through humour. As team cohesion is negotiated discursively, the players of higher status not only have more influence over the negotiation of the shared humour norms but consequently also on how team cohesion is negotiated.

The discussion of whether and how strongly a speaker uttering a failed humour attempt is rejected group membership status becomes more complex when a member of the CofP is a newcomer to the team, but theoretically of senior status due to age and experience. This is the case with Kevin, who came down from the first

team of the club and is therefore older and more experienced by comparison with the majority of the players of FC Anonymous II. He often constructs a senior identity of high status for himself (e.g. by targeting others). His team members however construct him as a newcomer to the team, which is why he is repeatedly denied in-group membership status – evident in frequent failed humour instances. In this case, age seniority and experience appear outweighed by the newcomer status illustrating the complex and multi-layered negotiation of group membership and ultimately team cohesion. Kevin likely makes use of what he perceives to be the humour norms of the team – or, he employs the norms of his former team – and fails. This again impacts on his status within the CofP. By rejecting his humour attempts that target teammates, the members of the CofP appear to implicitly show Kevin that he crosses the boundaries of acceptance within their team – in line with how Wenger (2000) describes the social learning aspect of newly joining a CofP.

6.3.1.3 Constructing identities through humour – and failing

The (co-)construction of differing identities through humour and how this influences the negotiation of team cohesion has been discussed in all three analysis chapters and is now revisited once more (see figure 4). As demonstrated but not explicated, what and how identities are constructed shapes the degree of failure of a humour attempt. The speakers in the six examples discussed construct various identities for themselves as well as for their audience and the butt(s) of the humour. Concentrating on the examples receiving the strongest rejection (as illustrated in figure 5 further below), the identities constructed for the butts of the failed humour attempts range from an athlete in poor bodily constitution (6.2.1), a sexualised and gendered 'figure of fun' (6.2.2) to a junior player with low hierarchical status (6.2.3). It has been argued that identity categories such as gender, status, sexuality, athleticism, and 'race' are among the most salient ones to a professional football player (e.g. Brown, et al., 2003, Clayton & Humberstone, 2006, Fogel, 2011, Rowe, 2013). The above analyses suggest that when these are attacked or portrayed negatively through humour it may have an aggravating effect on the degree of humour failure. Furthermore, by not co-constructing a desirable identity for a fellow teammate or vice versa, ascribing identities contrary to the aspired self-image of a professional football player, the

humorous face attack potentially leads to a strong rejection resulting in the denial of group membership status which again influences the negotiation of team cohesion.

To compare, in the failed humour examples without strong rejection – hence lying in the middle of the continuum or towards the unperceived end – the butt for whom an undesirable identity is constructed is first of all not present (see 6.2.4) but more importantly, the identities constructed are less threatening. In 6.2.5 and 6.2.6 for example the identities constructed are an object of desire and a clueless person – arguably not as harmful to a professional football player as being constructed as of low hierarchical status or poor athleticism. Accordingly, it is possible to argue that what kind of identity the speaker of a humorous utterance constructs for him- or herself as well es what identity is constructed for the audience and/or butt(s) appears relevant to the reaction of the hearer(s) of a (failed) humour attempt (see e.g. File & Schnurr, 2019).

6.3.1.4 Revisiting the failed humour continuum

Having discussed the interlocutor, contextual, environmental and linguistic factors of familiarity with norms, hierarchical status, influence on negotiation of norms, identity construction and hearer reaction, I will now revisit the failed humour continuum presented in 6.1.1. Offering a systematic way to visualise the different realisations of 'imperfect' negotiation of utterances intended to amuse, the continuum has been helpful in discussing how failed humour impacts on the negotiation of team cohesion among members of the team. I have tried to apply the analysed examples to the continuum based on the interpretations whilst taking into account the above-mentioned influencing factors resulting in the following representation (figure 5):

Figure 5: Failed humour continuum illustrating examples 6.2.1 – 6.2.6

As established in 6.1.1, the categories (recognition, understanding, appreciation, and agreement) are not mutually exclusive and the boundaries between them are fuzzy – hence along a continuum. This is why the examples are marked in a 'stretched' manner rather than specific dots. Having arranged the examples along the continuum illustrates the dynamic nature of the negotiation of failed humour in interaction, the complexity of the phenomenon, as well as the possible differing degrees and realisations of humour failure. Encapsulating the differing conceptualisations of failed humour as a complex phenomenon, the failed humour continuum contributes to making interactional data more tangible.

Moreover, it is possible to make claims about the extent to which the degrees of failed humour instances differ from each other providing the possibility to examine the potential effects on the negotiation of team cohesion. In addition, one may use the continuum to compare differing contexts to make assertions about how failed humour manifests in each. It is, for example, remarkable how many of the humour attempts fail by rejection among members of FC Anonymous II. As discussed before, a possible explanation is that 'snubbing' a fellow teammate who makes humorous remarks may be a characteristic of the team's shared repertoire. This would mean that when someone oversteps the boundaries of appropriate humour behaviour, a fellow teammate rejects the humour attempt – for example by ignoring it entirely or

criticising the speaker for it. Team cohesion is then constructed through negotiating these boundaries.

6.3.2 Negotiating team cohesion through humour rejection

In summary, and returning to what I argued at the beginning of this discussion section, the negotiation of failed or partly failed humour in this CofP can be understood as a way of negotiating what counts as acceptable behaviour in the construction and negotiation not only of shared discursive norms but of team cohesion, as well. By rejecting certain humour attempts – based on among others the above discussed contextual, environmental, interlocutor and linguistic factors (Bell, 2015) – members of a CofP knowingly or unknowingly construct the acceptable ways of discursively negotiating team cohesion within their CofP. Or, in the words of Bell (2015), "[t]he failure of humor in interaction can be viewed as creating a socially-imposed limit on linguistic creativity, acting as a check to keep language use within certain boundaries" (p. 12). Given that humour "balances on a knife edge between playfulness and aggression" (Bell, 2015, p. 31), the discourse analytical study of failed humour especially provides an insight into how members of a CofP negotiate the shared repertoire used among themselves. While the players in this context collectively use a more competitive humour style, the overstepping of what counts as an acceptable biting style may be manifested in failed humour. Borrowing the words of File and Schnurr (2019),

> in interpreting a specific utterance and accounting for it as humorous or non-humorous, different audiences and members of the audience orient to and employ different identity categories, which they use to justify their stance towards the humour as failed and inappropriate or as successful and acceptable (p. 141).

Failed humour in interaction thus provides insights into the negotiation of acceptable norms of behaviour as well as the identities constructed in this CofP which ultimately shows how team cohesion is negotiated in this context. Members of the team construct themselves and others as part of the team, the core, an in- or out-group and thereby discursively negotiate team cohesion. In this specific context team cohesion thus appears to be negotiated among others through a biting humour style

as well as its boundaries and how these boundaries are made tangible through rejecting someone's humour attempt.

Having analysed different interactional examples of the general humour style, racialised humour as well as failed humour, I have illustrated the discursive, dynamic, and in situ negotiation of team cohesion among members of FC Anonymous II. In the following chapter, I will critically discuss the findings from the analysis chapters in order to address the core aims of the project. I will elaborate upon the RQs guiding this study by discussing team cohesion as a discursively negotiated process more broadly.

7. Discussion

Before directly going into the discussion to elaborate on the main research aims of this study, here I reiterate the RQs:

   i.   How can team cohesion among members of FC Anonymous II empirically be captured?

   ii.   What are the processes involved in the discursive negotiation of cohesion?

- How is group membership negotiated?
- How is identity construction done?

   iii.   How are processes of cohering affected when group membership claims fail?

This discussion chapter critically positions the findings of this study within the literature, thereby highlighting connections with previous studies as well as new contributions.

First, I will briefly summarise the content of chapters 4, 5 and 6 (7.1). I will then thoroughly discuss the main conceptual contribution of my study which concerns an interactional data-driven understanding of team cohesion as a discursively negotiated process (7.2). Here, I will highlight the value of discourse analysis in researching team cohesion (7.2.1) and examine different factors affecting the discursive negotiation of team cohesion as identified in this thesis (7.2.2). I will proceed with a discussion of the failed humour continuum as a theoretical contribution of my work (7.3). The usefulness of the continuum for researching team cohesion will be examined. Lastly, I will illustrate the methodological contribution of approaching team cohesion with an ethnographic research design (7.4).

7.1 Illustrating team cohesion in action – Summary of analysis chapters

Chapter 4 laid the groundwork to explore team cohesion by providing an understanding of the humour norms that are manifest in the shared repertoire among members of FC Anonymous II. Detailed analyses of different humour strategies, styles and responses revealed the constant re-negotiation and re-shaping of discursive processes of cohering in interaction. Players predominantly adopt a

competitive and biting humour style to negotiate group membership status – often creating temporarily embedded CofPs within the overarching team CofP. While constructing sub-groups, players simultaneously align with humour norms displaying their membership in the team. In addition, self-directed humour is used to enhance solidarity and construct a collective identity – thereby contributing to processes of cohering.

Chapter 5 focused on racialised humour, a specific and regularly employed humour strategy. The analyses of instances of boundary-marking racialised humour showed that the discursive processes of cohering are influenced by the construction of and alignment with racialised ideologies as well as the acceptance of racialised in- and out-group positions. Using self-directed racialised humour to target one's own in-group or accepting a racialised out-group position, minority players regularly align with racialised ideologies in order to cohere with their teammates. On one hand, minority players construct themselves in alignment with racialised ideologies that ridicule their own in-group and mark it as different, but on the other hand in-group solidarity is strengthened and discriminatory stereotypes are reclaimed. This points to the construction of group membership as part of multi-layered processes of cohering. It can therefore be maintained that racialised humour offers various ways of negotiating team cohesion: by aligning with one's own in-group, racialised ideologies, and humour norms characteristic of the CofP. Chapter 5 thus supports the finding of racialised humour involving a so called 'sword and shield paradox' functioning between simultaneous unification and separation (Caparoso & Collins, 2015, Saucier et al., 2016, Wolfers, et al., 2017). In other words, part of the discursive processes of cohering involve the seemingly contradictory functions of reinforcing solidarity among CofP members while setting up sub-groups according to differences in racialised backgrounds. Consequently, the chapter provides further evidence of the paradoxical and ambiguous function of racialised humour tying in with my previous research (Wolfers, 2016, Wolfers et al., 2017) and illustrates the multi-layered negotiation processes involved in the discursive construction of team cohesion.

Despite the acceptance and normalisation of a biting humour style among members of this CofP, a considerably high amount of failed humour emerged from the data. Intending to examine how failed group membership claims impact on the negotiation of team cohesion, chapter 6 concentrated on instances of (partly) failed humour. Failed humour in interaction illustrates what counts as acceptable behaviour in the construction of both shared discursive norms and team cohesion. Hearer reactions here become a vital focus point, as they may range from not perceiving a humour attempt at all to strongly rejecting it – with the boundaries being fuzzy and the manifestations dynamic. Making use of a failed humour continuum, I showed that in the context under investigation most cases of (partly) failed humour fail by rejection. By rejecting certain humour attempts the boundaries of appropriate humour behaviour become visible. Also, humour rejection was construed as another characteristic of the shared negotiated repertoire of the CofP. One of the main points raised in chapter 6 concerns the emerging interpretational dilemma: Does failed humour naturally threaten the negotiation of team cohesion as the interactional goals of group membership management may fail? Or, does rejecting someone's humour attempt reflect yet another process of cohering as it aligns with the competitive interactional norms of the shared repertoire of the team? Both possible interpretations were discussed and appear reasonable, which points to the ambiguous nature of not only humour but also failed humour. Moreover, this ambiguity further complicates current and more simplistic theorising of cohesion in sports teams.

7.2 Team cohesion as a discursively negotiated process

In order to better understand the conceptual contribution of my work, the theoretical backdrop that my study uses as a foundation to further explore cohesion needs to be reiterated. The most popular definition of team cohesion in sports teams describes cohesion as a multidimensional and dynamic process "reflected in the tendency of a group to stick together and remain united in the pursuit of its instrumental objectives and/or for the satisfaction of member affective needs" (Carron, et al., 1998, p. 213). While this definition offers a good starting point acknowledging the complex, processual, and dynamic nature of cohesion, the

literature review has shown that the connected approaches towards researching team cohesion have been critiqued for basing their conclusions about cohesion as a group variable on self-reporting instruments focusing on individuals (e.g. Cota, et al., 1995, Hendry, et al., 2016, Mudrack, 1989).

I now illustrate why I believe that deriving insights from self-reports of individuals rather than focusing on the behaviour exhibited by said group seems somewhat simplistic. To begin with, questionnaire data can only capture "*perceptions* of cohesion" (Carron, et al., 2002, p. 119, my emphasis) not the phenomenon itself, which makes the derivation of a definition of the phenomenon problematic. Furthermore, understanding cohesion as a group variable but approaching it through data collected with individuals appears contradictory (see also Cota, et al., 1995, Hendry, et al., 2016, Mudrack, 1989). Also, quantitative inquiries are inherently detached from the social context in which people actually cohere with one another, which also means that they only capture perceptions of cohesion retrospectively rather than in situ. Moreover, the definition alludes to a processual and dynamic nature of cohesion without unpacking the dynamic and complex processes involved.

It has furthermore been argued that, as a result of this particular conceptual basis, cohesion research is dominated by psychological studies focusing on measuring cohesion by an outcome performance (e.g. Carron, et al., 1998, Carron, et al., 1985, Cota, et al., 1995, Hendry, et al., 2016, Martin, et al., 2013). Moreover, as shown in the introduction, most online resources offering strategies to build cohesive teams in the sporting and business world paint an oversimplified picture by approaching cohesion as the "key to success" (United Nations, 2017, para. 1). Using the definitions derived from psychological work on team cohesion, many write about ways of "strengthening team cohesion" (Gilbert, 2018, para 1, see also Smith, 2015) – arguably based on an understanding of the social phenomenon that lacks empirical evidence of how team cohesion is actually done.

Against this backdrop, I have explored how team cohesion can empirically be captured as a dynamic and complex in situ negotiation process between interactants.

Through detailed accounts of cohering in discursive interaction my work has brought into focus and provided empirical evidence of the different building blocks of the above definition by Carron et al. (1998). More crucially, I have presented illustrations of CofP members as they went about the processes of negotiating group membership status and constructing identities and used these to build a rich account of the phenomenon at hand. While many of the psychological studies and resources on cohesion do indeed acknowledge communication as an important influence that enhances team cohesion (e.g. Martin, et al., 2013, Widmeyer & Williams, 1991), I would go further and argue that communication rather *does* cohesion. To shed further light on this notion of cohesion as a discursively negotiated process, I will discuss the value of discourse analysis to explore and capture team cohesion in the next section, thereby answering RQ i.

7.2.1 The value of discourse analysis for exploring and capturing team cohesion

As argued in the literature review, IS as one of the major theoretical approaches to discourse analysis provides the theoretical tools to construe team cohesion as a socially constructed phenomenon and the analytical tools to explore how it is negotiated in and through discursive interaction (e.g. Bailey, 2015, Gumperz, 2015, Paltridge & Phakiti, 2015, Holmes, 2014, Tannen, 2005a, Vine, et al., 2008). Focusing on the discursive norms as reflected in the shared negotiated repertoire of a CofP then offers insights into the in-situ negotiation of group cohesion as a social process (e.g. Holmes, 2006, Holmes & Hay, 1997, Holmes & Marra, 2002a, Meyer, 2000, Schnurr, 2009, Wilson, 2010). In and through humorous interaction – as an exemplary characteristic of the shared discursive repertoire – interlocutors manage group membership status positioning themselves and others as CofP members, in-, out- or sub-group members whilst constructing identities for themselves and others (e.g. Boxer & Cortés-Conde, 1997, Dynel, 2008, Kotthoff, 2003, Petraki & Ramayanti, 2018, Schnurr, 2010, Schnurr & Chan, 2011, Sharpe & Hynes, 2016, Walton, et al., 2013, Wolfers, et al., 2017) – thereby negotiating team cohesion. Specific discourse strategies found to be involved in this negotiation include, among others, collaborative floor management, othering, or creating an 'us vs. them' dichotomy

(e.g. Dynel, 2008, Holmes, 2006, Holmes & Hay, 1997, Holmes & Marra, 2002a, Jaworski & Coupland, 2005, Meyer, 2000, Ladegaard & Cheng, 2014, Schnurr, 2009).

However, a lot of the complexity of the concept remains hidden in the existing discourse analytical work on cohesion. My project unpacks some of the complexity through a focus on the *discursive negotiation of team cohesion as a social process* among members of a sports team. I have examined the dynamic processes of negotiating team cohesion previously identified as important by others – which shows the value of discourse analysis, and more explicitly IS, for researching team cohesion as a discursively negotiated process. Furthermore, the context-specific processes of negotiating team cohesion as reflected in the interactional discourse norms and meaning-making processes have been made tangible and can be understood more fully. Also, the analysis of actual in-situ interactions has illustrated how these discursive processes of cohering are constantly being (re-)negotiated and thus dynamic – providing further evidence for what sport psychologists researching cohesion have argued in their definitions.

Discourse analysis therefore highlights how team cohesion and the interactional norms of a CofP are inextricably linked. It is in and through language that members of a CofP negotiate group membership status and construct identities – and the negotiation processes involved shape and constitute the discursive negotiation of team cohesion as a social process. Using humour practices as my way into the data, I discuss in greater depth the impacting factors identified in this project which are involved in the complex negotiation processes of team cohesion. Naturally, for a different context and CofP another discourse strategy characteristic of the shared repertoire may be the appropriate focus to explore the discursive negotiation of team cohesion.

7.2.2 The discursive negotiation of team cohesion – impacting factors

Different factors impacting the ways team cohesion is negotiated – such as identity construction, group membership claims, norms and ideologies, hierarchical status, familiarity with norms, and influence on norms – have been identified, analysed and

discussed (see chapters 4, 5, and 6). I now revisit figure 4 which illustrates the dynamic negotiation of team cohesion through failed humour (see 6.3) to include manifestations of both successful and failed humour as part of the processes of negotiating team cohesion. This way, I am bringing together all three analysis chapters to answer RQ ii and RQ iii.

Following my own understanding and argument developed in the course of the analysis about a non-binary view on humour with regards to possible response strategies, I propose the idea of a *humour continuum* (see also Drew, 1987, McKeown & Curran, 2015). The humour continuum illustrates any negotiation of an utterance intended to amuse as identified by the researcher (figure 6 below). By implication of humour falling partly flat, as was shown in chapter 6 (see also File & Schnurr, 2019), humour may also partly succeed. The two ends of the humour continuum then are failed and successful humour – with the boundaries and realisations between these two extremes being fuzzy, dynamic and hard to pin down. As indicated before (see 6.2.5), depending on the context, laughter can be regarded as 'stronger' humour support than for example a smile or chuckle (McKeown & Curran, 2015). While my project has illustrated different degrees of humour failure and success, more research is needed to further explore this idea of a humour continuum. Still, figure 6 (below) allows for a more comprehensive description of possible humour instances illustrating its complexity and ambiguity.
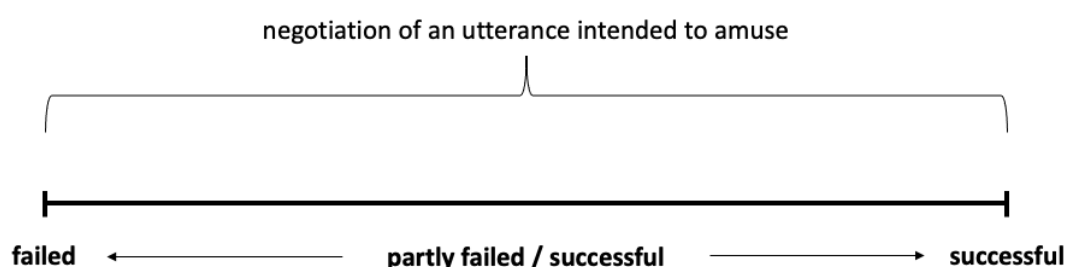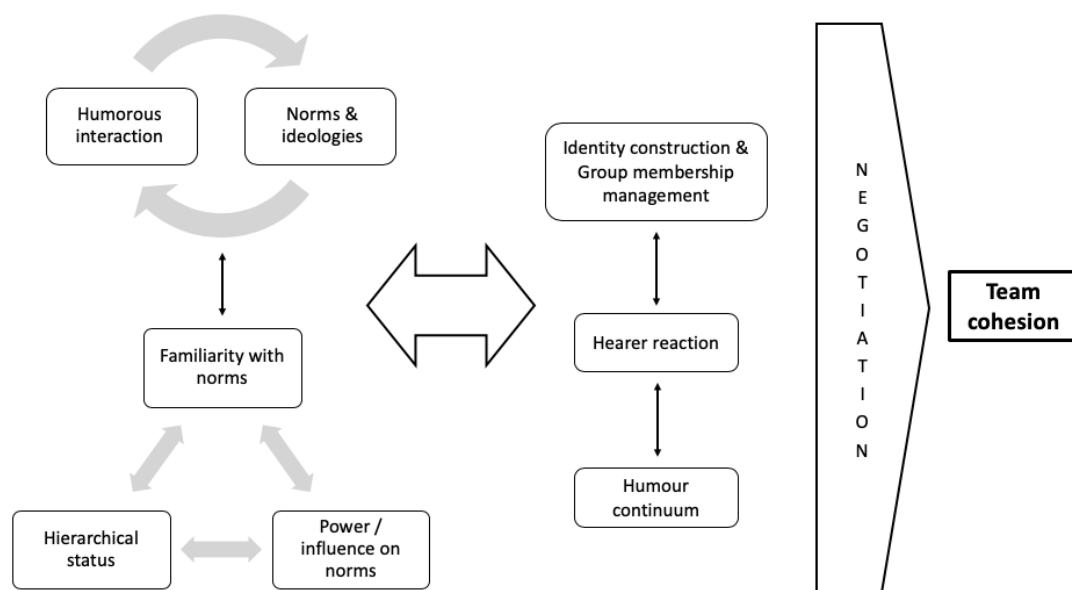

Figure 6: The humour continuum

Integrating this deeper understanding of different realisations of humour in interaction, the revised version of figure 4 illustrating the complex and dynamic discursive negotiation of team cohesion as a social process looks as follows:

Figure 7: The discursive negotiation of team cohesion through humour

Figure 7 attempts to capture the processes involved in the discursive negotiation of team cohesion through humour as identified in my thesis. I will now discuss the different impacting factors depicted in figure 7 to build a fuller understanding of team cohesion as a discursively negotiated process.

The psychological studies on team cohesion maintain that communication leads group members to share similar beliefs and attitudes thus increasing the pressure to conform to group norms (Carron, 1988). My work provides empirical evidence for this understanding by illustrating the construction of shared norms and ideologies in and through humorous interaction – depicted as a circle to indicate constant (re-) negotiation in figure 7. In the case of FC Anonymous II, group members align with norms and ideologies constructed based on for example cultural and ethnic diversity, or the team being like a family where everyone knew not to take the biting humour seriously. Therefore, an expectation of being able to be on the receiving end of biting humour is constructed as a team norm because "that is football" ("das ist Fußball", interview data, Andre). Accordingly, in order to display membership in their team, members are expected to align with the shared negotiated norms and ideologies through competent use of the shared repertoire. As such, by taking part in the

"interactional bonding game" (Dynel, 2008, p. 246) that is banter, team members may, at times, have to accept being positioned as out- or sub-group members as this is part of how the team internal humour is done in this particular context.

Consequently, the context-specific rules of cohering – as demonstrated in the analysis chapters – may mean taking on these different interactional roles and group membership positions as well as performing different identities (see figure 7). In other words, the discursive negotiation of team cohesion through humour entails the construction of certain identity categories such as the butt and 'humorous perpetrator'. It could be claimed that as much as humour creates temporary in and out-group members, negotiating team cohesion through humour also includes setting up boundaries through group membership management and identity construction. It has hence been shown that cohesion does not necessarily mean for a group to "stick together and remain united" (Carron, et al., 1998, p. 213). Rather, the construction of temporarily embedded sub-, in- or out-groups is part of the negotiation of team cohesion. The pressure to conform to these group norms in order to "fit in" (Clayton, 2019, p. 169), then constitutes part of how team cohesion is constructed in this specific context. Cohesion therefore appears to not necessarily be something that always happens at the whole group level, all the time.

To provide another example, while framing the team's diversity as something positive during interviews, it was also often used in terms of discriminatory stereotypes constructing racialised identities and sub-groups in and through humorous interaction (see chapter 5). This apparent contradiction, too, can be understood as part of the complex meaning-making processes of the players making sense of their team environment which ultimately contributes to the discursive negotiation of cohesion. Consequently, minority players may discursively align with racialised ideologies – self-directedly or when made the butt – due to pressurised conforming tendencies (Sue & Golash-Boza, 2013). By (co-)constructing an in-group through less aggressive self-directed humour, speakers often construct multi-layered collective identities and membership of both the team and the in-group simultaneously. This illustrates that the discursive negotiation of team cohesion not

only includes the construction of sub-groups but rather that these may be constructed simultaneously to construct 'superordinate' CofP membership. In other words, by constructing sub-group membership (e.g. based on 'race'), interlocutors at the same time claim CofP membership through competent use of the shared interactional norms. Identity construction and group membership management thus are important links which help thresh out the complex and multi-layered linguistic processes that need to be pinned down to better understand team cohesion as a discursively negotiated process (see figure 7).

However, as the team – like any other CofP – is not homogenous but rather composed of interactants of different levels of influence on the shared discursive norms (see also Clayton, 2019, Culver & Trudel, 2008, Wenger, 1998a, Wilson, 2011), the norms and ideologies are constantly being renegotiated and reshaped by the members in (humorous) interaction. These negotiation processes, in turn, depend on the familiarity with norms of both speaker and hearer/audience as well as their hierarchical status and resulting power or influence on shaping these norms – all connected and interrelated (see figure 7). As shown in 4.1.2, newcomers especially must "eat humble pie first" ("erstmal kleine Brötchen backen", interview data, Rouven) before participating in banter, thereby learning the negotiated boundaries of appropriateness in interaction (see also Dynel, 2008, Holmes & Marra, 2002a). 'Shared' negotiated norms and ideologies then really refer to *shared and negotiated between core members and shared and learned by newcomers* of a CofP (see also Clayton, 2019). The learning process and negotiation of status has for example been illustrated with interactions involving Kevin. Constructing himself as a senior player of high hierarchical status and making core group membership claims, Kevin regularly appears to stretch the team-specific boundaries of appropriate humour use. As a result of his humour falling (partly) flat, he is repeatedly denied in-group membership status and positioned as a newcomer. These discursive negotiation processes illustrate that the need to align with the interactional norms in order to cohere with team members are learned in and through interaction. This becomes tangible when looking at the hearer/audience reaction(s) determining where a humour attempt lies on the humour continuum between failed and successful humour.

As illustrated and discussed in chapter 6, the rejection of humour attempts appears to be a common way of interacting among members of the CofP under investigation. Given that the normative humour behaviour among members of FC Anonymous II is characterised by a competitive and biting style, rejecting a humour attempt may potentially be a strategy for members to further align with and contribute to these biting norms. Priego-Valverde (2009), too, argues that the more competitive the humour style among close interlocutors, the more liberty members of the CofP may take in rejecting humour, which, given the close bonds, may not necessarily threaten solidarity (Bell, 2009a, 2009b, 2015, Culpeper, 1996). Following this reasoning, it is possible to argue that humour rejection can potentially constitute yet another discursive negotiation process for cohering as it illustrates the alignment with the biting interactional norms of the CofP. Then again, as most instances of humour rejection in the dataset can be connected to differences in status between speaker and butt of the humour, rejecting a humour attempt may as well be a means of showing how team cohesion is *not* negotiated in a CofP. Newcomers like Kevin thus learn in interaction that cohering by targeting junior players is not an appropriate way of interacting for him (yet). This again demonstrates that team cohesion is not only deeply embedded in the interactional norms of a CofP, it also shows that communication and cohesion are inextricably linked and interdependent. In order to understand team cohesion, we therefore need to understand the norms of behaving within a given context.

For all the above reasons, I argue that when approaching team cohesion as a multidimensional and dynamic process "reflected in the tendency of a group to *stick together* and *remain united* in the pursuit of its *instrumental objectives* and/or for the *satisfaction of member affective needs*" (Carron, et al., 1998, p. 213, my emphasis), the discursive negotiation processes involved need to be taken into consideration. This again highlights the value of discourse analysis as a method for unpacking some of the deeply complex components of current definitions and conceptualisations of team cohesion in sport teams. Focusing on discursive strategies – such as humour – through which to study and unpack team cohesion, it was

possible to reveal a range of counter-intuitive communicative processes (i.e. the creation of temporary sub- and out-groups for cohesive purposes) that may be going missing if we do not collect empirical evidence of this phenomenon.

One theoretical concept developed to make the complexity of team cohesion as a multi-layered discursively negotiated process tangible is the failed humour continuum. As this constitutes one of the main theoretical contributions of my work, I will discuss it in the next section.

7.3 Making the negotiation of team cohesion tangible: The failed humour continuum

To briefly review what was argued in 6.1.1 and 6.3, the proposed failed humour continuum (figure 3) offers a systematic and comprehensive – yet idealised – framework to visualise different realisations of humour failure in interaction. It allows the analyst to make interactional data more tangible by encompassing differing degrees and realisations of (partly) failed humour in interaction. It thus illustrates the complexity of the phenomenon of negotiating humour as failed to a certain degree, which changes dynamically as the interaction unfolds. Important for this study, the continuum helps in discussing how failed humour impacts on the negotiation of team cohesion among members of the CofP at hand. The negotiation of context-specific boundaries of appropriateness in relation to both shared discursive humour norms and team cohesion become palpable. Moreover, shared discursive norms and team cohesion are inextricably linked. As a result, boundaries of appropriateness as constructed discursively in interaction impact on the negotiation of team cohesion and vice versa.

The idea of a humour continuum between failed and successful humour furthermore nicely complements the failed humour continuum. However, as will be discussed in the subsequent chapter 8, this concept requires more research. Having briefly revisited the theoretical contribution made with this thesis, I will now outline the methodological contribution.

7.4 An ethnographic study of team cohesion in action

Collecting audio-recordings and observations of interactions, as well as interviews, it was possible to capture empirical evidence of team cohesion as a discursively negotiated process *in action* which would have not been possible through e.g. questionnaire data. The ethnographic study of team cohesion thus provides a concrete alternative method of capturing the phenomenon in comparison to the largely quantitative approaches currently predominant in the cohesion in sports teams research arena (e.g. Carron, et al., 2002, Carron, et al., 1998, Carron, et al., 1985, Mach, et al., 2010, Murrell & Gaertner, 1992).

Methodologically speaking, the analysis has highlighted the benefits of using different sources of data allowing for an interpretation of both perceptions of the participants as well as their concrete discursive interactions which, at times, have appeared to be contradictory. For instance, while it was reported in interviews that there was no bullying on the team (see 5.4), some of the more aggressive humour attempts e.g. targeting Dae-Jung based on discriminatory racialised stereotypes could be interpreted as just that: bullying. This contradiction between the audio-recorded data of actual interactions and the interview data illustrates the benefit of an ethnographic study design and shows how complex the examination of team cohesion really is.

Another methodological contribution of my work concerns my capacity as the researcher. As argued in 3.9 of the methodology chapter, an ethnographic study which examines team cohesion among members of a male professional football team has not been conducted before. Given the constraints in scope of this thesis, I have written a paper that critically reflects on the role of gender and sexual identity when conducting qualitative research in explicitly gendered contexts, where gendered roles and expectations, as well as notions of hegemonic masculinity are prevalent (Wolfers, under review).

In this chapter I have more explicitly answered my RQs and discussed the contributions made through this project. I will now move to the final chapter of this thesis to offer concluding remarks.

8 Concluding Remarks

The main aim of this study was to explore, capture and better understand team cohesion and the discursive processes involved in the negotiation of this social process. Throughout the thesis I have paid special attention to group membership management and identity construction as central factors shaping the ways team cohesion is negotiated in and through language among members of FC Anonymous II. I have shown the value of both an ethnographic research design and discourse analysis to unpack some of the complexity previously identified by others in definitions and conceptualisations of team cohesion in sport teams. Moreover, this study has indicated that humour constitutes a useful discursive strategy which facilitates the study of team cohesion, thereby highlighting the link between team cohesion and communication. In this final chapter, I will discuss impact activities already designed and delivered within the sporting world based on the findings of this thesis (8.1). This will be followed by considering the limitations of the study in 8.2. Lastly, I will suggest some possible directions for future research (8.3).

8.1 Impact activities within the sporting world

This study's findings may be applied to the sporting world in manifold and meaningful ways. The conceptual understanding of team cohesion as a discursively negotiated process deeply embedded in the interactional norms of a group enriches current debates, definitions and understandings of the phenomenon. Based on my findings from this project, I have already designed and delivered impact activities in the sporting world which have shown promise.

Providing concrete empirical evidence of what is claimed in the existing literature on team cohesion in sports teams has great value for designing practical workshops and coaching sessions for different actors in the sporting world. For instance, based on the preliminary findings of this study, I have designed a workshop session for the entire coaching staff of FC Anonymous in 2018 titled "Crossing boundaries in a team: When banter becomes bullying" ("Grenzüberschreitungen im Team: Wenn aus Spaß Ernst wird"). The workshop was designed to create a greater awareness among

coaches about the potentially damaging effects of boundary crossing (racialised) humour. I coordinated the design of the workshop presentation with the head of the elite academy to tailor it to the specific needs of the club. From this, I was able to learn and better understand the demands and interests from the football club's perspective. Unfortunately, due to scheduling difficulties I never got to actually deliver the workshop. Nevertheless, I was informed that the presentation was circulated with the coaching staff and used for training purposes.

Moreover, as part of a one-day symposium hosted by the Sports Culture and Communication Research Collective (henceforth: SCCRC), I designed and delivered a workshop titled "Team cohesion & sports teams: How team members negotiate cohesion through humour" to coach developers from UK Coaching in 2019. During this interactive workshop I presented empirical evidence for the negotiation of team cohesion in interaction, which was well received and prompted insightful discussions about the connection of banter and cohesion. Subsequent to the fruitful discussion, I provided the coach developers with some theoretical concepts and advice about how to design response strategies for potentially boundary-crossing communicative practices observed in a sports team. In sum, the symposium vividly demonstrated the value of applied linguistics to sports coaching.

In the future, I wish to design and deliver workshops about team cohesion to those actually involved in the negotiation processes: sports team members. I plan on drawing on the findings of this study to raise awareness about the connection between team cohesion and communicative practices among members of a team. Apart from practical workshops and training sessions, the empirical insights can be used to design training and information materials that can be distributed to stakeholders from the sporting world.

The above suggestions on how my research can be applied to the sporting world are in no way exhaustive but constitute a great starting point from which I wish to embark.

8.2.1 Implications for sports teams

Approaching team cohesion as a dynamic process that is negotiated through communication between members of a team has implications for how team cohesion is currently approached in the sporting domain. Based on sport psychological work that highlights the importance of fostering cohesion for greater success, team-building exercises designed to build a cohesive team (Chu, 2017, Gilbert, 2018, Smith, 2015, Walker, 2012) are used during training camps or incorporated into coaching philosophies. The findings from this study can be used to revise this approach and place greater focus on communicative practice between team members – both on and off the pitch. Exercises facilitating talk – possibly even humour – between members are then conceivable. Thereby, humour as a discursive strategy used in the negotiation of team cohesion may be encouraged rather than minimised for reasons of professionalism (Wiedemann, 2013).

Furthermore, understanding the negotiation of team cohesion as an on-going process – thus never fully completed – raises interesting questions with regards to the significance and usefulness of 'measuring' cohesion among members of a sports team.

8.2 Limitations of the current study

The main limitations of this study concern its qualitative nature. Ethnographic investigations have historically been criticised for being impressionistic, subject to bias, and for researchers' inability to generalise findings and replicate such studies (e.g. Brewer, 1994, Bryman, 2016, Hammersley, 2005, Wilson, 2017). According to Hammersley (2005), these debates, mainly led by quantitative researchers, centre "on criticisms of ethnography for not meeting the criteria of science" (p. 3). Since the 1960s, ethnographers from the social sciences have responded to such criticisms in various ways. As I have sufficiently argued for the usefulness of the ethnographic research design as well as reflected on my role as a researcher in the methodology chapter addressing some of the above criticisms (see 3.5), here, I address the limitations specific to this micro-ethnographic study of the football team FC Anonymous II.

Due to the time constraints imposed on me by the football club FC Anonymous, I was not able to spend more time with the team than the agreed three weeks. Collecting further data during mid-season as well as towards the end of the season would have allowed me to explore how the negotiation of team cohesion changes over the course of a season. With this regard, focusing on newcomers joining the team and progressing towards becoming in-group members would have potentially been insightful. Also, because of these time constraints, I was neither able to collect interview data from all team players nor carry out respondent validation. Therefore, a longitudinal ethnographic study with the opportunity to return to the field regularly may have offered even more nuanced findings.

Another limitation of this study concerns the specific context. Researching the second team of a well-known professional football club from Germany involved several challenges. Due to the limited number of possible research participants as well as the high stakes environment with participants possibly being in the public eye, several considerations had to be made to ensure the highest possible ethical standards of research (see 3.6). Several data had to be left deliberately vague, which made the analysis processes and presentation of findings a little more challenging. For example, given the specific focus on racialised humour in chapter 5, more detailed information on the players' backgrounds would have helped achieve a more detailed account of the racialised humour practices involved in the negotiation of team cohesion.

In addition, all data was collected in German and later translated into English (see 3.9). As discussed in 3.8 it was particularly challenging for me to reflect the often-fraternal tone of the colloquial language in German in the English translations. In addition, translating humour poses a special challenge for the researcher (Chiaro, 2010, Vandaele, 2002). Therefore, during the translation process some of the particular colloquial tone may deviate from the original in German, which is why I offer both languages in the transcripts. In addition, this dilemma was addressed

through the checking of the transcripts by one of my supervisors whose mother tongue is German.

Furthermore, given the nature of this study I am merely offering a *context-specific* understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Naturally, a different context with different interlocutors, norms and practices would offer differing contextualised meaning-making processes (Apte, 1987). Still, the specific approach to capturing and better understanding team cohesion can be applied to different contexts to explore the particular discursive negotiation of the social process.

8.3 Future research directions

Concluding the thesis, I consider some potentially fruitful avenues of investigation that may follow from this project. Due to the shortage of sociolinguistic research into the discursive negotiation of team cohesion among sports team members, the potential areas for future investigation appear plentiful. With this PhD, I have focused on conversational humour as one among many possible discourse strategies characterising the shared repertoire of a CofP. Therefore, one possible next step could be the expansion of this focus onto other discourse strategies to examine how they are involved in the negotiation of team cohesion. In addition, non-verbal cues such as the mentioned handshake in the negotiation of team cohesion could enrich the discussion. Also, as my work provides empirical evidence for the definitions and conceptualisations of cohesion put forward by sport psychologists, I see great potential in working together on an interdisciplinary project with the aim of bringing together insights from both research communities and possibly reconceptualise the phenomenon of team cohesion as a whole.

Moreover, analysing the collected data from other angles of content or theory such as leadership, power, or politeness – to name just a few – seems promising, as well. In light of the current political situation and the advancement of critical race theory, a focus on racialised discourse and the implications for the construction of both individual and collective identities appears important and relevant (see also Wolfers, fc). In addition, taking an intercultural communication lens seems very promising

given the construction of identities along e.g. national background, ethnicity and religion.

Moreover, examining the data from a methodological angle with particular focus on gender deems auspicious, as well. As indicated throughout the thesis, I have already submitted a paper critically reflecting on the often-challenging experiences of female researchers conducting ethnographic fieldwork in a masculine and heteronormatively constructed research context such as male professional football (Wolfers, under review). In the paper, I argue that in research contexts where notions of masculinity are normative, gender and sexual identity as strong influencing factors on the research encounter deserve more scholarly attention and reflection as they are potentially always relevant to the conduct of the study as well as the research outcome (Wolfers, under review).

Lastly, future research directions for humour scholarship are also worth considering. The theoretical contribution of the failed humour continuum paves the way for additional investigations of the under-researched phenomenon of (partly) failed humour in interaction. Further research is needed to examine its usefulness for not only making empirical data tangible but also examining social processes – such as team cohesion. This way it would be possible to refine the model and/or develop it further. I have already expanded on the idea of the continuum (figure 6) to include different degrees of successful humour and introduced the idea of a humour continuum (see 7.2.2). As this is in the very early stages, further research is needed to elaborate on the notion.

In closing, as team cohesion is seen as a central influencing factor on a sports teams' success and performance, understanding the phenomenon better is particularly relevant. This thesis has shed further light on team cohesion as an ongoing dynamic process negotiated between team members in interaction. As a result, the complexity of the discursively negotiated process central to sports team members' lived realities can be approached more holistically to offer support and training.

9 References

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10 Appendix

10.1 Interview guide

• Kannst du mir was zu dir und deinem Leben erzählen? (Biografisch / persönlich)

• *Can you tell me about you and your life? (biographical / personal)*

>• Wann und wo wurdest du geboren?
>
>• *When and where were you born?*
>
>• Was ist dein familiärer Hintergrund?
>
>• *What is your family background?*

• Weißt du noch, wie du zum Fußball gekommen bist?

• *Do you remember how you got into football*

>• Und wie war der Weg zum [Name Verein]?
>
>• *And how did you get to [club name]?*

• Kannst du dich noch erinnern, wie es sich angefühlt hat, als du erfahren hast, dass du es zum Verein geschafft hast?

• *Do you remember how it felt when you found out you had made it to the club?*

• Kannst du mir beschreiben, wie dein erster Tag bei [Name Verein] verlief?

• *Can you describe how your first day at [club name] went?*

>• Kannst du mir von deinem ersten Tag als Testspieler berichten?
>
>• *Can you tell me about your first day as a trialist?*
>
>• Kannst du dich erinnern wie es sich angefühlt hat, offizielles Teammitglied zu werden?
>
>• *Do you remember how it felt when you found out you officially became part of the team?*
>
>• Kannst du mir erzählen, wie die Spieler auf dich reagiert haben, als du neu in der Mannschaft warst?
>
>• *Can you tell me how the players reacted to you when you were new to the team?*

• Wie würdest du das Team beschreiben?

• *How would you describe the team?*

>• Was meinst du, inwiefern sich das Team von anderen Teams (für die du gespielt hast) unterscheidet?
>
>• *How do you think the team is different from other teams (for which you have played)?*

• Wie würdest du deine Rolle innerhalb des Teams beschreiben?

- *How would you describe your roll within the team?*

- Kannst du mir was über deine Position erzählen?

- *Can you tell me about your position?*

  - Wie kam es dazu, dass du die Position spielst?

  - *How did you come to play this position?*

  - Siehst du dich langfristig auf der Position oder würdest du dich noch gern in eine andere Richtung entwickeln?

  - *Do you see yourself playing the position in the long term or would you like to develop in another direction?*

- Kannst du mir von deinem schönsten Moment im Team erzählen?

- *Can you tell me about your best moment on the team?*

- Kannst du mir davon erzählen, wie du es erlebt hast / erlebst Freundschaften im Team zu schließen?

- *Can you tell me about your experiences of making friends in the team?*

- Kannst du mir von Schwierigkeiten oder Problemen im Team berichten? (Du musst natürlich keine Namen nennen)

- *Can you tell me about any difficulties or problems in the team? (Of course, you don't have to name any names)*

  - Hast du Verletzungen / Mobbing / o.ä. erlebt? Wenn ja, wie bist du damit zurechtgekommen?

  - *Have you experienced any injuries / bullying / or else? If so, how did you cope with it?*

  - Ich habe während meiner Zeit hier mitbekommen, dass du verletzt warst / über dich gelacht wurde / o.ä. – Wie gehst du damit um?

  - *During my time here, I noticed that you were injured / people laughed at you / or else – How do you deal with something like that?*

- Ich habe während meiner Zeit bei euch viele Veränderungen mitbekommen: Neue Spieler sind hinzugekommen, ihr hattet Testspieler, ihr habt die Saison begonnen, zwei Spieler sind mit den Profis ins Trainingslager gefahren, Profispieler bestreiten Spiele mit euch – kannst du mir ein bisschen darüber erzählen, wie du denkst, dass diese Dinge das Team beeinflussen?

- *I've seen a lot of changes during my time with you: new players have joined, you had trialists, you started the season, two players went to training camp with the*

professionals, 1ˢᵗ team players play games with you – can you tell me a little bit about what you think how these things affect the team?

- Kannst du mir erzählen, wie es für dich ist, wenn Testspieler kommen?
- *Can you tell me how it is for you when trialists come?*
- Kannst du davon berichten, wie du es erlebst, im zweiten Team zu sein? Wie unterscheidet es sich deiner Meinung nach vom 1. Team?
- *Can you talk about how you experience being on the 2ⁿᵈ team? How do you think it differs from the 1ˢᵗ team?*

- Während meiner Zeit hier habe ich mitbekommen, dass in der Kabine viel gelacht wird – kannst du mir ein bisschen was über den Umgang im Team erzählen und vielleicht auch wie du denkst, dass ihr euch alle so versteht?

- *During my time here I noticed that there was a lot of laughter in the dressing room – can you tell me a little bit about the togetherness on the team and maybe also how you think that you all get along?*

- Kannst du mir davon erzählen, was dir an eurem Team am besten gefällt?
- *Can you tell me about what you like best about your team?*
- Kannst du von einer Situation berichten, in der du dich vielleicht auch mal unwohl gefühlt hast?
- *Can you tell me about a situation you may have felt uncomfortable?*
- Ich habe zudem mitbekommen, dass ihr einen recht rauen Umgangston pflegt – Ist das normal bei euch im Team und unterscheidet es sich von anderen Teams, für die du gespielt hast?
- *I also noticed that you have a rather rough tone – is that normal for you on the team and is it different from other teams you have played for?*

- Wenn du drei Dinge am Team ändern könntest – welche wären das?

- *If you could change three things about the team – what would they be?*

- Zum Ende: Gibt es etwas, das ich vergessen habe, dich zu fragen, was ich aber definitiv noch über euer Team wissen sollte? Möchtest Du noch irgendetwas hinzufügen / sagen / selber fragen?

- *To conclude: Is there anything, that I forgot to ask you, but should definitely know your team? Is there anything you would like to add / say / ask yourself?*

248

10.2 Research Ethics form

Centre for Applied Linguistics

Application for Ethical Approval
MPhil/PhD Students

A Information

Name of student:	Solvejg Wolfers
Date of registration:	18.04.2017
Project title:	Intercultural communication within a youth football team
Supervisor:	Dr Kieran File & Dr Stephanie Schnurr
CRB Clearance:	

B Texts

If your research does not include any textual data, please confirm this below and go to Section C

/

If all or some of your texts are not in the public domain, please explain what steps you have taken to obtain relevant permission for their collection and use. Please also complete any relevant parts of Sections C and D.

/

If some or all of your texts are in the public domain, give details of this and explain what steps you have taken to obtain any relevant permissions. When these permission have been obtained, please pass a copy to the Research Secretary to be added to your file. (You may not need to complete Sections C and D.)

My research might include texts that are in the public domain such as wesbite texts.

C Participants

Details

Please describe the participants in the research including ages of children and young people where appropriate. Also specify if any participants are vulnerable e.g. as a result of learning disability.

The participants of my research will be performance sports team players over the age of 18.

Respect for participants' rights and dignity

How will the fundamental rights and dignity of participants be respected, e.g. confidentiality, respect of cultural and religious values?

All rights, interests, sensitivities, and privacy of the informants will be respected as well as the wish not to participate. The participants will be informed about their right to withdraw from the research at any point.

Informed consent will be obtained prior to data collection. The participants will remain anonymous and their confidentiality will be respected.

Privacy and Confidentiality

How will confidentiality be assured? Please address all aspects of research including protection of data records, thesis, reports/papers that might arise from the study.

As stated above, the participants will remain anonymous and their confidentiality will be respected. Pseudonyms will be used for both athletes and clubs in order to protect identity. The data records will only be shared between the researcher and the two supervisors (Dr File and Dr Schnurr). When used for the thesis, publications or presentations, the anonymity will be obtained by changing all names of the participants.

D Consent

Will prior informed consent be obtained?
— **from participants**   YES
— **from others**   YES

Explain how this will be obtained. Provide details of the relevant procedures and any issues associated with them.

An information sheet and a consent sheet to sign will be distributed to the participants and recollected for storage. The participants' consent for being researched (observations, audio-recordings, interviews) will be obtained. The consent sheet will also include the participants' consent for the usage of the data for future publications and/or conference presentations given that the anonymity of the participants is preserved. Also, the consent sheet will inform the participants of the possibility to withdraw from the research at any stage without any consequences.

If verbal rather than written consent is to be obtained, give reasons for this.

As stated before, a written consent will be obtained.

If prior informed consent is not to be obtained, give reasons for this. If the research involves observation where consent will not be

obtained, specify situations to be observed and how cultural/religious sensitivities and individual privacy will be respected.

/

Will participants be explicitly informed of the student's role/status? If not, give reasons for this.

Yes.

Will deception be used? If so, provide a clear justification for this and details of the method of debriefing.

No.

Will participants be informed of the use to which data will be put?

Yes. (This will explicitly be described in the consent agreement.)

Will participants be told they have the option to withdraw from the study without penalty?

Yes.

Attach a copy of all consent forms to be used in the study.

E Security and protection

Data storage

Where will data be stored and what measures will be taken to ensure security?

The data will be stored on a password-protected hard drive as well as an external hard drive disk. Also, a hard copy and password-protected drive will be stored in the office of one of the supervisors.

For how long after the completion will the data be stored? (All data must be kept at least until the examination process is complete.)

For 10 years.

F Protection

Describe the nature and degree of any risk (psychological as well as physical) to participants and the steps that will be taken to deal with this.

The participants won't be in any form of risk. If they happen to feel uncomfortable, they can withdraw immediately and the research will be stopped. In order to minimise the risk of participants feeling pressured by their peers into participating, the consent sheets will be collected folded together so as to avoid having to show the choice of participation mode to others. Also, if the participants want to get in touch with someone else than the researcher, the details of the supervisors will be provided on the information sheet.

Identify any potential risks to the researcher and the procedures that will be in place for dealing with these.

There is no risk for the researcher.

In the extremely unlikely event that a participant has concerns during the research process I will take measures to ensure that the situation is brought to an end and calmness is restored. Also, the gatekeeper facilitating my access to the team as well as my supervisors will act as a go between should players wish to raise concerns to someone other than the researcher.

Also, I need to pay extra care to the collection of my data given that recording equipment may fail. Hence I will always carry at least two devices during the data collection stage.

I will seek my supervisor's guidance throughout the process.

How will participants' well-being be considered in the study?

There will be constant feedback and the researcher is prepared to send a report in the end. During observations, recordings and/or interviews I will be keenly aware of avoiding upsetting or distressing participants.

How will you ensure that your research and its reporting are honest, fair and respectful to others?

The researcher will be supervised throughout the whole research project. Before publication all written research will be checked by supervisors.

How will you ensure that the research and the evidence resulting from it are not misused?

Again, the researcher will be supervised throughout the whole research project and before publication all written research will be checked by supervisors. Also, I will ensure that the research data is protected from theft by keeping physical recordings locked in a filing cabinet.

G Ethical dilemmas

How will you address any ethical dilemmas that may arise in your research? Please give details of the protocol agreed with your supervisor for reporting and action.

All data collected will be done so with ethical approval and according to the ethical guidelines of the University of Warwick. In case issues arise during the research process, the supervisors will be informed and consulted.

H Authorship

Have you and your supervisor discussed and agreed the basis for determining authorship of published work other than your thesis? Give brief details of this.

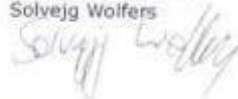This will be discussed for every paper prior to submission.

I Other issues

Please specify other issues not discussed above, if any, and how you

will address them.

I do not anticipate any major issues from my research but I will make sure I contact my supervisor or request an amended ethics approval should I encounter any unforeseen issues.

J   Signatures

Research student
Solvejg Wolfers

Date
09/06/2017

Supervisor
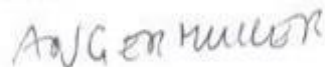
Date
09/06/2017

K   Action

Action taken

☑ **Approved**

☐ **Approved with modification or conditions – see Notes below**

☐ **Action deferred – see Notes below**

☐ **[Where applicable] CRB clearance reported to HSSREC**

Name
ANGEN MULLER

Date
16/06/17

Signature

Notes of Action

Date of Approval by Graduate Progress Committee

10.3 Information sheet

Forschungsprojekt
Team-Kommunikation im Fußball
Informationsblatt für Teilnehmer

Forscherin:
Solvejg Wolfers

Einleitung:
Sie und ihr Team sind eingeladen, an der Forschung zur interkulturellen Kommunikation im Fußball teilzunehmen. Bevor Sie sich entscheiden, ob Sie teilnehmen wollen, müssen Sie verstehen, warum die Forschung durchgeführt wird und was die Teilnahme für Sie persönlich bedeutet. Bitte lesen Sie sich daher die folgenden Informationen aufmerksam durch.

Ziel des Forschungsprojektes:
Das allgemeine Ziel des Forschungsprojektes ist die Untersuchung der Art und Weise wie die Fußballspieler der ▮▮▮ Mannschaft des ▮▮▮▮▮▮ miteinander kommunizieren.
Es geht darum, ein gesteigertes Bewusstsein dafür zu schaffen, wie wichtig interkulturelle Aspekte für die Mannschaften des Vereins sind. Diese Erkenntnisse sollen dafür genutzt werden, Konzepte zu erarbeiten, mit denen ein Mehrwert für die praktische Ausbildung der Fußballer des Nachwuchsleistungszentrums erzielt werden kann.

Teilnahme an der Forschung:
Um die Ziele dieses Projektes zu erfüllen, möchte die Forscherin Solvejg Wolfers Beobachtungen sowie Audioaufnahmen der Spieler der ▮▮▮ Mannschaft vor und während dem Training, der Teamansprachen sowie der Punktspiele durchführen. Außerdem möchte sie außerhalb der Trainingszeiten und nach vorheriger Absprache kurze Interviews mit ausgewählten Spielern führen.

- Ihre Teilnahme an der Forschung ist vollkommen freiwillig.
- Sie können sich von Anfang an gegen eine Teilnahme entscheiden oder diese jederzeit bis zwei Wochen nach Abschluss der Datenerhebung zurückziehen.
- Ihre Entscheidung nicht teilzunehmen oder die Teilnahme zurückzuziehen, hat keine negativen Konsequenzen für Sie und Ihren Verein.

Mehrwert:
Die Forschung hat Vorteile für Sie und Ihr Team.

- Sie und Ihr Team haben die Möglichkeit, Einblicke in die interkulturelle Kommunikation Ihres Mannschaftsgefüges zu erlangen.
- Diese Erkenntnisse können genutzt werden, um potentielle Konflikte zu lösen und Wege der verbesserten Team-Kommunikation zu finden.
- Nach Beendigung der Forschung kann bei Interesse ein Abschlussreport von Solvejg Wolfers per Mail an Sie versandt werden.

Zeitrahmen der Forschung:
Der Forschungszeitraum beginnt im Juli 2017 und endet voraussichtlich Anfang Dezember 2017. In diesem Zeitraum wird die Forschung in drei Intervallen durchgeführt werden.

Potenzielle Risiken oder Nachteile:
- Anfängliches Unbehagen bei der Beobachtung oder Befragung durch die Forscherin.

Vertraulichkeit:

- Die Forscherin wird Ihre Identität bei der Transkription und Berichterstattung über die Beobachtungen, Audioaufnahmen und Interviews geheim halten. Ihr Name wird anonymisiert und alle Details, die Sie persönlich identifizieren, werden in den Transkripten entfernt oder verschlüsselt.
- Alle sensiblen Informationen (z. B. Teamstrategien) bleiben streng vertraulich und werden in jeder schriftlichen Form der Forschung verschlüsselt.
- Notizen und Aufzeichnungen zur Forschung werden in verschlossenen Aktenschränken sowie passwortgeschützten Computerordnern und passwortgeschützten externen Festplatten gespeichert und innerhalb von 10 Jahren nach Abschluss des Forschungsvorhabens zerstört.

Verwendung der Forschung:
Solvejg Wolfers möchte die Forschung gerne anonymisiert wie folgt verwenden:

- Für das Verfassen der Doktorarbeit
- Für eventuelle Publikationen in akademischen (und nicht-akademischen) Fachzeitschriften
- Für die Präsentation auf akademischen Konferenzen
- Für das Verfassen von Trainingsmaterialien

Weitere Fragen?
Wenn Sie weitere Informationen wünschen, die Ergebnisse oder andere Aspekte des Forschungsprojektes weiter diskutieren möchten, wenden Sie sich bitte an:

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Wenn Sie Bedenken über das Projekt haben, die Sie lieber nicht mit der Forscherin besprechen möchten, wenden Sie sich bitte an eine der Betreuerinnen der Doktorarbeit:

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10.4 Consent sheet

WARWICK
THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Einverständniserklärung zur Teilnahme an der Forschung von Solvejg Wolfers

Projekttitel: Team-Kommunikation im Fußball
Ort, Datum: Hamburg, 03.07.2017

Bitte ankreuzen

1. Hiermit bestätige ich, dass ich das Informationsblatt für das oben genannte Projekt gelesen und verstanden habe und dass ich damit einverstanden bin, an der Forschung wie beschrieben teilzunehmen. Ich bestätige, dass ich die Gelegenheit hatte, Fragen zum Projekt zu stellen und dass ich das Informationsblatt für meine Unterlagen behalten darf. ☐

2. Ich habe verstanden, dass meine Teilnahme freiwillig ist und ich ohne Angabe von Gründen und ohne negative Folgen für mich und meinen Verein (bis zwei Wochen nach Beendigung des Projektes) jederzeit aus dem Forschungsprojekt aussteigen kann. ☐

3. Ich bin damit einverstanden, dass jedwede Gespräche und Interviews aufgezeichnet werden. ☐

4. Ich stimme zu, dass meine Daten im Folgenden verwendet werden (die Geheimhaltung meiner Identität, Verschlüsselung strategischer Informationen sowie solcher, die mich identifizieren können, vorausgesetzt):

    a. Für das Verfassen der Doktorarbeit ☐

    b. Für eventuelle Publikationen in akademischen (und nicht-akademischen) Fachzeitschriften ☐

    c. Für die Präsentation auf akademischen Konferenzen ☐

    d. Für das Verfassen von Trainingsmaterialien ☐

Name Teilnehmer:_____

Unterschrift Teilnehmer:_____

Email:_____

Ort, Datum:_____

Wenn Sie einen Abschlussbericht des Forschungsprojektes an die oben genannte Emailadresse erhalten wollen, kreuzen Sie bitte hier an. ☐

Kontakt: Solvejg Wolfers, Centre for Applied Linguistics, University of Warwick, Coventry CV4 7AL, UK. Tel. +44 (0)7565 850 385; Email: S.Wolfers@warwick.ac.uk

10.5 Recording notes general – Screenshot

Date	Training Time	Recording Name	Length	Comments – specific	Comments – general
76 09.07.17	10.00	170709_3_start regeneration running exercise me on bike_Holger tells me about Kevin_lots of mumbling hard to understand_talk with Fabian about my project and his schoolwork_Joel le and Daniel talking about black bloc_Holger carreer talk_end of run	41:58min	Holger tells me that Kevin is a 'licensed player' (1st team); is with the 2nd team during the training camp; will play games for them too; is "a good man", just has a problem with his endurance; has been injured the year before; is a top football player; has been with the U23 before Kevin to Holger "I'll get on the back, okay?" (0:35min); Holger tells Kevin he has to work on what he's not good at (endurance); Holger asks who will lead the speed; Kevin jokes he wants to, but Sinan says that he'll do it We start (1:35min); Holger and I are riding in the back Fabian comes closer to my bike and asks me whether Simon dropped my off at home orderly (6:17min); I affirm; silence (between me and Fabian); he asks me how long I will stay with them (6:41min); I answer and explain when I will come back; we talk about the weather in Germany and the UK; we talk about my studies, course, supervisors, where I live, and how the PhD process works; he asks whether I recorded everything with my dictaphone and assumes it is in the locker room that "one notices how we talk" (11:13min); he tells me that next to football he just finished school and wants to start studies next March (we talk until 12:30min roughly) I drive close to Kevin and Daniel who are running together and chatting (14:40min) about someone; hard to understand over the noise of the steps, bike and birds Vitali and Daniel talk about clearing out Media Markt (electrical store) (18:30min); Daniel appears to joke about getting consoles with his car or a fridge for his mother, Kevin (19:30min) "Daniel was at the rally, right? One has to watch out. [...] I saw him … (louder:) Right, Daniel? You don't even have to put on a mask!", Daniel smiles "Chiller, dude. Cap and hood", Kevin laughs The path becomes even more narrow and I can't ride next to any players which is why I ride behind them; nothing is audible Holger rides next to me (29:32min) and explains that the boys are usually getting faster towards the end as they want to get 'home'; we talk about me knowing them better after a week already; Holger tells me they all know each other pretty well and most of them have been in the U19 together too, which Holger coached 2 seasons ago; he tells me that Simon is in his 6th year with them now; Holger says apart from his height everything fits (33:25min), "Good guy, can play football, does many things right" but for the top he "doesn't have the body"; we talk about how little players will 'make it' so it is important to do sth next to football such as studies; Holger talks about how he did it himself and how annoyed he is about not doing anything really good back in his playing days and having 'catastrophic English' now, as he would be very interested in going abroad; he sends his kids to England for that reason; in his opinion English is the most important thing nowadays no matter what job We turn into the street towards the training property again and Holger tells them to walk a little and drink before meeting on the pitch I bring the bike back to the garage with Holger	Bike ride during athletic training (running exercise through forest and close-by area) I use a neck strap to carry the recorder so I have my hands free for riding; Holger and I get on the bikes and we are driving towards the crowd of players; Sinan is in running clothes as well and will join them I feel slightly insecure with the big dictaphone dangling in front of me Also, I don't want to embarrass myself in not being able to ride the bike I was provided with properly (it is a bit too big for me) I can keep up fine As the paths are rather narrow, I have trouble getting close (without driving into players); the noise of the bike on the ground (stones and sand) is rather loud, which is why it is hard to hear the voices; I can only hear snippets of talk

10.6 Recording notes humour – Screenshot

Recording	Time	Episode notes	Humour type	Humour support ?	Actors involved	Topic
141 170801_2_5	12:00	The players start leaving; I follow them to the locker room and when they start undressing I say goodbye and see you tomorrow; Kevin asks whether I had a nice working day; we both laugh, if I answered the response is not caught on tape	irony	laughter	Kevin, me	work research
142 170802_1	00:50	Overlapping chatter about clothes and other topics, Simon loudly joins the conversation asking Rouven laughingly whether he has money (due to the big shopping bag), players laugh, Simon jokes about Rouven being paid for sitting on the substitute's bench, Rouven doesn't laugh about the joke	irony teasing put-down	laughter	Simon, Rouven	money fashion
143 170802_1	01:51	When Edwin arrives, he doesn't shake hands with everyone and Vitali says "I love it when Edwin always says hello" ("Ich liebe das wenn Edwin immer Hallo sagt"), Simon laughs, Edwin "Let me change first dude" ("Lass mich ersma umziehen Digger"), Simon laughingly "He doesn't have to huh?" ("Er muss nich ne?"), Vitali "No he doesn't" ("Nein er muss nich"), incomprehensible chatter	irony/sarcasm? teasing confrontational	laughter	Edwin Simon, Vitali	hierarchy rules of behaviour politeness
144 170802_1	02:52	When new players arrive, they all shake hands with me too; Kevin greets me saying "Switch off that thing now" referring to my audio-recorder ("Mach jetzt mal das Ding aus hier"), I laugh, another player (Ecem?) "Is she recording?" ("Nimmt sie auf?"), Kevin laughs "Yes … so be careful right … not that you say anything your girlfriend shouldn't know" (Ja … also pass auf ne … Nicht, dass du was sagst das deine Freundin nicht wissen soll"), all laugh	confrontational put-down teasing irony sexualised	laughter	Kevin, me, Ecem	recording relationships
145 170802_1	04:45	Kevin and Henning shake hands, Kevin "Fresh bold head" ("Freshe Glatze"), players talk about why he cut his hair, they appear to joke about how he can do it now that he already has a girlfriend, laughter	irony gendered		Kevin, Henning	looks
146 170802_1	05:55	Dae-Jung walks in, Kevin "Did you have cats for breakfast? And dog for lunch?" ("Hast du heute Katze gefrühstückt? Und Hund zum Mittag?"), Dae-Jung smiles	racialised irony	smile	Kevin, Dae-Sung	stereotype
147 170802_1	03:15	Kevin pulls up a chair close to me asking whether I wanted to sit down there I say no it's fine and ask Edwin whether the chair next to him is already taken, he says "No it's free I kept it free" ("Ne is frei hab ich frei gehalten"), we laugh and I say "That's nice" ("Das is lieb"); I sit down next to Edwin (by the end of a row of chairs)	irony gendered flirtatious	laughter	Kevin, Edwin, me, ?	politeness

10.7 Transcription conventions

[smiles]	Paralinguistic features in square brackets
(hello)	Transcriber's best guess at unclear utterance in brackets
What	Word emphasised through stretching
…	Short pause (under 1 sec)
…//…\…/…\\	Simultaneous speech
?	Rising intonation
[…]	Section of transcript excluded
Example 1	Underlining highlights humour attempts
Example 2	Wavelike underlining highlights responses to humour attempts

10.8 List of abbreviations

BIPOC	Black, Indigenous and People of Color
CofP	Community of Practice
e.g.	example given
FC A II	FC Anonymous II
GEQ	Group Environment Questionnaire
i.e.	id est
IS	Interactional Sociolinguistics
RQ	Research Question
SCCRC	Sports Culture and Communication Research Collective
U19	under-19
vs.	versus