

"The fans' complot": soccer and masculine performance in bars

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ABSTRACT

This paper issues some topics of the social interaction occurrent in bars where football matches are transmitted, particularly aspects of gender performance. The data analysed refer to an ethnographic fieldwork being held since the beginning of 2004 in bars of the Greater Porto Alegre area, in Brazil. Three performatic modalities are discussed: the presence on the setting as performance, verbal challenges between the participants and joking dramatizations. I consider that these elements – among others – reveal part of the complex field of meanings related to masculinity in Brazilian society, being a constitutive part of the phenomenon that I call "football joking relationships".

Keywords: football (soccer), gender, masculinity, performance.

Since the early 1980's, with the publication of the now classic *Universo do Futebol*, a collection of articles organized by Roberto da Matta (1982), the complex world of soccer has become part of the thematic repertoire of Brazilian Anthropology, overcoming decades of being tagged as "the opium of the people", which had summarily resolved the problem of this sport and its appropriation by Brazilian culture in the Social Sciences. More than 20 years later, the universe of soccer is still proving to be a fertile field of possibilities for research on contemporary Brazilian culture, as can be seen from the volume of publications on the subject in different fields of knowledge.¹

In this article, I've proposed discussing a few elements of masculine performance typical of a situation in the field where I have been doing research since early 2004, in a project called *Electronic Bleachers: Sociability, Reception and Gender in Mediatized Soccer*, as part of the Graduate Studies Program in Applied Social Sciences in the University of Vale do Rio dos Sinos, financially supported by Fapergs. This research, briefly, is an ethnographic investigation using bars that show televised soccer games, seeking to interpret the logic regarding collectively sharing access to the same media product – the soccer game – in these primarily masculine environments.

After briefly revising soccer, sociability and gender-based performance in Brazil, as well as making a few methodological considerations, I've presented three recurring aspects of performance in the context researched: presence in the setting as performance, verbal provocations among participants and the joking theatricalization which occurs in these settings, by framing these aspects in the more all-encompassing phenomenon which I've called "joking soccer relationships".

Soccer, sociability and masculine performance in Brazil

Sociability derives from the German Philosopher and Sociologist, Georg Simmel, who defined this term as "a leisure form of association" (Simmel, 1983, p. 168). According to Simmel, sociability is a form of interaction in which participants are simultaneously interested and uninvolved, whose acts become autonomous so as to avoid any sort of demonstration of objective interest in the subjects being discussed – typical party conversations would be a good example. As such, one may compare Simmel's notion of sociability to Huizinga's definition of "game" (1971, p. 33):

[...] a game is a voluntary activity or occupation, held out within certain determined limits of time and space, following rules freely agreed upon, yet absolutely obligatory, endowed with their own proper finalities, accompanied by feelings of tension and joy and a consciousness of their being different from "everyday life".

Evidently, these two notions aren't equivalent in greater detail, but, by keeping differences in mind, a parallel between them permits us to think of sociability as a kind of "game of social life", a moment of leisure (it's good to remember the etymology of this term, derived from the Latin *ludus*, "game"), pleasure, distinct from "serious" things in daily life, a fragile refuge from the hardships of work, economy and politics. I don't intend to debate here whether or not sociability may be subsumed to the notion of game or vice-versa. What matters is underlining how these phenomena fit in with each other in establishing daily life within the "finite field of meaning" (Schutz, 1962) that they stipulate. The specific phenomenon I wish to explore here regards a complex combination between media, game, sociability and performance: established sociability around the collective consumption of soccer games and the facts of the game as a framework for everyday social interaction, manifested in performances within the places where the research was done.

Judging by the characteristics of this modality of interaction – at least in the Brazilian case –; a new term may be ascribed to this problematic: the role of masculine gender. Even though there has been a notable growth in feminine participation in the world of soccer in the last few years (not only in media-based audiences and stadiums, but even in the soccer field itself, with the international success conquered by the women's Team Brazil), soccer in Brazil is still hegemonic masculine territory.

Traditionally, participating in games, competitions and challenges is a characteristic trace of masculine roles in many different cultures. From tribal groups around the world to rural groups and our own modern urban society, the greater part of meanings articulated around "being a man" are related to accepting provocations and challenges put forth by other men.² Eventually, these challenges take on the form of direct provocations offending one's honor, in which case recurring to public agonistic action becomes necessary. At other times, reacting to such challenges or provocations is demanded at a more symbolic level, such as verbal responses, irony, sarcasm, offenses or acid replies, i.e., "having the last word". The phenomenon that I would like to analyze here regards a special type of performance, whether in attitude, challenge, or theatricalization, in which the rule is maintaining a sense of humor,

even – and especially – when one loses, patiently supporting opponents' teasing or, better yet, making a comeback with an acid or humorous response. This markedly masculine sociability deals with what Carmen Rial has denominated as "homosociability" (personal communication, on December 27, 1995), a leisure form of interaction between participants of the same sex, in this case, men. Sociability between men may sometimes grow into rather aggressive forms of interaction – which navigate within the straight limits of what may be called "playing around", in the modality of interaction that Radcliffe-Brown (1959) called "joking relationships",³ defined as

[...] a peculiar combination of friendship and antagonism. This behavior is such that in any other social context it would express and generate hostility; but this attitude is not serious and shouldn't be taken seriously. There are hostile intentions as well as real friendship. In other words, it's a relationship of consented disrespect. (Radcliffe-Brown, 1959, p. 91, my translation).

Interaction regulated by the mediation of a sports event serves notably for this kind of competitive sociability – which may be called a "joking soccer relationship", in which the interminable "teasing" or "making fun of" between *gremistas* and *colorados*, *cruzeirenses* and *atleticanos*, *flamenguistas*, *pós-de-arroz* and *vascainos* is a good example. Frequently the joking relationship takes on a theatrical and performatic form, publicly and humorously manifesting how participants align themselves to the situation. In one of the bars where I did research, during the final game of the gaúcho championship in 2004, between the *Internacional* and *Ulbra* teams, the thresholds of sociability became quite clear: one *gremista* fan, a man around 60 years old, surrounded by *colorados*, openly picked on almost 30 fans of the opposing team that were sitting around him when the *Ulbra* team scored the first goal. The *Internacional* tied, and, as the score chart changed, another older man – a *colorado* fan – sitting in front of him, lifted up his chair by the back and threatened to bang it into the *gremista* – with an unmistakable grin. The waiter reprimanded him and the fan replied by saying: "Take it easy, I'm only kidding around!" And actually, right as the referee gave the final whistle, which made *Internacional* champion, the same man who had branded the chair congratulated his opponent and, smiling and patting each other on the back, the two opponents bade each other good evening – just like in Radcliffe-Brown, countering pretensions of hostility with friendship.

In terms of interaction, Brazilian masculine sociability is anchored in the theme of sports. Ask any man what his team is and you may find yourself in an interminable conversation, without ever running the risk of being indiscreet or causing embarrassment, since – as passionate as fans may be – nothing that affects their *selves* is being called into question. This theme, involving, yet without being compromising, may be allied to the constant flux of information coming from sports editorials and themes and, thus, we have the perfect topic for masculine sociability in Brazil. As an example, one may be reminded of the real-life "soap operas" involving rumors about buying and selling players, clinical reports on athletes' recovery from injury, and speculation about results and charts published everyday in newspapers throughout the country: "sports gossip", against which Umberto Eco (1984) cried out in vain, is the raw material of masculine social interactivity all over the country.

Hence, masculine performances occurring in the environments chosen for research are an everyday interaction manifesting deep aspects of masculine culture in Brazil, making evident a symbolic logic of belonging and exclusion that, mediated by soccer, resolves tensions in a joking fashion, which in extreme cases, could lead to physical confrontation and violence. Obviously, fights do break out among fans, even though I personally believe that these are more the exception than the rule. Here, one should keep in mind the role of the press which tends to overwrite "media-based speculation" on fan wars, news that sells much better than daily inconsequential teasing, "being a good sport", more frequent, but less noteworthy. In the

four settings researched, in over a year of fieldwork, I didn't register any fights, except for one confrontation between fans (casually, from the same fan club) which, in the participants' words, "beat on their chests", in a conflict dissolved by other participants before breaking out into open physical violence. Informants' depositions made it clear that "being a good sport" about opponents' teasing is a necessary condition for participating in the game.

Eventually, the stadium environment and surrounding areas, with thousands of fans separated physically into two antagonistic groups – with added tension occurring from the presence of organized fan groups⁴ and their reputations –, might offer conditions for symbolic and physical violence to emerge in a more accentuated way in the bars, where a fan from the other team is often sitting at a table right next to his opponent, and where personal relations with the commercial establishment⁵ modulate this violence by favoring its expression through teasing, irony and kidding around; basically manifestations of the same kind of tensions, but preferably *sub specie ludi*.

On method

This research, the partial results of which make up this text, began in March, 2004, and deals with the reception of media-based soccer in public places, especially bars in greater metropolitan Porto Alegre. The group is made up of a coordinator and three research assistants. Since April, 2004, each member has been engaged in ethnographic fieldwork, each member working in a bar – always the same person for each participant. Initially, contact with the field situation basically consisted of participant observation and creating an ethnographical field diary, interviews being held later on with participants in the situation. The group gets together weekly to exchange reports and collectively discuss their ethnographic experiences. Thus, isolating one aspect – the structuring nature of a similar field situation, although taking place in distinct settings – makes it possible to amplify considerably the field of interpretative possibilities of the phenomenon analyzed, whose objective is to deal with a traditional dilemma in ethnographical technique: the difficulties of comparing situations in distinct fields, since each situation is unique in its specificities, but may be thought of as part of a more general phenomenon.⁶ In order to amplify the way that each situation in a specific field is read, the members of the research group also go into each others' fields, so as to facilitate reading the others' reports and deepen their own comprehension of the phenomenon analyzed as a general category. Evidently, the nature of the phenomenon researched facilitates exchanging these experiences. One of the main problems faced by any ethnographer – negotiating his or her entrance into the field situation as a participant observer⁷ – had already been resolved: since televised soccer games in bars are a public event, there are no barriers to the researchers participating, no "social role" to be negotiated, no "password" to be conquered, thanks to the fluidity of the situation and the relative lack of distinction between the participants permits pretty much unrestricted access. If there is any sort of Password, this would be the tactical "obligation" of ordering a drink as soon as one occupies a table.

A similar problem must also be dealt with by researching media reception in the domestic milieu, since the researchers often find themselves faced with the dilemma of destroying the naturalness of the situation researched by their very presence in this milieu, having to work hard to gain access and the trust of those being researched, or possibly having to opt for creating an artificial situation of "experiment", exposing people to media products in external environments to those where the reception would naturally occur, a procedure that, in Harold Garfinkel's words (1967), "loses the phenomenon", since the situation being dealt with is no longer a naturally occurring situation, but an artificial one, *sui generis*, and, being subject to

the researcher's control – who decides what, to whom, when, and how many times to vehicle – doesn't say much about the world of life in which the media-based reception is part.

Masculine Performance in bars: three modalities

The "finite field of meaning" brought forth by transmitting a soccer game in a bar environment is a phenomenon lasting around two hours. Shortly before the game starts, there are usually only a few regulars in the bars, and many empty tables. As the start of the game approaches, the fans started arriving; the height of the public is around the middle of the first period, and this public remains stable until the end of the game. The number of fans varies from a minimum of 40 to more than one hundred when there are important games. The dynamics of organizing space also change during the game. Normally, people are spatially organized in the bar around the tables. Each group of table, chairs and persons composes a minimal interactional unit in this context, which, conserving the relative autonomy of the other tables, puts together people who already know each other, and who talk among themselves, looking at each other around each table, making it possible to categorize the standard behavior in the bar in general as "unfocused interaction" (Goffman, 1963), i.e., when people are physically close in a given environment but not aligned in the same situation, but in many different co-occurring mini situations. During the game, this spatial organizational logic is altered; the fans all face the television screen (causing many fans to turn their backs toward the tables, which become mere "coasters"), establishing a "cone" whose vertices is occupied by the TV, configuring a "focused interaction" in the environment, i.e., in which different participants immediately present among each other collectively align themselves in the same situation. This new organization of space also changes the organization of the conversations. If within the original arrangement, sound in the bar is composed of indistinct voices – the sum of conversations at the tables –, during the game one may clearly hear the sound of the television, and, despite persisting lateral conversations, a particular form of enunciation becomes evident: loudly spoken sentences, directed towards the bar, for everyone to hear, without looking at interlocutors, generally about facts occurring in the game – impediments, offsides, faults, goals, etc. – or an image shown during the transmission of the event, or its narration.⁸ Thus, in this context of media-based images, fans, games, irony, provocations and challenges, I've called attention to three aspects of the intense performances shown in the environment: one's very presence in this setting as an attitude, verbal provocations and joking theatricalizing.

Presence as performance

Being in the setting, all of the participants are automatically ascribed to a same category – fan – organized in two opposing groups: *gremistas* or *colorados*.⁹ Many of the fans manifest their belonging with clothes and accessories – generally team t-shirts, but also caps, rain jackets as well as other items. Among the others, normally dressed, it's possible to establish their alignment by simply observing their corporal performance relative to the facts of the game. Since it is a tactical rule that "he who is not a *gremista* is a *colorado*", and vice-versa, all fans align themselves invariably with regards to an "other" or better yet, "against" the other. One roots for his own team as much as – if not even more – against the rival team. It doesn't matter much who is playing, each game is interpreted by the codes of local sports rivalries and quickly one may discover who is on whose side.¹⁰ Thus, there is a constant monitoring of the situation among participants aimed at identifying each fan with a team. Many times I was approached by other fans, sitting nearby, to verify this alignment directly, in a low voice: "Are you *colorado*?" By hearing a positive response, a dialogue about the game starts, this time in a much higher tone of voice: "Gee, what about our team, uh?" With a little patience, attentively observing the reactions of those present to the facts of the game – goals, penalties,

offsides, good plays, etc. – one may rapidly map out fans' alliances in the situation. When any team misses a goal- each person's alliance is instantly revealed.

Thus, being in the bar means being considered a fan, and the fans are *gremistas* or *colorados*. Being a fan means being subjected to the facts of the game, placing oneself personally at stake. In the bar, no one escapes unscathed from taking a goal, since opponents' teasing is instantaneous and faultless – even if one's own team isn't playing, there are always adversary fans – “dryers” – ready to hit. As soon as they are identified, fans may always be targeted for teasing on another day, when the results of the game go against them, in a kind of logic of implacable reciprocity. In other words, by merely being present in the “fan complot” – term used by an informant to define the atmosphere in the bar – implies risk, the risk of being verbally hit on, a risk that has nothing to do with the fans, per say, but the chance happenings of the soccer ball and the feet kicking it. The risk of being made fun of is proportional to the pleasure of making fun of someone else, the taste of getting even from ancestral teasing, whether from games and championships that took place years ago or just last week, a logic of identifying that is constructed in opposition to another and for loyalty to a club, whatever might be the results of the game. It's the logic of the game.

The value attributed to attitudes implied in the mere presence in this environment of risk became evident a short while ago, when Porto Alegre's *Internacional* disputed the final game of the gaúcho championship of 2005 against the *15 de Novembro* team from the city of Campo Bom. The game was very tense and highly disputed: after six minutes of overtime, the championship award changed hands four times, ending up finally with the *Internacional's* victory. After the game had ended and the fans left the bar, a car with three young men on a street in front of the bar passed by honking its horn and waving an *Inter* t-shirt. A *Colorado* fan that had been in the bar during the whole game commented out loud for everyone to hear: "You were all inside your homes afraid, now that it's over, come on out, you sons of bitches!" Here, a hierarchy among fans from the same team is manifested, in which the non-presence in the setting is denounced as a sign of "fear", emphasizing the "courage" of those who had exposed themselves to risk,¹¹ as well as the dichotomy between "home" – a sheltered, feminine place within this logic – and "street", understood as a public arena, where risks are taken, a man's place in a masculine logic.

Verbal provocations

As has already been remarked upon, the bar environment during a game is the stage for a peculiar modality of enunciation, which I call "speaking for all to hear". During a game, this modality of verbal interaction gains emphasis, as much because of the high tone of voice with which the sentences – short and cutting – are proffered, as by the sense of humor used to pronounce them, as well as their ties to the images and definitions of the situation proposed by the TV transmission. Most of the time, these commentaries are about the actual facts of the game in themselves. However, as many studies have shown,¹² a televised broadcast of a game is not exactly the same thing as a game: it's a media presentation, with its own rules and narrative codifications, which include broadcasting images, angles, replays and details not directly related to the game, to which fans react, depending on the situation. In the same way, the locution, even though it tries to be "journalistically faithful" to the facts of the game, is, itself, colored by the narrative conventions of its vehicle – radio or TV – manifesting a definition of the situation proposed by the sportscaster rather than an unlikely and transparent proof – even though the broadcast discourse is proposed as such. Thus, "speaking for all to hear" is also a way of reacting to media discourse, in front of the dozens of fans present in the bar. Ordinarily, these enunciations are satirical in intent, sharply ironic, and sometimes make the bar – whether the fans be companions or adversaries – laugh. In the last game of the 2005 gaúcho championship, *Internacional* won in overtime thanks to two goals by Souza, a player denigrated by fans, a midfielder who, until then, had only scored one goal and hadn't even

participated on the main team. During the commemoration of the second – and unexpected – goal, the fans cried out in chorus: "hey, hey, hey, Souza is the team!" being ironic with the whole disbelief generated from the unexpected situation.

As an example of this modality of interaction regarding transmitted images, I would like to call attention to the invariable corrections made by fans directed towards the *Internacional* coach at that time, the *carioca* (from the city of Rio de Janeiro) Joel Santana, who, whenever he appeared sporadically in the televised game, was subjected to a series of joking interpellations, all of which alluded to his supposed drinking problems: "There you go, boozier!" or "Say something, Bob the sponge!" In this case, the motto of the satire referred to the coach's losing control of himself for being an alcoholic. Since autonomy is an important value in this logic of masculine identity, continual drinking is a challenge in itself, being able to "guarantee oneself", and not depending on anyone. In this perspective, a drunkard, who depends on someone to take him home, is discredited as being apt to play a masculine role. Another motive for teasing was the ex *Gremio* goalie, Danrlei, then a reserve player on the Minas Gerais state *Atlético* team, who appeared in a quick glance in the bleachers, bringing forth public comment: "Look at the faggot... Too bad that we can't throw a radio at him from here!" Here, another perpetual motto of this modality of masculine sociability is made evident: disqualifying an other under the "accusation" of homosexuality, reiterating this aspect of constructing masculine identity, as denounced by Chodorow (1979) as being "repressive and devaluating femininity", that, by attributing "feminine" attitudes to a man, disqualifying him before other men, in what is called "homophobia".

Frequently, this kind of verbal action, as a way of provoking the opposing team's fans – uttered for all to hear – occasions a reply in the same tone of voice, instant and cutting, configuring an interactional modality of "verbal provocation". Interaction among participants in these cases takes the form of "adjacent pair" (to use a term from Conversation Analyses), in which teasing provokes an instant reply from a participant on the opposite side, who accepts the provocation and throws it back, in the form of a reply. As an example, one might refer to the game in which *Grêmio* entered the field, and a *gremista* spoke for all to hear: "Here comes the bi-champion of America!" The retort came immediately: "Here come the big seconders!" The ironic rehash alludes to *Grêmio* having been recently lowered to the second division of the Brazilian championship, while, on the other hand, the *gremista* was alluding to all the great awards won throughout the team's history: different predicates articulated around the same category, manipulated like darts. In the same fashion, public criticism from a *gremista* on the wont efforts of one of the team's players – "For heaven's sake, take this man off the field!!!" – was instantly juxtaposed to the snubbing appeal of his rival, using an election campaign-like tone of voice: "Stay on the field, Marcelinho!"

On another occasion, a boy came into the bar with a red flag without any symbol on it, only the red color. A fan asked: "What's this, the Landless Poor Movement?" The boy replied: "Better the Landless Poor Movement than the Teamless, who use a blue flag!!!" Sometimes, one must wait for the right moment to "get back" at a sarcastic remark. In one of the bars frequented for the research, there are two televisions, one for the *Inter* game and another for *Grêmio*; after a serious fault against a *Grêmio* player, a fan exclaimed: "He has to be kicked out of the game" The reply came instantly: "Are you crazy, he didn't even break his leg! Soccer is a man's sport..." Minutes later, on the other television, an equally serious fault was committed against an *Inter* player. The same fan who had previously replied cried out: "Give him a red card!" from which sprang the inevitable comeback from the first disgruntled fan: "Huh, didn't you say that soccer is a man's sport?"

Joking theatricalization

Sometimes, the mocking performance goes beyond the limits of speech, of spirited tirade or verbal provocation. In these cases, teams' fans prepare and train ahead of time outright humorous performances, which even make their opponents laugh, whether by using double entendres previously prepared or physical adornments to be shown to the public with joking objectives; the same interactional motto of verbal provocation, but demonstrating greater care in its elaboration and an evident intentionality in investing in the promotion of joking relationships, such as spitefully placing a table fan in front of the TV in order to "dry out" the adversary's decisive game.

The day that *Grêmio* played against *Brasil*, a team from the city of Pelotas, *Grêmio* was winning by 1 to 0, when *Brasil* scored a tie. A *colorado* fan stood up, showed off his profile in a meaningful position, put his hand on his heart and started singing with all his lung force: "I love you, my *Brasil*, I love you, my heart is green, yellow and indigo anile!" The play on words of a popular propaganda piece of the military dictatorship in the early 1970's was surprising and funny, and brought forth no other reply than crying laughs from the whole bar.

During the final game of the gaúcho championship of 2005, between *Inter* and *15 de Novembro* team, the bar manager – *gremista*, since in the bar no one escapes being categorized by team – brought a thick very melted candle which he showed off to the whole bar, saying that it was there to do "voodoo for *Inter*". He took the candle to a highchair in the corner of the bar and lit it up. Shortly afterwards, the *colorado* goalie fractured his arm and left the field in an ambulance. The manager looked around with a mocking air, capturing the fans' looks, and then looked at the candle and waved his fingers of both hands with his arms extended towards the candle, a witch's gesture. Without the goalkeeper, *Inter* took a goal, leaving the score 1 to 0. After tying, the game went into overtime and a *gremista* fan said: "It's the candle" A *colorado* fan snooped up to the candle and blew it out. The manager feigned indignation, and lit the candle again. At the end of the game, he blew out the candle, telling everyone that he would "save it for overtime". During overtime, with the result of the championship coming out in the last few minutes, the manager blamed the candle, saying that it had melted away before the game ended. A year before, at the end of the 2004 gaúcho championship, a *colorado* fan had brought a banner in which one could read: "I already knew so!" However, the game started with *Inter* losing 1 to 0 to *Ulbra*, at which point the fan held up his banner towards the bar, lowering his head and exclaiming "Opa!" pretending to have been mistaken. At the end of the game, though, with his team's victory, the banner could serve its "function". When the manager went over to compliment him for the championship, the fan took him by the neck, simulating a strangling, and passed a closed fist over his head, shaking him up in feigned hostility, from which they both separated laughing.

Conclusion

The symbolic universe of soccer in Brazilian culture manifests itself as a territory for expressing important aspects of this culture, sometimes constituting a kind of "total social fact" in our society.¹³ Ethnographical research on the context of collective reception of soccer games in bars, in this way, demonstrates, through participants' performances in the situation, profound aspects of a masculine *ethos* in Brazil. Willingness to take risks, considered a masculine social value, is manifested as giving value to one's mere presence in a situation, since by just being there one is automatically given a social role, as a fan, and a "side" in a system of mutual exclusion – *gremista* and anti *colorado* or *colorado* and anti *gremista*. From this tactical inscription of a place in the situation, "being there" implies taking risks, placing oneself in the game: making fun or being made fun of doesn't depend on the fans, but on the imponderable results of the game taking place in the field, which makes going to the bar an act of great uncertainty. As Goffman (1967) comments in his essay *Where the Action Is*, an

emotion attributed to a situation depends on how much is at stake. Reiterating this motive, is the notable frequency with which money is betted on the results of the game or events within the game, such as the result of a penalty kick, for example.

This masculine competitive logic also assumes the form of verbal provocations, another "game" within the game, joking soccer relationships in a pure state, in the public arena, in front of everyone. It's interesting to note that, for participants, pertaining to a club in this context is the only valid way of being defined in the situation, without creating threats to any of the participants' selves, except for an eventual extreme in which a given participant makes fun of his opponents: probably, when the scale is inverted in the game, he himself will be the preferred target. Yet, once again, it's as a "sick" *colorado* or *gremista* that he will be summoned, and not for any other personal attribute – that, if framed as an "affront" or "insult", would demand restoring threatened honor: physical violence.¹⁴

Thus, I feel it is important to call attention to the symbolic universe of soccer that goes way beyond the social facts that take place in the stadium, field and in the bleachers, yet spreads over the pages of the newspapers everyday, occupies hours of airtime and entire radio and television programs and – way beyond the 90 minutes of the game – manifests itself in everyday social interaction, in casual sociability that, allying an "other" – any other – to one of the "sides", offers the possibility of interaction, whether friendly or joking, making the hardness of "serious", professional, legal, or family relationships softer: a phenomenon that instigates and demands comprehension.

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1 Some good examples worth mentioning are Stigger (2002) in the area of Physical Education, Helal et al. (2001) in Communication, Mascarenhas (2001) in Geography, besides a vast and qualified production on soccer in Brazilian and Latin American Anthropology, such as Guedes (1998), Damo (2002), Alabarces (2000), Archetti (2003) and many others.

2 For a revision of this theme, see Gastaldo (1995, p. 117 ss).

3 In another classic article on this theme, *As Relações Jocosas de Parentesco*, Marcel Mauss (1979) is more dedicated to kinship in itself than to jocosity, even though he emphasizes the role that social relations play in making this institution more flexible.

4 On organized groups of fans and violence in the stadiums, see Pimenta (1997) and Toledo (1996).

5 Here, the rules of the "space", as described by Magnani (1986) are in effect: the personal and social cost of provoking a fight in the space are very high, and, just like in the bars where he did research, the blame for events of this sort is usually imputed on the "outsiders".

6 About the question of inferences in fieldwork, see Becker (1998).

7 For a good discussion on methodological difficulties in Ethnography, see Cardoso (1986).

8 About aspects of the narrative in sports locution, see Gastaldo (2000).

9 Evidently, in the ethnographic field in question. Nevertheless, except for Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo, where there are more than two large groups of fans, dual rivalry in soccer is the standard way of organizing relationships among fans and very widespread in Brazil. In this sense, see Damo (2002).

10 In mid 2004, Sao Paulo played against *Grêmio*: being one goal away from Sao Paulo, there was a huge commemoration among the *colorados*. When the sports commentator commented that Sao Paulo winning would be bad for *Inter* on the score chart, a fan shot back: "What's so bad? *Grêmio* can go fuck itself!", publicly reiterating the local rivalry – seen as being more important than the position of the actual team in the championship.

11 For Goffman (1967), "emotions" evoked by an event are directly related to the dimension of risk assumed. In the bars where the research was conducted, it's common to give emphasis in an argument by betting money, thus increasing the risk associated with each participant's position.

12 See, in this sense, Gastaldo (2000) and Rial (2003), for example.

13 For example, the Brazilian team in the World cup games. On this theme, see Gastaldo (2002).

14 Here, I reiterate that the combination of these elements of competitiveness, jocosity, absolute dualism and conflict flirt with the outbreak of violence, and that eventually these limits might actually be overcome. However, since there was no outbreak of violence in the four settings during more than a year of participant observation indicates that the international regulatory mechanisms permit participants to take risks and toy with this limit.

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