

## **On and Off the Pitch: Diversity policies and transforming identities?**

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### **Abstract**

This article examines the operation of diversity policies and practices in the sport of football using textual material from Government initiatives, club websites and interviews with club community based workers to suggest that new identity positions are being put into discourse. Sport and in particular football has become a site at which, rather than being classified as dangerous territory where fans have to be controlled, new, responsible, self-regulating citizen selves might be created. However, identity positions that I suggest are emerging both conform to and resist the apparatuses of governmentality which generate them and my research indicates that while there is some transformation taking place, the possibilities of new identity positions cannot be simply read off from the policy statements. Transforming identities are accommodated through discourses of charity, utilitarianism, and human rights, ranging from more paternalistic understandings of community within charity discourses to the political activism and equality based practices of human rights.

Sport has long been the site of regulatory practices, involving different lines of intervention framed at particular historical moments by discourses of the healthy body as well as those of social control through the diversion of energies into sporting rather than political and possibly socially disruptive practices, allegiances and identifications. More recently, sport has become the target of policies and interventions categorized within the framework of cultural diversity, social inclusion and social cohesion. This paper addresses some questions about how identities might be transformed and what identity<sup>1</sup> positions might be being made available through the introduction of strategies for promoting diversity in the context of sport using the example of football. Football, as a popular, high profile sport, continues to offer enormous possibilities for the reconfiguration of identities and production of transformed citizen selves, as well as for the regulation and control of dissent, dissidence and excess.

In the late nineteenth century, with the arrival of mass (male) sports participation and the enthusiasm with which the sport was greeted by fans in the 1880s and into the twentieth century, football was promoted as an activity to divert the energies of working class men from political engagement in which they might challenge economic inequalities and exploitation, leading to the redefinition of sport as commercial entertainment (Hargreaves, 1986, Giulianotti, 1999, 2005). British football culture, often localized in areas of high urban density and industrialization, developed in the market place as well as through spontaneous community activity. As Neil Taylor argues, most football clubs came out of works teams run by factory owners, 'established in law as private concerns with boards of directors' (2004: 48). Later in the twentieth century, football became the site more specifically of direct government control through the targeting of fans as 'hooligans' (Williams and Wagg, 1991). The disaster at the Heysel stadium in 1985, when 39 Juventus fans died was probably a watershed in the transformation process, as expressed by the Football Supporters' Association (which later became the Football Supporters' Federation) in challenging unfavourable views about football fans and providing an argument against the government's unpopular football policing policies. This construction of the fans is also illustrated, not only by analyses of media coverage of the particularly conflictual decades of the 1970s and 1980s, (Giulianotti and Williams, 1994), but also by the responses of official inquiries into a series of football

stadium tragedies, for example in the Popplewell Report (1986) on the Bradford City fire at Valley Parade and, more particularly, in the Taylor inquiry (1990) into the Hillsborough disaster in Sheffield, which gave the main cause of the disaster as ‘police failure’. In both cases fans had been perceived as potentially dangerous and deviant. Spectators had been prevented from gaining access to the pitch through structures which were organized to safeguard players from pitch invasion in the case of Hillsborough and to prevent fans entering the ground without paying after the match had started at Valley Parade. Although ensuing reports and recommendations have focused upon structural safety at sports stadia, there is still some resonance of the construction of spectators and fans as potentially dangerous and as the cause rather than the victims of tragedy (<http://www.le.ac.uk?fo/resources/factsheets/fs2.html>). The positioning of fans as deviant and dangerous has had considerable purchase within the discourse of sport through identification with particular versions of working class masculinity. Sport has long been inflected by an embodied hegemonic masculinity in the context of which, it can be argued, all other versions of masculinity have to be negotiated (Connell 1995). In football this masculinity, coded as white, is often associated within a binary taxonomy of the authentic (‘real’, traditional supporters of football) and inauthentic (middle class, fair weather, more recently arrived supporters (Robson, 2000)). The beleaguered ‘authentic fan’, the target of claims of hooliganism, continues to be victimized by more recent interventions to tame the excesses of football fandom according to Tim Crabbe and Adam Brown (2004).

By the late twentieth century, the language had changed and there was a notable move away from discourses foregrounding control and constraint and a shift towards football as site for the promotion of diversity, inclusion and cohesion through the configuration of new footballing identities. It is to this I now turn in this paper, which draws upon arguments about the assemblage of persons through the mechanisms of governmentality, (Rose, 1996, [1989] 1999) to present an exploration of the possibilities of these transformative and transforming identities within a space where cultural diversity provides the framework for new sets of practices and re-conceptualisations. Stephen Wagg claims that policy interventions to promote social inclusion have two interrelated aspects; the role played by clubs and that of ‘the grass roots campaigns to save clubs’ both concerned to ‘mobilize prevailing interpretations of the word ‘community’’ (2004:16). My main concern in this paper is with the mechanisms of legislative and policy interventions by the state and the practices of the clubs. My focus is upon an examination of the websites of clubs in the English Football League along with analyses of data from interviews with club personnel, from clubs in the Premiership, Championship and League 3 in South Yorkshire and the West Midlands, in the context of recent interventions in the field of public policy. Firstly, it is important to locate the responses of the football clubs within the framework of apparatuses of intervention instated in government policies and within the specificities of diversity expertise.

### **Diversity Policies: The U.K. background**

Diversity policies in sport in the UK largely derive from (i) the legislation against discrimination which embeds the notions of inclusion and fair treatment for all in law, (ii) the legislation covering ‘race’, the Race Relations Act (1976 and the Race Relations Amendment Act (2000), gender, through the Equal Pay Acts (1970 and 1980), (iii) legislation on gender and sexuality through the Sex Discrimination Act (1975) and Gender Reassignment Act (2003), and (iv) legislation on disability through The Disability Discriminations Act (1995) and Special Educational Needs Act, SENDA (2001). This legislation is imbued with the language of fair play and justice, highlighting the inequity of existing practices and making it possible to ‘put into discourse’ (Foucault, 1981:11) a new language of equality which makes re-conceptualisations of identity possible. Legislation has often focused on fair treatment in relation to paid employment, although there has been an extension into access to services as well as the translation of inclusion and equity into the discourse of rights with European

Union Directives of 2000 implementing Article 13 of the Human Rights Act (2000/43/EC) and Equal Treatment Directives of 2000 for religion, belief, disability or sexual orientation (2000/78/EC). The Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) and Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) have also played important parts in the implementation of fair employment practices within a framework of equality and justice. The CRE has also been particularly active in promoting equity in other fields including sport (<http://www.cre.gov.uk/speqs/index.html>). However, most of the legislation and the associated quasi-governmental bodies or charitable organisations promoting diversity and social inclusion focus on a particular aspect of exclusion and, whilst academic inquiry has increasingly combined them, for example, articulating gender and 'race' in its critiques, in the relationship between the state and diversity, these categories of exclusion are treated as separate and distinct from each other.

The promotion of diversity in sport is driven by government policies organized around social inclusion, although the language has shifted slightly from the framework of the inclusion/exclusion binary to a focus on cohesion, especially following the Parekh Report (2000) and, on diversity. The Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) cites the 1996 EU Lisbon summit as the source of its social inclusion policy, of which diversity is one aspect. Member states of the EU have been committed to promoting social inclusion and cohesion as strategic goals. As Stephen Wagg argues, the concept of social exclusion has 'a special place in the lexicon of the contemporary Labour Party' (2004: 14) as part of Labour's values, promoted in the context of a free market with all that that entails for liberal democracy, defined primarily in relation to the labour market. This has implications for other fields, including sport. The Social Exclusion Unit set up by the Labour government in 1997, published *Bringing Britain Together* (SEU 1998) and created 18 'Policy Action Teams' (PATs) which were central to the implementation of this policy. The PAT 10 Report, covering the arts and sport based on the 1999 Collins Report (Collins et al 1999), which focuses on the relationship between sport and social inclusion and exclusion, led to the publication of *A Sporting Future for All* (DCMS 2000) which has been followed by *The Government's Plan for Sport* (2001) with annual updates in 2002 and 2003.

The interventions which are the subject of this paper have only a relatively recent history and can be seen to have expanded within sport only in the last 10 years. Much of the activity which has led to the growth of policies and practices of diversity, inclusion and cohesion in sport are so recent that some of the lower league football clubs have only very rudimentary policies and for the majority of the clubs the focus is on 'race' and 'ethnic' diversity, with only very limited cognisance of any other diversity matters, especially those relating to sexuality. Diversity policies are part of a proliferation of social, cultural and legislative interventions which could be included in what Nikolas Rose calls the 'practical rationalities' (1996: 173) which permeate everyday life and the myriad ways in which people take on identity positions whereby selves are transformed (or not). It is the ubiquity and extent of these practices and their productivity and potential for transformation which are most useful for an exploration of the particular interventions associated with promoting diversity<sup>ii</sup>.

Diversity policies and practices are themselves diverse. They range from legislation with, in some instances, the threat of coercion or other sanctions for contravention, to economic incentives for compliance or even for creative responses to such incentives. All involve new language, new sets of practices and expectations and whole new categories of employment and job description. The range of mechanisms involved in their transformative potential lend themselves well to a Foucauldian approach focussing on governmentality as involving diverse assemblages of persons (Rose, 1996). However, Rose, in suggesting that a concern with the speaking, first person subject, 'I', can 'accord too much to language as communication' (ibid:178) underestimates the importance of language and of the meanings given to enunciation by those persons. The language of diversity and how it is spoken is crucial to an

understanding of how identity positions are taken up within this field, especially when the first person singular pronoun is replaced by the plural and collective agency is included.

Tensions within sports diversity policy initiatives reflect those in other areas of the multi-faceted complexities of the relationship between the state and diversity, although there are particularities within sport because of its specific alliances between competition, celebrity and community. Diversity poses problems in sport that have resonance in the wider arena, because of the inherent conflict, or at least ambiguity, between the positive aspect of diversity, based on the freedoms that the liberal state cannot deny its citizens and the negative, premised on normative liberal notions of equality; between policies that demand both multiculturalism and the celebration of difference on the one hand and antidiscrimination practices on the other. Diversity in sport, as elsewhere, is concerned with addressing inequalities and marking out differences, making them explicit and yet at the same time claiming such differences *do* not matter because they *should* not matter. As Christian Joppke observes, such policies, which he classifies as liberal-democratic, call for ‘different, even diametrically opposed responses to both appearances of diversity: abolish it by means of “anti-discrimination” policy or protect and promote it by means of “multi-culturalism” policy’ (2004:451). In effect, they demand ‘the simultaneous rendering invisible and visible of ethnic diversity’ (ibid: 451). There is both the widespread celebration of difference and heterogeneity and the homogeneity of a common humanity that shares equal rights and duties that, as John K. Noyes argues of post-colonialism, ‘requires a dialectic that can account for the unifying and homogenizing moments’ (2002: 274). This dialectic has to be situated and to be located within the temporal and spatial specificities of the institutions and cultures within which encounters take place.

Sport carries particular inflections of this dialectic. There is more stress on social inclusion than upon any celebration of difference, but the policies and practices that are increasingly part of the mechanisms through which diversity is promoted also demonstrate the different elements of multi-culturalism upon which Stuart Hall draws; the more radical critical, revolutionary approach and corporate multi-culturalism (2001). Whilst not wanting to make excessive claims for the radical potential of sport, especially football, which is clearly first and foremost big business and highly competitive, through its very mass appeal and popularity, I want to argue that those involved in promoting diversity could, can and do deliver a radical message.

In sport there is a powerful emphasis on making things visible and my concern has been largely with that which is represented, but this field, as all others implicated in the interventions of diversity, is beset by similar contradictions and dilemmas. The public face of football is very much concerned with representations of visible difference. High prominence is given to campaigns like *Kick it Out*, the F.A and P.F.A. supported organisation started by the C.R.E. in 1993 to fight racism in football and to role model black players, albeit conforming to a traditional culture of footballing identities; the only evidence of multiculturalism is the celebration of visible difference, rather than the plurality of practices that make up multi-faceted, diverse culture, let alone ethnicity. Clubs give high priority to images of players wearing anti-racist insignia and black players acting as iconic figures of race equality, classified as ‘role models’. The transforming language of diversity and the iconography of the football club websites illustrate some of these tensions as well as demonstrating some of the attempts that are made at resolution and at providing some kind of consistency and even uniformity.

The UK government’s recommended approach to sport in order to promote inclusion and to target disadvantaged groups as part of neighbourhood renewal is summed up in PAT10.

Participation in the arts and sport has a beneficial social impact. Arts and sport are inclusive and can contribute to neighbourhood renewal. They can build confidence and encourage strong community groups. Arts and sports bodies which receive public

funds should be accessible to everyone and should work actively to engage those who have been excluded in the past. ...Arts and sports bodies should acknowledge that social inclusion is part of their business. Equally, area regeneration schemes should explicitly incorporate arts and sport in neighbourhood renewal. (1999: 5).

Here, the language of social reform and actions that must be accountable, especially to gain access to resources, targets particular spatial localities and brings together Home Office concerns with 'strengthening society' through 'community cohesion' (Home Office, 2005) with cultural practices in a discourse of equal opportunities which aims more to produce than to police citizens. PAT10 acknowledges the risk that sport and the arts might seem to supplement welfare policies.

We do not believe that every artist or sportsperson should be a social worker by another name, or that artistic or sporting excellence should take second place to community regeneration (1999:5)

This caveat is redeemed by the recognition of 'excellence' and the familiar aspect of diversity which seeks to draw on the widest possible pool of talent, to spread the benefits so that 'the pool of talent available be as wide as possible' (ibid:5).

However, the benefits to the wider community of promoting the social inclusion of not only disadvantaged but possibly disaffected groups remain dominant. It is explicitly stated that 'Arts and sport, cultural and recreational activity, can contribute to neighbourhood renewal and make a real difference to health, crime, employment and education in deprived communities' (ibid. 5). This is because they 'appeal directly to individuals' interests and develop their potential and self-confidence' and they 'relate to community identity and encourage collective effort' (ibid: 8). These policies, like those expressed in the Home Office strategy document, *Improving Opportunity, Strengthening Society* place diversity within a framework which brings together 'community organisations, business and front line public services' (2005: 5). Football clubs draw on particular communities, although increasingly the spatial location and the fan base of major clubs have become disassociated. Increasingly it is the physical locality in proximity to the ground that is inhabited by those who are not part of the club's traditional, mainly white fan base who are the target of policies designed to combat social exclusion and promote diversity (Bradbury, 2001).

Government policy suggests that *Sport England* should 'explicitly recognize that sustaining cultural diversity and using sport to combat social exclusion and promote community development are among its basic policy aims. Sport England should seek to devote resources specifically to community development objectives and ensure that its funded clients and governing bodies also contribute in their work to such objectives.' (PAT10: 17).

Another strand of the government's approach to diversity discourse targets the body, more specifically the healthy, fit body along with other aspects of good citizenship. For example, the Foreword to *Game Plan* (DCMS/SU 2002)

Sport defines us as a nation. It teaches us about life. We learn self discipline and teamwork from it. We learn how to win with grace and lose with dignity. It gets us fit. It keeps us healthy. It forms a central part of the cultural and recreational part of our lives. Sport and physical activity can help the Government achieve key objectives. Crucially, it can help us tackle serious health issues (ibid: 6).

This has resonance with the Victorian reconstruction of Classicism embodied in the public school ethos of Juvenal's much re-worked *mens sana in corpore sano*. Whilst the mechanisms deployed may be heterogeneous, the target group is assumed to be homogeneous in one respect. Even if diversity is highlighted, all are assumed to welcome their inclusion in this

sporting project. The body is targeted as the site of intervention, in a sporting version of the biopolitics which permits the state to invade the private space of the domestic and the corporeal in order to secure overall benefit (Donzelot, 1980), later construed in a more disembodied dimension of governmentality (Rose, [1989/1999]). For contemporary sport the target group is not middle and upper class public schoolboys but disaffected and disadvantaged youth and those from under-represented groups. In this reconfiguration of the sporting corporeal ethic, not only is there the establishment of a causal link between the healthy body and the healthy mind, but there is also a rationale for this particular version of the state implanting body techniques upon individuals (Elias, 1983). Bodies here are not disciplined through the prison or the asylum (Foucault, 1967, 1973, 1977), but through similar, if much more diffuse, heterogeneous and subtle injunctions. The strategies still operate to 'enjoin an internal relation between the pathological individual and his or her body in which bodily comportment would manifest and maintain a certain disciplined mastery exercised by the person over himself or herself' (Rose, 1995:31). In football, the deviants and the disaffected are likely to be male, with women being classified among the disadvantaged and under-represented. *Game Plan* stresses the importance of securing compliance and highlights the wider benefits.

More people taking part in sport and physical activity at all levels will bring a number of benefits. The report is clear that there is strong, systematic evidence of a direct link between regular physical activity and improved health for people of all ages... We must get more people playing sport, across the whole population, focusing on the most economically disadvantaged groups, along with school leavers, women and older people (DCMS/SU 2002: 7).

The report acknowledges that this is a productive intervention and that providing the best possible introduction to sport and physical activity when young is vital if people are to be active throughout their lives. A great deal of weight is given to Sport England's county scheme in this context. 'International sporting success helps to generate pride and a sense of national identity, and a "feel-good" factor' (ibid: 9).

However advantageous these policies may be seen to be, there is a distancing of the role of the government and the approach is distinctly neo-liberal as in demonstrated by this claim:

The existence of benefits does not automatically mean that government should intervene in sport. Therefore we also examine the case for government intervention on efficiency and equity grounds, either to stimulate provision by the private or voluntary sectors in order to reduce the health costs of inactivity; or to address inequality of access or opportunity, for example differences in participation between social groups or absence of facilities in certain areas (ibid: 44).

These government mechanisms are largely targeted at citizens who will regulate themselves and who will be construed as active participants in the processes of implementation and where "technologies of subjectivity exist in a symbiotic relationship with..." "techniques of the self" (Rose, [(1989)1999:11] The citizen thus produced, Rose argues, is no longer

motivated only by the calculus of pain and pleasure, but through 'self-inspection, self-problematization, self-fulfilment and confession. [so that] we evaluate ourselves according to the criteria provided for us by others' (ibid:11). However, whilst these measures may be indicative of 'government at a distance' in many ways and the techniques that are implicated in the production of particular types of 'ideal' citizens within this field are multifarious, there is a great deal of stress on the monitoring process and upon external evaluation of how far criteria have been met, which might invite a more utilitarian approach based on a financial as well as a felicific calculus. This is a collective citizenship which, within the discourse of

sport, imposes corporate responsibility on the club, as well as engaging with self-regulating individuals and one in which policies of inclusion are performance indicators.

## **Diversity, Cohesion and Football**

The football club is a corporate commercial enterprise like many others in the entertainment industry, but it has specific features, histories and genealogies of identification. It is marked by deeply held allegiances and the passion of belonging arising from strong local feelings as well as the pull of global celebrity. Football also occupies a highly visible space which is overtly political and has the potential for political transformation. The massive global interest in the sport suggests that the quotation of the following statement by Paul Elliott's, the ex-Premiership player of *Team up Against Racism*, which he attributes to Nelson Mandela, is much more than hyperbole and empty rhetoric:

Sport, football especially, has an important role to play in the lives of people. Sport has the power to change the world and to empower people. Sport speaks to people in a language they understand. (Elliott, 2005)

Part of the ubiquity and global appeal of football is due to its being a discursive field in which spectacle, the spectacular and visual representation are central. The primacy of the visual is demonstrated by the club websites. These provide a space in which club allegiances are represented, secured and re-established and where it is still useful to claim that fans are interpellated (Althusser, 1971) as 'true' supporters of the club through identification with its history and iconography, often validated by the purchase of associated products. Whatever the limits of this Althusserian concept (Hirst, 1979, Barrett 1991), especially in its inherent assumption that there must be a subject prior to the identification process of interpellation by which the subject is 'hailed', it clearly has application in this context not only as a 'summoning into place' of the subject (Hall, 1996) but as a means of capturing particularly well the intensity of the moment of identification and the investment in identity that is so powerfully expressed in the belief systems in football. Interpellation may be a moment of misrecognition (Heath, 1981) but it nevertheless incorporates the relationship between the discursive 'outside' and the investing 'inside' in a manner that resonates powerfully with the identification mechanisms implicated in sport, especially football. The notion of moments of being hailed into an identity position, also suggest the possibility of such moments constituting the narratives through which particular identities are constructed and re-constructed. Just as interpellation 'works' when the subject is recruited, there are also occasions when subjects do not recognize their names. For example, there are tensions between the corporate power of the club and the identifications made by their fans (Crabbe and Brown, 2004) just as there are disjunctures between the policies and practitioners of diversity.

The discussion in this section is based upon analyses of football league club web sites ranging from rich clubs at the top of the Premiership to much less affluent lower league clubs. There is a concentration of clubs in South Yorkshire and Birmingham which are also the sites for interviews with personnel involved in 'community activities' and promoting diversity<sup>iii</sup>. All the clubs' websites, apart from three, are administered by premiumtv.co.uk and hence bear great similarity to each other. Two of the exceptions, Manchester United and Arsenal, can clearly afford to finance their own very sophisticated websites expressed in the most up-to-date, sophisticated, comprehensively inclusive language of diversity. Charlton, the other club to run its own web site is distinctive because of its long and very successful record of promoting diversity which predates many of the state interventions mentioned above (<http://www.charlton-athletic.co.uk>). Paul Elliott, cites Charlton as the model which is being deployed by the F.A. for the promotion of race equality in particular, in football (2005).

'Diversity' incorporates 'race' 'ethnicity', disability, gender, economic exclusion and sexuality, but is most voluble on the matter of 'race'. Some clubs incorporate reference to sexuality on their web sites, such as the rich clubs, Manchester United and Arsenal, although Cambridge United, currently at the bottom of League Two, also makes reference to seeking to confront discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation in its Charter (<http://www.cambridge-united.premiumtv.co.uk/page/CustomerCharter/0,,10423,00.html>). Although all the football club websites are dominated by advertising and merchandise, especially that of the club and league sponsors, the home pages do sometimes include diversity matters along with the latest team news, such as match reports and transfers. This material comes under 'community' or sometimes 'fans or 'club' or in the section which might seem to relate most directly to the project of government, under the 'Customers' Charter'. It is apparent that diversity is not the prime concern of the websites.

All the clubs have youth access, training and supporters' clubs, work with local schools and participate in football in the community projects. These activities are framed around making the best of local talent, with the club benefiting from the local community and around responsible citizenship. These activities balance mechanisms of bringing in talent with those of helping the disadvantaged. Across all the websites football is re-presented as desired and desirable; football can be deployed to benefit young people because it is assumed that everyone is equally eager to be involved in football. For example Leicester City's Charter states that children are encouraged to develop their enthusiasm for learning using sport and in particular football as motivation' (<http://www.lcfc.premiumtv.co.uk/page/CommunityDetail/0..10274~440213,00html>)

Community activities embrace anti-racism through a variety of mechanisms, from the routine display of the team photograph of players wearing *Kick It Out* T-shirts, through the organisation of Asian girls' teams and teams of disabled people (avfc.co.uk/) to a vast range of sustained proactive ventures such as those undertaken by Charlton Athletic Race Equality (CARE). Discourses of diversity on the web sites are dominated by race equality and community work, especially with children and young people. Some sites, such as Charlton's, refer to 'girls and boys' but in most cases it is only girls whose gender is marked. There are some references to women, but usually the more familiar sporting nomenclature 'ladies', which reveals the specific genealogy of women's inclusion in sport (Hargreaves, 1994), is deployed. Identification for women is as fans, generically described, or as part of the 'community' who might be in some way disadvantaged, although of course there are large numbers of women employed at the clubs, albeit in mainly secretarial and more junior administrative posts as well as, in many cases, a women's team.

The 'community' is a broad church bringing in children, minority ethnic groups, youth, drug addicts, young offenders. Through these apparatuses football clubs constitute collectives of responsible citizens who proscribe anti-social, especially racist practices and help the disadvantaged. Work in the community also involves targeting young offenders, truants and, in the case of Charlton, football projects have helped reduce youth crime and disorder (<http://www.charltonathletic.co.uk/education.ink>) (<http://www.charltonathletic.co.uk/Socialinclusion.ink>).

Charlton is held in high regard by activists at other clubs. For example a radio station director at a West Midlands Premiership club, struggling to gain funding for community education programmes says of Charlton,

They do it properly. They have a mission and community is right at the top.

Some clubs give a higher priority to the promotion of diversity, but all include community based activities and anti-racism, but in the overall framework of club activities anti-racist policies are allied to prescribed equal opportunities practices, for example as enshrined in employment legislation. Importantly, in this context legislation provides staff such as

stewards with the police backing they need to exclude supporters who engage in racist or other offensive behaviour. As one black Steward working at a Premiership club said,

There's still racism on the terraces. The point is now we don't have to put up with it. We can call the police. We do.

There is some elision between the community based outreach of the clubs and what constitutes charity work. There is coverage of player involvement in this field in which all players have to make some contribution. However, players and clubs offer different interpretations of this, but it mostly involves the attendance of celebrity players at the bedside of a sick child or at a charity dinner. A Premiership Personnel Liaison Officer describes this as,

We go to the children's hospital once a year. We go at Christmas.

The same club's Community Officer, much of whose work involves responding to requests for charity appearances, was more critical. Although players are required to contribute to such occasions they are not all enthusiastic about 'putting something back' into the community in spite of the massive wages in the Premiership.

Giving something back. It's all about giving something back. Footballers destroy the game. Overpaid they are. Agents, footballers, Bosman and the wages'

Community, in its diverse manifestations, political commitment to human rights and the more paternalistic interventions of charity, constitute the main forms of interpretation of the panoply of discourses associated with diversity in the context of football clubs.

### **Corporate Strategies and identity possibilities?**

The discursive regimes identified within the field of diversity in sport generate particular identity positions, presenting different possibilities for the reconfiguration of identity, although it has to be noted that this is within a specific context of ethnicity and gender in a workforce made up predominantly of white men<sup>iv</sup>. The policies and practices, which are themselves diverse, are also contradictory, just as the identificatory processes may be ambivalent. Those working at football clubs negotiate their identities according to the situation in which they find themselves. The Personal, Welfare and Liaison Officer at a Premiership club whose caring role involves looking after the players, of whom a large number are not English and may not even speak any English, acknowledges that 'the football world is coming to terms with the fact that we women have something to offer' and negotiates her own identity within a framework of change and ideas that draw upon feminist repertoires. Within the club, the group most likely to have a strong representation of black people is the players, although there are very few Asian players and, of course no women. Women's teams do not play at the club ground, nor do they train at the training ground. The 2005 European Championship television coverage notwithstanding, women are largely absent from dominant football culture. At one West Midlands club I met the former ladies' team captain, who was now working as steward at the club. Her enthusiasm was unabashed, however. As she said,

It's a great game. My daughter's in the team now and I'll always be a fan. Yes things are changing though. We'll get there!

The possibilities for identification are framed within the discourses of community, of charity and of human rights and I would suggest that these regimes offer three distinctive identity positions within the field of diversity. The dominant regime as manifested by its volubility in the iconography and language of diversity represented on the websites and by the personnel

who work in the field, involves a discourse of equality and inclusion within the framework of community<sup>v</sup>. Community and what is classified as the work of the club community officer or the activities that are spatially located within the area surrounding the club, from which its fan base was traditionally drawn but which now often represents a community with no tradition of interest in football and certainly without the financial resources to attend matches at the ground, occupies most space on the club websites, when you look for ‘diversity’.

The utilitarian identity position articulates a particular version of community, strongly marked by compliance with legislative and quasi legal apparatuses and concern for a public image promoting social inclusion and ‘doing good’ which might counter any negative media coverage of some of the excesses of celebrity players, on or off the pitch. The other dimension of the utilitarian identity relates to accessing resources. Not only do clubs have to be seen as having a Customers’ Charter and to be involved in community activity, for example with children’s groups, education for under-achievers and to encourage under-represented groups, especially Asian people, to participate in the life of the club, but they will only be able to access European and U.K. government funding if they can be seen to be successfully carrying out these activities. Many Premiership clubs have radio stations and even television in the case of Manchester United and one club is aiming to finance the station through such funding, targeting education. Football clubs which hitherto would have sought only independent commercial sponsorship are now deploying their diversity activities to gain government funding and have established quite extensive apparatuses committed to this end. This utilitarian focus within the clubs has produced a new identity position in this terrain, which requires the re-negotiation and rationalization by those so recruited. However, this is one position and it is not the only alternative.

The identities reconfigured are not all transformative and those drawing on charity discourses indicate both resistance to the project of diversity and continuity with earlier positions. Confronted with the demands of inclusion and cohesion, another response is to retreat into a more traditional position based on paternalistic strategies. This is apparent from the website inclusion of women, girls, disabled people, young offenders and the local community, which includes those living within the proximity of the ground and likely to be economically disadvantaged, as those who would benefit from the generosity of the club or who might be grateful for a sighting of one of the club’s celebrity players; the language is that of patronage and paternalism. All Premiership players are expected to make some contribution to diversity, but this often involves a photo opportunity or a charity appearance. Charity work is part of the work of ‘community’ and may be more acceptable than other parts of this work, especially given bureaucratic demands described by one Community Officer as,

It’s gone crazy. These rules and this political correctness. It’s gone too far.

Charity is explicitly a large part of the work,

I’m in charge of the charitable trust. That’s part of my work as Community Officer. We do a lot Raise £40,000 a year we do. It’s a big part of the job and what we do.(Premiership Community Officer)

(Although, it must be noted that £40,000 is small beer compared with players’ salaries in the Premiership).

Whilst the charitable player figure is a feature of the Premiership the genealogy of charity works through the lower leagues too in a more traditional trajectory aligning sport and charity. For example, The Football League, which runs the lower three divisions of the game (The Championship, League One and League Two), makes no mention of equality or diversity in its regulations (<http://www.football-league.premiumtv.co.uk/page/Rules/0,,10794>,

[00.html](#)). They do, however, demonstrate interest in charitable work and have focused on women's and girls' football,

with the aim of increasing the number of female supporters at matches, driving awareness of the women's game and further increasing participation in women's football,

all within a framework of helping those who are less fortunate. There is little scope for the promotion of women and the club's women's ('ladies') team to celebrity status and the women's game is largely relegated to the category of 'worthy' efforts. This is one of the strategies deployed to maintain the outside status of women; through the exclusion from celebrity and through the inclusion of women in the category of those in receipt of charitable assistance. In each case these are mechanisms of exclusion and of othering.

The most radical opportunity for identification comes from the human rights political discourse which is most dominant at Charlton Athletic and at clubs that have taken the initiative in addressing diversity, like Sheffield United with its F.U.R.D. programme, although it is a position adopted by practitioners at many clubs. Such projects are also well supported by fans, who provide much of the impetus for change. Whilst the targets of diversity policies are 'outsiders' and identities emerge through a process of 'othering' (Butler 1993), utilitarian and charity identities are complicit in this devaluing of 'the other', human rights identities make the process explicit and challenge assumptions of lower worth. This identification, which is particularly well demonstrated at Charlton, is apparent through the extent of commitment, for example in the range of activities, the diversity of target groups, the sustained programme of interventions as well as through the language of 'race' and equality and the dedication of staff who make political investment in these positions. Not only does this include some high profile figures as proponents and practitioners, rather than figure heads, of diversity, but also the 'community' extends well beyond the immediate vicinity of the club. An identity based on human rights extends beyond the routine conformity of utilitarianism and challenges the patronage and condescension of charity.

## **Conclusion**

Football has been targeted as a site at which citizen identities, embracing diversity, can be seen to be emerging, but not through smooth or predictable pathways. The commitment of football clubs to the regeneration of local communities and to wider participation, including those involving race equality, whilst characterized by different identifications is located within a new economic discourse of diversity. However, I have argued that there has been a significant shift in the identities that are available within football, arising from the explosion of diversity, cohesion and social inclusion discourses, marking a move in the case of, for example, for those employed in the clubs themselves from participants in a commercial enterprise, outside the terrain of equality politics and social justice, to self regulating citizens involved in social transformation and for football supporters from disruptive 'hooligans' to responsible citizens and political activists promoting equality. Fans are both the target of policies and practices and are instrumental in supporting a more radical programme of diversity as well as providing the impetus for change. Whilst it is possible to exaggerate the extent of change, especially in the shift from control and constraint to the production of self-regulating football identities, especially among fans, it can be demonstrated that these transforming discourses are generative of specific identities which re-form, resist and accommodate as well as comply. In part, transforming discourses of diversity operate as new techniques of control and are still enforced through traditional, if newly applied, tools of policing. In this sense they may be viewed in a utilitarian manner, either as requirements of practice, for example in complying with legislative demands or with the criteria applicable to

qualify for additional, notably European, funding or, as in the human rights, equality discourse, citizenship facilitates significant changes and challenges to the material inequalities that diversity policies aim to defeat.

Transformative discourses of diversity are activated, accommodated and subverted through the mechanisms of policies of cohesion. Subversion is sometimes expressed as hostility to a directive 'bureaucracy' demanding routine and cosmetic compliance. Human rights discourse, often indicated by a focus on equality more than cohesion, represents a commitment to change which the charity discourse endangers and even undermines. Charity, which might be seen as a weak version of the utilitarian discourse of routine conformity, draws on paternalistic repertoires and largely involves very limited action. The process of identification at times undermines the mechanisms of the discursive field through which it is made meaningful. Diversity policies appear to present a plane of consistency and yet they are appropriated and understood in different and sometimes contradictory ways. Whilst regulatory practices may indeed constitute techniques of the self, they are not always successful. Resistance does not always take the form of a discourse of resistance; it can be an accommodation and a negotiated settlement, which is indicative of what Paul Gilroy calls 'conviviality', which includes the processes of cohabitation and interaction that have made multi-culture an ordinary feature of social life, in Britain. (2005: xv)

Whilst the sport of football is both highly visible and visual and the language of diversity is increasingly voluble, there are significant absences and silences that might constitute subversion of the diversity project. There is much greater reluctance to address sexuality as a sphere in which discriminatory practices might operate, although homophobia, for example as expressed on the terraces, is perceived as unacceptable. Black players, there being virtually no Asian or South Asian players in the Premiership, are frequently deployed as role models, for example in community projects, but there is no parallel activity by out players. The gendered nature of attempts at securing stability in the identities re-produced within this field depends upon the assumed masculinity that underpins the mechanisms that are adopted to deal with change, although this is much more likely to be challenged within human rights discourses. Gender plays an important part in the language of inclusion, on the websites and in club policies, but women have been excluded from F.A. pitches until recently, club training grounds, home pages, prime time media coverage and women are included as excluded 'minorities' along with Black, Asian, disabled, economically disadvantaged, deviant people. However, having been 'put into discourse', diversity has to be addressed and a space has been opened up for the re-configuring and re-negotiation of identities in football which can embrace practices of equality.

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<sup>1</sup> Football carries strong elements of identification and the notion of being recruited into an identity in this field combines elements of situating the self and investing in an identity position which demand recognition of the spatial, temporal and biographic aspects of identity as an expression of the interface between the personal and the social (Woodward, 2002). Identity permits acknowledgement of the intensity of this investment, made here, for example through club affiliation the deep commitment of which, especially in terms of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995), however illusory this might be, extends beyond the notion of being subjected. The concept of identity is also preferred for its genealogy of association with identity politics. The identification processes that are implicated, which are strongly gendered, ethnicized and racialized, are produced within discourse. I use identity in this paper in preference to subject, although there is overlap between the use of 'self' and identity, in order to highlight the engagement with and investment in identity positions. Identity and identification permit ambiguity and failure as well as aspects of the agentic and consequently of resistance, which are difficult to accommodate in theories of subjectification which posit agency as arising only from the manner in which the self is assembled (Butler, 1990, Rose,

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1996). I use identity without its connotations of fixity, although I am aware of the dangers. (Gilroy, 2005)

<sup>ii</sup> Rose defines practical rationalities as ‘regimes of thought, through which persons can accord significance to aspects of themselves and their experience and regimes of practice, through which humans can “ethicalize” and “agent-ize” themselves in particular ways...through their associations with various devices, techniques, persons and objects’ (1996:173). The concept is useful for exploring some of the processes through which new identities are forged within discourses of diversity and equality and what has been called ‘equal opportunities’, that is the techniques of production. Whilst the focus on the dynamics of the processes is particularly apposite for my project I wish to emphasize the points of resistance as well as failure in what Rose calls the regimes of subjectification, which, in spite of his protests to the contrary (ibid: 200), seem more akin to the Frankfurt School suppression of agency. However, as Stuart Hall has argued in relation to Foucault’s notion of subjectification upon which Rose draws, such an approach had the advantage of drawing attention to the specific historical and institutional sites at which identities are formed (Hall, 1996). My use of the ‘practical rationalities’ focuses on the specificities of discursive practices and formations.

<sup>iii</sup> The websites selected were Arsenal, Aston Villa, Birmingham City, Charlton Athletic, Manchester United and West Bromwich Albion from the Premiership; Derby County, Leicester City, Nottingham Forest and Sheffield United from the Championship; Sheffield Wednesday from League One; Cambridge United from League Two. My project revolves around Sheffield and Birmingham.. As a comparison, there are two rich clubs from the top of the Premiership, both located in areas of considerable diversity); a cluster of clubs around the West Midlands, providing interesting comparative material for the study of Aston Villa; a group of clubs from the East Midlands, which not only provides a comparison to the West Midlands but also, along with the inclusion of Sheffield United , with particularly strong links with *Kick It Out*, through *Football Unites, Racism Divides*, provides material on clubs from the Championship. Leicester City is particularly interesting in this context given the ethnic makeup of the town. Added to this are Charlton Athletic, whose work in the community has stood as a benchmark for other clubs for many years and was highlighted at the Home office Runnymede Trust Conference Cohesion, Diversity, Equality launching new government Diversity initiatives (2005) and Cambridge United, which also stand as representatives of small clubs in general and League Two in particular.

<sup>iv</sup> C.R.E. data from the Welch et al, 2004, Racial Equality in Football Survey indicate that for the 19 out of 20 Premiership clubs that responded black and ethnic minorities accounted for  
2% management staff  
4% of admission staff  
6% of coaching staff  
20% of ‘other’ staff  
Women are concentrated in the clerical and administrative posts and some women work as stewards

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