Away from Home: The Ethics of Hostile Affective Scaffolding

Abstract: During live sporting events, fans often create intense atmospheres in stadiums, expressing support for their own local players and discouragement for the opposition. Crowd hostility directed at opposition players surprisingly elicits contrasting reactions across different sports. Tennis players, for example, have reported that hostile crowds are hurtful and disrespectful, whereas footballers often praise and encourage such hostility. What explains this tension? Why are hostile atmospheres considered wrong for some athletes, and not for others? We argue that creating hostile atmospheres for opposition players functions as a form of hostile affective scaffolding, as it scaffolds affective states in such a way that harms the interests of the opposition athletes, while promoting the interests of fans. These hostile atmospheres wrong the scaffolded insofar they constitute a form of recognition disrespect, and to the extent that they violate the formal rules and conventional norms internal to the sporting practices. Although the focus is on the sporting context, our analysis reveals significant implications for a more nuanced understanding of what hostile scaffolding is, and how we should understand its normativity. The existing literature views hostile scaffolding as constituted by a setback to the overall interests of the scaffolded, and that the wrong-making feature of this scaffolding is necessarily explained by harm. Instead, we argue that hostile scaffolding should be understood as hostile relative to a set of interests that an agent has, not just their overall interests, and that the wrong-making features of hostile scaffolding are not limited to harms.

1. Introduction

The atmosphere during live sporting events is a key attraction for fans who attend sports games, with 78% of fans citing "general atmosphere" and "excitement" as the main reason for their enjoyment (GMR Marketing 2018). Many athletes report being inspired by the support of a crowd, but spectators also express discouragement for players they do not support. In some sports, athletes react negatively to this crowd hostility. For example, German tennis player Laura Siegemund criticised the audience at the 2023 U.S. Open for their hostility towards her, as they booed her repeatedly throughout the match to support the American player, Coco Gauff. As Siegemund describes, the audience "had no respect for the way I played. They have no respect for the player I am. They have no respect for tennis, for good tennis. This is something that I have to say hurts really bad. […] This kind of unfair, just respectless behaviour toward the non-American player, I have only experienced here on this court" (Walker-Roberts 2023). In the same year, Novak Djokovic accused British tennis fans at Wimbledon of "disrespect", because in his words "they were trying to annoy me the entire match"

(Reuters 2023). Djokovic also criticized the crowd at the French Open saying "there are people who love to boo every single thing you do. That's something that I find disrespectful" (France24 2023).

The negative reaction to hostile atmospheres during tennis matches stands in marked contrast to the positive attitudes towards hostile atmospheres during football games. Anfield Stadium, home to Liverpool Football Club, is said to have a unique atmosphere during matches due to the passionate singing and encouragement of the Liverpool supporters for their home team. This atmosphere is so powerful that it is often praised and admired by opposition players and managers, despite the atmosphere being intensely hostile towards them. Former Manchester City player, Micah Richards, has claimed that "[t]here's something about the atmosphere at Anfield, they just don't let you play your normal game" (Ladson 2024), and Manchester City manager, Pep Guardiola, claims that while playing at Anfield "[y]ou feel small and the rival players seem to be all over" (Sky Sports 2019). Similarly, former Newcastle United player Alan Shearer has claimed that "[w]hat they [the Liverpool fans] create there [at Anfield] is something very different, very unique. […] I know it's an old cliche but they really are like another man there, they're just unbelievable" (Ladson 2024). And finally, Johan Cruijff has described the "goosebumps" he experienced whilst playing against Liverpool that were not a response to the opposing team, "but because of the atmosphere" (Sear 2022).

Here we have a similar phenomenon—the creation of a hostile atmosphere for visiting athletes by the local sports fans—receiving very different reactions. In tennis, visiting players find this hostility disrespectful, reacting as if the crowd was doing something wrong. By contrast, opposition footballers appreciate the hostile atmosphere despite recognising the negative impact on their performance, indicating that the creation of a hostile atmosphere is positively valued and admired. What can explain the different reactions and attitudes towards this same phenomenon?

On the face of it, the question of whether it is wrong for fans to create a hostile atmosphere for opposition athletes may seem limited to those interested in the ethics of sports fandom (see for example Archer and Wojtowicz 2024; Kadlac 2022; Tarver 2017). However, we argue that the creation of hostile atmospheres is not an issue that is reserved for sporting contests and the philosophy of sport, but instead points to wider implications for the emerging discussion about hostile scaffolding within the literature on situated affectivity. In this literature, emotions, feelings, and other affective responses are considered not simply as mental processes, but rather as complex interactions between agents and their environments, with an environment being able to shape or manipulate an agent's affective states (Stephan and Walter 2020; Walter and Stephan 2023). A recent development within the debate is an examination of the ways in which features of our environment can scaffold affective responses that are harmful or counter to our interests (Archer 2024; Slaby 2016; Spurrett 2024; Timms & Spurrett 2023).

In what follows, we argue that creating a hostile atmosphere for an opposition team or player in a sports stadium functions as a form of hostile affective scaffolding for those athletes, as it scaffolds affective states in such a way that harms the interests of the opposition athletes, while promoting the interests of fans.

By taking the responses from the tennis and football players seriously, we provide an account that helps to justify why in some cases this hostile affective scaffolding is considered wrong, and not in others. We suggest that the creation of hostile atmospheres in sport stadiums wrongs the scaffolded insofar as they involve recognition disrespect, and to the extent that doing so violates the formal rules and conventional norms that are internal to particular sporting practices. While our focus is on the example of sporting contests, the discussion reveals significant implications for the concept and normativity of hostile scaffolding more generally. In the literature it is assumed that hostile scaffolding should be understood as constituted by a setback to the overall interests of the scaffolded, and that the wrong-making features of such scaffolding is explained by the arising harm. However, we argue that hostile scaffolding should be understood as hostile relative to a set of interests that an agent has, and not just to their overall interests, and that the wrong-making features of hostile scaffolding are not limited to harms.

We begin Section Two by making our case for why the creation of hostile atmospheres in sports stadiums constitutes a form of hostile affective scaffolding. In Section Three we consider the extent to which this hostile scaffolding wrongs the scaffolded insofar as it undermines their interests and constitutes a harm. However, we argue that appealing to harm does not plausibly capture why this particular form of hostile scaffolding is wrong, and so in Section Four we argue that the creation of hostile atmospheres in sporting stadiums wrongs the scaffolded as a form of recognition disrespect. To explain why some athletes consider hostile atmospheres as a wrong while others do not, in Section Five we suggest that the extent to which the hostile scaffolding constitutes a wrong depends on the formal rules and conventional norms involved in the practice of the relevant sport. Before we conclude, in Section Six we outline three important implications that our account generates for conceptualising hostile scaffolding beyond the sporting examples we use in this paper, and respond to one objection that could be raised against our argument.

It is worth briefly mentioning how we understand the concept of 'atmospheres' in our argument. It is not our aim to engage in a detailed investigation of the nature of atmospheres as affective phenomena,[1] although in the conclusion we will outline why doing so may offer value to a more general account of hostile affective scaffolding. For our purposes, it is enough to understand affective atmospheres as an affective tone that is present in a particular space (Böhme 2017) or in a particular group of people (Osler 2021). In the sporting examples we use throughout the discussion, the atmospheres exist among particular people (the spectators and fans) in particular spaces (sports stadiums). These atmospheres are created by the expressive interactions of both the spectators and fans with each other, with the athletes and with the space they are in.[2] The creation of

[1] For detailed discussions of the nature of (affective) atmospheres see Anderson (2009), Griffero (2010), Riedell (2019), and Osler (2021). For a discussion of the creation of atmospheres specifically in football stadiums, see Edensor (2015).

[2] In this paper we focus on cases where spectators intend to create a hostile atmosphere. It is worth noting, though, that hostile atmospheres may also arise unintentionally, for instance fans may create a hostile

an atmosphere arises out of these affective interactions and have an impact on the affective states of those present, including the competitors. This does not mean though, that everyone present necessarily shares in the affective tone of the atmosphere they are witnessing or experiencing (Osler and Szanto 2021).

2. Hostile Scaffolding and Fan Atmospheres

A key contribution of the philosophical work on situated affectivity is the detailed examination of the ways in which people scaffold their environments to manage their affective lives. The majority of this work has focused on the way features of the environment are used to promote certain affective experiences (Colombetti and Krueger 2015; Maiese and Hanna 2019; Coninx and Stephan 2021). For example, one might draw on material resources to bring about certain affective states, such as wearing a colourful outfit to feel lively and happy, or wearing loose clothing with the aim of feeling comfortable, relaxed and at ease (Colombetti and Krueger 2015: 1163). Music can also be used to scaffold moods and emotions (Krueger 2014). Lively, upbeat music might put us in a fun and happy mood in preparation for a night out with friends, while calm and gentle music can help people feel relaxed at the end of a working day. Other people can also be used as affective scaffolds; we might make a special effort to see our fun and upbeat friend when we need to be cheered up, but seek out our kind, empathetic friend when we need to feel soothed in times of stress (Colombetti and Krueger 2015).

In these examples, people use and change their environments in an attempt to bring about affective states that they desire, and that they expect will promote or enhance their interests. However, our environments might also feature affective scaffolding that goes against our desires and does not promote our interests. Jan Slaby (2016), for instance, refers to cases of 'mind invasion', in which the environment is designed in ways that go against the interests of those whose affective states are scaffolded. Slaby claims that the corporate workplace is a paradigm example of mind invasion, making use of and "enabled by technology and other material arrangements" (such as the use of email, advanced performance metrics, and tracking technology) that shapes and influences the affective states of workers (Ibid., 2, 10).[3] Crucially, the affective states that are brought about by these technologies promote the overall interests of the corporation (increasing work productivity) rather than its workers, which Slaby claims is exploitative.

Ryan Timms and David Spurrett (2023) develop the concept of 'hostile scaffolding' to refer to external features of the environment that scaffold an agent (the scaffolded) in ways that undermine their interests and instead promote the interests of another agent who has introduced the scaffold into the environment (the

atmosphere simply by cheering for their team, without meaning to make things more difficult for their opponents. This possibility raises additional complications that we do not have the space to explore here but would benefit from further research in the future. We are grateful to an anonymous referee for pushing us to consider this point.

[3] Slaby contrasts his concept of 'mind invasion' with what he calls the "the user-resource model" of situated affectivity, which examines the ways in which agents draw on external features of their environments to promote their own interests. See also Aagaard's critique of the "dogma of harmony" (2020: 165).

scaffolder). While Timms and Spurrett focus on hostile *cognitive* scaffolding, in later work Spurrett (2024) extends this to cases of hostile *affective scaffolding*. In the case of hostile affective scaffolding, it is affective states broadly understood, such as emotions and moods, that are being scaffolded in ways that promote the interests of the scaffolder and undermine the interests of the scaffolded. For instance, Spurrett (2024: 830) argues that cigarettes are an affective technology that scaffold positive affective states in users but, due to their negative health effects, do so in ways that undermine the overall long-term interests of the smoker (the scaffolded) and promotes the interests of the tobacco manufacturer (the scaffolder).[4] We understand 'overall interests' here to refer to the interests of the scaffolded once all relevant factors have been taken into account. While some hostile scaffolding may serve some immediate interests a person has (like satisfying a desire to smoke), they undermine their overall interests because the long-term negative health impacts significantly outweigh the short-term benefits of satisfying this desire.

As Spurrett and Timms (2023: 57) make clear, whether or not a scaffold counts as hostile is "not an all or nothing property of the external structure", and so depends on the particular agent and the way they engage with and relate to their environment. As a result, there are instances of affective scaffolding that function in such a way as to support the interests of some and undermine the interests of others. For instance, a statue celebrating a Confederate General in the Southern United States may scaffold positive experiences of belonging among (some) White Americans, while scaffolding feelings of fear, anxiety, or alienation among Black Americans (Archer 2024). Similarly, a transport organization may play classical music at subway stations with the aim of discouraging young people from gathering there. This music may provide a positive form of scaffolding for the affective experiences of older commuters, while undermining the interests of younger people by taking away an attractive and safe place to gather (Osler et al. forthcoming). These cases show that hostile scaffolding may not be hostile for all groups whose affective states are being scaffolded. Yet, insofar as the interests of the scaffolder are promoted at the expense of the interests of some of those whose affective states are being scaffolded, then this counts as an instance of hostile affective scaffolding for those whose interests are undermined.

We can now explain why the atmospheres that fans create in a sporting stadium constitute a form of hostile affective scaffolding. By booing the German tennis player Laura Siegemund, the American crowd at the U.S. Open aimed to make her feel uneasy in ways that would undermine her performance and so increase the chances of American player winning the match. Similarly, the fans at Anfield create an atmosphere that aims to make Liverpool players feel energized, at home, and confident, while at the same time making opposition players feel small, overwhelmed, and scared. In both cases, the aim of the crowd is to create an environment in which opposition players experience affective states that undermine their performance, while the home players experience affective states that enhance their performance. These affective states are counter to the interests of

[4] For a discussion on the concept of affective technologies, see Piredda (2020) and Heersmink (2021).

the opposition players (the scaffolded) whilst promoting the interests of fans doing the scaffolding, by making it more likely that their favoured team or player will win the match. This, then, counts as a form of hostile affective scaffolding for the opposition players.

It is not only anecdotal evidence that supports the idea that fans in stadiums can have an impact on the performance of both their team and the opposition. A study of the impact of social pressure from sports supporters in five major European football leagues found that the presence of home-supporters at games significantly improves the home-teams' chance of winning (Scoppa 2021). Teams playing at home were shown to have an advantage over away teams, and this home-advantage is almost twice as big when the home supporters are in the stadium. This suggests that attempts by home fans to make their team feel comfortable and energized, and to make the away team feel uncomfortable, do impact on the performance of both teams.

While fans in both the tennis and football examples engage in hostile affective scaffolding, the responses to this scaffolding differ. In tennis, the opposition players claim the scaffolding is wrong and disrespectful, while football teams praise it. Given that hostile scaffolding is characterised as a negative phenomenon, the positive reaction from footballers raises an interesting puzzle about the normativity of hostile scaffolding.

3. Hostile Atmospheres and Harm

To what extent does hostile affective scaffolding wrong the scaffolded? One answer is that hostile scaffolding is wrong because it is harmful. Although the normativity of hostile scaffolding is not addressed directly in the current literature, its harmfulness is built into the definition of the concept on most accounts. The concept of hostile scaffolding developed by Timms and Spurrett (2023) and Spurrett (2024) rests on a technical understanding of 'hostility' given by Kim Sterelny (2003) in his evolutionary account of 'informational hostility'. This technical understanding of hostility refers to changes in the environment that serve the interests of the agent making the change, at the expense of another agent's interests. This does not imply intent to harm from the scaffolder, and any harm arising for the scaffolded may be a by-product of the change in environment (Spurrett 2024: 826). However, the cases that are used when exemplifying the concept of hostile affective scaffolding pick out instances in which the interests of those being scaffolded are intentionally undermined by the scaffolder. By definition, then, hostile affective scaffolding involves harm to the scaffolded, as it undermines of their interests. In fact, hostile scaffolding is just defined by Timms and Spurrett (2023: 54) as scaffolding that can have "harmful cognitive and affective consequences."

Importantly, both Timms and Spurrett (2023: 59-60) and Spurrett (2024: 823, 830) qualify that harm only arises when the *overall* interests of the scaffolded are undermined. For example, even though cigarette smokers report desire-satisfaction, the scaffolding used by cigarette manufacturers counts as harmful as their interests are promoted at the expense of smokers' overall interests. Similarly, even though the affective technologies used in gambling machines can positively serve the interests of recreational gamblers whose short-

term desires for fun and pleasure are satisfied, the overall interests of regular and addicted gamblers may be undermined in the service of the casino's interests.

Given that hostile affective scaffolding necessarily involves harm, this gives us good reason to think that someone who introduces a hostile scaffold wrongs those whose interests are undermined by being scaffolded. This suggests one argument as to why the creation of hostile atmospheres by fans at sporting stadiums may be wrong. If the overall interest of the opposition team or player is to win the match, and the affective scaffolding created by fans attempts to undermine this interest, negatively impacting on the opposition's performance, then the creation of this affective scaffold is wrong because it is harmful.

While this may seem like a logical move given the definition of hostile scaffolding, and seems to capture the wrongs involved in the gambling and cigarette examples used in the literature, it does not provide a persuasive explanation for the wrong involved in hostile fan atmospheres at sporting games. The inadequacy of the harm argument becomes clear when we remember that the wrongfulness of harm is defeasible. While harming others is *prima facie* wrong, there may be good reasons for why the undermining of someone's interests is not necessarily wrong in all cases. For example, giving a fine to a speeding car driver may harm the car driver but is fully justified by the fact that they have broken a legitimate law that is needed to keep people safe. Doing so does not violate the driver's rights and is an excusable harm given the context. This means that the harm caused by the creation of hostile atmospheres is only *prima facie* wrong, and the reasons here can be outweighed or defeated by other factors.

In many sporting contexts the harm involved in the creation of hostile atmospheres will be outweighed or defeated, meaning that harm is an implausible wrong-making feature. The interests that are being undermined in these cases are the interests that the opposition have in winning the match. Given that most sporting contests are games in which one team or player winning means that the other team or player loses, by default one team or player suffers a setback to their interests. By scoring a goal, for example, Liverpool harms the interests of the opposition by making it more difficult for them to win the match. If attempting to win causes harm to the opposition in this way, then anything a sports person or fan does in an attempt to win the match would stand in need of justification. It is very easy to find such a justification, namely, that this is part of a sporting contest that only makes sense as a competition if both sides are doing their best to win the match.

In general, the idea that scoring a goal requires normative justification because it harms the interests of the opponent is counterintuitive to the goals and ideals of competitive sports. Sporting competitors need no justification for actions they take within the rules to defeat their opponent, and this is just as much the case in football as it is in tennis. Of course, there may be exceptions. If an opponent has a medical emergency, for instance, and needs immediate attention then it may be morally required to come to their assistance rather than continuing to try to win the match. However, harming an opponent by frustrating their ability to win the match in ways permitted by the rules is not the kind of harm that should require justification and so is not even *prima facie* wrong. The same reasoning can be applied to the conduct of fans—whether it is wrong for fans to create

hostile atmospheres for players or teams depends on whether they do so in ways permitted by the rules of the sport. Official sporting institutions, for instance, have banned the use of racist slurs or propaganda during matches, as the harm to the players who these behaviours are directed towards is wrongful, as both inexcusable and as a violation of their rights. However, the ways in which fans create hostile affective scaffolding does not always involve these immoral behaviours. Booing opposition players, cheering home players, chanting club songs, for example, do not violate the rights of the scaffolded and seems plausibly excusable given the rules and competitive nature of the sport.

Although tennis players react negatively to hostile atmospheres, the reasons they give for these reactions are similarly not captured by appealing to harm. Instead, as quoted above, both Siegemund and Djokovic claim that fans were 'disrespectful' to them as players, and also in Siegemund's case, disrespectful to the game of tennis in general. In the next section, we argue that appealing to disrespect is more promising to capture the wronging involved in hostile affective scaffolding in the tennis case, and in a way that explains why in the football case the scaffolding is praised rather than bemoaned.

4. Hostile Atmospheres and Disrespect

A more plausible argument for why the creation of hostile atmospheres in sporting stadiums wrongs the scaffolded is that it is a form of disrespect. In this section we examine the most plausible version of this argument from disrespect, suggesting that it is best understood as referring to a violation of 'recognition respect' in relation to their roles as tennis players. As we will argue, this version of the argument also accommodates the footballers' seemingly puzzling positive responses to the hostile atmospheres during their games.

A useful starting point for analysing the most appropriate way to interpret the kind of disrespect that tennis players Siegemund and Djokovic refer to, is Stephen Darwall's distinction between 'recognition respect' and 'appraisal respect'. Recognition respect involves "giving appropriate consideration or recognition to some feature of the object in deliberating about what to do" (Darwall 1977: 38). When we have recognition respect for someone, we recognise some feature they possess and accept that the feature ought to factor into our deliberations about how to act towards them. For example, properly recognising someone as a rational agent may involve accepting that they are entitled to make their own life choices. This recognition places limits on how we can behave in relation to them, such as ruling out making important life decisions on their behalf. Recognition respect can also involve recognition for roles that people occupy. Respecting someone as a teacher, for example, involves accepting that they have special authority in the classroom, and have the right to decide when students are allowed to contribute to class discussions.

Appraisal respect, on the other hand, involves an appraisal of someone for the positive qualities that they possess (Darwall 1977: 39). For example, respecting a tennis player's talent is a form of appraisal respect, as this is a positive evaluation of their tennis ability. Appraisal respect, in contrast to recognition respect, does not necessarily involve any judgement about how one should behave towards the person being respected.

Respecting a tennis player's talent need not involve any judgements about how one should behave towards her. Of course, this appraisal may be accompanied by a desire to praise or applaud that person, but this would not be part of the respect itself, which according to Darwall, consists only of the positive appraisal.

Given this distinction, the wronging involved in creating hostile atmospheres in sports stadiums is not a lack of appraisal respect. First, appraisal respect does not involve a judgement of how one should behave towards the person being respected. This means that the behaviour of those booing cannot count as a violation of this kind of respect. Second, those creating a hostile atmosphere are generally not negatively evaluating the talents of those they are attempting to intimidate. In fact, it is when fans accept that their players are facing talented opponents that they are more likely to create an intimidating atmosphere. An opposition player who the crowd recognises as being talented and a threat to the chances of their home player winning, may receive more boos in an attempt to make them feel uneasy. If anything, then, a hostile atmosphere may signify appraisal respect rather than disrespect.

If hostile atmospheres are disrespectful, then the kind of disrespect involved is a lack of recognition respect. This would mean that in the creation of the hostile atmosphere, fans fail to give appropriate recognition to a certain feature of the opposition players in their deliberations about how to treat them. There are two parts to this argument: (i) the claim that the creation of hostile atmospheres is a form of treatment, on the basis of (ii) a certain feature of a person that is not being recognised appropriately. The first part of the argument is uncontroversial—hostile atmospheres created by fans during sports matches are a form of treatment towards the opposition players. The second part of the argument requires more attention, as it is not immediately obvious which feature of an athlete is not being appropriately recognised. If we take seriously the views of the footballers and tennis players as cited earlier, creating a hostile atmosphere at a sports match does not violate recognition respect for someone as a human being or a rational agent. If this were the case, then both footballers and tennis players would find the creation of hostile atmospheres as disrespectful. However, the fact that many opposition players and managers are appreciative of the hostile Anfield atmosphere, suggests that they do not find this disrespectful. Creating a hostile atmosphere in a sporting context appears to be disrespectful in some sporting contexts and not others, and so the feature that is being disrespected cannot be shared in all sporting contexts.

More plausibly, then, the form of recognition disrespect involved in the creation of hostile atmospheres is a lack of recognition in relation to the role of a particular kind of sportsperson or sports team. This provides a way of understanding why certain forms of scaffolding may be disrespectful in one sport but not another. To create a hostile atmosphere for a tennis player disrespects them in their role as a tennis player, while doing so for a footballer does not violate the recognition of the player in their role as a footballer. To justify this distinction, in the next section we argue that whether a hostile sporting atmosphere is disrespectful depends on the norms of the sport.

Note that the fact that someone is subject to recognition disrespect does not necessarily mean that they will have suffered a harm. Suffering this form of disrespect will often be harmful, as it may be humiliating or shameful and it may lead one to lose one's trust in others. However, there are at least two kinds of occasion where it may not be harmful. First, where the disrespected person remains completely ignorant of the disrespect. This will not always be harmless, as the disrespect may be witnessed by others who come to think less of the disrespected as a result. But it is at least an open question whether this disrespect would lead to harm and presumably there are some such cases in which they are not harmed as a result. Second, where the disrespected person benefits in some way from being disrespected. In a sporting context this may occur where a hostile atmosphere brings out the best in a tennis player and so they perform better as a result. Here we might say that although the player has been disrespected by the hostile atmosphere, they have not been harmed by it.

5. Hostile Atmospheres and Conventional Norms

In this section, we argue that the creation of a hostile atmosphere by sports fans is part of the conventional norms of some sports, but not others. This explains why hostile affective scaffolding is compatible with respecting athletes in football but not in tennis. Our starting point for this argument is the definition of sport given by Bernard Suits (1978). Suits argues that sport is a form of game involving physical skill. Games are activities that contain constitutive rules that determine the permissible moves that one can make within the game, and what counts as winning and losing. In tennis, for example, you score a point when you hit the ball using a tennis racket into the opponent's side of the court and they cannot return it into the boundaries of your side of the court. While in football, goals are generally scored by kicking or heading the ball into the opponent's goal.[5] These rules for scoring points are 'constitutive' because they are essential to the sport.

The constitutive rules of a game are accepted by the players, as these make the sport possible. For example, the distinctive physical challenges of football only exist because the outfield players are forbidden from using their hands to touch the ball. If all players could catch, punch, and throw the ball then the game would have a different set of physical challenges, and be considered a different sport (such as Gaelic Football). Suits argues that sports and other games require players to have the right kind of attitude towards these constitutive rules. A 'lusory attitude' is an attitude in which players gladly and voluntarily accept the constitutive rules and seek to comply with them, as this makes playing the sport possible. When players lack this attitude, Suits argues that they are not in fact playing the sport at all. For example, a racing cyclist who uses a secret motor attached to their bicycle would not count as taking part in the sport of cycling, regardless of whether

[5] Of course, these are not the only way to score points or goals in either sport. For example, in tennis, points can also be won by players who do not hit the ball at all, when their opponent commits a double fault in the service. In football, goals can also be scored when one's opponents puts the ball into their own net.

they are caught out. This is because they do not have a lusory attitude and are not acting in line with the sport's constitutive rules.[6]

In addition to constitutive rules, different sports also contain conventional norms and a distinctive ethos. As pointed out by Fred D'Agostino (1981: 15), in basketball, for example, the formal rules prohibit most forms of contact, but there are many forms of contact that are technically against the formal rules but that are not penalized during a game. This is because alongside the set of formal constitutive rules that determine what counts as playing basketball, there are a set of informal conventions governing how those rules should be applied. One of these implied conventional norms that is universal among all competitive sports is that the sporting contest should be a "mutual quest for excellence" (Simon *et al.* 2015: 43). The quest is mutual because competitors need to cooperate with each other to generate challenges that bring out the best performance and push each other to the limits of their abilities. This works, according to Simon *et al.* due to "an implicit social contract under which competitors accept the obligation to provide a challenge to opponents according to the rules of sport" (2015: 47). Conventional norms that govern how the formal rule of a sport are applied are often generated in relation to this quest for excellence, and goes some way to explain why some contact may be permitted in basketball, even though it is formally prohibited.

These accounts of the nature of sport provide the building blocks to explain why the creation of a hostile environment by sports fans is part of the conventional norms of some sports, but not others. Although these accounts focus on the way in which players abide by formal rules and informal norms, these can be extended to cover the way in which spectators are expected to behave in the stadium during a game. It is part of the conventions of some sports—tennis, golf, snooker, for example—that spectators are expected to be quiet while the action is taking place. In other sports—football, rugby, hockey, for example—as part of the sporting conventions spectators are permitted and even encouraged to shout and sing together while the game is being played.

There are several possible explanations as to why these diverging conventions may develop. One explanation appeals to the understanding of sport as involving a quest for excellence. Some sports require very high levels of concentration and fine motor skills, and so the norms governing spectator behaviours are developed to generate the appropriate environment to foster excellent performance and concentration (MacGregor 2004). An alternative explanation could appeal to the history of a particular sport. The norms involved in tennis, for example, might have developed as part of the middle- and upper-class norms of Victorian England where the modern form of the game developed, requiring behavioural restraint from players and spectators (Lake 2011). The more working-class history of association football may explain why these

[6] Though some intentional rule violations do seem compatible with continuing to play the game (Fraleigh 2003).

behavioural norms were not expected, and instead fostered the development of emotionally expressive fandom (Correia 2023).

Regardless of how the origins of these differing norms are explained, the norms governing fan behaviour in the sport of tennis are clearly different to those of football. As these spectator norms are part of the informal convention and distinctive ethos of each sport, they are constitutive of the mutual quest for excellence within the sport, to push and challenge athletes to perform at their best. This means that the challenges (or lack thereof) that these spectator norms present to athletes during a game is part of the distinctive set of skills and abilities that are being tested in each sport. In football, where fans are encouraged to create an atmosphere that is encouraging for their team and hostile for the opposition, the ability to perform well in the face of hostile atmospheres becomes one of the distinctive skills that top level performers need. In tennis, where fans are expected to be quiet during play, the challenge of dealing with a hostile atmosphere is not part of the norms of the game, and so players can excel without developing this skill.

Appealing to the different conventional norms that govern spectator behaviours explains why it is disrespectful for fans to engage in hostile affective scaffolding in some sports, but not others. It is disrespectful to someone in their role as a tennis player to engage in such scaffolding, as it does not appropriately recognise their role as tennis player and the challenges that they should face in their quest for excellence as part of the game. On the other hand, creating such an atmosphere is not disrespectful to someone in their role as a footballer, as it is part of the norms of the sport that players may have to deal with the challenge of maintaining their performance in the face of such hostile scaffolding.

Considering the role that hostile affective scaffolding plays in the norms of different sports can accommodate for the contrasting responses that different athletes give when faced with hostile scaffolding. First, when it comes to football, our account explains why players and managers often encourage their teams' fans to make the atmosphere more intense. For example, the Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp criticized the Liverpool fans for being overly quiet during a Carabao Cup match against West Ham in December 2023, saying that he, "was not overly happy with the atmosphere", and requested that fans who were not willing to create the appropriate atmosphere should give their tickets away to other fans (Bosher 2023). This is a legitimate request for Klopp to make, given that hostile affective scaffolding is part of the conventional norms and distinctive ethos of football, and a legitimate way in which a club may seek to gain an advantage in a match. Klopp is entitled to ask the fans to engage in hostile scaffolding in the stadium, as this does not contravene the conventional norms of the game in the way that it would do in tennis.

Similarly, understanding hostile affective scaffolding from fans as part of the norms of football helps to explain why, as we cited in the introduction, opposition players are so appreciative of the hostile Anfield atmosphere. If we view the challenge of dealing with such an atmosphere as part of the quest for excellence that is inherent to the conventions of the sport, then footballers can appreciate that hostile atmospheres generate more demanding sporting challenges that will push them to the limits of their sporting abilities. By

engaging in hostile affective scaffolding, fans are helping to create a better form of challenge for the opposition players, motivating them to perform at higher levels. Just as a footballer might appreciate playing against elite opposition, inspiring them to play to the very limit of their abilities, so might a hostile crowd push them to the limit of their ability to maintain their performance in the face of hostility. In this way, the hostile affective scaffolding created by football fans is not disrespectful and so does not wrong the scaffolded.

However, the argument from disrespect provides a vindicating explanation as to why hostile affective scaffolding in tennis wrongs the scaffolded. The fact that dealing with the challenges of hostile atmospheres is not constitutive of the norms of tennis explains why creating such hostility is disrespectful to the game. Competitive tennis is designed to test the challenges made possible and permitted by the constitutive rules and informal conventions of the sport. Facing external challenges that are not part of the sport undermines the test of the challenges that are part of the sport.

One could object that external challenges in sports matches cannot be eliminated altogether, with some players, for instance, having to deal with the end of a romantic relationship, the death of a loved one, or media scrutiny of their private life. One might think that being a good tennis player also involves being able to overcome these personal obstacles and continue to play excellent tennis. For example, when tennis player Aryna Sabalenka's ex-boyfriend died during the Miami Open in 2024, she was praised for her ability to continue playing with "total focus and drive", winning her match despite the devastating news (Carayol 2024). However, there is a difference between overcoming external obstacles that are unintentional and often inescapable features of human life, such as death and the ending of relationships, and intentionally created external challenges that could have been avoided. While Sabalenka did continue to play despite her bereavement, this was not an external challenge that Sabalenka was expected to overcome as part of her pursuit of sporting excellence.

Before outlining the wider implications of our argument for the concept of hostile scaffolding, there are three qualifications to highlight. First, our account explains the wrongs of hostile scaffolding in terms of recognition respect, which can come in different varieties depending on which feature is picked out as being relevant. Some varieties of recognition respect might pick out features such as being a human, rational agent, or moral agent. For our purposes, the relevant feature under consideration is the athlete's role *qua* athlete—the tennis player and footballer in their role specifically as a tennis player or footballer. While our account does legitimise some forms of hostile scaffolding, it does not legitimise hostile scaffolding that disrespects sportspersons as human beings, rational agents, or moral agents, such as racist or sexist behaviours, and physical harm. Failing to respect a person in this way is very different to failing to respect them in their role as an athlete.

Second, an advantage of our account is that it accommodates an explanation of why the hostile atmospheres created by sports spectators is only wrong in certain circumstances, namely, when it cannot be justified as part of the constitutive rules or conventional norms of the sport. However, these norms are not always fixed and allow for change. For example, spectators at tennis games as part of the National Collegiate

Athletic Association in the U.S. are well-known for creating hostile atmospheres for opponent players, due the passionate and emotional collegiate affiliations of the fans. Similarly, fan atmospheres during games that take place as part of youth football leagues are (or should be) more restrained and supportive to both sides. This means that the norms that govern spectator behaviours not only differ between sports, but also within the same sport depending on the type, location, and level of the game.

Finally, given that the quest for excellence plays an important role in the formation of constitutive rules and conventional norms in all sports, this places constraints on whether a certain form of hostile affective scaffolding wrongs the scaffolded athletes. Take for example the use of the 'pink technique' used in football, which involves painting the away dressing room of the opposition team in the colour pink. This tactic aims to alter the affective states of the opposition players by lowering testosterone and aggression levels. While still legally allowed in the U.K., with Norwich using the technique in 2018, it has been banned by the governing body of professional American football (Wales 2018). Our account can explain why the pink technique might be wrong in sports like American football. As a form of hostile affective scaffolding, the altering of an opposition's affective states through the use of colour is a form of recognition disrespect, as it fails to recognise the players in the opposition team in their role as footballers, undermining their ability to test the challenges and skills that are constitutive of the sport. The pink technique is an external challenge that players should not be expected to overcome given the norms of the sport. Although, as we have already stressed, whether a certain challenge counts as part of the norms of a particular sport is often changeable, with rules and conventions developing over time.

6. Implications for Hostile Scaffolding

We have argued that hostile affective scaffolding created by spectators during sporting contests wrongs the scaffolded when it involves recognition disrespect. Whether such scaffolding counts as recognition disrespect is in turn determined by the sport's constitutive rules and conventional norms governing spectator behaviour. This explains why hostile atmospheres are encouraged and praised during football matches but considered disrespectful in tennis. In this section we outline the implications of our discussion for the concept of hostile scaffolding more generally, and respond to one final objection that could be raised against our argument.

First, our argument has significant implications for how we should understand the normativity of hostile scaffolding. The literature currently takes for granted that hostile scaffolding necessarily harms the scaffolded and closely examines the harms involved in different cases of scaffolding. However, we have argued that the wrong-making features of hostile scaffolding are not limited to harm, as the sporting context is one in which the wrongs of hostile scaffolding should be understood instead as a violation of recognition respect. This hostile scaffolding may be wrong even if it does not harm anyone. Given that recognition disrespect can cover any feature of a person that is not given appropriate respect in decision-making about how to treat them, there are many other situations and contexts beyond sports in which hostile scaffolding might be wrong in virtue of

being disrespectful. For example, students who create hostile scaffolding in classrooms might disrespect someone's role as a teacher, or rowdy passengers might disrespect someone's role as an airhost if creating a hostile atmosphere during a flight.

Second, our argument adds further weight to the claim that affective scaffolding needs to be understood as relative to the interests that agents have. It does so first by providing further support for the idea that affective scaffolding may be hostile for one group of scaffolded people while being benign for others. As we noted in Section One, the same instances of affective scaffolding that make some people feel uncomfortable and unwelcome in a public space, may make others feel at home. Our argument further strengthens the case that at least some hostile affective scaffolding needs to be understood as hostile relative to some scaffolded agents but not others. It is also worth noting that there may be some players who thrive in a hostile atmosphere. Some players may find the booing and abusive chanting from opposition fans to be motivating and inspire them to higher levels of performance. In these cases, the atmosphere may be intended as hostile but in fact fail to be hostile to this player, as it does not undermine any of their interests. This provides further support for the agent-relativity of scaffolding, as some forms of scaffolding that are intended to be hostile to some agents may in fail to be so and in fact have the opposite effect.[7]

In addition, our argument also implies the need to make room for *intra-agent* relativity as part of the concept of hostile scaffolding. In the case of hostile atmospheres at football matches, we argued that this is a case of hostile scaffolding as it scaffolds the affective states of the away team's players such that it undermines those players' interests, and instead promotes the interests of the home fans (the scaffolders). However, we also argued that given the conventional norms of football, dealing with the challenges created by such a hostile atmosphere is part of the sporting contest and the quest for excellence. As such, the hostile atmosphere may promote the interests of players who desire the most difficult sporting challenge possible. This means that the atmosphere created by spectators would count as hostile relative to one set of interests that the players have (winning the match), but would also help to promote other interests that the players have (facing the best test of their sporting abilities) and so would not count as hostile relative to these interests.

At this point, an objection could be raised. When it comes to determining what counts as an instance of hostile scaffolding for the scaffolded, Timms and Spurrett (2023) are clear that only a person's *overall* interests are relevant. Given this, it seems that it should only be the overall interests of the athletes that would be relevant to determining whether an atmosphere counts as hostile or not. Our discussion has implied that the overall interest in the football case should be the quest for sporting excellence, overcoming the challenges that are legitimately tested by the rules and norms of the sport. While winning a match is a significant and valuable sporting achievement, the ultimate aim that athletes should have is to achieve sporting excellence rather than winning a match. This suggests that in the football case the scaffolding is not hostile, as there is no setback to

[7] Thanks to an anonymous referee for suggesting this point.

the overall interests of the scaffolded. If we accept this then there would be no need to relativise hostile scaffolding to a set of intrapersonal interests. Either the scaffolding harms the agent's overall interests, in which case it is hostile, or it does not, in which case it is not hostile scaffolding.

We accept that this is one way to respond to the issues we have raised in this paper. Nevertheless, if we take seriously the reports of those who have experienced hostile atmospheres, it does not seem appropriate to limit what counts as hostile scaffolding by referring only to an agent's overall interests. Players, fans, and journalists report that the hostile atmosphere in a football stadium makes it difficult to feel confident and at home, which fits naturally with Sterelny's (2003: 25) discussion of how environments can be informationally hostile by making certain tasks more cognitively demanding for certain agents. Similarly, the hostile atmospheres in sports stadiums make the task of succeeding in the sporting contest more affectively demanding for athletes. This gives us good reason to class this as a form of hostile affective scaffolding, even if it does not undermine their overall interests. Restricting the concept to only those instances in which overall interests are either promoted or undermined unnecessarily excludes a wide range of scaffolding cases that are not benign and involve hostility.

7. Conclusion

Although our focus in this paper has been the creation of hostile atmospheres in tennis and football stadiums, our aim in this discussion was to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of what hostile scaffolding is, and how we should understand its normativity. By taking seriously that athletes in different sports react contrastingly to the hostility aimed at them by spectators, we have questioned the extent to which hostile scaffolding is necessarily constituted by a setback of the scaffolded's *overall* interests, and whether the wrong-making feature of this scaffolding is necessarily explained by harm.

Instead, we have argued that hostile scaffolding should be understood relative to a set of interests an agent has, rather than being restricted to their overall interests. This helps to explain why the hostile atmosphere created by fans during a football match counts as hostile scaffolding, relative to one particular set of interests (winning the match), even though the hostility is praised as supportive of another set of interests (the quest for excellence). Given that what counts as hostile scaffolding is determined by the promotion of at least one set of the scaffolder's interests at the expense of at least one set of the scaffolded's interests, further research can now focus on determining the relation between these sets of interests, and how to accommodate for competing inter- and intra-personal interests.

Furthermore, we have argued that hostile scaffolding may be wrong not due to harm, but as a form of 'recognition respect'. This explains why visiting tennis players found the hostile atmosphere disrespectful to themselves as players and to the game of tennis itself, and also why footballers often respond positively to hostile scaffolding. Given that the normativity of hostile scaffolding is not limited to the harm it may inflict on

the scaffolded, this opens avenues for further research to consider other wrong-making features of hostile scaffolding, such as domination, acting contrary to virtue, or the violation of rights.

Finally, we argued that the creation of atmospheres in sporting stadiums counts as a form of affective scaffolding, manipulating the affective states of the athletes in a way that is hostile for some and benign for others. There are many other types of atmospheres in different contexts that may count as either benign or hostile forms of affective scaffolding, such as the creation of encouraging atmospheres in educational contexts to aid the learning experiences of students, or the intense and disciplined atmosphere created in military training to facilitate the most effective preparation for its recruits. We hope that future research can engage in a detailed investigation of the nature and normativity of these various forms of atmospheric scaffolding.

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