

Worlds of evidence

Visualising patterns in witness statements in the aftermath of the Hillsborough football stadium disaster

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The Hillsborough football stadium disaster (1989) in Sheffield, UK, led to the deaths of 97 football fans and resulted in the longest jury case in British legal history (2016). This article examines the witness statements of two Sheffield residents who claim to have attended the match. Using a mixed-methods approach that incorporates a cognitive linguistic framework (Text World Theory) with visualisation software (VUE) we consider both form and function of a number of linguistic features, such as meta-narrative, evaluative lexis, syntax, and modality to investigate how institutional voices permeate and potentially distort layperson narratives. Our analysis casts doubt on the veracity of the statements and raises questions about what can be considered evidential in a forensic investigation.

Keywords: Hillsborough, modality, text world theory, VUE

1. The Hillsborough disaster and the context of the V/J witness statements

On 15th April 1989, Liverpool Football Club played Nottingham Forest in a semi-final at Hillsborough Stadium in Sheffield, UK. Over twenty-three-thousand fans queued at the Leppings Lane end of the ground to gain entry via a restricted bottleneck long identified as a serious hazard. In the period before the 3 pm kick-off the arrival of fans outside the stadium led to congestion and crushing as the turnstiles could not adequately process entry. The Police Match Commander ordered the opening of an egress gate in order to relieve the crush. However, the central “pens” on the terrace were already full to capacity. They were

accessed by a 1 in 6 gradient tunnel directly opposite the opened egress gate. Over two-thousand Liverpool fans, unfamiliar with the stadium's lay-out, descended the tunnel unpoliced and unstewarded into already packed spectator pens. By the time the match kicked off at 3 pm, men, women, and children were being crushed to death. At 3:06 pm the match was abandoned. Within minutes, the match commander, Chief Superintendent David Duckenfield, falsely told the Football Association chief executive that the fans had forced the gate (the same gate he gave the order to open), generating a false narrative that would become institutionally accepted and shared with the media (Scraton et al. 1995; Scraton 1999a, 1999b, 2004). However, independent research reports (Coleman et al. 1990; Scraton et al. 1995), a drama-documentary (McGovern 1996) and academic analysis (Scraton 1999a) challenged official accounts of the disaster and revealed that police statements charting officers' self-taken testimonies had been systemically reviewed and altered. Over a decade later, a Government-appointed Independent Panel (2012) exposed further institutional manipulation of evidential statements which blamed fans and deflected institutional culpability. Ninety-seven men, women, and children were killed as a result of the crush at Hillsborough. On 26th April 2016 a jury overturned the original verdict of accidental death, determining the cause of death as unlawful killing.

This article analyses the witness statements of two Sheffield residents (Figure 1), hereafter referred to as V and J, who lived together and who claimed to have attended the match together.

Incident 102 170889 OF 10004 TYPING SERVICE DOCUMENT

STATEMENT NUMBER 10407

NAME: [redacted] DOB: [redacted]

Address: [redacted] N38 11

Occupation: EXPORT CLERK

IC: [redacted] Height: [redacted] Build: [redacted]

Hair colour: [redacted] Eyes: [redacted] Complexion: [redacted]

Facial hair: [redacted] Use: [redacted] Accent: [redacted]

Number of pages: 9

Date: 200409

I am a single woman living at the above address with my friend, [redacted]. I have lived at this address for a period of two years and, with the house, from Sheffield.

I have become accustomed to the ritual of football crowds coming and going and have previously witnessed crowds on cup semi-final days. I have been a life long supporter of Sheffield Wednesday and do, together with friends, regularly visit the ground to watch games.

On Friday 14th April 1989 (140489) I was given an opportunity to purchase some tickets for the cup semi-final which was due to be played at the ground on the following day between Liverpool and Nottingham Forest. The tickets were from a friend who knew somebody in the box office. We had no choice in where the tickets were for

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Figure 1. The original V/J statements (our highlighting)

The two statements were taken on 30th April 1989, 15 days after the Hillsborough Disaster (for the raw texts, see Appendix). Sensitive personal information has been redacted for confidentiality. Both statements chart events over a 24-hour period during 15th April 1989 and include evaluative reflections. There are a total of 85 and 83 sentences in the V and J statements respectively. Their statements were selected for analysis because they exhibit strikingly similar syntactic and lexical patterns that raise questions about their authorship, the veracity of their evidence, and about the wider evidence-gathering process. Both statements also exhibit an abundance of lexicogrammatical patterns indicative of ‘policeseak’, such as the frequent use of passive voice, post-subject adjuncts, time specifications and temporal adverbials (Fox 1993; Hall 2008). While these are clearly important issues in answering questions of authorship and warrant further investigation, a detailed and systematic analysis thereof would exceed the scope of this article. We therefore limit ourselves to indicating characteristics of ‘policeseak’ as they become apparent in the examples throughout the analysis.

In the analysis, we used a mix-methods approach that incorporates cognitive linguistic methodology with visualisation software, specifically, Text World Theory and VUE software. This combined approach enabled us to consider both form and function of a number of linguistic features, such as meta-narrative, evaluative lexis, syntax, and modality, to explore how institutional voices permeate lay-person narratives in witness statements. Additionally, it offers insights into the meaning potential that can be harnessed by such linguistic markers. We argue that Text World Theory (Werth 1999) facilitates the analysis of the *role* of modal forms and evaluative lexis in the discursive event (and after), thus moving beyond form to consider function. To present our findings we use a visualisation tool that can help model Text World networks.

2. Text World Theory and the notion of the textual discourse-world (tDW)

Text World Theory (TWT) is a cognitive linguistic framework that offers a systematic way of understanding how discourse participants construct, manage, and negotiate different narrative elements in texts. The analytical model makes use of mental spaces (Fauconnier 1994; Fauconnier & Turner 2002) or “worlds” that are defined by spatial and/or temporal parameters, modal cues, or attitudinal markers. In other words, text-worlds (TWs) are “text-driven” (Werth 1999: 103), firstly through “world-building” elements, such as entities, time, location and objects, and secondly, through “function-advancing” elements, or goings-on. Characters and entities that exist within the text are called text-world “enactors”, while those

existing outside it are referred to as discourse-world (DW) participants. Examples of the latter include the reader or receiver(s) of a text. DW participants bring their own knowledge and experiential histories to the text, often relying on such knowledge to make sense of the text-world(s). It is also important to note that TWs can help DW participants make sense of their own reality, the DW. Consequently, although DW participants sit outside the TW they inform it and can be informed by it, so that the relationship between the DW and the TW is bidirectional (Canning 2017). Of course, the DW is not only populated by readers and receivers of texts; DW participants can also include text producers, such as author(s) and narrator(s) who often occupy different spatial and temporal spaces than their reader/receiver(s). As such, the DW is typically “split” to account for such spatio-temporal distance.

Many TWs can be constructed in any given text as TW enactors often physically inhabit (or move through) different spatial and temporal spaces. Additionally, enactors may invoke different spatio-temporal worlds, for example, through acts of remembering or imagining. These types of world are manifested linguistically through, for example, modality, negation, hypotheticality, reported speech, or focalization, and are referred to as “modal-worlds” in TWT terms. In our analysis, the chain of text-worlds is the content of the witness statements that charts both the flashbacks of two witnesses relating the events on the day of the disaster, and the occasional emergence of the tDW. The tDW, i.e. textual discourse-world, is so-called because it points to events occurring in real-time at the point of generating the TW chain. In other words, the tDW is the “legal discourse setting” (Ho et al. 2019: 316) of the statement-taking scenario and includes participants such as the police officer(s) (typically the scribe) and the witness (typically the narrator). The tDW is visible at times throughout witness statements. It is invoked when the focus of the TW shifts to signal or cue its contemporaneous construction. For example, in the J statement, this occurs: “**The only other thing I could say** was that watching the incident, it surprised me to see that nobody took the lead to tend to the injured or generally organise everybody” (J72).¹ By explicitly signaling the contemporaneous context (in bold text) J is acknowledging the limitations of her formal role as a witness in a goal-directed discourse situation (her role is to provide a comprehensive account of the goings-on that day). Such tDW returns anchor the TW narration to its present-tense generation and reminds the reader (in the “actual ontological discourse-world” (Ho et al. 2019: 316)) that what they are reading is a forensic text mediated under the police officer’s guidance,

1. Quotations from the J and V witness statements are given in brackets throughout, signalled by their initial followed by the sentence number within the statement from which the quotation is taken.

and at times, through their “retelling” (Canning 2020). It is precisely because of this that tDW returns may offer insights into the statement-taking scenario that are not otherwise obvious to the DW reader. These include things like topic initiation, undocumented question and answer pairs, and clarifying reformulations. We return to this later.

Text World Theory was developed initially to account for how readers build mental representations of fictional worlds as they read. Since then, researchers have been attempting to plot the conceptual structures of complex discourse. Conventional diagrams visually represent discourse processing through multi-layered boxes (i.e. text-worlds) with arrows indicating the linking or nesting relations between worlds in a text, attempting to distil complexity and to indicate conceptual patterns in the data. However, manual techniques are highly challenging when it comes to diagramming long stretches of texts and analytically complex datasets. For this reason, Wang et al. (2016a, 2016b) and Ho et al. (2018, 2019) have embarked on the first cognitive computational approach, developing a preliminary model of the web-based tool *Worldbuilder* <<http://viv-research.info/TWT/system/wb.html#>> for data annotation and TW visualization. TWT has been operationalized by the research team as a structured framework as shown in Figure 2.

Worldbuilder is designed to allow the user to upload texts and annotate them for categories derived from TWT. After data annotation, the *Worldbuilder* system aims to convert raw texts into a structured format for ease of processing data quantification and visualisation. It is envisaged that the user will be able to view descriptive statistics of the annotation and visualise the text-worlds as projected in the texts, so as to facilitate forensic linguistic analysis.

Worldbuilder at the current stage is still a prototype, but it has already made two major contributions. First, this research presents the structured annotation scheme for a computer-based operational purpose (see Figure 2), and secondly, it has pointed out a crucial distinction between actual discourse-world (DW) and textual discourse-world (tDW) while processing legal documents (see Ho et al. 2019). Given that the features of sophisticated data quantification and visualisation are still underdeveloped in *Worldbuilder* at the current stage, we thus adopt only its TW annotation scheme for our data annotation and use open source software (VUE, Visual Understanding Environment) to manually annotate and diagram the text-worlds projected in the two statements under study.

VUE is a piece of concept mapping software developed at Tufts University (for the employment of VUE for text-world diagramming, see Lugea 2012, 2016; Ho et al. 2018, 2019). The particular value of the software is its capacity for storing multiple layers of information, which can then be viewed individually or conflated. Thus, VUE offers a means of visualising the dynamic structure of discourse,

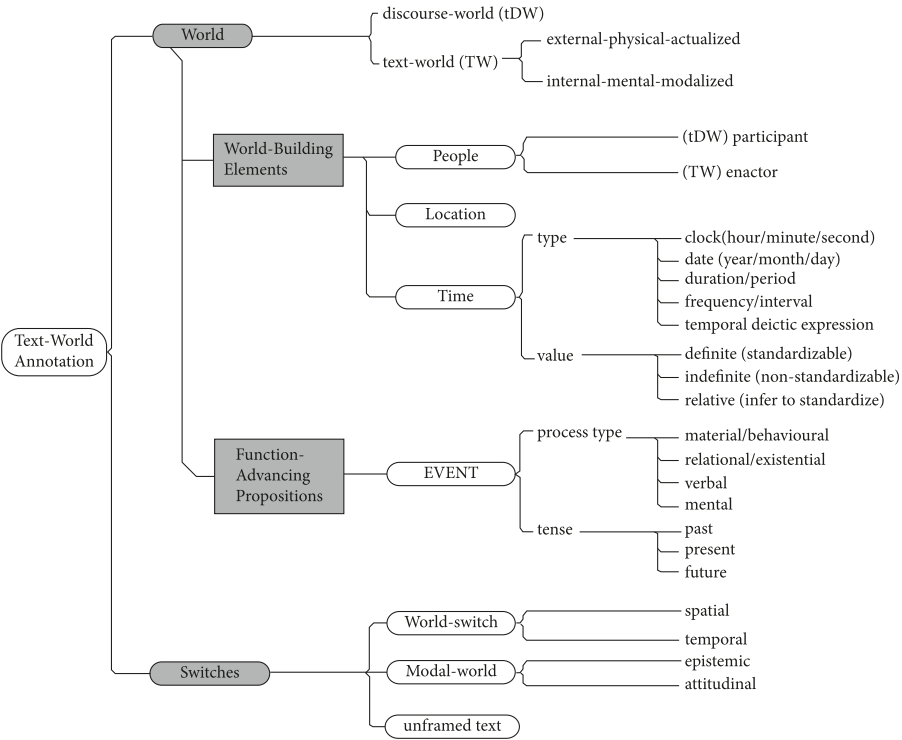


Figure 2. TWT structured framework for data annotation²

wherein text-worlds may be nested inside each other. VUE utilises “maps” and each map includes a “map info” view, where information about participants in tDW, world-building elements, and function-advancing propositions can all be recorded. VUE’s interactive Zoom feature allows the user to draw a diagram of any size, to zoom in to get a close-up view of the file, and to zoom out to see more of the page at a reduced size, thereby facilitating the observance of patterns in the data. Our analysis in the next section makes use of VUE to construct the text-world structures as reflected in the two statements. It should be mentioned that the figures below are used to illustrate the use of VUE in our diagramming process to underpin the qualitative analysis of the statements. As we are unable to present the interactive Zoom features, some of the figures may be unclear in view of textual details, so we have included a sample “zoomed-in” view of some of our diagrams. In the original *Worldbuilder* annotation scheme, world-switch types could

2. By “Discourse world (tDW)” we mean *both* the DW *and* the specific textual-discourse world. The latter is a particular instantiation of the DW, so that in our analysis the tDW constitutes the “here and now” domain of the police-witness interaction.

be annotated as spatial, temporal, epistemic, attitudinal. In this article, we have categorised only two types of world-switch: “spatial/temporal” and “modal” (both epistemic and attitudinal).

3. Text-worlds annotation and visualisation of the V/J statements using VUE

As a first step, we identify and annotate the text-worlds as projected in the statements. For the purpose of clarity, we will use V’s statement to illustrate how we go through the TW annotation process (see Figure 3). In V’s statement, the initial discourse setting forms a starting point for the text-world diagram. TW1 (sentences 1–3) is in present tense and presents the tDW that V was situated in, establishing her identity as a witness. In our diagramming of the statements, any proposition that instantiates the tDW is annotated in yellow.

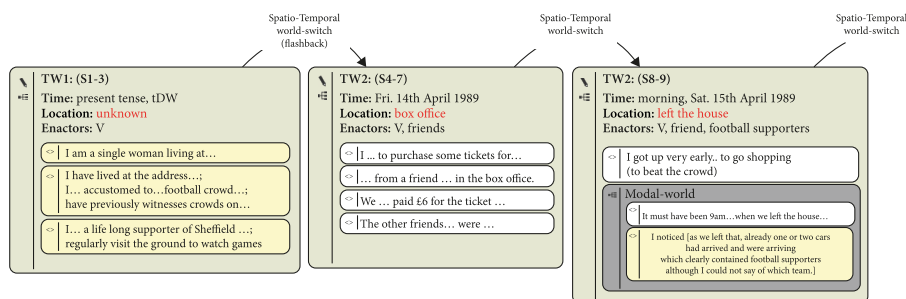


Figure 3. VUE diagramming of the opening of V’s statement

We then shift to TW2 (sentences 4–7) as the past tense indicates a flashback to past events. The world-switch from tDW to TW here is indicated by the tense shift and the explicit spatio-temporal deictics:

On Friday 14th April 1989 (140489) I was given an opportunity to purchase some tickets for the cup semi-final... The tickets were from a friend... **in the box office**.... The other friends who purchased tickets were [redacted] and two friends, [redacted] and [redacted] can be contacted on Sheffield [redacted].

(V4–7)

In TW₂, the linguistic reference to time (“On Friday 14th April 1989”), enactors (“I”, “the other friends”), and location (“in the box office”) come together to help reconstruct that TW where V and her friends were purchasing tickets the day before the semi-final. The TW₂ flashback is annotated as an unambiguous text-world in that the spatial and temporal parameters of the described events are clearly defined by V with no presence of modality.

However, as discussed above, sometimes discourse participants may project an inaccessible state of affairs (i.e. reporting the happenings in internal/perceptual/cognitive domains). These types of mental representations usually convey a particular attitude or degree of epistemic commitment to the proposition being expressed and, as such, are categorised as modal-worlds in TWT terms. Thus, the switches to modal-worlds triggered by linguistic indicators of that modality will be marked in grey, as shown in TW₃ (“it **must have been** 9am when I left the house”).

We utilised the VUE visualisation tool to model the witness statements’ narrative structure. It should be noted that the switches to modal-worlds are often embedded within text-worlds. The spatio-temporal world-switches are connected by curved arrows and presented in horizontal format, as they, in essence, represent the progression of narrative through space and time. Temporal progression within a text-world (i.e. when a sequence of temporal events is described as happenings in the same situational context) are presented in vertical format. Following the annotation process detailed above, Figures 4a and 4b below show an overview of the text-world structures of the V and J statements.

Through this visual structuring of text-worlds, it becomes possible to view correspondences and represent patterns between the two witness statements in terms of their narrative structure as well as the occurrence and type of modality within that structure.

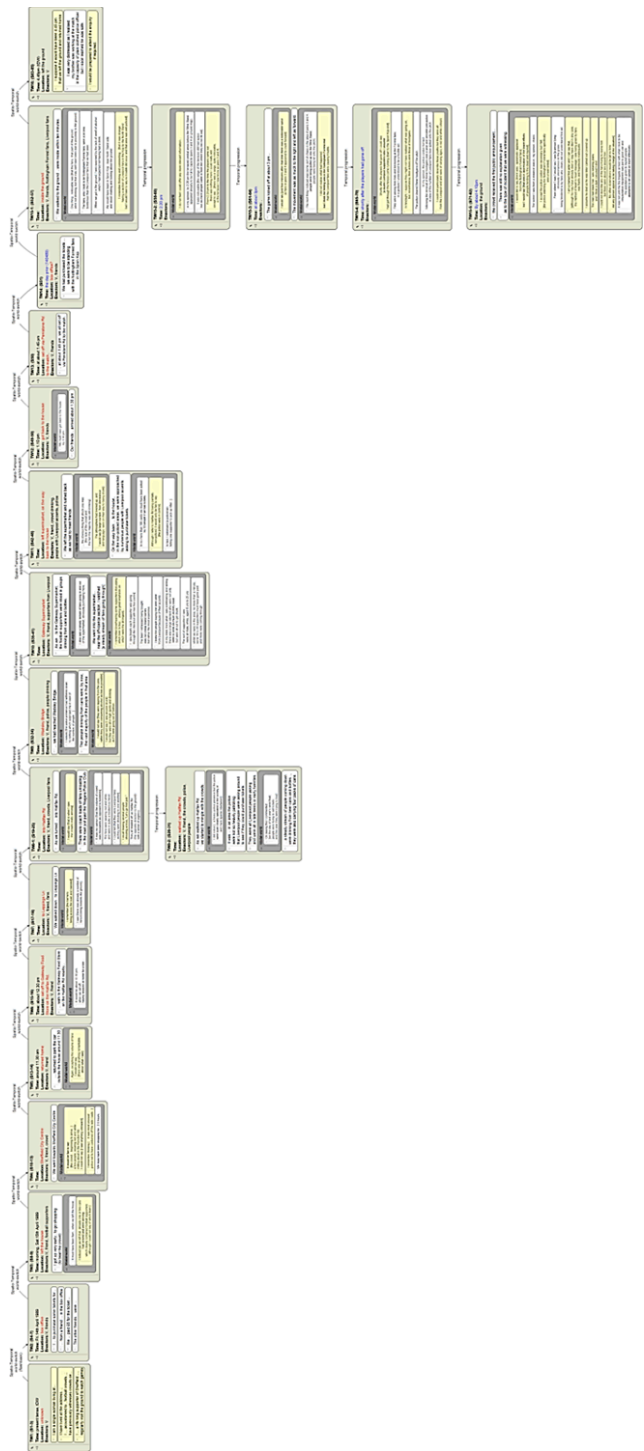


Figure 4a. Text-world structure in the V statement



Figure 4b. Text-world structure in the J statement

4. Analysis

4.1 An overview of ‘worlds’

The text-world diagrams of the V/J statements show some interesting parallels in the distribution of text-worlds and modal-worlds. The V statement is 85 sentences long and the J statement is 83 sentences, yet there are 21 text-worlds that chart the goings-on in each statement. These text-worlds largely outline the spatial and temporal progression of the events narrated by both. As both witnesses claim to have spent most of the day together, it would not necessarily be significant to find parallels in the distribution of these spatio-temporal text-worlds. However, around these text-worlds there are a number of epistemic modal-worlds, which by definition subjectively frame the propositions that fall within their scope, making them more individuating in terms of authorship. According to Werth, modal-worlds correspond to “the probability system, and specifically the notion of truth”, principally because they mark propositions on a “scale of certainty-impossibility” (Werth 1999: 239, 244–248). For example, if a witness reports that “X happened”, the event “X” is presented as fact. However, if a witness reports that they “assumed X”, the fact of “X” is undermined by the modal “assumed”, so the proposition remains unverified and should not qualify as evidence in a forensic setting. Thus, an analysis of modal-worlds can tell us crucial information about the evidential value (or lack of value) of reported propositions in witness statements (see also Thompson 1996). Additionally, modal-worlds are generated when enactors subjectively express attitudinal judgements. For instance, if a witness reports that they were “surprised by X”, two things are understood: (i) the facticity of “X” is existentially presupposed, and (ii) the witness’s subjective evaluation of X (as surprising) is communicated. The latter (ii) carries additional loaded meaning (as it is subjective). The following analysis considers the distribution, content, and evidential significance of modal-worlds in both statements.

To begin, a breakdown of the text-worlds and epistemic modality in each statement are summarised in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Number and type of world-switches and modal-worlds per statement

	V	J
Text-Worlds of which:	21	21
Temporal World-Switches	5	6
Spatio-Temporal World-Switches	16	15
Modal-Worlds*	22	19

* Some modal-worlds contain several sentences. This accounts for the seeming disparity in modal-world counts later in the analysis of the three sections within each statement.

For our analysis we have divided the statements into three main sections (see Figure 5): the opening section (V1–14 and J1–14), which is rather formulaic, provides orientational and demographic information that bolsters the witnesses’ credibility and speaking rights. The mid-section of each statement charts the journey from “home” to the “Gateway supermarket” and spans a sizeable chunk of both statements (V15–49 and J15–47). The final section of the witness statement covers the walk to the ground and the reportable event (the crush) and constitutes 36 sentences (V50–85 and J48–83).

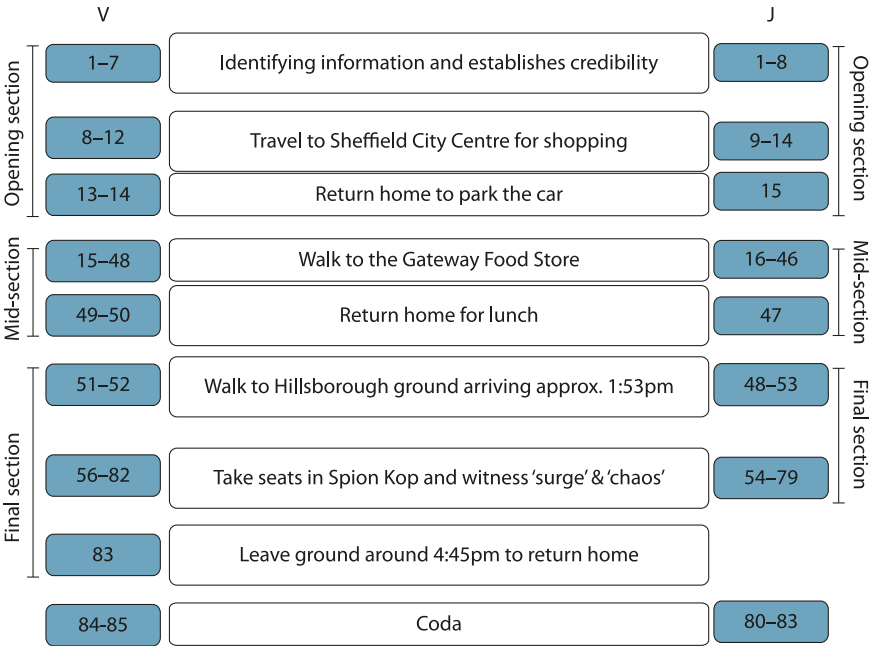


Figure 5. The sentence-by-sentence construction of each statement

The distribution of the three sections in each statement is shown as a percentage in Figure 6 below.

Given that the key event being investigated was a deadly crush inside the stadium, it is odd that so much of each statement charts a trip to the local shop. It is worth, therefore, taking a closer look at the content of this mid-section. In both statements’ mid-sections there are a number of modal-worlds that are “enactor-accessible” (Werth 1999: 216) and so are unverifiable by DW participants. In the V statement 25 of the 35 sentences in this section are modalised in some way, and in the J statement 22 out of 33 sentences are modalised. Many of the sentences contain more than one modal marker. What is interesting is that in the V state-

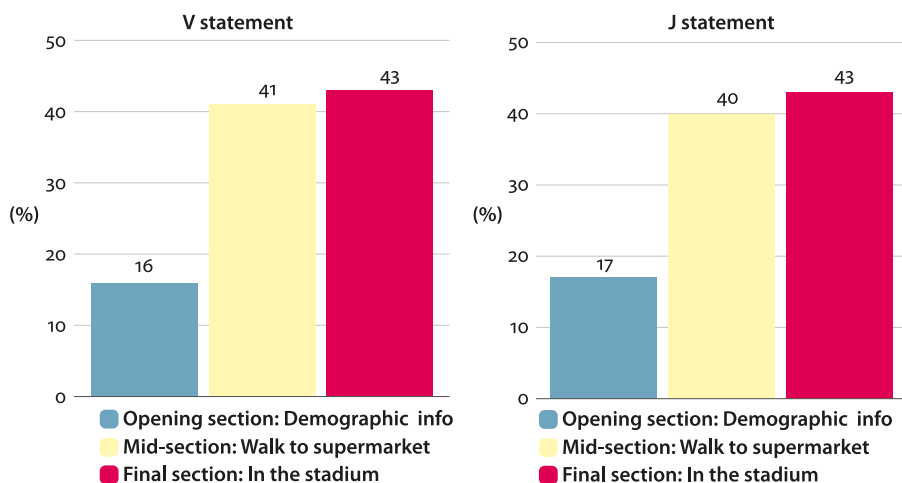


Figure 6. The percentage distribution of sentences per section in each statement

ment 18 of the 25 modalised sentences have corresponding modalised pairs in the J statement. In other words, these 18 modalised sentences occur at the same points in each narrative, contain the same information, and crucially, share the same degree of epistemic commitment and attitudinal shading. To explore these in more detail, we will look at the sentence pairs that exhibit strong commitment to the truth of a proposition, followed by those that exhibit weaker commitment. Although there is overlap with sentences that exhibit attitudinal shading, we address this separately.

4.1.1 *Epistemically strong(er) modal-worlds*

In each statement's mid-section, strong epistemic commitment predominates. The following serve as examples (bold type shows the modality):

We walked down our road to Leppings Ln and I **remember** the barriers being across the road and manned. (V17)

We walked down our road to Leppings Lane and I **remember** now that the barriers were in place across the ends of our road and Police Officers were manning them. (J18)

The proposition (the barriers were across the road and manned) is foregrounded as being newsworthy by the marked modal verb “remember” which makes it “only enactor-accessible” (Gavins 2005: 81). Having said that, we argue that marking the event modally in this way could enhance its potential facticity. Given that everything a witness reports is in the past, and so arguably all reports are

“remembrances”, the explicit marking of the proposition as such makes it more noteworthy and could be used here to enhance the speaker’s reliability. The corresponding paired sentence J18 has an almost verbatim construction and further enhances the force of the “newsworthiness” of the proposition (Labov 1972; Labov & Waletzky 1967) and its evidential value by tagging the adverbial “now”, bringing the reader into the tDW of the legal interaction. In fact, every word of V’s sentence can be found in J’s (although note the change in tense of the irregular “be” verb). As research into idiolectal variation has shown, speakers tend to make “distinctive and idiosyncratic choices” when producing spoken or written texts (Coulthard 2004: 431–432) even if they tell the same story twice (Ibid: 434). It is significant that both witnesses report that they “remembered” the same (relatively minor) event, at the same point in the telling of their narratives and used the same words to express that remembrance. This is one indication that both texts may not have been independently produced (we allude to the issue of authorship throughout the article).

Epistemic commitment can also be realised through adverbials such as “clearly” and “obviously” which mark facticity as in the following examples:

I did notice that there was a heavy police presence but the police were quite **clearly** saturated in the vicinity of the public houses and more sparse in between. (V27)

[...] we could see Police Officers along the way, but the Police presence was heavier near to the public house, which was, **obviously**, to monitor the fans by the pubs going in and out [...]. (J25)

Example V27 expresses certainty not only through the modal adverb “clearly” but through its pre-modifying adverb “quite” (we return to the attitudinal value of this later). The emphatic auxiliary “did” in “did notice” foregrounds the “heavy police presence” and enhances the facticity of this offering, while J25 uses “obviously” rather liberally to bolster what can only be an inference. At times this modal marker is combined with a second epistemic marker of commitment as the following example shows:

The journey back was similar in route and the **obvious** thing that struck you was the size of the crowd and **the fact that** the majority was still drinking. (V43)

V’s strong epistemic marking renders the proposition newsworthy so that whatever is entailed by it is marked as evidentially significant. The “still drinking” is explicitly presented as “fact” (J’s corresponding sentence pair here reads “the number of fans drinking did not decrease”, see J44). The pronoun “you” is also interesting (“struck *me*” seems more cohesive) and could be a nod to the presence

of the police interviewer, a superaddressee (Bakhtin 1986: 126), or a generalisation akin to “the obvious thing that was striking” or in place of the impersonal pronoun “one”. Further examples of corresponding sentence pairs can be found in the opening section (e.g.V9 and J12).

Other means of upgrading epistemic commitment include the intensifying adverb “really” and the aforementioned adverbial “now”:

As we turned the corner, and passed the traffic island into Halifax Rd, I would say that is when I saw the crowds **really** arriving (V19)

As I got into Leppings Lane, I could see a number of fans making their way to the ground, but as I passed the junction with the island at Halifax Road, **it was now** I could see hoards of fans arriving (J19)

Using “really” in this way, V19 constitutes a form of “objective” but “implicit emphasis” (Martin & White 2005: 132) and presupposes information is held in the common ground (but not stated) that large crowds were indeed present. Such emphasis may be interpreted as conferring predominantly high epistemic commitment on the “seeing”. In J19 the adverbial component “it was now” is a cleft-structure that is mirrored in “that is when...” in V19 and functions emphatically to foreground the subsequent newsworthy information (“hoards of fans arriving”) (see also V21). In so doing, it strengthens the epistemic commitment to the “seeing”. Both examples exhibit *policespeak*, specifically in the high frequency of time adverbials (underlined) (Fox 1993: 187). Here the reported action of the arrival of the fans is temporally located in concordance with the movement and location of the witnesses.

While these examples exhibit strong epistemic commitment, this should not, by default, determine facticity or objectivity. In fact, all but one of the examples above, and indeed the remainder of the 17 epistemically strong sentences in V and the 13 epistemically strong sentences in J, express a rather specific marked epistemic stance in that these propositions (marked with certainty or high epistemic commitment) present the Liverpool fans in a pejorative light. Interestingly, in the aftermath of the disaster, SYP advanced three primary claims in their own statements and in the press: (i) that Liverpool fans were drunk (ii) that Liverpool fans were ticketless, and (iii) that Liverpool fans arrived too late to safely get into the ground on time. All three allegations formed a dominant “hooligan” narrative that, although contradicted by CCTV around the ground, found its way into a small number of residents’ statements (Canning 2018; HIP 2012) of which V and J are two. The one pair of sentences, V17 and J18, that does not mention fans’ behaviour refers antithetically to the professionalism of the police (see also V47, V48).

4.1.2 *Weak epistemic commitment*

The sentences that exhibit weak epistemic commitment in the mid-section are categorised as such because they contain explicit markers of doubt or exhibit greater epistemic distance to propositions, which makes them objectively unverifiable. Corresponding pairs of sentences are noted below:

It was my opinion that the volume of crowd was thousands as opposed to hundreds. (V21)

[There was hundreds of fans off loading by the Niagara Police Club.] **In fact**, I **would** go as far as to say that there was thousands of football fans. (J20–21)

Here, both are commenting on the “unloading” (V20) of fans from coaches and while J’s estimation of “thousands” of fans “off loading” corrects a previous assertion that there were “hundreds” (J20), there is no mention of “hundreds” in V’s statement until it appears in V21 above. This would suggest that the numeral “hundreds” was introduced in the tDW for it to be placed in opposition to “thousands”, but crucially, its introduction into the common ground has not been not recorded. The proposition itself (that there were thousands of football fans) is mediated in both statements through epistemic hedging (in bold). This has two primary effects: (i) it can downgrade the evidential value of the proposition by reducing it to opinion, or (ii) it can signal police intervention in the tDW by getting on record their “impartiality” as scribe by explicitly attributing the proposition to the witness. In other words, the police here could be “doing credibility” (Lea & Lynn 2012; Lynn & Canning, under review) by distancing themselves from the contentious proposition that there were thousands of football fans. In J21 the epistemic marker “in fact” should be redundant as the main clause is mediated through the modal “would go as far...”, but the sentence-initial modal can have the effect of negating this subsequent epistemic distance. Additionally, the syntactic form of the bold text, a cleft structure, functions to foreground the post-positioned numeral at the end of the sentence.

In the sentences below that identify Liverpool fans, the syntax is identical in that both are framed through an epistemic modal-world, followed by a “justification” clause (underlined):

I could tell that they were Liverpool fans as they were shouting to one another. (V23)

I presume that they were Liverpool fans as they spoke with a Liverpool accent and wore red and white. (J22)

While V's "I could tell" is epistemically weaker than a bald assertion ("They were Liverpool fans") J's "presume" is weaker still. Both qualify their hedged assertions with an embedded clause that begins "as they" which could be read as indicating police-prompting or undocumented questioning (Fox 1993; Canning 2018, 2020) either to achieve institutional rigour (by eliciting as much disambiguating orientational information as possible) or to establish on-record any identifying details upon which a case for culpability depends (Home Office Circular 1988; Home Office Directive 2019; Baldwin 1993: 327; Haworth 2017: 201). In other words, it is likely that both V23 and J22 were responses to undocumented questions (e.g. "how do you know they were Liverpool fans?"). It is important to offer some contextual information here that may help explain the double justification clauses in determining the identity of fans engaging in anti-social behaviours as "Liverpool fans". Both Nottingham Forest and Liverpool play in red and white and so the assertion that fans wore "red and white" may not be enough to disambiguate the former from the latter.

Later in this segment of the statements the witnesses claim that Liverpool fans were in the local supermarket and were buying alcohol:

[...] **in my mind**, from what I was **overhearing** and **seeing**, there was a large element who were not only keen to drink as much as they could but were all out to get drunk. (V40)

In my mind, I **could see** that from the quantity and type of beer they were buying an element of the supporters were out to drink as much as they could in order to get drunk. (J39)

In both, "in my mind" is enactor-accessible and pragmatically functions as the subjective frame through which to read whatever is predicated of it. Once again, this framing occurs when a contentious proposition is offered, which may point to the police "doing impartiality" (Lynn 2008; Lea & Lynn 2012) by explicitly attributing the proposition to the witness. Syntactically, the propositions governed by the phrase "in my mind" in both V40 and J39 are qualified by similar binomial pairs: "from what I was **overhearing and seeing**" (V40) and "from the **quantity and type** of beer they were buying" (J39), thus amplifying the "evidential" weight of their respective epistemically weak propositions. In short, what is undeniably subjective opinion in both V40 and J39 is heavily pre-modified with qualifying clauses to steer the interpretation as fact – that the fans were drinking heavily to get drunk. However, this is not fact but conjecture. The proposition carried therefore is not evidentially verifiable. The focus on alcohol is the dominant theme in this section and continues in the following examples:

[...] whilst we were in the area, no more than a minute, **some** 18 to 20 supporters **must** have gone past and more were coming through. (V41)

there were **some** fifteen to eighteen pass through as and in the time we purchased our beer. (J40)

Again, the modal shading here is weak as both witnesses use the indeterminate adverb “some” for number (meaning “roughly” or “thereabouts”). Note also that both reference time (“no more than a minute”, “as and in the time”). V’s proposition is modalised further with what is semantically a modal verb denoting obligation, “must”, but which is used pragmatically here to hedge the epistemic commitment. Having said that, in this segment of both statements J exhibits lower epistemic commitment than V (J’s contains 11 modalised sentences governed by weak commitment compared to 9 in V’s). Some further examples of J’s hedging can be seen below:

I say they were fans, it **would** only be an **assumption** if I said they were ticket touts. We **assumed** also that they were from Liverpool by there [sic] accent. (J26–27)

We again **presumed** they were fans by there [sic] accents. (J37)

Up to the point of J26 in J’s statement there is no mention of the phrase (or any synonymous term) “ticket touts”, and so like the “hundreds” in V21 (above) it is likely to have been introduced by a third party in order to be negated (or at least downplayed). Another indicator of third-party involvement is the adjunct in post-subject position “we again” (J37), “a structure typically found in police reports” (Fox 1993, 186). Such a construction (which also occurs in J16 “I then decided to walk”), whereby the subject is immediately followed by a temporal adverb would be highly marked in general, lay discourse (Hall 2008, 81; Svartik 1968). It is immediately followed by an on-record, qualified, although hedged, identification of the fans as “Liverpool” fans. The focus stays on the theme of “tickets” and towards the end of this mid-segment both witnesses report the following:

In no more than 100 yards we **must** have been asked by 30 people if we had tickets. (V46)

I **would** say in a space of 200 yards, we were approached by **some** thirty people looking to buy any spare tickets. (J46)

The proposition is modalised through epistemic framing “I would say” (J46) and through the pragmatic use of the modal “must” in V46. The modal shading in V’s “must” is mirrored in J’s use of “some” in J46. A diagrammatic representation of the patterns thus far can be seen in Figures 7a and 7b:

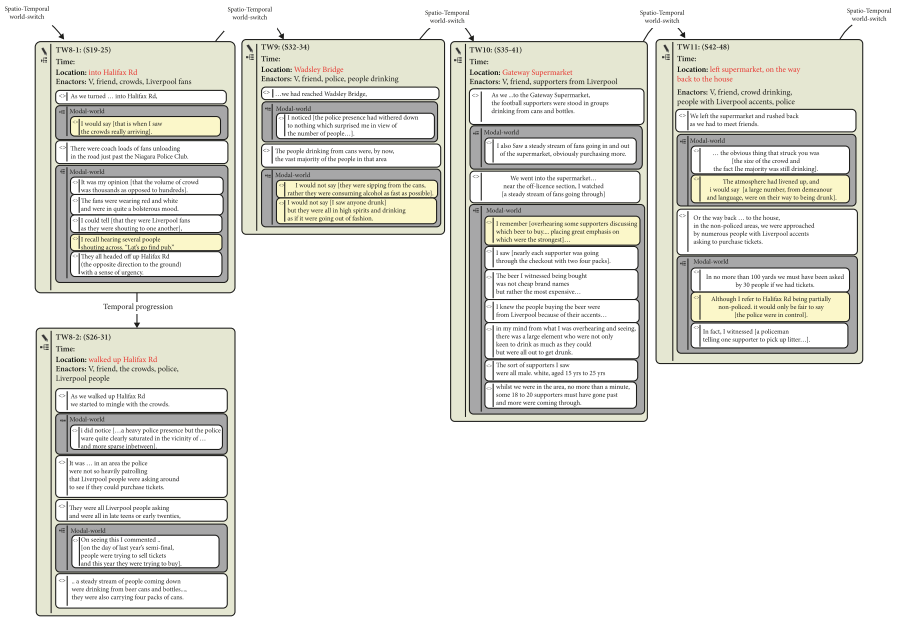


Figure 7a. Text-worlds breakdown in mid-section of V statement

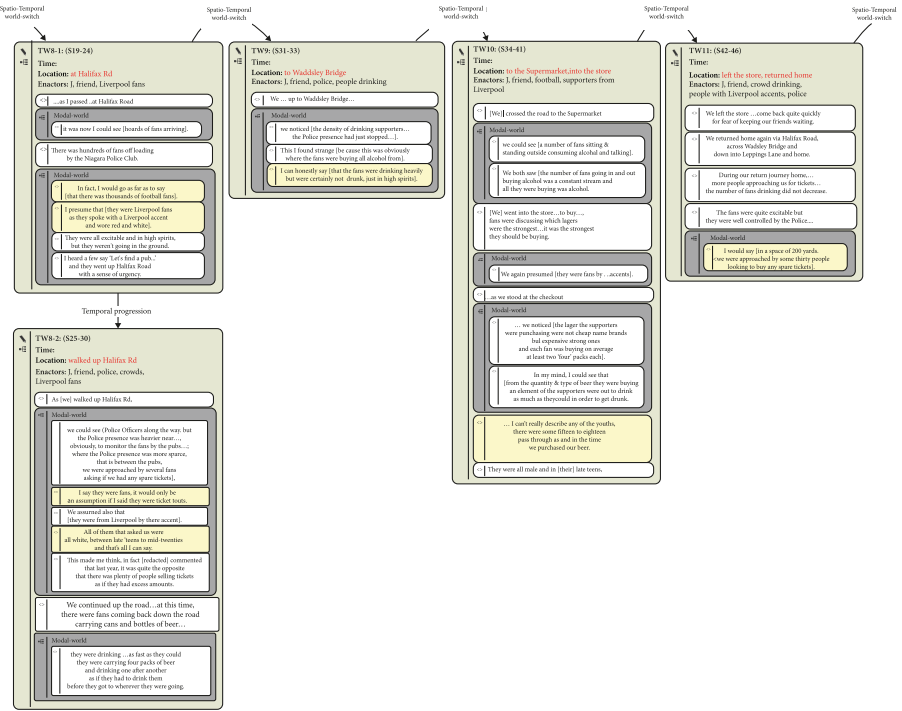


Figure 7b. Text-worlds breakdown in mid-section of J statement

In summary then, there are 22 sentences (out of a total of 33) in the J statement that comprise modal-worlds, 11 of which project uncertainty or weak epistemic commitment. Of these, 5 express epistemic distance through an inability to unequivocally identify Liverpool fans (“I presume that they were Liverpool fans” (J22), “it **would** only be an **assumption** if I said they were ticket touts” (J26), “we **assumed** also that they were from Liverpool” (J27), that’s all I can say” (J28), “we again **presumed** they were fans by there [sic] accents” (J37), “Again, I **can’t really** describe” (J40)), 2 relate to number (“I **would go as far as to say** there were thousands” (J21), “**some** thirty people” (J46)), and 3 relate to cognition (“This I **found** strange” (J32), “this made me **think**” (J29), “in my mind” (J39)). Additionally, 2 sentences are modalised due to attitudinal information (we address this in the following section).

In the V statement, there are 25 sentences containing modal-worlds (out of a total of 35 sentences in the mid-section). Of these, 9 convey weak(er) epistemic commitment. To offer a breakdown, 3 relate to “saying” (“I **would** say”, V19, V44, V47), 2 relate to cognition (“it was my opinion” (V21), “in my mind” (V40)), 4 relate to estimation of number or time (“It **would be** about 12.30pm” (V16), “some 18 to 20 supporters” (V41), “must have been” (V46), (V49)). Additionally, 2 sentences are modalised due to attitudinal information.

However, the majority of modal-worlds in both statements at this mid-section of the narrative are, in fact, epistemically strong: V explicitly marks commitment to 17 of her 25 sentences while J explicitly marks commitment to 13 of her 22 sentences. However, those propositions themselves focus overwhelmingly on negative behaviours alleged about Liverpool fans: all but one of the 17 sentences that contain strong epistemic commitment in V’s statement relate to Liverpool fans either purchasing or consuming alcohol, ticket-touting, or littering, while in J’s statement all but one relate to either “hoards” of fans, alcohol purchase and consumption, or ticket-touting. Yet in spite of this apparent strength of the propositions, they are, as we have shown, largely enactor-accessible and thus, unverifiable.

4.1.3 *Attitudinal modal-worlds*

In addition to conveying epistemic commitment or lack thereof, modal-worlds also encode attitudinal information, sometimes within the same modal-worlds that carry epistemic information. Staying with the mid-section of each statement, the following sentence pairs offer evaluative commentary on what is reported:

They [Liverpool fans] all headed off up Halifax Rd (the opposite direction to the ground) **with a sense of urgency**. (V25)

Table 2. Sentences in mid-section containing modal-worlds by type (weak/strong/attitudinal)

	V	J
Total sentences in mid-section *:	35	33
Epistemically strong	17	13
Epistemically weak	9	11
Attitudinal	2	2

* Some sentences contain more than one type of modality

I heard a few [Liverpool fans] say “Let’s find a pub, where’s there a pub” and they went up Halifax Road **with a sense of urgency**. (J24)

The final prepositional phrase in both is attitudinal and so it is unusual for both witnesses to subjectively evaluate the same behaviour at the same point in the narrative in exactly the same way. Further corresponding pairs can be found a little later and combine epistemic commitment with attitudinal commentary:

[...] I **noticed** that the police presence had withered down to nothing **which surprised me** in view of the number of people and shops in that area. (V32)

[...] we **noticed** the density of drinking supporters had thickened, but the other thing was the Police presence had just stopped near to the shops. This I **found strange** because this was **obviously** where the fans were buying all the alcohol from. (J31–32)

The marked epistemic commitment (“noticed”) frames both propositions as newsworthy. Note also how J’s statement uses a present participle verb form as a premodifier to frame “drinking supporters” as presupposed and marks epistemic certainty through “obviously”. There is no basis for what has been offered as “obvious”, and indeed, such “emphatic adverbials” (Finegan 2010: 69) can function in legal discourse “to fortify lame propositions” (Garner 1995: 614). Both witnesses explicitly mark their attitudinal response to the lack of a “police presence” as being unexpected. Invoking Gricean logic (1975), the reader/hearer is led by the maxim of relation to draw the inference that the alleged “drinking supporters” warranted a greater police presence. While in the Gateway Supermarket themselves, V and J note the following:

The beer I **witnessed** being bought was not cheap brand names but rather **the most expensive** Pilsner Lagers such as Stella Artois. (V39)

We bought our lager and as we stood at the checkout we **noticed** that the lager the supporters were purchasing were not cheap name brands but **expensive strong ones** and each fan was buying on average at least two ‘four’ packs each. (J38)

Epistemic commitment combines with attitudinal gloss in both: “witnessed” and “noticed” are markers of strong commitment, while “the most expensive” and “expensive strong ones” demonstrate their assessment of the type of beer being purchased. Both frame their attitudinal response through negation (“not cheap name brands” vs “not cheap brand names”) to create an opposition and thus prime the force of the subsequent affirmative assertion. Immediately following this judgement, both statements proceed with sentences V40 and J39 already discussed:

[...] **in my mind**, from what I was **overhearing** and **seeing**, there was a large element **who were not only keen to drink as much as they could but were all out to get drunk**. (V40)

In my mind, I **could see** that from the quantity and type of beer they were buying an element of the supporters **were out to drink as much as they could in order to get drunk**. (J39)

The lexical and syntactic overlap here is striking. Both allude to the limitations of their objectivity (“in my mind”) which, as mentioned earlier, frames the subsequent attitudinal propositions as subjective and thus unverifiable but which are nonetheless included in the formal record. To develop our earlier point about possible police intervention, we proposed that this explicit framing (“in my mind”) could be a direct result of the police scribe “doing credibility” (Lea & Lynn 2012: 3101), or at least being *seen* to be doing credibility by actively scripting the witness as focaliser and distancing themselves from the negative judgement that follows. In this way, the police can construct a “genre of impartiality” (Lynn 2008; Lea & Lynn 2012: 3098). The introspective stance in the above and its occurrence at the same narrative points, together with the almost identical propositions that stance governs (that the fans were wilfully trying to get as drunk as they could), makes it unlikely that the content of these sentences occurred unprompted and/or purely by chance.

4.2 The walk to the ground and the “at-issue” event in the stadium

We now want to turn to the final section of the statements. The predominant epistemic certainty we have seen thus far in the mid-section is in stark contrast to the epistemic distance the characterises this final section. The latter comprises

36 sentences in both and focuses on the “at-issue” event, the crush at the Leppings Lane entrance and in pens 3 and 4. There are 36 sentences in each statement that comprise this final section, the majority of which are modalised. The VUE diagrams of this section are captured below in Figures 8a and 8b, and the structural patterns of modal-worlds, text-worlds, and textual-discourse-worlds should be discernible in grey, white, and yellow respectively.

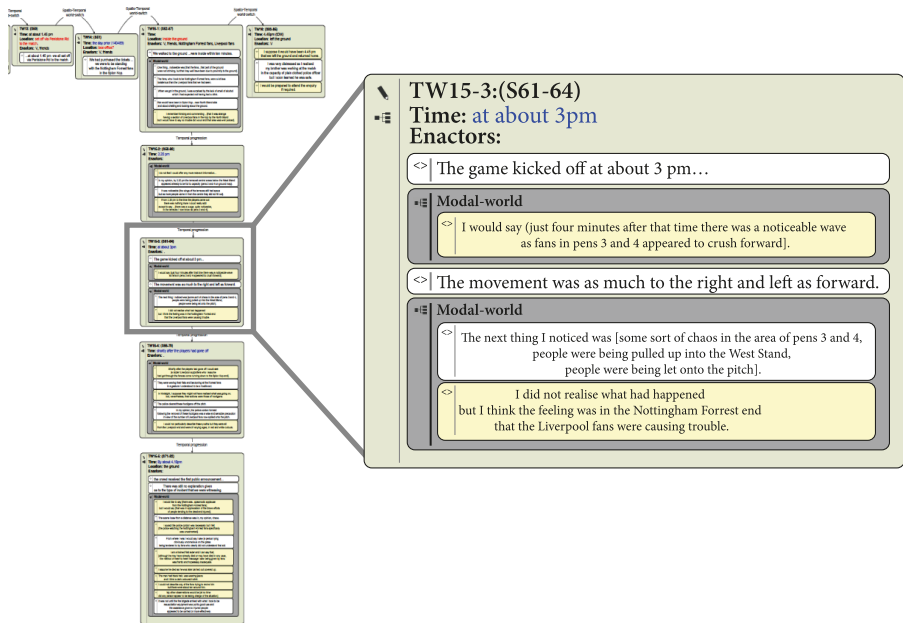


Figure 8a. The final section of the V statement with zoomed-in detail

In the V statement, 31 of the 36 sentences comprise modal-worlds, while in J, 27 of the 36 sentences comprise modal-worlds. Upon examining the type of modal-worlds, we found that the situation regarding relative strength and weakness of epistemic commitment is the reverse of the previous section in that the modal shading is weaker in this final section. In the V statement, of her 31 modalised sentences, 23 are shaded with weak(er) modality while 15 are epistemically marked for commitment (there is some overlap as sentences contain both weak and strong shading) and 3 are neither but are attitudinally marked. In the J statement, of her 27 modal-worlds, 16 show weaker commitment while 9 are epistemically strong, and 5 are neither but marked attitudinally.

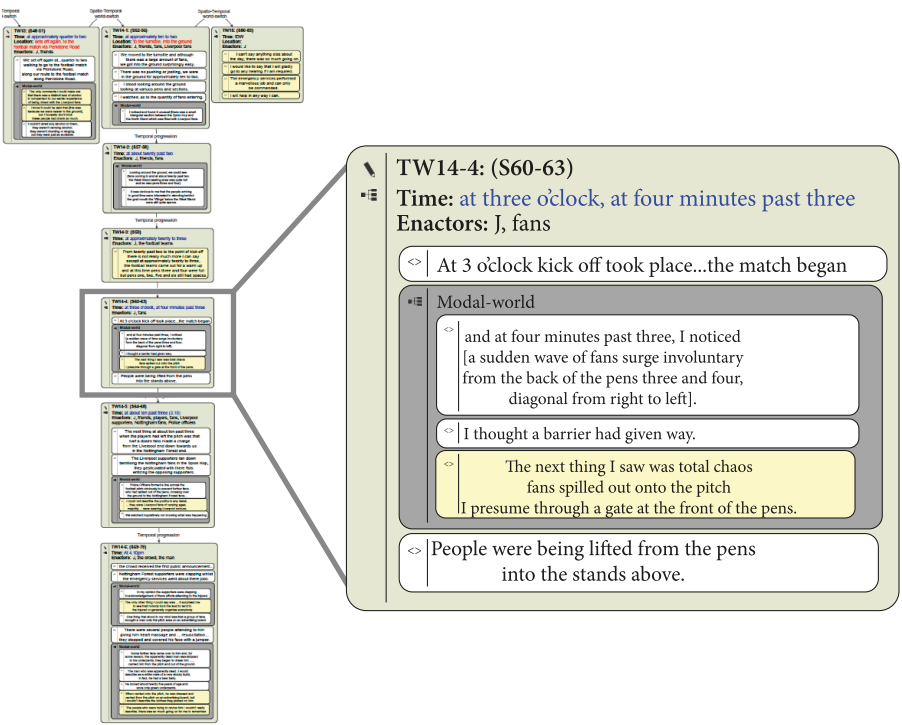


Figure 8b. The final section of the J statement with zoomed-in detail

Table 3. Sentences in final section containing modal-worlds by type (weak/strong/attitudinal)

	V	J
Total sentences in final section *	36	36
Epistemically strong	15	9
Epistemically weak	23	16
Attitudinal	3	5

* Some sentences contain more than one type of modality

If we consider the modal-worlds that show strong epistemic commitment, the following serve as examples:

One thing that was noticeable was that the fans on the way to that part of the ground were not drinking [...]. (V53)

[...] there was a distinct lack of alcohol in comparison to our earlier experience of being mixed with the Liverpool fans. (J49)

In the above, both witnesses are referring to the Nottingham Forest fans, and both mark their commitment explicitly (bold type), presenting the Forest fans' behaviour as newsworthy only insofar as it departs from what they allege they have seen thus far with the Liverpool fans. The comparison makes the latter's behaviour seem even more deviant when constructed in opposition (and by default, the former's behaviour appears more noble as a result). Lest anyone be in doubt, the following elaborative move is offered:

The fans, **who I took to be** Nottingham Forrest [sic] fans, were a lot less boisterous than the Liverpool fans that we had **seen**. (V54)

I **couldn't smell** any alcohol on them [Forest fans], they weren't carrying alcohol, they weren't chanting or singing, but they were just as excitable. (J51)

Interestingly, the weaker "who I took to be" in V54 governs only the identification of the fans as Forest supporters and not the assertion that they were "less boisterous than the Liverpool fans" which is presented as fact. J's statement uses negation to convey what one may have expected, but not experienced – that the Forest fans were not as "boisterous". The attitudinal components are interesting, too. V54 uses the pejorative "boisterous" to characterise Liverpool fans (by implication), and J uses the much more positively connoted "excitable" to describe Forest fans. Additionally, both witnesses use prolepsis to inoculate themselves against a potential rebuttal in their assessment of the Forest fans' lack of alcohol consumption ("One thing that was noticeable was that the fans on the way to that part of the ground were not drinking, **but that may well have been due to proximity to the ground**" (V53); "I **know it could be said** that this was because we were nearer to the ground, but I honestly don't think these people had drank [sic] so much" J50).

After taking their seats in the stadium, V and J say this:

It was **noticeable** that the wings of the terraces still had space but as more people came in from the centre they did not fill out. (V59)

It was **obvious** to me that the people arriving in good time were interested in standing behind the goal mouth the 'Wings' below the West Stand were still quite sparse [sic]. (J58)

This marked epistemic commitment relates to the same event, although lexicalised differently ("people [...] did not fill out" and "people [...] were interested in standing behind the goal mouth"). The "goal mouth" is otherwise known as pens 3 and 4, the location of the deadly crush. What is interesting here is that the negation in V59 implies that the opposite was expected (i.e. that the fans *should* have filled out) which implies that they had agency. However, this would have been impossible because the pens were enclosed by lateral fencing (a fact that would have been visible to V and J) so movement between them could not have

occurred. This is compounded by the use of “interested” in J58, which suggests some level of intentionality or choice. Again, the implication is unwarranted as the fans entering the 1 in 6 gradient tunnel to these enclosed pens would not have seen the density of supporters already inside this area (although the overcrowding would have been visible from the police control room), nor would they have been able to move once inside.

The crush is described from sentence 60 in both statements and even though both claimed to have sat together in the Kop end, their recollections show less correspondence from this part of their statements than those that describe the earlier part of the day. Even so, there are some striking assertions of certainty:

[...] I saw a person lying **obviously** unconscious on the grass being tendered [sic] to by fans who **clearly** did not understand first aid. (V76)

This is interesting because of the contrast in epistemic stance that precedes it: “The scene I saw **from a distance** was, in my opinion, chaos” (V74). In V74, V emphasises the physical *remove* from which she appraises the “scene” (“from a distance”). The nature of that scene immediately follows in V75: “I accept the police cordon was necessary but I felt the police watching the Nottingham Forrest [sic] fans specifically was unwarranted”. This is the only sentence in V’s statement that appears to criticise the police and its paratactic positioning with V74 makes it likely that there is a cohesive tie linking the “chaos” with the police behaviour. Interestingly, in the statements offered by the South Yorkshire Police, many of which were heavily altered (HIP 2012; Scraton 2016; Canning 2018), the force were directed that “there should be no reference to the word “CHAOTIC” or any of its derivatives which would give rise to the assumption that complete control had been lost at the ground” (cited in HIP 2012: 356, capitals in original). The modal distance in V74 sits oddly with the epistemic commitment in V76 above, in which V appears at no such remove and has no trouble discerning the scene where it negatively appraises Liverpool fans. She also expresses attitudinal stance in the emphatic adverbials. Using both “obviously” and “clearly” together, however, seems gratuitous; the intensifying function of “obviously” seems redundant and using both together may have the effect of undermining what is actually claimed as “clear” and “obvious”. As Garner puts it, using “clearly” and “obviously” even on their own “protest too much. They signal weakness” (Garner 2004b: 363). They are used here and throughout both statements to intensify or modalise propositions that document, directly or indirectly, a pejorative stance on Liverpool fans. This raises questions about the veracity of this evidence.

There are other epistemically strong sentences that, like V76, combine with attitudinal marking (we have not counted these separately other than when they occur without epistemic shading). Examples include the following:

I remember thinking and commenting amongst ourselves that **it was strange** having a section of Liverpool fans in the Kop by the North Stand but I would have to say no trouble did occur and that area was well policed. (V57)

I noticed and **found it unusual** that there was a small triangular section between the Spion Kop and the North Stand which was filled with Liverpool fans. (J56)

In my opinion, the police cordon formed following the removal of these **hooligans** was a **wise and sensible precaution** in view of the number of Liverpool fans now spilled onto the pitch. (V69)

Police Officers formed a line across the football pitch **obviously** to prevent further fans who had spilled out of the pens, crossing over the ground to the Nottingham Forest fans [sic] enclosure. (J66)

In the V69 sentence, this is the first mention of any police cordon or line on the pitch (see also V75), yet it is presented as having already been introduced into the narrative with the definite article “the”. It contains “opinion” (marked in V69 explicitly as such – and see our earlier point about framing for police impartiality), and is attitudinal in a number of ways: “hooligans” describes the behaviour of Liverpool fans using pejorative appraisal, whereas “wise and sensible precaution” describes the behaviour of police using positive appraisal (which makes her critical assessment of police for the same cordon in V75 odd). The binomial structure in V’s proposition is typically legalese / police register (see also the binominals in V57, V69, and J56 above), and “in view of ...” contains a hidden (and unsubstantiated) implicature that the fans would invariably cause trouble. In J66, the “obviously” foregrounds the reasonableness of the cordon and again indirectly praises the officers for their proactive behaviour. It should be noted that the South Yorkshire Police came under heavy criticism for instituting this cordon in response to what they claim to have been told was a pitch invasion which in turn invoked a “hooligan” frame (Canning 2018). While the cordon was in place, fans were treating the dying and carrying the dead off the pitch. Indeed, as the Liverpool fans tended to the injured, V’s statement switches from weak to strong epistemic stance to report the following:

[...] the method of heart to heart massage I saw being given by [Liverpool] fans was **frantic and hopelessly inadequate**. (V77)

Here the witness claims epistemic commitment, “I saw”, to what is undeniably attitudinal, yet, just three sentences previously in V74 mentioned above, V “distance[s]” herself from the lexically under-specific “chaos” she reports having seen.

4.2.1 *Weaker commitment*

While the above examples show strong epistemic commitment, the witnesses' experiences to and in the stadium are communicated predominately in hedged assertions with much greater attitudinal gloss. The following serve as examples:

I **did not realise** what had happened but I **think** the feeling was in the Nottingham Forrest [sic] end that the Liverpool fans were causing trouble. (V64)

[...] I **could see** a dozen Liverpool supporters who I **assume** had got through the fences come running down to the Spion Kop end. (V65)

[...] fans spilled out onto the pitch I **presume** through a gate at the front of the pens. (J62)

I **could not particularly describe** these youths but they were all from the Liverpool end and were of varying ages, in red and white colours. (V70)

I **felt** the police watching the Nottingham Forrest [sic] fans specifically was unwarranted. (V75)

I am a trained first aider and I **can say that**, although he **may** have already died or **may** have died in any case, the method of heart to heart massage I saw being given by fans was frantic and hopelessly inadequate. (V77)

It was not until the fire brigade arrived with **what I took to be** resuscitation equipment was put to good use and the assistance given to injured people **appeared** to be carried on more effectively. (V82)

The sentence V64 is oddly marked by two cognition verbs ("realise" and "think"), the former of which is negated, and also by the nominalisation "the feeling", which makes the markedly hedged claim that Liverpool fans were "causing trouble" unequivocally weak. Yet, its inclusion as evidential information appears to be accepted. This is unusual given that the justification for the altering of statements by the SYP was to "remove expressions of opinion" (Home Office, HOM000030920001 1–2; HIP 2012:331). V65 and J62 feature conjecture (but note V's acknowledgement that the pens were "fence[ed]", which validates our earlier point in the discussion of V59 above). The remaining examples above from the V statement are typical of the weak modality offered in this latter part of the statements.

4.2.2 *Attitudinal stance*

We want to conclude this section with a final word on the attitudinal stance adopted in this segment. As in the previous segment, the focus seems to be on

the negative behaviours of the Liverpool fans, who, in spite of their instrumentality in the rescue effort, are presented in both statements as ineffective, and at times, detrimental to resuscitation efforts. Both witnesses describe what can only be referred to as a kind of pitch invasion when it became obvious that a disaster was occurring:

Shortly after the players had gone off I **could see** a dozen Liverpool supporters who I **assume** had got through the fences come running down to the Spion Kop end. They were waving their fists and beckoning at the Forrest [sic] fans in a gesture I **understood** to be a **hostile act**. (V64–65)

The next thing at about ten past three when the players had left the pitch was that half a dozen fans **made a charge** from the Liverpool end down towards us in the Nottingham Forest end. The Liverpool supporters ran down **tantilising** [sic] the Nottingham fans in the Spion Kop, they **gesticulated** with there [sic] fists **enticing** the opposing supporters. (J64–65)³

The “charge” of Liverpool fans is presented here as an aggressive act of deliberate goading in both statements, although qualified in V’s with a cognition verb “I understood” (but see our discussion of V69 and police-constructed impartiality). The lexical choices are all pejorative terms and direct the reader to interpret the actions documented as wilful acts of football hooliganism. Indeed, just two sentences later, V states unequivocally “The police cleared **these hooligans** off the pitch” (V68). Immediately afterwards, we get V69 and J66 justifying the police cordon (see above discussion). The paratactic positioning of these two events may be deliberate: the (publicly) heavily criticised police cordon would appear to have full justification according to both V and J’s witness testimonies, notwithstanding V’s criticism in V75.

5. Textual discourse-worlds

Having examined modal-worlds for their epistemic commitment and attitudinal gloss, we now want to turn to the discourse world of the story generation itself. This is the reality in which the witness and police scribe interact in order to generate the story that appears on the witness statement (and which may also include the writing of the statement). This forensic world (known in Gibbons (2003) as the “primary reality”) can be described in TWT terms as the textual discourse-world (tDW), traces of which appear in the final statements. These

3. The orthographic errors (‘there’ for ‘their’) in J’s statement do not appear in V’s which indicates that in spite of the overwhelming similarities in construction there were two police scribes.

traces, which we call “tDW returns”, anchor the story (and the reader) to the forensic context. Textual discourse-world returns are interesting as they indicate the presence of an interlocutor whose conversational turns are woven into the narrative as if they formed part of the witnesses’ own monologues. Our analysis of the tDW returns suggests that the police scribe has, at key points, intervened in the telling of the narrative, and as such, foregrounds the dialogic nature or co-constructedness of what are taken evidentially (by the court) to be monologic witness testimonies. They also give a clue as to what direction the interviewing officer is steering the focus of the narrative. There are several points in the two statements whereby the narrative returns to the tDW. The first series are taken from the V statement and are reproduced below. Where there are corresponding pairs of sentences (but not paired tDW returns) we follow the extract with the paired J reference in parentheses:

[...] already one or two cars had arrived and were arriving which clearly contained football supporters although **I could not say** of which team.

(V9) (see J12 for pairing)

It would be fair to say at this stage the crowd was already beginning to arrive and a few people, wearing red and white colours, were already milling about in the Peniston [sic] Rd area although **I could not say I saw anything untoward**.

(V11) (see J12–13)

I remember thinking that [...].

(V12) (see J14)

Again, excepting the volume of fans at that early stage, **I would not say** there was anything remarkable about what I saw.

(V14)

I recall hearing several people shouting across, ‘Let’s go find pub’.(V24) (see J24)

I remember overhearing some supporters discussing which beer to buy [...].

(V34) (see J36)

In hindsight, **I suppose** they [Liverpool fans] might not have realised what was going on, but, nevertheless, their actions were those of hooligans.

(V67)

I do not feel I could offer any more relevant information, save to say that, [...].

(V58)

As these examples show, the role of the witness is marked by cognition verbs (“recall”, “remember”) and nominal markers of time (“hindsight”), while negation signals their inability to adequately fulfil their role as witness in some instances (“I do not feel that”, “I could not say”). It is interesting that V11 and V14 use negation to deny propositions not yet documented in the statement, and so arguably not part of the common ground, which raises questions as to who initiated the topics.

Additionally, there are eight tDW returns in the V statement which have corresponding tDW returns in the J statement as outlined in Table 4:

Table 4. Corresponding tDW returns in V and J

V	J
17. [...] and I remember the barriers being across the road and manned.	18. [...] and I remember now that the barriers were in place across the ends of our road and Police Officers were manning them.
34. I would not say I saw anyone drunk but they were all in high spirits and drinking as if it were going out of fashion.	33. I can honestly say that the fans were drinking heavily but were certainly not drunk, just in high spirits.
60. From 2.20pm (1420) to the time the players came out there was nothing more I could really add except to say when they did come out there was a surge, quite noticeable, in the terraces I now know as pens 3 and 4.	59. From twenty past two to the point of kick-off, there is not really much more I can say except at approximately twenty to three, the football teams came out for a warm up and at this time pens three and four were full up but pens one, two, five and six still had spaces.
65. [...] I could see a dozen Liverpool supporters who I assume had got through the fences com running down to the Spion Kop end.	62. [...] fans spilled out on to the pitch I presume through a gate at the front of the pens.
70. I could not particularly describe these youths but they were all from the Liverpool end and were of varying ages in red and white colours.	67. I could not describe the youths in any detail, other than they were Liverpool fans of varying ages, the majority of which were wearing Liverpool colours.
80. I can't describe any of the fans trying to revive him but there were about ten around him	78. The people who were trying to revive him I couldn't really describe , there was so much going on for me to remember.
85. I would be prepared to attend the enquiry if required.	80. I would like to say that I will gladly go to any hearing if I am required.

In these examples, V's narrative acknowledges her role as witness through the use of the verb "remember" (V17) in that the purpose of the interaction (i.e. a goal-directed forensic event) is overtly marked. In V34 and J33, the word "drunk" (or any synonym of "drunk") does not appear prior to its inclusion here as a negated clause, which suggests that the idea of Liverpool fans being drunk has been introduced by a third party (e.g. the police officer taking the statement) in order to be denied. J goes a bit further and offers a concessionary proposition, before giving an outright denial ("certainly not drunk"). In short, the notion of (not) "drunk" fans is likely invoked here as a response to an undocumented insti-

tutional intervention. The police officer here is likely the source of this topic of “drunkenness”.

In both V60 and J59 we can see a detailed and mirrored reference to clock time (“From 2.20pm (1420) to the time the players came out” and “From twenty past two to the point of kick-off” a pattern throughout both statements (there are 11 (V) and 9 (J) instances of clock time alone). As Fox (1993, 187) notes, “police officers are obsessed by time. Or so it seems from their statements”. It has been shown that witnesses tend to give very limited temporal information when freely recounting their experiences, but do so only when prompted (Rock 2001).

Sentences V60 (and J59) and the remainder thereafter occur while at the stadium during the period of the fatal crush, and it is also where V and J are less able to fulfil their role as witnesses (e.g. “I can’t really describe”). The events that precipitate these negated propositions present the Liverpool fans in a pejorative light (see Appendix V64–69, and V77; J64–66, 75, 78), and are immediately followed by on-record failures to describe more precisely who these fans are, but crucially, V and J are able to identify them as Liverpool fans. Strangely, even though at this point in both narratives the witnesses are sat together in the ground, and so arguably could be expected to concur in their statements, the opposite is actually the case. It is from this point that both narratives exhibit the greatest variation in form and content. Moreover, as television and CCTV footage from the disaster clearly shows, Liverpool fans led the rescue effort on the pitch, yet for all V and J’s epistemic distance in relaying this stage of the narrative both witnesses have no trouble identifying fans as “hooligans” whose resuscitation efforts were “hopelessly inadequate” (V77).

6. Conclusion

This article has incorporated a cognitive stylistic analysis (i.e. TWT) with an attempt to visualise and quantify the TW structures of witness statements. Its primary purpose was to demonstrate how modality is employed to indicate the strength/weakness of propositions that tell the at issue event, how the narration of the event is linguistically mediated in the witness statements, and how certain information is packaged via the mediating process. Through this analysis we hope to have shown that a witness statement is an expression of events through an amalgamation of mental spaces or worlds – spatial, temporal, modal, and discursal – and that events that are mediated through modal-worlds place that “evidence” on a precarious footing. Whether the modality concerns attitude or epistemic commitment or distance, the point is that the propositions it governs are typically enactor-accessible, less factive and more subjective than un-

modalised propositions, and therefore, less evidentially reliable. In spite of this, such evidence forms part of the “evidence-in-chief”. This analysis also shows that through attending to tDW returns, the forensic context can be made visible, as well as the dialogism inherent – but not documented – in the story generation.

Modal-worlds are by definition enactor-accessible and thus unverifiable in an objective reality. That they proliferate throughout both V and J’s statements begs the question why are they there? What purpose does subjective – and therefore non-evidential – information serve? And for whom? Additionally, both statements exhibiting strikingly similar patterns of modality (amongst other things) at the same points in the narratives raises questions about their authenticity in terms of authorship. In telling a story, even the same story – even the same story twice by one teller – we use different but overlapping lexicogrammatical structures and features. As research into authorship and idiolect has shown “[...] in any comparison of two texts, the more similar the set of items chosen, the greater the likelihood that one of the texts was derived, at least in part, from the other [...], rather than being composed independently” (Coulthard 2004: 434, see also Grant & Baker 2001). On the issue of whether (and to what extent) V and J authored their own statements – this jury is still out.

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Appendix

The V statement (sentences numbered for ease of reference)

1. I am a single woman living at the above address with my friend, [redacted].
2. I have lived at the address for a period of two years and with the house [redacted] from Sheffield Wednesday Football Ground, I have become accustomed to the ritual of football crowds coming and going and have previously witnessed crowds on cup semi-final days.
3. I have been a life long supporter of Sheffield Wednesday and do, together with friends, regularly visit the ground to watch games.

4. On Friday 14th April 1989 (140489) I was given an opportunity to purchase some tickets for the cup semi-final which was due to be played at the ground on the following day between Liverpool and Nottingham Forrest.
5. The tickets were from a friend who knew somebody in the box office.
6. We had no choice in where the tickets were for and paid £ 6 for the ticket to stand in the Spion Kop end where the Nottingham Forrest fans were to be placed.
7. The other friends who purchased tickets were [redacted] and two friends, [redacted] and [redacted] (can be contacted on Sheffield [redacted]).
8. On the morning of Saturday 15th April 1989 (150489), I got up very early because I knew if I was to go shopping I would want to beat the crowd.
9. It must have been 9am (0900) when I left the house in company with [redacted] I noticed as we left that, already one or two cars had arrived and were arriving which clearly contained football supporters although I could not say of which team.
10. We went towards Sheffield City Centre.
11. It would be fair to say at this stage the crowd was already beginning to arrive and a few people, wearing red and white colours, were already milling about in the Peniston Rd area although I could not say I saw anything untoward.
12. I remember thinking that with the crowd already arriving in private vehicles it was most unusual for the police not to have cordoned off the side roads in the immediate vicinity of the ground.
13. We must have been shopping for a good two and a half hours and returned to park the car outside the house around 11.30 am (1130).
14. Again, excepting the volume of fans at that early stage, I would not say there was anything remarkable about what I saw.
15. I still had shopping to fetch so [redacted] and I decided to walk to the Gateway Food Store on the Halifax Rd nearby to fetch the few remaining items.
16. It would be about 12.30 pm (1230) when we set off, having stopped at home for a bite to eat.
17. We walked down our road to Leppings Ln and I remember the barriers being across the road and manned.
18. As we got into Leppings Ln I saw there was already a number of fans trickling towards the ground.
19. As we turned the corner, and passed the traffic island into Halifax Rd, I would say that is when I saw the crowds really arriving.
20. There were coach loads of fans unloading in the road just past the Niagara Police Club.
21. It was my opinion that the volume of crowd was thousands as opposed to hundreds.
22. The fans were wearing red and white and were in quite a boisterous mood.
23. I could tell that they were Liverpool fans as they were shouting to one another.
24. I recall hearing several people shouting across, "Let's go find pub."
25. They all headed off up Halifax Rd (the opposite direction to the ground) with a sense of urgency.
26. As we walked up Halifax Rd we started to mingle with the crowds.
27. I did notice that there was a heavy police presence but the police were quite clearly saturated in the vicinity of the public houses and more sparse in between.
28. It was as we were walking along in an area the police were not so heavily patrolling that Liverpool people were asking around to see if they could purchase tickets.
29. They were all Liverpool people asking and were all in late teens or early twenties.

30. On seeing this I commented to [redacted] that on the day of last year's semi-final, people were trying to sell tickets and this year they were trying to buy.
31. By now a steady stream of the people coming down were drinking from beer cans and bottles, not only this, they were also carrying four packs of cans.
32. By the time we had reached Wadsley Bridge, I noticed that the police presence had withered down to nothing which surprised me in view of the number of people and shops in that area.
33. The people drinking from cans were, by now, the vast majority of the people in that area and I would not say they were sipping from the cans, rather they were consuming alcohol as fast as possible.
34. I would not say I saw anyone drunk but they were all in high spirits and drinking as if it were going out of fashion.
35. As we crossed the road to go to the Gateway Supermarket, the football supporters were stood in groups drinking from cans and bottles.
36. I also saw a steady stream of fans going in and out of the supermarket, obviously purchasing more.
37. We went into the supermarket and whilst we were near the off-licence section I watched a steady stream of fans going through.
38. I remember overhearing some supporters discussing which beer to buy, they were placing great emphasis on which were the strongest and I saw nearly each supporter was going through the checkout with two four packs.
39. The beer I witnessed being bought was not cheap brand names but rather the most expensive Pilsner Lagers such as Stella Artois.
40. I knew the people buying the beer were from Liverpool because of their accents and, in my mind, from what I was overhearing and seeing, there was a large element who were not only keen to drink as much as they could but were all out to get drunk.
41. The sort of supporters I saw were all male, white, aged 18 yrs to 25 yrs, and, whilst we were in the area, no more than a minute, some 18 to 20 supporters must have gone past and more were coming through.
42. We left the supermarket and rushed back as we had to meet friends.
43. The journey back was similar in route and the obvious thing that struck you was the size of the crowd and the fact the majority was still drinking.
44. The atmosphere had livened up and I would say a large number, from demeanour and language, were on their way to being drunk.
45. On the way back down to the house, again in the non-policed areas, we were approached by numerous people with Liverpool accents asking to purchase tickets.
46. In no more than 100 yards we must have been asked by 30 people if we had tickets.
47. Although I refer to Halifax Rd being partially non-policed, it would only be fair to say that the police were in control.
48. In fact, I witnessed a policeman telling one supporter to pick up litter he had dropped.
49. We must have got back to the house by 1.10 pm (1310).
50. Our friends, [redacted] and [redacted], arrived about 1.30 pm (1330) and at about 1.45 pm (1345) we all set off via Penistone Rd to the match.
51. We had purchased the tickets the day prior through a friend and the tickets meant we were to be standing with the Nottingham Forrest fans in the Spion Kop.
52. We walked to the ground and were inside within ten minutes.

53. One thing that was noticeable was that the fans on the way to that part of the ground were not drinking, but that may well have been due to proximity to the ground.
54. The fans, who I took to be Nottingham Forrest fans, were a lot less boisterous than the Liverpool fans that we had seen.
55. When we got in the ground I was surprised by the lack of smell of alcohol which I had expected not having had a drink.
56. We would have been in the Spion Kop on a barrier near the North Stand side and stood chatting and looking about the ground.
57. I remember thinking and commenting amongst ourselves that it was strange having a section of Liverpool fans in the Kop by the North Stand but I would have to say no trouble did occur and that area was well policed.
58. I do not feel I could offer any more relevant information, save to say that, in my opinion, by 2.20 pm (1420) the terraced central areas below the West Stand appeared already to be full to capacity (pens 3 and 4 on ground map).
59. It was noticeable that the wings of the terraces still had space but as more people came in from the centre they did not fill out.
60. From 2.20 pm (1420) to the time the players came out there was nothing more I could really add except to say when they did come out there was a surge, quite noticeable, in the terraces I now know as pens 3 and 4.
61. The game kicked off at about 3 pm (1500) and I would say just four minutes after that time there was a noticeable wave as fans in pens 3 and 4 appeared to crush forward.
62. The movement was as much to the right and left as forward.
63. The next thing I noticed was some sort of chaos in the area of pens 3 and 4, people were being pulled up into the West Stand, people were being let onto the pitch.
64. I did not realise what had happened but I think the feeling was in the Nottingham Forrest end that the Liverpool fans were causing trouble.
65. Shortly after the players had gone off I could see a dozen Liverpool supporters who I assume had got through the fences come running down to the Spion Kop end.
66. They were waving their fists and beckoning at the Forrest fans in a gesture I understood to be a hostile act.
67. In hindsight, I suppose they might not have realised what was going on, but, nevertheless, their actions were those of hooligans.
68. The police cleared these hooligans off the pitch.
69. In my opinion, the police cordon formed following the removal of these hooligans was a wise and sensible precaution in view of the number of Liverpool fans now spilled onto the pitch.
70. I could not particularly describe these youths but they were all from the Liverpool end and were of varying ages, in red and white colours.
71. By about 4.10 pm (1610), the crowd received the first public announcement to the effect that they should remain in the ground to allow emergency services to get through.
72. There was still no explanation given as to the type of incident that we were witnessing.
73. I would like to say that there was, from time to time, spasmodic applause from the Nottingham Forrest fans but I would say that was in appreciation of the brave efforts of people tending to the dead and injured.
74. The scene I saw from a distance was in, my opinion, chaos.
75. I accept the police cordon was necessary but I felt the police watching the Nottingham Forrest fans specifically was unwarranted.

76. From where I was I would say I saw a person lying obviously unconscious on the grass being tendered to by fans who clearly did not understand first aid.
77. I am a trained first aider and I can say that, although he may have already died or may have died in any case, the method of heart to heart massage I saw being given by fans was frantic and hopelessly inadequate.
78. I assume he died as he was later carried out covered up.
79. The man had black hair, was wearing jeans and I think a dark coloured t-shirt.
80. I could not describe any of the fans trying to revive him but there were about ten around him.
81. My other observations would be at no time did any person appear to be taking charge of the situation.
82. It was not until the fire brigade arrived with what I took to be resuscitation equipment was put to good use and the assistance given to injured people appeared to be carried on more effectively.
83. I suppose it would have been 4.45 pm (1645) that we left the ground and returned home.
84. I was very distressed as I realised my brother was working at the match in the capacity of plain clothed police officer but I soon learned he was safe.
85. I would be prepared to attend the enquiry if required.

The J statement (sentences numbered for ease of reference)

1. I am a single woman living at the above address with my friend, [redacted].
2. I have lived at this address for two years and I am quite used to seeing football matches, supporters and Police Officers on Saturday afternoons.
3. I am, in fact, a Sheffield Wednesday Football Club supporter and attend football matches from time to time.
4. This year the 15 April 1989 was the date for the Semi-final cup match between Nottingham Forest and Liverpool Football Clubs and both [redacted] and I decided to attend the football match as it was being held at Lepping Lane football ground.
5. The tickets were bought for the game on the Friday before the match for the fee of £ 6.00.
6. We bought them from a friend of a friend via the Sheffield Wednesday Football Club ticket office.
7. We had no choice on where we sat in the ground and our luck of the draw was to have tickets for the standing area in the "Cop" with the Nottingham Forest supporters.
8. When we purchased the tickets there was four in all, one for myself and [redacted] and the other two for two other friends [redacted] and [redacted].
9. We both, that's [redacted] and I, got up early on the day of the game to organise a few things in order that we could get to the game in good time.
10. I first went out of the house at nine o'clock on that Saturday in order to do some shopping.
11. We went out early so as not to miss being allowed into our own road as the Police more often than not block off the end of the road.
12. When we went out to Sheffield City centre to do our shopping, we could see clearly football supporters from both teams, but at this time it was more family supporters arriving.
13. We drove into town via Penistone Road.
14. When we set out, I was surprised to find the Police had not already blocked off the road in view that supporters had already started to arrive.
15. We were in the town for a few hours and returned home to leave our car outside the house.

16. Both [redacted] and I then decided to walk across to the “Gateway” Supermarket in Halifax Road to fetch some other items of shopping at twelve thirty.
17. Our friends still hadn’t arrived so we continued to the shops.
18. We walked down our road to Leppings Lane and I remember now that the barriers were in place across the ends of our road and Police Officers were manning them.
19. As I got into Leppings Lane, I could see a number of fans making their way to the ground, but as I passed the junction with the island at Halifax Road, it was now I could see hoards of fans arriving.
20. There was hundreds of fans off loading by the Niagara Police Club.
21. In fact, I would go as far as to say that there was thousands of football fans.
22. I presume that they were Liverpool fans as they spoke with a Liverpool accent and wore red and white.
23. They were all excitable and in high spirits, but they weren’t going to the ground.
24. I heard a few say “Let’s find a pub, where’s there a pub” and they went up Halifax Road with a sense of urgency.
25. As [redacted] and I walked up Halifax Road, we could see Police Officers along the way, but the Police presence was heavier near to the public house, which was, obviously, to monitor the fans by the pubs going in and out; where the Police presence was more sparse [sic], that is between the pubs, we were approached by several fans asking if we had any spare tickets.
26. I say they were fans, it would only be an assumption if I said they were ticket touts.
27. We assumed also that they were from Liverpool by there [sic] accent.
28. All of them that asked us were all white, between late “teens to mid-twenties and that’s all I can say.
29. This made me think, in fact [redacted] commented that last year, it was quite the opposite that there was plenty of people selling tickets as if they had excess amounts.
30. We continued up the road with the supporters and, at this time, there were fans coming back down the road carrying cans and bottles of beer and they were drinking from there and down the road as fast as they could they were carrying four packs of beer and drinking one after another as if they had to drink them before they got to wherever they were going.
31. We continued up to Waddsley Bridge and we noticed the density of drinking supporters had thickened, but the other thing was the Police presence had just stopped near to the shops.
32. This I found strange because this was obviously where the fans were buying all the alcohol from.
33. I can honestly say that the fans were drinking heavily but were certainly not drunk, just in high spirits.
34. [redacted] and I crossed the road to the Supermarket and we could see a number of fans sitting and standing outside consuming alcohol and talking.
35. We both saw that the number of fans going in and out buying alcohol was a constant stream and all they were buying was alcohol.
36. [redacted] and I went into the store and went to buy some lager ourselves and whilst at the display, fans were discussing which lagers were the strongest and that it was the strongest they should be buying.
37. We again presumed they were fans by there [sic] accents.

38. We bought our lager and as we stood at the checkout we noticed that the lager the supporters were purchasing were not cheap name brands but expensive strong ones and each fan was buying on average at least two "four" packs each.
39. In my mind, I could see that from the quantity and type of beer they were buying an element of the supporters were out to drink as much as they could in order to get drunk.
40. Again, I can't really describe any of the youths, there were some fifteen to eighteen pass through as and in the time we purchased our beer.
41. They were all male and in there [sic] late teens.
42. We left the store and began to come back quite quickly for fear of keeping our friends waiting.
43. We returned home again via Halifax Road, across Wadsley Bridge and down into Leppings Lane and home.
44. During our return journey home, there were more people approaching us for tickets and the number of fans drinking did not decrease.
45. The fans were quite excitable but they were well controlled by the Police along the route.
46. I would say in a space of 200 yards, we were approached by some thirty people looking to buy any spare tickets.
47. We arrived home, received our guests and had some lunch.
48. We set off again at approximately quarter to two walking to go to the football match via Penistone Road, along our route to the football match along Penistone Road.
49. The only comments I could make are that there was a distinct lack of alcohol in comparison to our earlier experience of being mixed with the Liverpool fans.
50. I know it could be said that this was because we were nearer to the ground, but I honestly don't think these people had drank so much.
51. I couldn't smell any alcohol on them, they weren't carrying alcohol, they weren't chanting or singing, but they were just as excitable.
52. We moved to the turnstile and although there was a large amount of fans, we got into the ground surprisingly easy.
53. There was no pushing or jostling, we were in the ground for approximately ten to two.
54. I stood looking around the ground looking at various pens and sections.
55. I watched out of interest as to the quantity of fans entering.
56. I noticed and found it unusual that there was a small triangular section between the Spion Kop and the North Stand which was filled with Liverpool fans.
57. Looking around the ground, we could see fans coming in and at about twenty past two the West Stand seating area was quite full and so was pens three and four.
58. It was obvious to me that the people arriving in good time were interested in standing behind the goal mouth the "Wings" below the West Stand were still quite sparse [sic].
59. From twenty past two to the point of kick-off there is not really much more I can say except at approximately twenty to three, the football teams came out for a warm up and at this time pens three and four were full but pens one, two, five and six still had spaces.
60. At three o'clock kick off took place and the match began and at four minutes past three, I noticed a sudden wave of fans surge involuntary from the back of the pens three and four, diagonal from right to left.
61. I thought a barrier had given way.
62. The next thing I saw was total chaos fans spilled out onto the pitch I presume through a gate at the front of the pens.
63. People were being lifted from the pens into the stands above.

64. The next thing at about ten past three when the players had left the pitch was that half a dozen fans made a charge from the Liverpool end down towards us in the Nottingham Forest end.
65. The Liverpool supporters ran down tantilising [sic] the Nottingham fans in the Spion Kop, they gesticulated with there [sic] fists enticing the opposing supporters.
66. Police Officers formed a line across the football pitch obviously to prevent further fans who had spilled out of the pens, crossing over the ground to the Nottingham Forest fans enclosure.
67. I could not describe the youths in any detail, other than they were Liverpool fans of varying ages, the majority of which were wearing Liverpool colours.
68. We watched inquisitively not knowing what was happening.
69. At 4.10 p.m. the crowd received the first public announcement to the effect that we should remain in the ground to allow emergency services through.
70. The Nottingham Forest supporters were clapping whilst the emergency services went about there [sic] jobs.
71. In my opinion the supporters were clapping in acknowledgement of there [sic] efforts attending to the injured.
72. The only other thing I could say was that watching the incident, it surprised me to see that nobody took the lead to tend to the injured or generally organise everybody.
73. One thing that stood in my mind was that a group of fans brought a man onto the pitch area on an advertising board.
74. There were several people attending to him giving him heart massage and mouth to mouth resuscitation and, after a while, they stopped and covered his face with a jumper.
75. Some further fans came over to him and, for some reason, the apparently dead man was stripped to his underpants, they began to dress him and once dressed, carried him from the pitch and out of the ground.
76. The man who was apparently dead, I would describe as a white male of a very stocky build, in fact, he had a beer belly.
77. He looked about twenty five years of age and wore only green underpants.
78. When carried onto the pitch, he was dressed and carried from the pitch on an advertising board, but I couldn't describe the clothes they placed on him.
79. The people who were trying to revive him I couldn't really describe, there was so much going on for me to remember.
80. I can't say anything else about the day, there was so much going on.
81. I would like to say that I will gladly go to any hearing if I am required.
82. The emergency services performed a marvellous job and can only be commended.
83. I will help in any way I can.

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