

Sports journalism, fandom, and social cohesion: The framing of Springbok Eben Etzebeth's assault incident* on the Facebook pages of selected news organisations

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Dissertation accepted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree *Master of Arts in Communication* at the North-West University

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Graduation: June 2023

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DECLARATION

I, Bronwen Bain, hereby declare that this dissertation is my own work.

The text and bibliography reflect the sources I have consulted and sections with no sources are my own ideas and arguments.

Bronwen Bain

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30 November 2022

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- I would like to thank my parents and siblings for supporting me throughout this journey. Your support means more to me than I can ever put into words. I could not have done it without you.
- To my supervisors, thank you for guiding me through this study. I am eternally grateful for the time and effort you put into this, and I genuinely could not have asked for better supervisors.
- To my friends who were always there cheering me on - thank you.

ABSTRACT

South Africa is a proud sporting nation, and sport is seen as a cultural phenomenon that can contribute to social cohesion, which refers to the shared sense of solidarity and community within society. However, the sport has also been an area of conflict in South Africa due to aspects such as prescribed racial quotas for sports teams. It is in this context that sports journalists work and in which fans support athletes and teams – nowadays often through two-way communication about sport on social media platforms.

In this study, the Facebook pages of three news organisations with a strong focus on sport, *SA Rugby magazine*, *Sport24* and *TimesLIVE*, were studied following an alleged incident during which Springbok rugby player Eben Etzebeth was accused of assaulting and using racial slurs on men of mixed race outside the Langebaan Yacht Club in the Western Cape of South Africa. The alleged attack happened days before the 2019 Rugby World Cup team announcement, an international sporting event that Etzebeth was expected to play a key part in and in which South Africa hoped to perform – among other reasons to strengthen the nation's cohesiveness. A literature study was employed to create a theoretical framework focusing on social cohesion, sports journalism, and fandom. Subsequently, a qualitative content analysis was used to analyse news reports about the Etzebeth incident posted by the news organisations on their Facebook pages and the comments of fans in which they responded to the news about the alleged incident. Framing and fandom as theories guided the interpretation of positive and negative frames that contributed to and undermined social cohesion.

A total of 498 comments and 13 news reports were analysed. The results showed that Etzebeth was framed more negatively by the journalists of all three publications, and fans framed him more positively. The frames identified in the sports news reports were predominantly attributional framing, which means journalists accentuated certain aspects to make certain issues appeal more to the audience than others. Journalists focused on the orientation to the greater good and how a racial incident involving a rugby star undermined social cohesion. The dominant frame amongst fans was situational framing, as fans placed the incident in the context of the Rugby World Cup instead of social cohesion. Fans focused on inclusion and belonging by discussing Etzebeth's inclusion in the Rugby World Cup and showed their affiliation with the Springboks by putting social injustice aside. However, despite being more positive, the fans' frames did not unequivocally contribute to or undermine social cohesion. In fact, in several instances, fans elevated social cohesion above sport. The study concludes that based on the empirical data and analysis sports journalism and fandom are elements that can inform social cohesion.

Key terms:

Eben Etzebeth; Facebook; fandom; fans; framing; social cohesion; Springboks; sport; sports journalism.

Title:

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OPSOMMING

Suid-Afrika is 'n trotse sportnasie en sport, as 'n kulturele fenomeen, kan bydra tot sosiale kohesie, wat verwys na gedeelde solidariteit en gedeelde belange in 'n gemeenskap. Sport is egter ook 'n bron van konflik in Suid-Afrika weens, onder meer, voorgeskrewe rassekwotas vir sportspanne. Dit is in die konteks wat sportjoernaliste werk en ondersteuners atlete en spanne aanmoedig – deesdae dikwels deur middel van tweerigtingkommunikasie oor sport op sosialemedia-platforms.

In hierdie studie is die Facebook-blaaie van drie nuusorganisasies, *SA Rugby magazine*, *Sport24* en *TimesLIVE*, wat al drie sterk fokus op sportberrigewing, bestudeer na afloop van 'n beweerde voorval waartydens die Springbokrugbyspeler, Eben Etzebeth, daarvan beskuldig is dat hy bruin¹ mans aangerand het en rassistiese opmerkings gemaak het. Die beweerde insident, buite die Langebaan-seiljagklub in die Wes-Kaap van Suid-Afrika, het plaasgevind dae voordat die 2019 Rugbywêreldbekerspan aangekondig is, 'n internasionale sportgeleentheid waarin Etzebeth na verwagting sou speel en wat sosiale kohesie kon versterk.

'n Literatuurstudie is gebruik om 'n teoretiese raamwerk te skep deur te fokus op sosiale kohesie, sportjoernalistiek en ondersteunerskap (*fandom*). Daarna is 'n kwalitatiewe inhoudsanalise gedoen van die nuusberigte oor die Etzebeth-insident wat geplaas is op die Facebook-blaaie van die geselekteerde nuusorganisasies, sowel as die plasings van ondersteuners in reaksie op dié nuusberigte. Raming, sowel as ondersteunerskapteorie, is gebruik om die data te ontleed. 'n Totaal van 498 plasings deur ondersteuners en 13 nuusberigte is in die tydperk 25-31 Augustus – die week onmiddellik ná die beweerde voorval – bestudeer.

Die resultate dui daarop dat Etzebeth oorwegend negatief in die nuusberigte van al drie publikasies geraam is en dat die ondersteuners se plasings hom positief geraam het. In die nuusberigte het attributiewe of toeskryfbare raming (*attributional framing*) die sterkste gemanifesteer, wat beteken dat die nuuspublikasies en joernaliste sekere aspekte sterker aksentueer sodat dit meer by die gehoor kan aanklank vind. In ondersteuners se plasings het situasionele of situasieraming (*situational framing*) meer prominent na vore gekom deurdat die insident in die konteks van die Rugbywêreldbekertoernooi geplaas is eerder as in 'n konteks van sosiale kohesie. Ondersteuners het gefokus op insluiting en geborgenheid deur Etzebeth se insluiting in die toernooi te bespreek en het hul affiliasie met die Springbokke bo sosiale geregtigheid geplaas. Hoewel ondersteuners Etzebeth meer positief geraam het, is daar voorbeelde in die data waar sosiale kohesie wel voorrang geniet het bo sport en as sodanig is die sterk sosialisering en identifisering wat met sportondersteuners geassosieer word ietwat ontsetel. Die empiriese data en die analise dui daarop dat sportjoernalistiek en ondersteunerskap (*fandom*) 'n invloed op sosiale kohesie het.

¹ In the South African context, with its history of racial classification, the terms 'brown' and 'coloured' have both been used to describe people of mixed race. The Afrikaans version of the abstract uses the term 'brown' (bruin).

Sleutel woorde:

Eben Etzebeth; Facebook; ondersteunerskap; ondersteuners; raming; sosiale kohesie; Springboks; sport; sportjoernalistiek.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction, background, and context

South Africa is a proud sporting nation where sport plays a transformative role, judging by the national celebrations after South Africa won the 1995 and the 2019 Rugby World Cup tournaments, respectively (Deutsche Welle, 2019). Following the win at the Rugby World Cup in 2019, Cape Town-based company biNu conducted a survey to investigate how South Africans felt about the achievement. 99% of respondents said they were aware of the accomplishment, 65% said it made them happy, 16% said it made them proud, and 10% said it made them excited. 88% said that sport contributes to their sense of belonging, while 85% said that sport could assist South Africans in combating racism and xenophobia (Human Sciences Research Council, 2019). This suggests that in the South African context, sport can contribute to social cohesion, which is defined as the degree to which a society is integrated and inclusive (Department of Arts and Culture, 2020; Engh *et al.*, 2015:37). In South Africa, terms such as “*Rainbow Nation*” and “*Ubuntu*” have been used to capture the nature of social cohesion (Abrahams, 2016:96). “*Rainbow Nation*” refers to the ideal of a democratic South Africa where all racial groups contribute to nation-building and democracy and diversity is recognised and respected (Sidanius, 2019:254; Vorster *et al.*, 2020:51). “*Ubuntu*” is an African philosophy which refers to the expression ‘I am what I am because of others’ and has a particular focus on humility and collectivism (Abubakre *et al.*, 2021). Communities who practice Ubuntu emphasise that actions interrelate to determine togetherness (Molose *et al.*, 2019). This is relevant to the study because in a cohesive society, inequalities and exclusions determined by race, gender, class, age, disability, or any other differences are either reduced or completely removed (Burns *et al.*, 2018:15; Department of Arts and Culture, 2020).

But social cohesion in South Africa remains one of the most pertinent challenges in the 27 years since Apartheid ended (French Development Agency, 2017; Burns *et al.*, 2018:1). Although the ability and potential of sport to support social cohesion in South Africa has been noted, sport is also an area of social conflict because of the application of racial quotas in sport. Transformation has been a core policy for the Department of Sport and Recreation since 2013 (Du Preez, 2011). There is a 60% racial quota for national sports in South Africa, meaning that 60% of the team members must be of colour, and while South Africa’s 2019 Rugby World Cup squad was transformed, there are ongoing debates about team selection and whether players were there on merit or because there is a quota to reach (Du Preez, 2011; Louw, 2019).

Nevertheless, sport's role in building social cohesion in divided societies has been seized upon by various sporting codes across the world. Campaigns used to promote social cohesion through sport include the 'No Room for Racism' campaign currently running in the English Premier League (Premier League, 2021). Between 30 April and 3 May 2021, the Football Association, alongside the Premier League, went silent on social media to show solidarity against racism, and players like Liverpool's Jordan Henderson and Arsenal legend Thierry Henry announced they would be participating on their personal accounts. Seattle Storm, the Women's NBA team, are also at the forefront of change in the United States. Their focused efforts to encourage people to get vaccinated, stand up for racial justice and voting rights, as well as protecting trans youth from discrimination received praise from American President Joe Biden (Hoffman, 2021). Similarly, in July 2019, the Springboks started a campaign called #StrongerTogether in a bid to get the country to throw their support behind the team before the World Cup tournament (SA Rugby, 2019).

Amid these efforts to use the Rugby World Cup to build social cohesion in 2019, on the eve of the South African squad announcement, lock Eben Etzebeth was accused on social media of allegedly^{2*} assaulting four men of mixed race outside the Langebaan Yacht Club, as well as using racial slurs. A grainy video of the incident appeared on social media; two of the complainants demanded over a million rand from the Springbok as compensation and took the matter to the Human Rights Commission (HRC) who filed four complaints in the Equality Court (Rugby Pass, 2019).

Etzebeth pleaded his innocence in the alleged racial assault incident, but social media, Facebook, and Twitter comments, in particular, did not die down after the ANC in the Western Cape called for his removal from the Rugby World Cup squad (Petersen, 2019). Because of Etzebeth's popularity as a player and the fact that he is a public figure and role model, the incident trended on social media, with the hashtags #LangebaanFour and #Langebaan being used to refer to the incident. The news media, including sports journalists, reported on the incident in print and on social media. Etzebeth maintained his innocence (Pijoos *et al.*, 2020), but the social media hype did not die down.

In November 2021, the Western Cape director of public prosecutions decided not to prosecute Eben Etzebeth and his cousin Emile Etzebeth after a witness and the complainant were unable to identify the assailant and another witness was found to be unreliable (Pijoos, 2021). Because a successful prosecution appeared unlikely, the case against the Etzebeths did not proceed to a court of law.

^{2*}When the researcher embarked on this study, the director of public prosecutions had not yet declined to prosecute Eben Etzebeth for the 2019 Langebaan assault incident. The word "alleged" was therefore omitted from the title when it was registered. However, for the sake of accuracy, the phrase "alleged racial incident" should have been used.

The focus of this study has been the Etzebeth incident in a South African context where social cohesion is contested. This incident was used as the case study, which has been described as an event in a real-life context where behaviour cannot be manipulated. Case studies assist researchers in examining data that is context-specific and give an in-depth understanding of the issue (Crowe *et al.*, 2011; Rashid *et al.*, 2019).

The context-specific data that have been investigated are social media posts on Facebook. The Facebook pages of the *Sunday Times* (and its daily online publication platform *TimesLIVE*), *News24 Sport*³ and *SA Rugby magazine* (*SA Rugby mag*) have been studied. All three publications have a sharp focus on covering sports but target readers with different demographics in their writing. Facebook posts of news reports by sports journalists about the Etzebeth incident have been investigated and explained in the method in 1.7.2. In addition, posts by sports fans on the Facebook pages of these three publications have also been studied.

Framing has been applied as the theory in this study. Framing theory explains how fans and selected news organisations expressed themselves about the Langebaan incident in their posts on the Facebook pages of the three selected news organisations.

Media framing describes how the salience of news coverage impacts how the audience interprets what is said in the news to make issues appear more prominent than others (Scheufele, 1999:103; Guggenheim *et al.*, 2015:208). It is used to construct a social reality, and language is essential because the message needs to have a direct impact on the receiver and their reactions (Feste, 2017, 2017; Eaton, 2020). Framing in the news context could take place in several ways: conflict between parties, human interest, consequence, morality, issue, and responsibility (Arowolo, 2017). This is especially relevant to this study because the case study involves race, conflict, human interest, consequence, morality, and responsibility, which can all be used to determine the online users' and the sports journalists' frames that were constructed in news reports published on social media during the period of the study. However, this is a broad outline of framing, which will be explained in further detail later in the study.

Sports journalism is no longer just a broadcast and print beat but rather a combination of both because journalists are required to write articles that are published online and feature articles published in print, as well as take photographs and videos (Del Carme, 2020). Social media is an important platform that sports journalists use to distribute sports news. In the context of social cohesion, sports journalism can contribute to strengthening cohesion because the more journalists highlight the

³ *Sport24* will be used in this study to refer to *News24 Sport* because the publication was *Sport24* until a recent rebrand and is now referred to as the sport section of *News24* (Qukula, 2022).

success of teams, the prouder and more united the citizens will feel. But sports journalism has come under fire for not holding athletes accountable when they are accused of wrongdoings, specifically when their actions occurred off the sports field. Examples of this are the Lance Armstrong doping scandal, Diego Maradona's drug allegations and Tiger Woods' marital issues and affairs. The way journalists present or frame sports stars, including Eben Etzebeth, therefore, becomes relevant.

But understanding sports fans is important in understanding the role that sport plays in society (Mastromartino *et al.*, 2017:2). In the social communication network that has been created in the domain of sports, fans are also a critical element. Sport creates a sense of attachment, identification and attachment, and fans use the internet and social media to learn more about the teams they support and the athletes who play for the team and to show their support for that team, social media is the key platform to do so (Carrington, 2013:380; Pegoraro, 2012:250). This brings the concept of sports fandom to the fore, where individuals watch sports as a way of identifying with others, to escape, or for self-presentation (Serazio, 2012:2). Studies have shown that team identification has a positive impact on social integration and coherence, so, social media helps to grow sports fandom by creating an environment where players are easily accessible, and connections can easily be built amongst fans through social media.

Nations (2021) defines social media sites as web-based communication platforms that allow relevant, social conversations among mutual contacts on a specific site. But Laub (2019) and Daniels (2013:702) state that social media, Facebook specifically, plays a large role in the creation and spread of hate speech and is often used in harmful ways or to evoke violence and has been studied extensively. To target hate speech and improve social cohesion, South Africa has introduced policies, codes of conduct and legislation, as well as monitoring, to promote social cohesion (South African Human Rights Commission, 2021:5).

Sports journalists and fans form part of a South African context in which sports can contribute to social cohesion. The Etzebeth case study has created an opportunity to investigate how journalists and fans frame sports stars in posts on selected publications' Facebook pages in a context where social cohesion is fragile.

Flowing from this context and background outline, the problem that this study seeks to address and the research questions that it seeks to answer have been formulated.

1.2. Problem statement

Sports journalism, a popular section of the news media, is known for providing results, analysis, and opinions to audiences on different distribution platforms, including social media. Sport in South Africa

has been an area of conflict in the country, enhanced by factors such as racial quotas. However, when social cohesion issues such as racist off-the-field incidents come to light, some sports journalists may rather pay attention to the team/player winning rather than the issue of social cohesion. Likewise, fans may also rather respond to news about their heroes and their teams than events that take place off the field.

Social media, in this study Facebook, can be used by journalists to publish sports news and creates a platform for fans to comment, like, dislike, and share views and opinions on sports news. These discussions or posts on the Facebook pages of selected news organisations and their contribution to social cohesion, or lack thereof, are the focus of this study.

The framing of the Springbok player Eben Etzebeth for his role in an alleged racial assault incident on the Facebook pages of selected news organisations by journalists and fans in a context like South Africa is the problem that has been investigated to understand how sport can both advance and undermine social cohesion in a socially networked society where the sport is a popular pastime. This study is important to explore the in South African context because of the power that sport has had on the country, and the potential it has to be used as a tool for promoting nation-building.

To determine how Eben Etzebeth was framed by journalists and the fans of selected publications, the following research questions have guided the study.

1.3. Research questions

1.3.1. General research question

How was Eben Etzebeth framed in the Langebaan alleged racial assault incident on the Facebook pages of selected news organisations in a context in which sports journalism and fandom are elements that can inform social cohesion?

1.3.2. Specific research questions

1.3.2.1. What are the key features of sports journalism in the context of social cohesion in South Africa, according to the literature?

1.3.2.2. How can the features of framing theory be applied to fandom and sports journalism in the South African context, according to the literature?

1.3.2.3. How was Eben Etzebeth framed in the alleged racial assault incident by journalists of *TimesLIVE*, *SA Rugby magazine* and *Sport24* in news reports posted on these publication's Facebook pages between 25 and 31 August 2019?

1.3.2.4. How was Eben Etzebeth framed in the alleged racial assault incident by social media users in comments on the Facebook pages of the publications in 5.3 between 25 and 31 August 2019?

1.4. Research objectives

1.4.1. To determine the key features of sports journalism in the context of social cohesion in South Africa, according to a literature study.

1.4.2. To determine how the features of framing theory are applied to fandom and sports journalism in the South African context, according to a literature study.

1.4.3. To determine, using a content analysis, how Eben Etzebeth was framed in the alleged racial assault incident by journalists of *TimesLIVE*, *SA Rugby magazine* and *Sport24* in news reports posted on these publications' Facebook pages between 25 and 31 August 2019.

1.4.4. To determine, using a content analysis, how Eben Etzebeth was framed in the alleged racial assault incident by social media users in comments on the Facebook pages of the publications in 1.4.3. between 25 and 31 August 2019

1.5. Theoretical arguments for qualitative studies

The study has relied on framing as a communication theory to be applied to sports journalism and fandom in a South African context in which the role of sport in contributing to social cohesion is contested.

Framing has been defined as the process that journalists use to create meaning by selecting and highlighting what they believe is the most important action. Therefore, certain topics and ideas receive more attention than those the journalist may not believe is as important (Lecheler *et al.*, 2019:3; Arowolo, 2017). It suggests that the way news is presented to the audience influences how they process the information by providing a narrow context (Arowolo, 2017). Frames give socio-political issues meaning, highlight definitions and interpretations, and provide solutions, all while maintaining the status quo (Muir *et al.*, 2021:2). Framing is focused in five ways: to create a cognitive shortcut, simplify news, distract the audience from the real issues at hand, prevent the audience from thinking outside the box and creating a cognitively shaped audience (Arowolo, 2017). It also shapes the public's understanding of certain issues (Muir *et al.*, 2021:2; An, 2009:107). In this study, the Eben

Etzebeth confrontation was already on the news agenda because it was portrayed as a race issue, which is a sensitive issue in South Africa and important to South African media. The aim of this study is to determine what kind of frames were constructed through posts about the Etzebeth incident on the Facebook pages of selected news organisations and whether they contributed to social cohesion or hindered it.

Social cohesion, which is part of the study's context, explains how individuals can co-exist constructively in society despite their differences, with an emphasis placed on how cooperation can increase the common good (Vasta, 2010:506). Social cohesion can be divided into individual-level and group-level, and different groups can be cohesive in different ways. Individual-level indicators are the individual's intention to be part of the group and their decisions on whether they want to improve or weaken how much they participate in the group, depending on their commitment to the group (Friedkin, 2004:410). These indicators will be relevant in understanding some of the racial dimensions in the study, also in relation to sports supporters.

A sports fan is an individual with a strong affiliation to a sport or team and finds value in watching the sport and following the happenings (Jackson, 2012:7; Samra *et al.*, 2014:263). Henry Jenkins believes that fans play an important role in media production, consumption, and distribution because they engage with the content by commenting and sharing and interpreting the meaning behind it, referred to as textual poaching (Fisher, 2019). Fandom involves participatory culture because individuals are both producers and consumers of media. A participatory culture consists of low barriers to artistic expression, supporting and sharing creations, mentorship from more experienced members, members making valuable contributions, and members who feel socially connected to others (Grinnell College, 2017). Fandom and participatory culture will be explained further in Chapter 3 (see 3.3.1.1).

In the literature on fandom, there are five different types of fans: temporary, local, devoted, fanatical and dysfunctional, and each type differs in the level of attachment to the team (Fouvy *et al.*, 2011:4), all of which are important to the study because their level of attachment is also, given the importance of sport in South Africa, an expression of individual level and group-level cohesion around the sport. Similarly, it will contribute to how they frame a prominent national rugby player such as Eben Etzebeth when he is accused of racism. Sports fans rely heavily on rugby journalists to bring them breaking news and analysis of games which they cannot get elsewhere, often on social media platforms. This is why posts on the Facebook pages of three news organisations will be analysed.

Whiting *et al.* (2013:364) state that individuals use social media for seven reasons, namely social interaction, information seeking, passing the time, entertainment, relaxation, communication ability

and convenience. All seven reasons will be explored in this study because people use social media and sports for various reasons, as stated above, focusing on Facebook specifically.

Therefore, framing has been able to assist in determining how Eben Etzebeth was portrayed by selected rugby journalists on the Facebook pages of *SA Rugby magazine*, *Sunday Times* (and its daily online publication *TimesLIVE*), and *Sport24* compared to Facebook users in the comment section of the selected publications during an important time in South Africa where the focus was on advancing social cohesion through sport in this instance winning the Rugby World Cup, which was achieved.

1.6. Research approach and design

This section about the study's research approach and design, including the research methods, have been discussed in chapter 4. This section therefore serves as an orientation to the study, leaving some of the detail for later (see 4.2-4.10)

To understand qualitative research is to understand that meaning can be socially constructed by individuals as they go through the world (Merriam, 2002:3). This study has been done qualitatively to understand how people react in different contexts, environments, and situations (Bengtsson, 2016:8). According to Butina *et al.* (2015:186) there are three primary characteristics of qualitative research. Firstly, the research is focused on understanding experiences to find meaning in the experiences. Secondly, the researcher is solely responsible for collecting and analysing the data, and lastly, the research is rich and descriptive (Butina *et al.*, 2015:86).

For the purpose of this study, qualitative research has been measured using a literature study and content analysis. The literature study has contextualised the topic by providing a background of existing research, identifying any contested claims, and highlighting any gaps in existing research (University of Edinburgh, 2021), while qualitative content analysis involves compressing words into context categories according to rules set out at the beginning of the study (Stemler, 2001:1).

1.7. Research methods

1.7.1. Literature study

A literature study is defined as “a systematic and thorough survey of publications that are relevant to a research project” and to identify gaps in the field. It is a critical process during which the strengths and weaknesses of existing research are assessed, and gaps in a particular field of study can be identified (Du Plooy, 2009:63).

After conducting searches on several databases like *Ebscohost*, *JStor*, *Boloka* and *GoogleScholar*, a few similar studies on the framing of athletes have been done, but none of this nature. Studies have been conducted to determine how individuals use social media to gratify their needs and how the media frame topics like race and social cohesion, such as #FeesMustFall in 2015 (Linden, 2017). Doreen Zimbizi conducted a study in 2017 which compared how the mainstream media reported on the protests compared to how youth media reported on it from a student perspective, which informs this study and focuses on how the mainstream media framed an athlete and how the public received it. Studies have also been conducted to determine how Olympic teams were framed when they weren't in favour with the rest of the world and how women are framed in sport, but none are specific to an individual player or the South African and rugby journalism context. Dhatchani Naidoo's (2010) study on the impact of framing on consumption choices was also helpful in identifying the various frames that can be used in a study and which shows how easily frames can influence individuals' choices without them even realising it.

Existing studies have assisted in this regard because framing in sports has already been investigated widely, and the framing of certain races in South Africa has also been brought to light with several protests being studied, such as the #FeesMustFall study mentioned above. This has assisted this research project because my study has investigated how a sportsman is framed for a race issue, which contributes to understanding social cohesion. So, existing studies have helped with the formulation of a framework for this study in a South African context, while this specific incident has provided a new perspective on it.

Books such as *The Routledge Companion to Media Fandom*, *An Introduction to the Study of Media Fan Culture*, and *A Companion to Media and Fan Studies*, alongside academic articles and studies, have created a better understanding of fandom. Studies such as Pilar *et al.*'s (2019) about the impact of sports mass media on society, as well as Tuck's (2003) study on the link between sports and the media, have helped to contextualise the study in terms of how sports, media and fandom all play an active role in sport today and the way it is presented to the public, also in the field of journalism, news articles and books about racism in sport and the impact it has on social cohesion, have also been considered as part of the literature.

While there are several studies such as Steen Steensen's (2011) research about the relationship between social cohesion and participatory journalism and Anna Leupold's (2016) on journalism and social cohesion, there is limited research on the relationship between sports journalism and social cohesion. There is a vast amount of research available on the importance of social cohesion in South Africa, and is cited throughout this study, but there is limited information available about the

contributions of sports journalists in South Africa. This study, I believe, will therefore contribute to the understanding of the dilemmas faced by sports journalists in the context of social cohesion.

1.7.2. Empirical research method: Qualitative content analysis

Content analysis is defined as a research method that makes replicable inferences from data according to the context or content by taking the data and breaking it down according to codes (Krippendorff, 1989:403; Hsieh *et al.*, 2005:1278; Marvasti, 2019:1). It is a way of doing research by using data to understand the meaning or context that an individual applies to a topic or scenario (Krippendorff, 1989:403). Content analysis shifts the focus to the writer who creates meaning in the text and the significance of the meaning in the context that it is analysed in (Kohlbacher, 2006), with the same data being found no matter how many times the study is repeated. When doing content analysis, the attributes of the text are analysed, and thereafter, keywords can be used to test the consistency of the frequency of the word (Stemler, 2000:2). It is essential for qualitative content analysis to be reliable in that it is consistent, so no matter how many people analyse the text, it should all be coded in the same way. Content analysis was selected over framing analysis, which emphasises how frames arrange occurrences in everyday life and contentious social issues in particular (Creed *et al.*, 2002:36).

In this study, the Facebook pages of three news organisations have been analysed, namely the *TimesLIVE*, *Sport24* and *SA Rugby magazine* (online). 13 news articles related to Eben Etzebeth's alleged racial assault incident, posted by these organisations on their own Facebook pages, including text, headlines, and photographs, have been studied. The period investigated was 25-31 August 2019, which was immediately after the incident. The comments by users or fans on the same Facebook pages during the same period have also been analysed.

Data was thematically analysed, which is a qualitative method that breaks down rich data by making individual observations and coding them appropriately to identify themes and similarities (Rosala, 2019; Clarke, 2019). The researcher works through the data and highlights any themes that are relevant and categorises them to see how they relate to each other because findings will appear multiple times across sources (Rosala, 2019). Identifying meaning and experiences allows the researcher to understand how a topic is talked about and written about and the commonalities between them.

Content analysis has been an appropriate method of study because the topic is focused on the audience's opinion expressed in the comment sections of the Facebook pages of three news organisations and in news reports posted by the same news organisations on the same Facebook pages, so it has focused on understanding the perception and motivation behind the reaction. Through

the identified frames and by comparing the frames by journalists and users about the same case study and in the same period, the study has helped to understand whether these factors contribute to social cohesion or not.

1.8. Population and sampling/choice of study material

1.8.1. Unit of analysis

The unit of analysis for this study has been three publications, namely *TimesLIVE*, *SA Rugby magazine* and *Sport24*. The focus has been on all the articles that are related to Eben Etzebeth's alleged racial assault incident that was published on their respective Facebook pages between 25-31 August 2019 because all three have a strong and engaged audience. These publications have been selected because they have a strong editorial sports section, the writers are specialist sports writers, and all three publications serve different audiences in terms of demographics such as language, race and culture.

This study has been approached by manually collecting data from online news publications' Facebook pages (*TimesLIVE*, *SA Rugby magazine* and *Sport24*) over the period of a week, 25 – 31 August. An exploratory study of all the articles has been done to identify articles specific to Eben Etzebeth. Keywords like “Eben Etzebeth” and “Langebaan” have been used to do a more detailed search for articles from the relevant Facebook pages of the three selected publications, which has helped keep the study narrow and focused. The contents of the news reports, as well as the headlines, captions, images, and comments, will then be analysed to determine how Etzebeth was framed, the respective frames, and the agenda of the media outlet during the first week of the scandal. The contents of the articles and the Facebook comments under the posts have been collected and placed in a document saved on the cloud to ensure comments are saved and protected and articles are not lost as publications sometimes delete articles and people delete comments. Because the information used to conduct the study has already been in the public domain, there was no need for a recruitment process.

1.8.2. Sampling and sampling method

The sampling used in this study was non-probability, and the sampling method was purposive sampling, where the researcher purposefully selected participants or research material with certain characteristics relevant to the study, in this instance, news reports and user comments on selected Facebook pages following the Etzebeth alleged racial assault incident. Selection has been dependent on the researcher's judgement, but as a non-probability sample, it has not aimed to be representative of a broader population (Hennink *et al.*, 2020:92).

The samples that have been used in this study emanated from a case study involving Eben Etzebeth. In August 2019, Etzebeth was accused of allegedly using racial slurs and assaulting four men in Langebaan on a night out in Langebaan (SA Rugby magazine, 2020). Case studies investigate issues in a real-world setting and are used to study a variety of topics to understand phenomena better and answer 'how' and 'why' research questions (Harrison *et al.*, 2017; Rashid *et al.*, 2019). They are bound by space and time, occur in a natural environment, revolve around decisions about people, and social processes and data can be collected in various ways (Harrison *et al.*, 2017).

1.9. Limitations of the study

The first limitation is that social media is dynamic and changes often. This study reflects a weeklong period in August 2019, and because social media is constantly evolving, may not reflect what Facebook is like today. It is recommended to use more than one social media platform.

The second limitation is that the data collected for analyses focused on a week-long period of 25-31 August 2019 to ensure the study was focused and the data was manageable. Future studies could extend this to a period of more than a week.

The third limitation is that the study focused on one incident that occurred with one rugby player. Future studies could analyse several incidents that do not need to be limited to rugby.

The fourth limitation is only three publications were analysed to keep data manageable. Future studies could expand this to more than three publications that do not need to be limited to sports publications to determine the role that sport, and sports journalism plays in a South African society.

The fifth limitation is that the study was done using only qualitative content analysis. Future studies could engage with fans through focus groups to enhance the validity of the study.

1.10. Significance of the study

This study is significant because social transformation remains a matter of concern in South Africa.

The study has focused on sport in a society where it plays an important role and can contribute on several fronts. It can help to build a deeper understanding of the role sport plays in building or undermining social transformation as it focuses on the reporting thereof by sports journalists and the engagement of fans with sports news, on social media in particular. On a theoretical level, the integration of social cohesion, fandom and sports journalism will also contribute to creating a theoretical framework to understand sports as a social phenomenon, which is part of South African society.

This study is also significant as a similar study has not been done in South Africa before. It will contribute to knowledge generation in the field of journalism.

1.11. Chapter layout

Chapter one: Introduction

- In this chapter, the framing theory and the concepts of rugby journalism, fandom and social cohesion have been expanded on. The Eben Etzebeth 'Langebaan incident' as a case study was explained, and its significance was placed in a South African context. The problem statement was formulated, research questions were included, and methods were outlined to conceptualise and execute the study.

Chapter two: Literature review of the key features of sports journalism in the context of social cohesion in South Africa

- In this chapter, social cohesion was defined, and the key features of rugby journalism were identified. The features were placed in the context of social cohesion in South Africa.

Chapter three: Literature review of the features of framing and the application of framing to fandom and sports journalism in the South African context

- In this chapter, the features of the framing theory were discussed. Thereafter, the features were applied to fandom and sports journalism in the South African context.

Chapter four: Research methods

- In this chapter, the research approach was discussed and motivated. The chapter was used to present the research design. The research methods, including a literature review and a qualitative content analysis, were outlined and applied to the study.

Chapter five: Presentation of empirical results

- In this chapter, the results of the content analysis were discussed. These results were based on data – frames – that have been obtained from news reports and user comments on the Facebook pages of three news organisations. The findings have been described, compared, and interpreted in this chapter in the context of social cohesion.

Chapter six: Summary and conclusion

- In this chapter, a summary of the key features of rugby journalism was provided, as well as sports fandom. A summary of the findings of framing on Facebook was provided to reach conclusions. The general and specific research questions were answered, and the achievement of the research goals was discussed.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW OF THE KEY FEATURES OF SPORTS JOURNALISM IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL COHESION IN SOUTH AFRICA

2.1. Introduction

Chapter one provided a broad outline of sports and social cohesion in the South African context with reference to sports journalism, fandom, and social media.

Sports journalism is a popular section of the news media, but when controversial off-field incidents come to light, such as the case study being researched, some sports journalists may keep the focus on sports instead of discussing issues such as social cohesion. Similarly, fans may also focus on the athletes and teams instead of events that take place away from the field. With this in mind, this chapter aims to answer specific research question 1 (SRQ1): what are the key features of sports journalism in the context of social cohesion in South Africa, according to the literature?

In this chapter, social cohesion in South Africa will be outlined as the context for the study. Thereafter sports journalism will be described by starting with a background and context, followed by a description of the key skills of sports journalists. Lastly, the key features of sports journalism will be mapped out in the context of social cohesion to answer specific research questions.

2.2. Social cohesion

2.2.1. Definitions and background

Le Bon (1895) has been credited for initiating research on social cohesion after explaining that different communities - including countries - have different characteristics and beliefs that influence the behaviour of individuals.

But no two countries are the same in terms of geography, history, or politics, which suggests it may be context-specific and adds to the difficulty of defining social cohesion (Fonseca *et al.*, 2019:231). Yet a sense of belonging and social connectedness is seen as an important human need (Pit *et al.*, 2022:119) and feeds into the conceptualisation of social cohesion in this study.

The literature suggests a cohesive society exists when individuals can live together despite their differences and have a shared sense of solidarity, contributing to unity (Chipkin *et al.*, 2008:61; Fonseca *et al.*, 2019:232). Another definition by Manca (2014) states that it is the extent to which individuals are connected and in solidarity within communities, with emphasis on their sense of

belonging and the relationships of the individuals with the community. The concept has also been summarised as an absence of conflict or crime, a societal attribute, a longing for affiliation, a level of stability, and a national identity/ Le Roux *et al.* (2018:2) emphasise diversity, participation, and reconciliation as well as justice and equity as elements of social cohesion.

Through social cohesion, attempts are made to reduce inequality in society are important because individuals need to feel a sense of belonging when they are part of a community, which is achieved when resources are distributed fairly and conflicts are resolved in a beneficial manner (Manca, 2014; Mekoa *et al.*, 2017:108). Mutual trust, tolerance and active participation are all essential components of a cohesive society (Chipkin *et al.*, 2008:61; Fonseca *et al.*, 2019:23-2332, Mekoa *et al.*, 2017:108).

Inequalities and exclusions, determined by race, gender, class, age, disability, or any other differences, are either reduced or completely removed in socially cohesive societies (Burns *et al.*, 2018:15; Department of Arts and Culture, 2020), as stated in chapter 1 (see 1.1).

The goals of social cohesion have also been outlined as equity, sustainable economic growth, avoiding social fractures and ensuring individual well-being is taken care of, and marginalisation is eliminated (Manca, 2014; Fonseca *et al.*, 2019:235).

But it is important to distinguish between social control and social cohesion. Social cohesion recognises injustice and marginalisation and works towards eliminating it, whereas social control prioritises covering up the cracks instead of working towards solving the root of the issue (De Beer, 2014:6; Le Roux *et al.*, 2018:2). Therefore, social cohesion prevails when justice allows all members of society to interact with each other. Social cohesion has been proven to reduce inequality and create trust within society (Brown *et al.*, 2015:10; Chan *et al.*, 2006; Stewart, 2010).

Social cohesion is particularly important in South Africa, given social and economic divides and its history of inequality, in particular, racial inequality and unemployment. South Africa is, for instance, considered one of the unequal countries in the world, brought about by a history of violence and marginalisation where Black people were forced to live in rural areas and were not offered the same education and health systems as white people (Lamb, 2019:366). In South Africa, social cohesion as a concept refers to an authentic South African identity where people can be united by their commitment to diversity (Baillie, 2018:424; Chipkin *et al.*, 2008:64; De Kock, 2018:9), equality and justice. It attempts to reconcile marginalised groups and rectify inequality created during Apartheid by creating an inclusive and cohesive society (De Kock, 2018:9).

The term “*Rainbow Nation*”, as mentioned already, has been used to capture the meaning of social cohesion in South Africa. This signalled South Africa’s shift to achieve an equal society willing to

promote equality and unity (Abrahams, 2016:96). Another term that has been used to capture social cohesion is Ubuntu, which refers to an African concept that means “the profound sense that we are only human through the humanity of others; that if we are to accomplish anything in this world, it will in equal measure be due to the work and achievements of others” (Stengel, 2009).

The idea of social cohesion has manifested in South Africa in various ways, and since Apartheid ended in 1994, the Department of Sport and Recreation South Africa has created several initiatives to encourage nation-building and overcome the divides that were created based on class, race, gender, and disability (Burnett, 2021:342). As a concept, social cohesion gained further momentum in 2012 after the Department of Arts and Culture in South Africa hosted a summit where social cohesion was introduced as a nation-building strategy “for developing an inclusive and cohesive South Africa” (Palmary, 2015:62,63).

The South African Government has subsequently indicated that it wanted businesses, government, and civil society to work collaboratively to instil change caused by racial privilege. All sectors have a role to play in promoting democracy, human rights, and equality, promoting a society free of racism and sexism and one that is equal and in solidarity, promoting unity amongst South Africans, and encouraging individuals and communities to heal (South African Government, 2020).

This represents the top-down approach to social cohesion, as social cohesion can be approached in two ways: top-down or bottom-up. Top-down social cohesion relies on a peace agreement which outlines how the society should stick together. This is not always effective because whatever is agreed upon in negotiations is not always implemented or does not have an impact on those most affected (Liaga *et al.*, 2020:394). The top-down approach can be seen as authoritarian, which may not work in South Africa due to the history of mistrust, corruption, and polarisation (Liaga *et al.*, 2020:394). A bottom-up approach is a community-centric approach which focuses on the relationship at grassroots level, where community members receive support, can raise concerns and issues and challenge views (Liaga *et al.*, 2020:394). Negotiations, dialogue, and mediation take place to ensure the core of the conflict is determined, and contact is maintained between individuals and the community to ensure social harmony is achieved (Liaga *et al.*, 2020:394). While both approaches have merit, countries with a history of tough circumstances require a combination to ensure politicians are held accountable and communities remain a unit (Liaga *et al.*, 2020:417). In South Africa, bottom-up efforts have been noticeable as communities rallied against events undermining social cohesion, like the #FeesMustFall protest, which was a student-led protest that took place in 2015 against inequality because access to education remains a privilege (Dold, 2015).

But despite the advantages a socially cohesive society may have, social cohesion has been criticised for being a convenient concept to drive political agendas, which devalues it (Abrahams, 2016:98). It cannot always be achieved in society due to individuals' inability to forget the past and wrongdoings, as some members of the community will always be excluded and cultures and identities clash over-representation (Johnson, 2021:725; Baillie, 2018:425). Ethnic and cultural environments also differ in the services that are provided to the community, such as facilities, religious and spiritual support, and welfare organisations, which influence how embedded individuals are in the community (Sohrabi, 2019:1292). The term is also nowadays viewed as a fuzzy catch-all phrase because it is given too much meaning that it ends up meaning very little (Baillie, 2018:425). The high crime rate, dishonesty, and lack of accountability from the government also undermine social cohesion in South Africa (South Africa Labour and Development Research Unit, 2018).

Social cohesion is multi-dimensional and multi-level, and these elements will be discussed in the next section (see 2.2.2).

2.2.2. Dimensions to social cohesion

There are five dimensions to social cohesion: inclusion and belonging, equality, social relations, legitimacy, and quality of life (Bottoni, 2016:4; Schiefer *et al.*, 2017:585; South Africa Labour and Development Research Unit, 2018):

Belonging refers to the values that individuals share, feeling at home, appreciated, or related to, as well as a collective identity (Schiefer *et al.*, 2017; Davids *et al.*, 2021:20; D'Eloia *et al.*, 2016:93). Identification refers to the individual's attachment to social entities because it is important that they feel recognised within society and are willing to participate and help where they can. Individuals feel attached to a group, trust the members, and willingly help and share their time. Shared values help individuals within the community to create common goals and structure social interactions. Belonging is closely linked to social relations, but belonging has more to do with the historical attachment to a group rather than the psychological one (Schiefer *et al.*, 2017).

Equality refers to the extent that a society is economically unified, opportunities are equal for all members and resources are shared equally (Scheifer *et al.*, 2017). Resources can be money, education, health care, employment and legal aid, which are all essentials for survival (Scheifer *et al.*, 2017).

Social relations are at the fore of social cohesion because social relations are what encourage members to join and remain in groups. Individuals share an orientation towards a common goal which refers to how an individual works towards the common good of the community and compliance with

social order (Schiefer *et al.*, 2017:589, Davids *et al.*, 2021:20). This is especially important in a democracy because individuals are expected to work together towards a common goal and support each other in working towards achieving it, as well as complying to norms (Schiefer *et al.*, 2017:589).

Lastly, quality of life because social cohesion aims to ensure the long-term well-being of individuals through equality, dignity, and autonomy. Quality of life refers to living conditions, physical health, and mental well-being and how they all work together (Schiefer *et al.*, 2017).

This is relevant to this study because the study will investigate whether individuals who may be connected as fans to a specific sports team – the South African national rugby team – felt a sense of belonging, inclusion, participation, recognition and legitimacy as they were confronted with the South African rugby player Eben Etzebeth's alleged assault incident as it was reported by various publications. It will also investigate if they, in their interactions on Facebook, communicate their feelings of isolation, exclusion, non-involvement, rejection and illegitimacy also, and whether these aspects came to the fore in the sports journalism published at the time.

2.2.3. Levels of social cohesion

Fonseca *et al.* (2019:242) and Bottoni (2018:1086) explain that there are three levels of social cohesion – the level of the individual, the community, and the institution. The level of the individual comprises the individual's communication, ability to complete tasks and take the initiative, behaviour, extent to which they discuss intimate topics, familiarity, inclusion, recognition, and legitimacy (Fonseca *et al.*, 2019:242). This level refers to the connection between two individuals and their sense of belonging to similar groups, including family and friends (Martines-Martinez *et al.*, 2020:162; Bottoni, 2018:1086). The level of the community comprises mutual support, social capital, the social bonds within the community, trust, formal/informal control, civic society, loyalty and solidarity, common goals and values, moral behaviour, and norms, as well as goal attainment (Fonseca *et al.*, 2019:242; Martines-Martinez *et al.*, 2020:163).

Individuals should have connections within primary groups but also secondary groups, so they feel an affiliation with community groups and organisations (Bottoni, 2018:1086). Lastly, the level of the institution comprises the sense of belonging in society, lack of social conflict, satisfaction in life, the behaviour of society, civic society, and the extent to which inequalities are reduced or excluded (Fonseca *et al.*, 2019:243; Martines-Martinez *et al.*, 2020:163). Legitimacy is important as institutions are expected to be mediators and provide quality services to maintain standards (Bottoni, 2018:1087). In a cohesive society, all three levels are present and maintained. In this study, the focus is both on the community as sports fans and on the institutional level, which is relevant when considering news organisations' sports journalism during the time of the alleged incident.

Based on the literature, a theoretical statement has been formulated to capture the key elements of social cohesion.

Theoretical statement one: Social cohesion is defined as the extent to which individuals coexist despite their differences through a shared sense of solidarity by eliminating marginalisation. Social cohesion is achieved through creating a sense of belonging, aiming for equality, improving social relations, and ensuring legitimacy and good quality of life. It is achieved at three levels, individual, community and institutions, and all contribute to how included an individual feels within their community.

2.3. Sports journalism

2.3.1. Sport as a cultural phenomenon

Steen (2008:6) defines sport as a cultural phenomenon with the potential to bring about change. He states: “Sport, in most cases, is full-contact ballet. In all instances, it is the art of competition... its demands on body and soul, on head, heart, and spirit ...it is a celebration of human possibility. The cultural aspect is also emphasised by Ferrucci (2019), who states that sport is a “way of life” and an activity that connects people or brings them together. The ability of sports to create a sense of solidarity relates to social cohesion, a phenomenon that is explored in this study (see 1.1).

Throughout history, the sport has been seen as a way to “level the playing field” and create equality through diversity, inclusion and solidarity (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2010:11), key features of social cohesion as outlined in the literature (see 2.2.2). Sport can be seen as an agent for change because it is more than just entertainment; it creates a platform for structural change as individuals come together for a common cause (Callahan, 2020).

In fact, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development sees sport as an important component of sustainable development, considering the contribution sport has towards peace and development (Sofi, 2019). Sport promotes several things, namely fairness, discipline, tolerance, respect and understanding, and unites people from various backgrounds, cultures, and religions, all of which are used to promote social cohesion (Sofi, 2019). One of the cornerstones of sustainable development is to unite individuals for a common goal, which sport does because it is a social phenomenon that determines the behaviour and action of the people who participate in sport (Sofi, 2019). People of all ages, races, genders, and abilities are able to participate in sports, but the universal language is the same, no matter the language or culture (Sofi, 2019).

Sport and watching sport has been attributed to raising awareness and decreasing a cultural divide by creating strong societal bonds and self-esteem for younger individuals, and journalists can influence how the fans view athletes when they choose to discuss their physical, social, or intellectual characteristics (Zafar *et al.*, 2021; Wille *et al.*, 2019:5). Sport creates a sense of belonging, moving individuals from 'I' to a collective 'we' (Callahan, 2020). The NBA is an example of this after they created a social justice coalition which promotes the Black Lives Matter movement, and the board, as well as coaches and players, got on board with the idea (Zafar *et al.*, 2021). People look to sportsmen to set an example and show sportsmanship, as seen been Liverpool player Mohamed Salah, where the "Salah Effect" has created an acceptance of Islam by British fans and reduced marginalisation (Zafar *et al.*, 2021). Salah is so popular in his country Egypt that in 2019 he received over one million votes in the presidential election, showing how powerful he is as a figure of unity and significance (Saad, 2018).

Sport can be seen in assisting nation-building because it reminds individuals that discipline, teamwork, and determination are important, and once you participate in sport, you learn that ethics and showing good sportsmanship are nation-building characteristics. Sport gives the youth a sense of direction because children see sportsmen as role models and aspire to be like them, with youth projects created to overcome issues like substance abuse and children dropping out of school (Bhattacharyya, 2019). Sport contributes to building infrastructure because when countries host global tournaments, they need the infrastructure to win the bid, so countries upgrade public transport, widen roads and lay telephone cables to accommodate tourists who come to the country for the global event (Bhattacharyya, 2019). Lastly, sports create a global community because events like the Olympics or World Cups bring individuals from all over the world together for one cause – supporting nations and serving as part of a brother and sisterhood (Bhattacharyya, 2019). Sport is one of the things that bring people together by creating patriotic citizens against factionalism. With that being said, sports organisations in South Africa also have a bottom-up role in changing, educating and promoting dialogue (Swart, 2021) and have, to some extent, been doing it.

There are four ways that social cohesion can be promoted in sports (Höglund *et al.*, 2008:806). Firstly, sports can be used as a symbol of reconciliation. Symbols can be used to represent the different cultures and unity within the country, an example being South Africa being coined as the Rainbow Nation because sport created opportunities for those who were previously disadvantaged, and the 1995 Rugby World Cup depicted that well (Höglund *et al.*, 2018:807). Secondly, creating policies that account for fair representation. One such policy is the quota system, introduced to highlight the true demographics of the country, which can be formal or informal. Formal quotas require a specific number in a team not to be white, which is used in sports like rugby. Informal quotas are decided by demand, policy documents or political pressure (Höglund *et al.*, 2018:809). Thirdly, initiatives that

eliminate negative stereotypes within the sports community. These initiatives can be inter-communal or intra-communal and come in the form of projects that aim to resolve conflict and integrate participants better, such as tournaments that allow people from different communities to play and interact (Höglund *et al.*, 2018:811). An example of such a project is the Hoops for Hope project in South Africa and Zimbabwe, which integrates interaction and reconciliation by teaching basketball players at school level life skills on top of the sport (Höglund *et al.*, 2018:812). Lastly, developing individuals. Individual development relies on creating opportunities for those who would previously have been marginalised or excluded (Höglund *et al.*, 2018:813).

Another such project in South Africa is the FIFA Play Soccer Project, which teaches participants how to lead and coach, along with the social skills that come with football practice (Höglund *et al.*, 2018:813). The South African government has linked sports to social cohesion and has made a concerted effort to create development programs to drive transformation (Höglund *et al.*, 2018:806). One of the ways that South Africa can reconcile individuals is by moving away from identities that involve conflict, which would have been during Apartheid, and moving towards an inclusive identity (Höglund *et al.*, 2018:807).

South Africa is filled with sports fanatics who are heavily invested, but the country's sport participation is rich in history due to economic, political, and social aspects brought about by Apartheid (Swart, 2017:278). South Africa was banned from participating in the Olympic and Commonwealth Games, and non-Olympic sports like cricket and rugby were also banned (Swart, 2017:278). Once Apartheid ended, the Department of Sport and Recreation created policies to prioritise eight areas and ensure equal access for all: streamline responsibilities for stakeholders in sport and recreation, providing funding for creating multi-purpose sports facilities in underprivileged areas, developing human resources to effectively manage sport and recreation, developing active lifestyles to assist those in competitive sport, reaching affirmative action targets, creating a code of ethics, and creating an international relations policy that is in line with government policy (Swart, 2017:279).

Sport brings people together by creating patriotic citizens against factionalism. However, the sport has also been blamed for sustaining racial prejudices or working against social cohesion. This has not been the case as the same players who are celebrated are the ones who are racially abused when decisions don't go in their favour (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2010:11)

Sport, specifically in South Africa, can play an important role in nation-building and decreasing marginalisation created based on class, race, gender, and disability. Sport also promotes fairness, discipline, tolerance, respect and understanding and unites people from various backgrounds, cultures and religions and a level playing field is achieved when diversity, inclusion and solidarity are

achieved (Sofi, 2019). Sports can promote social cohesion by being a symbol of reconciliation, having policies in place to ensure equal representation, combating negative stereotypes, and developing individuals by creating opportunities that had not previously existed. How sports journalists and sports fans reflect on the interface between sport and social cohesion is relevant in this study.

The key features of sport, such as raising awareness and decreasing the cultural divide, teaching individuals discipline, teamwork and determination, reconciliation, creating patriotic citizens, nation building, and representation, help to explain why human beings are so attracted to sport and why sports journalism, by focusing on a team's success, can also distract fans from their ordinary lives and bring them closer together (Srivastava, 2020:219; Moritz, 2019).

2.3.2. Sports journalism

Sports journalism, in essence, is news coverage of sport-related topics and competitions involving athletes (see 1.2.11). This includes the presentation of facts about matches, including previews and reviews or match reports. Match reports provide the reader with insights into why one team performed better or worse than the other and help audiences understand the sport better, while analyses discuss what influenced the result. Competition logs, scores, and team or athlete statistics are other aspects sports journalists may cover (Indeed, 2021; Srivastava, 2020:220; The News Manual, 2019, Bhawsar, 2018).

The invention of the Penny Press and the Industrial Revolution in 1833 (Harrower, 2013) majorly impacted sports journalism as newspapers were now able to reach a larger audience due to cities becoming urbanised (Moritz, 2014:13). Newspapers started targeting more people and editors were forced to look for content that appealed to more people, which explains the growth in popularity of sports journalism (Moritz, 2014:13).

The mid-1920s was coined the Golden Age of Sports Journalism because sports journalism became a prominent section in every newspaper and sports broadcasting on radio and television began (Moritz, 2014:14; Galily, 2018:103). Initially, sports journalism was considered the 'toy department' in the newsroom, with coaches and athletes questioning the competence of the writers despite many of them holding university qualifications or completing sports journalism courses (Weedon *et al.*, 2020:1377).

Notwithstanding the scepticism about sports journalism, it has become one of the most important and most popular functions of the news media, and as a result, more resources have been allocated to publications' sports departments (Harrower, 2013:111; Farrington *et al.*, 2012; Steen, 2008:15). Nowadays, sports journalism is seen as "the world's best advertising agency" that promotes athletes

and teams like celebrities in a sphere in which sport has become big business (Ramon *et al.*, 2021:604; Peltz, 2010:154).

Sports journalism has also evolved because of technology (Perreault *et al.*, 2020:2). Consequently, during the last 20 years in particular, sports journalism has also been globalised, digitised and marketised (deregulating and liberating media), which can be seen by the number of publications and platforms which are now available to the public to access sports news. In addition to printed publications such as newspapers and sports magazines (Galily, 2018:103; Boyle, 2006:1), there are also websites, including blog sites, and social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter (Washburn *et al.*, 2020:xxii; Lowes *et al.*, 2018:310).

The creation of news, including sports news, has also been affected by convergence, an outcome of technological changes. Convergence describes, characterises, and understands the world of digital media and how old and new media intersect (Latzer, 2013:1; Girardin *et al.*, 2020:1). Convergence describes the integration of wired and wireless communication by taking separate traditional and digital ideas and combining them into one (Latzer, 2013:1; Hendricks, 2018; Indeed, 2021).

At present, sports journalism as an area of specialisation, or a beat, comprises three verticals: print and social media, broadcast, and photojournalism. Journalists, due to convergence, may be expected to write for both print and online (Moritz, 2014:16), with aspects such as scores presented online immediately, and more in-depth analysis published later both online and in print (Bhawsar, 2018). But sports reporting is increasingly also focusing on what happens off the field (Washburn *et al.*, 2020:xv). This requires sports journalists to be more creative in their reporting, remain aware of what their competition is doing and push the boundaries of what already exists on other sports news sites (Lambert, 2019:27). Digital media, therefore, allows journalists more content options and makes them responsible for distributing their content, requiring cross-media skills and teamwork (Lawlor, 2018; Ureta *et al.*, 2017:878).

Dlamini (2020) states that social media enable sports journalists to promote their news organisations, obtain information, network, share posts, monitor their audiences, and interact with other users (Dlamini, 2020). Niche sports publications such as *SA Rugby magazine* often go live on their Facebook pages during press conferences and sometimes share predictions for upcoming fixtures during a Facebook live stream (Facebook, 2021). Broadcast sports journalism provides real-time reports from a sports event through television or radio broadcasts (including live commentary), as well as player and coach interviews. Production teams direct, produce and edit content to disseminate to the fans in real-time. Photojournalists and videographers record visuals at sports events and can capture the atmosphere from the games for the editorial section of publications (Bhawsar, 2018).

In addition to the creation of news, the distribution of content has also changed due to technological advances. Live matches are now broadcast almost anywhere in the world, and free news can easily be accessed on the internet. Through the various platforms on which sports journalism is produced, including social media platforms, journalists communicate directly with fans, athletes, and other journalists (Washburn *et al.*, 2020:xxii; Lowes *et al.*, 2018:310).

Similarly, sports teams, sports organisations and teams can make their content available online globally through various social media platforms, as well as through their club's or league's corporate communication departments. Sports clubs, therefore, deliver news to the fans directly instead of using journalists now makes it more difficult to access players (Meng *et al.*, 2015:202). The National Basketball League in America, for instance, became the first professional sports league to gain one billion followers in 2016 (Bell *et al.*, 2018:370). In a South African context, rugby teams like the Lions from Johannesburg and Bulls from Pretoria often share team news on social media and on their website first, where journalists, like fans, access the information. This enables the teams to make fans feel like they're part of the team and that they can connect with athletes (Lowes *et al.*, 2018:316; Ramon-Vegas *et al.*, 2018:15), which mirrors the ability of sport, as mentioned earlier, to create a sense solidarity and to bring people together (Ferrucci, 2019). This means that the traditional roles of journalists as gatekeepers have changed as they are no longer able to control all the news disseminated to the public, as was the case in the era before online news.

2.3.3. Sports journalism skills

Although sports journalism has undergone some changes, the skillset required has not changed dramatically over the years.

Some of the most important skills required of sports journalists are interviewing, creativity and strong writing skills, understanding sport and sports terminology, the ability to network with athletes and coaches, confidence, meeting tight deadlines, objectivity, strong morals and understanding of ethics and media law (St. Bonaventure University, 2021; CTN News, 2021; Horton, 2016; Weedon *et al.*, 2020:1384).

Their responsibility is, among others, to educate readers, which they can do by showing an understanding of tactics and strategies and presenting these clearly (CTN News, 2021). Sports journalists, for instance, must understand the terms used by referees throughout the game to be able to accurately represent what happened on the field and write stories in a way that fans understand and will keep coming back for.

While technical knowledge is essential, it is also important to understand the business and financial side of sports because this has several implications on sports, like Newcastle United being sold to a Saudi Arabian Public Investment Fund, making it the most expensive club in the English Premier League, which also shows how quickly and easily sports clubs become commercialised (Robinson, 2021). This relates to the digitisation and globalisation of sports because a sport that has a rich history in England has now been sold outside of England, allowing people from other parts of the world to invest in it (see 2.2.2.2).

Sports journalists are trained to meet deadlines because missing them puts strain on the rest of the sports team as the story still needs to be edited and proofread, and graphics need to be added before it's published (Horton, 2016). Because rugby journalists report on live matches, the report needs to be published as soon as possible because, in a digital environment, fans will search for the news elsewhere.

Objectivity is essential because cheering for a particular team clouds judgement, so the journalist is unable to clearly identify the trends or plays in the game that allowed for the team to win if they let their emotions get the better of them (Weedon *et al.*, 2020:1384; Stanley, 2018; Steen, 2008:17). This could result in losing valuable sources and contacts who will be unwilling to speak to someone who is unafraid of showing bias (Weedon *et al.*, 2020:1384; Stanley, 2018).

It is in this context that sport-specific ethical codes for journalism have emerged, such as the Associated Press Sports Editors (APSE) ethics guidelines (Accountable Journalism, 2022). Ethical codes require sports journalists to follow the guidelines defined as the standard of professional conduct that journalists adhere to when obtaining, disseminating, and commenting on the news (Weedon *et al.*, 2020:1387; Wille *et al.*, 2017:3). Ethical guidelines were introduced to preserve the reputations of journalists, including those covering sport (Wulfemeyer, 1985:58). These guidelines promote coverage that does not include discriminating against race, gender, age, or disability (Weedon *et al.*, 2020:1387) but, at the same time, do not shy away from exposing instances where such behaviour comes to the fore in the sporting sphere. A sporting code such as the APSE ethical guidelines refers journalists to their own newsroom codes, which in the South African context is the Press Code of Ethics and Conduct for South African Print and Online Media (SA Press Council, 202). It states, for instance, that journalists should take care to report news truthfully, accurately, and fairly" as we; "present news in context and in a balanced manner, without any intentional or negligent departure from the facts, whether by distortion, exaggeration or misrepresentation, material omissions, or summarisation.

2.3.4. Criticism against sports journalism

But the ability of sports journalists to act independently, which is a guideline in the SA Press Code, has been called into question because of some journalists' and news organisations' boosterism, fascination with certain teams, and players and the rumours they fuel.

In fact, sports journalists are often also told to "stick to sports", which encourages journalists and commentators to avoid discussing the politics in sports and keep the focus on what happens on the field. This essentially means "don't speak truth to power" (Moritz, 2019; Nettingham, 2020:1). By sticking to sports, journalists were not seen to promote equality, fairness, and a strong focus on sport, but rather a silence (Nettingham, 2020:53). And in doing so they may neglect their ethical duties to report truthfully (SA Press Code, 2020). Sports journalists have, for instance, been criticised for failing to perform public service journalism, like ignoring the sexual abuse allegations against USA Gymnastics coach Larry Nassar, bringing into question their credibility of them (Smith *et al.*, 2021:223). Three factors influence sports journalists' credibility: sources, expertise, and gendered assumptions. For a journalist, their story is only as strong as their sources which is why it is essential to maintain relationships with sources. Because of social media, sports organisations can break the news themselves, which makes credible sources even more essential to give them the upper hand. Because of how much information is readily available to the public, sports journalists must work harder to forge credibility and are subject to extreme criticism when they make errors in reporting, questioning their competency to report adequately.

Sports journalists have the opportunity nowadays, through social media, to engage readers and fans by talking up stories rather than turning a blind eye to them and restricting sincerity and morality (Moritz, 2019; Nettingham, 2020:54). By discussing stories that would usually be seen as uncomfortable, journalists are able to connect with their fans on a deeper level because it is the reality of what goes on in the world, which should not be avoided (Moritz, 2019). This is also what is expected of a journalist according to ethical codes.

However, sports journalists have a social responsibility to create meaning in news and world views by either supporting or opposing discussions. Sports coverage in the media is a major investment which is why it should contribute to sports as a cohesive, integrated, and diverse part of the media, which is why it is important for journalists to cover matters on the field and off it. But sports journalists have not only been criticised for avoiding off-the-field political news reports but also for what they cover and how they do it. In this study, how journalists reported on Springbok rugby player Eben Etzebeth's alleged assault incident will be analysed to determine whether it is the same as on-field reporting.

Much attention is placed on big leagues, and players, women, youth, and lower leagues are overlooked, and the lack of diversity becomes prominent, which brings into question their knowledge and skills (Ramon et al., 2021:605). For instance, sports journalists may attempt to avoid bias by claiming they are “colour-blind”, which implies they treat all athletes equally and do not factor in their race or ethnicity when writing about them. While it appears they use the athlete’s character as a measure of their ability and not a race, it has been criticised for the lack of awareness and for ignoring people of colour’s traditions, experiences, and marginalised history, which all stems from them not being white (Reifsnyder, 2018:33). Sports journalism and coverage has thus, as a result, been criticised as sexist and racist and for creating stereotypes (Craig, 2016:24).

Sports journalism, for example, has been described as hypermasculine because 85% of articles around the world centre around men’s sport and disregard ethics, as some articles contain only one or no sources (Wille et al., 2019:5). Women’s sport does not receive the same attention that male sport does (Council of Europe, s.a.:15). Several studies on sports commentary highlight how women athletes are categorised according to their physical, intellectual, and social appearance as opposed to their achievements (Wille et al., 2019:5). Female sports reporters also face criticism because they are seen as imposters in a male world and lack representation and opportunities and have their skills and knowledge critiqued. This manifests in two ways: lack of women in the industry and facing challenges due to their perceived lack of skills and expertise.

Sports journalists may also stereotype athletes by focusing on their intelligence, background, physical appearance, and leadership ability instead of their ability to perform in sports. Some journalists discuss athletes of colour so that fans are influenced and see race, which is a social construct, as a defining characteristic of the athlete (Ferrucci, 2019). Black athletes, in particular, are portrayed by the media as naturally athletic, while white athletes are seen as naturally intelligent or leaders (Ferrucci, 2019; Van Sterkenburg et al., 2021:32). In a society in which social cohesion is a challenge, a manifestation of such prejudices, often subtly, in sports journalism could be potentially problematic.

Sports commentators do not realise that their stereotypes are intrinsic, and their backgrounds influence the comments they make, which is the same case for sports journalists, which also may promote inequality in sports (Van Sterkenburg et al., 2021:340; Reifsnyder, 2018:23). The media itself is also not well represented because most journalists are white and male who fails to highlight the lack of ethnic diversity within sport (Van Sterkenburg et al., 2021:340). This is especially prominent in football, with players like Raheem Sterling and Marcus Rashford receiving backlash and even death threats from the mainstream media and fans after poor performances on the pitch.

The criticism of sports journalism brings into question how it relates to social cohesion, which has been defined (see 2.2.1.3) as the degree to which a society is integrated and inclusive and where inequalities and exclusions determined by race, gender, class, age, disability, or any other differences are either reduced or completely removed (Burns *et al.*, 2018:15; Department of Arts and Culture, 2020). In a context of social cohesion, the journalists' traditional role of gatekeeper and control, which can determine what content fans see and the way they see it, has changed as teams and athletes can communicate directly with fans, but they are still able to filter certain content and what they choose not to show or tell is equally as important as what they do show (Reifsnyder, 2018:26).

This connects to fandom, as sports journalism creates an experience for fans by building intimate connections between them and the teams they support (Lowes *et al.*, 2018:308). The criticism against sports journalism has been that journalists would choose not to cover certain topics than risk the important connection with fans. In other words, sports journalists, in terms of ethical journalistic requirements, are expected to tackle uncomfortable aspects within sports that may affect social cohesion, which is a focus of this study.

Sports journalism is important when discussing social cohesion, not only because of the role sport plays in society, but because the literature suggests both are supposed to be good journalism, and social cohesion can contribute to bringing people closer together (see 1.2.12), build people up and create an equal and just society while contributing to the Rainbow Nation in South Africa.

Theoretical statement two: Sports journalism comprises print and social media, broadcast, and photojournalism, which centres around the production of news during sports-related events and issues. While the platforms used to disseminate may have changed over the years, the key features are interviewing, writing, reporting, creativity, understanding of the sport, networking, confidence, meeting deadlines, objectivity, and ethics. Honest reporting and following ethical guidelines such as being honest about sources and not discriminating against race, age, gender, or disability.

2.4. Key features of sports journalism in the context of social cohesion in South Africa

Sports can bridge the divide arising from social, economic, and cultural issues through shared experiences where people realise they are more the same than they are different. The idea that sport can contribute to social cohesion is based on two principles: participating in sports promotes cohesion across social divides, and successful national teams promote pride and unity. Therefore, sport promotes social cohesion on a material and symbolic level in that people participate in it, and it creates a sense of national pride (Potgieter *et al.*, 2015).

One way that sports journalists can contribute to social cohesion is by empowering athletes. However, athletes are constantly criticised, like Caster Semenya, whose femininity is questioned because how fast she runs, how she runs, how she dresses, and because the way she speaks is considered more masculine. During the 2009 World Championships in Berlin, the media were unsure of how to speak about her and went as far as interviewing several spokespeople like family members, coaches, and gynaecologists to ensure she was, in fact, female. Therefore, sports journalists should understand the responsibility they have towards the public and that their profession and the media influences society (Wille *et al.*, 2017:3). They should acknowledge the person behind the athlete and be ethical in their reporting, which can contribute to social cohesion because the journalist is being inclusive and creating a sense of belonging with fans.

Sports journalists should also be objective in their reporting, so their judgement is not clouded, and their emotions do not get the better of them (Weedon *et al.*, 2020:1384; Stanley, 2018). This, in turn, will help them build and maintain contacts with important sources they are able to trust, no matter their race or gender, which highlights inclusivity.

Sports journalists are expected to cover all aspects of the sport, which means they should also cover the values and social views in sport and in doing so, they are serving the fans and their needs while also being inclusive and creating a sense of belonging (St. Bonaventure University, 2021). Athletes are humans and have recently taken a stand on issues they believe in, such as Colin Kaepernick kneeling during the American anthem to protest police brutality and the United States Women's football team wearing their warm-up t-shirts inside out to highlight wage inequality and the English Premier League player Marcus Rashford creating a feeding scheme so that all children in the United Kingdom receive meals at school (St. Bonaventure University, 2021).

In South Africa, there have been several incidents where players have spoken out about racism. In 2020, South African cricketer Lungi Ngidi called on his teammates to support the Black Lives Matter movement but was met with criticism from former white players who believed farm murders were more important, while players of colour came forward to discuss their experiences in the national team (Vahed *et al.*, 2021:201). Journalists took the opportunity to unpack racism in sports in South Africa and criticised cricket in particular for the lack of transformation. Cricket South Africa launched a project to address institutional racism in the sport and allowed former and current players to be heard (Swart, 2021).

In 1999, Brian McMillan was caught up in a controversy when he called the Indian opposition a "coolie", which he thought was a cricketing term and appropriate to use despite the backlash (Vahed *et al.*, 2021:201). As recently as July 2022, England Rugby head coach Eddie Jones was verbally

abused by a fan after the Australian-born coach's England team beat Australia in a test series. Jones was labelled a "traitor" by a fan in the stadium, to which he told the media "Clowns think they have a full go to abuse coaches. You have got 48 000 people full of drink, and all they want to see is their team win" (Decent *et al.*, 2022). Rugby Australia called for the fan to be banned from rugby matches for five years, which was labelled a "knee-jerk" reaction by the public (Budgen, 2022).

By reporting in a diverse and inclusive manner, sports journalists will create an environment where coaches and athletes feel like they can trust them, which will help them strengthen their network. If they are transparent and ethical in their reporting, they will build trust with the fans, who will continue to promote and consume their content. It is important that in a cohesive society that the journalist reports in a manner that represents several cultures and does not show bias towards one in particular.

In summary, sports journalism can contribute to social cohesion, as not all areas of sports receive attention from journalists. The journalists' role is to be a gatekeeper and control what content fans see and the way they see it, but what they choose not to show is equally as important as what they do show (Reifsnnyder, 2018:26). This connects to fandom, as sports journalism creates an experience for fans by building intimate connections between them and the teams they support (Lowes *et al.*, 2018:308). To create an experience for fans, sports journalists require specialised skills, which have been discussed (see 2.3.3). In a news media and journalism context, social media has the potential to influence social cohesion because of the role it plays in day-to-day communication (Stieglitz, 2022:104). The key features of sports journalism within the context of social cohesion will be presented.

2.5. Key features of sports journalism in a context of social cohesion

Table 2.1. explains the key features of social cohesion and sports journalism according to the three levels of social cohesion: individual, community and institutional.

Table 2-1: Key features of sports journalism in a context of social cohesion

Concept	Level of social cohesion	Social cohesion	Sports journalism
Inclusion and belonging	Individual	Individuals feel socially and economically included to ensure a good quality of life. They have shared norms and values and live in an accepting environment.	Journalists should create an inclusive environment by promoting different cultures and representing all members of society. In addition to empowering athletes, they should abide by ethical codes.

	Community	Individuals feel like they are part of the community and can contribute socially and economically.	Rugby journalists should be diverse and inclusive, and transparent by reporting on all athletes, no matter their race, gender, or ability, in the same manner.
	Institution	Individuals feel like they are part of society, are represented and have satisfaction in life.	Publications should report accurately and fairly so that every race, gender and socio-economic background is represented in the news. Their content should make people feel like they are part of the sporting community and work towards a common goal of enhancing transformation.
Social relationships	Individual	Individuals should have social networks and a support structure that they can rely on and trust.	Journalists should network with coaches, players, fellow reporters, and fans to promote unity and national pride.
	Community	Individuals within communities should have shared bonds and trust each other.	Journalists should build relationships with fans and their audience to improve relationships and enhance transformation.
	Institution	Individuals in society should connect with each other and build relationships.	Journalists should work with the community to promote national unity and empower athletes. No, the focus needs to be on journalists.
Legitimacy	Individual	Individuals should trust the authorities to represent them accurately.	Journalists should strive to be ethical and transparent in their reporting to accurately represent the population and cover the values and social views of the sport.
	Community	Individuals should feel represented by the community they form part of.	Journalists should report on issues accurately and fairly, be open and transparent and be a credible source for news.
	Institution	Organisations should accurately represent society.	Journalists should be a credible sources of news and ensure reports uphold the values and social views of the sport.

Orientation to the greater good	Individual	Individuals should always strive to be the best person they can be.	Journalists should be transparent in their reporting and eliminate social divides. No, this cannot be right. It is not the task of journalists to do that.
	Community	Individuals in communities should work towards the same goal that is beneficial to the community.	Journalists should work towards enhancing transformation and sharing the values and social views of the sport.
	Institution	Individuals in society should always act with good intentions that drive society forward.	Journalists should eliminate any social divide, create a sense of national pride through ethical and objective reporting, and abide by the values and social views of the sport.
Equality	Individual	Individuals should be treated as equal members of society.	Journalists should be diverse and honest in their reporting, as well as eliminate social division.
	Community	Individuals should be treated the same as all other members of the community.	Journalists should treat all members of communities equally and represent all races and genders to eliminate any sense of division.
	Institution	Individuals should be treated equally in society, no matter how different they are.	Publications should treat all members of society as equal and promote an inclusive environment through objective and ethical reporting.

2.6. Summary and conclusion

In this chapter, the research aim was to determine the key features of sports journalism in the context of social cohesion in South Africa, according to the literature. Sports journalism, which focuses on reporting within the world of sports, can play an important part in promoting social cohesion, which is the extent to which individuals in social trust and work together towards a common cause.

Sports journalists use match reports, analyses, features, and news articles to communicate with fans, and the prevalence of social media has made it much easier for them to disseminate information. This, however, means that information is readily available to the public, and anybody with an internet connection and laptop can be a sportswriter. It is important for sports journalists to build athletes up

rather than tear them down, be ethical and transparent in their reporting, and have a strong network to corroborate information to contribute to social cohesion in South Africa.

Social cohesion centres around five dimensions: inclusion and belonging, participation, legitimacy, and relationships. Inclusion is important because it emphasises participation and good quality of life for individuals while belonging focuses on the shared norms and values within the community. Legitimacy refers to the community's trust in institutions and how well they feel they are represented. Participation refers to the community's involvement in politics, while relationships focus on the quality of social networks and the individual's trust and acceptance in the community. These dimensions, along with the level of community, individual and institution, ensure that social cohesion is achieved.

The key features of sports journalism in the context of social cohesion in South Africa were identified as inclusion, belonging, social relationships, legitimacy, orientation to the greater good, and equality. Inclusion ensures individuals feel represented in society, and rugby journalists can achieve this through diverse reporting. Belonging refers to the sense of community that individuals feel, and rugby journalists can achieve this through ethical reporting. Social relationships are important to everyone because it gives them a sense of self-worth, and rugby journalists can build relationships with athletes, coaches, fellow journalists and even fans. Legitimacy refers to individuals trusting authorities, which rugby journalists can achieve by being reliable and reputable sources for fans to get sports news. Every individual should have an orientation to the greater good by working with other community members, rugby journalists can achieve this by being on the community's side and building trust. Lastly, every individual deserves to live in an equal society where there is no marginalisation and rugby journalists can achieve equality through balanced and diverse reporting.

Based on a literature study, a theoretical framework has been created based on the discussions of sports journalism, with a focus on the key features in a South African context, as well as the importance of social cohesion in a South African context. This framework will be used in the chapters to come to develop the measuring instrument for the empirical section of the study using content analysis to determine the key features of sports journalism in the context of social cohesion in South Africa.

CHAPTER THREE: LITERATURE REVIEW OF THE FEATURES OF FRAMING, AND THE APPLICATION OF FRAMING TO FANDOM AND SPORTS JOURNALISM IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

3.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, the key features of sports journalism in the context of social cohesion were explored, which will help this study to establish how South African rugby player Eben Etzebeth was framed by sports journalists and users, possibly fans, on the Facebook pages of selected news organisations following allegations about a racial incident in Langebaan. According to the problem statement (see 1.2), this exploration is to gain insight into how sports, as a pastime and a cultural phenomenon, can advance and undermine social cohesion.

This chapter also aims to answer specific research question 2: how can the features of framing be applied to fandom and sports journalism in the South African context?

Media framing (see 1.1.10) refers to the process whereby journalists and editors give more prominence to certain news items and use certain ideas, words, and sources in line with that agenda. During the process of creating the news, journalists make some issues more salient than others so that one issue may stand out more than others, creating a narrative that readers will understand. Therefore, journalists can influence how the audience understands topics and events - and their prominence (Love *et al.*, 2021:180). The audience in this study case is the users, some of whom may be fans, who have commented on the Facebook posts of the selected publications *Sport24*, *TimesLIVE* and *SA Rugby magazine*.

A fan has a strong orientation to sports and an affiliation to a team and thinks and talks about it regularly because being a fan helps individuals discover their identities, find friends and a sense of belonging, and satisfaction, and express themselves creatively (UK Essays, 2018; Reinhard, 2018; Seate *et al.*, 2019:380). Jenkins (2010) defines fandom as the social structures generated by passionate consumers of mass media and creates several forms of participation, defined as any cultural production that is initiated from grassroots level and allows for wide involvement. Fandom, nowadays, demonstrates contemporary culture as the Internet is the centre of communication, and consumers drive production (Smutradontri *et al.*, 2020:2). Social media has made it possible for individuals to be fans without attending live games by extending the game's reach if they have an Internet connection (Brown, 2017). It comprises social networks, blogs, podcasts, online games, and photo and video hosting, which creates a sense of community (Balakhonskaya *et al.*, 2021). Some of the most popular global social media platforms for sports coverage are Twitter and Instagram, while

South African-based websites like *SA Rugby magazine* and *SuperSport* provide post-match coverage like match analysis and post-match interviews.

Social media and framing are important to this study because the aim is to investigate and understand how Facebook creates a platform in the public domain and the role sports journalists and users, some of them fans, play in highlighting certain issues like race, an element of social cohesion (see Table 2.1 in chapter 2).

This chapter explores framing, social media, and fandom by giving a background to framing, how social media is used in sports journalism, a background to framing and the types of sports fandoms. Thereafter, how social media and fandom contribute to news framing in sports journalism is explained in the South African context.

3.2. Framing

The media plays an important part in shaping consumer culture, and the public agenda as individuals use the media to make sense of the world and what is happening around them, as well as to justify their behaviour and beliefs (Lundahl, 2020:1104; Penn State; s.a.). One way this is achieved is through media framing, which is the guiding theory in this study that has determined the frames that were created by journalists and the audience or users, including fans, after the assault allegations, against a prominent sports star came to light.

3.2.1. Background and development of framing theory

Robert Entman and Erving Goffman are two of the major theorists behind media framing, which has become a key theory in communication research. Entman defines framing as highlighting certain parts of events or issues, drawing connections between them to advance interpretation and evaluation (Boykoff *et al.*, 2020:832; Cacciatore, 2016:11), whereas Goffman defines frames as a representation of the structure used to explain individuals' context of what they encounter in their lives (Hernandez, 2015; Cacciatore, 2016:10). The framing theory can be used to understand media effects, which will be of value to this study which aims to determine how South African rugby player Eben Etzebeth was framed in the media and by fans after claims about an alleged racial assault.

Framing focuses on cognitive processes like moral evaluations, causal reasoning and understanding problems, and the power of frames relies on the ability of the media to relay information as a coherent whole (Penn State, s.a.; Olsson, 2011:228). News attributes related to specific themes should meet the media's agenda and create meaning by constructing and highlighting news in such a way that people and ideas receive more attention than those the journalist may not believe is as important (De

Beer *et al.*, 2018:239; Boykoff *et al.*, 2020:832). Boykoff *et al.* (2020:832) and Lumsden *et al.* (2017:929) add that media frames reinforce one another, pointing the issue in one direction by organising the issue and providing cues for interpretation by making some issues more salient than others. One way of framing the news public is through media hype, which dramatises and sensationalises news reports stories by focusing on a single event with a clear protagonist driving an agenda (Beyer *et al.*, 2018:252).

News framing is a process which helps individuals understand the processes, presence, and sets between sender and receiver (Lecheler *et al.*, 2019:10). Frame building refers to the interaction between individuals who decide how an issue is framed in the news and journalists can adapt frames to give their own views by competing, selecting and modifying frames to make the same issues appear different (Lecheler *et al.*, 2019:12; Hänggli, 2012:301). Internal and external forces, such as pressure from the newsroom and editorial policies, and politics and interest groups, influence how frames are built.

The mass media frame images of reality in a particular, patterned way, using elements of text made up of several elements, interpretation, attribution and evaluation, which are coded to reveal the frames influenced by font, text size and images used to break the news (Linström *et al.*, 2012:22; Matthes *et al.*, 2012:25263; Oh *et al.*, 2020:7). Interpretative framing explains that the way issues are framed affects how individuals think about the issue by initiating ideas and values to encourage a specific thought by linking the theory to a pattern of behaviour (Lecheler *et al.*, 2019:35). The way topics are framed influences the evaluations more which in turn results in attitudes or choices being influenced, and certain news frames draw out certain emotional responses like frustration, sadness, or disappointment from readers (Busby, 2019:618; Kühne *et al.*, 2015:260).

The media has several effects on the public, such as getting public attention, persuading beliefs and opinions, influencing behaviour, defining, and structuring reality, defining legitimacy, and informing in a timely manner (Linström *et al.*, 2012:22). Therefore, frames can assist in opposing or supporting a narrative by highlighting a certain ideology intentionally, so individuals are able to understand the world and draw conclusions (Seo *et al.*, 2016:229, Oh *et al.*, 2020:7). Similarly, if news consumption is limited to only a few sources, the frames reporting on the topic will show a specific reality (Penn State, s.a.).

There are several factors that determine whether individuals are influenced by frames, such as how frequently the topic occurs and if there are competing frames (Matthes, 2012:250). Therefore, different framing strategies are used to promote certain aspects to make problems appear more defined, which

allows for causal interpretation created by framing models: situations, responsibility, attributional, conflict, human interest, and morality.

Situational framing interprets situations in a manner that's aligned with preferences and interests, while issue framing is defined as the way an individual views a topic or situation, either positively or negatively, based on the considerations they make in relation to the topic or situation (Painter, 2021:35). Responsibility framing attributes responsibility for a cause or solution which shapes how the public views issues (Arowolo, 2017:2).

Attributional framing explains that when a topic is described positively, it will be perceived more favourably than a negative description (Kreiner *et al.*, 2021:2; Gamliel *et al.*, 2020:498). This is because positive association focuses an individual's attention rather than a negative frame, which may not always be the case in sports. The same can be said for social media, as individuals only post their best moments online, so individuals perceive them positively instead of focusing on the negatives.

Conflict framing refers to the media focusing on the conflict between individuals and institutions to get the audience's attention when there is controversy or a difference in opinions (Pedro-Lopez *et al.*, 2022:128; Colvin *et al.*, 2018:85). This is achieved through critiquing or attacking participants by emphasising the inter-personal or inter-group conflict between them (Pedro-Lopez *et al.*, 2022:128; Colvin *et al.*, 2018:85).

Human interest framing discusses broader issues by emphasising a person with direct experience, which assigns responsibility to them over other important aspects (Painter, 2021:35; Figenschou *et al.*, 2021:2; Arowolo, 2017:2). This is impacted by factors like vividness, proximity, identification, and emotions (Figenschou *et al.*, 2021:2). Lastly, morality framing refers to the way that injustices of groups towards another are accentuated to create concerns over how unacceptable their actions are (Mashuri *et al.*, 2021:1202).

In this study, all framing models were used in the analysis.

Theoretical statement three: Framing emphasises a certain topic to make it appear more salient than others, which is achieved through text, image choice and font size. Through framing, the media can influence behaviour, define reality and legitimacy, and inform fans about prominent issues in a timely manner. Framing manifests in seven ways, namely situational framing, issue framing, responsibility framing, consequence framing, conflict framing, human interest framing and morality framing.

3.2.2. Framing in sports journalism

Framing in sports occurs in two ways: in the news media discourse (sports journalism), which is either spoken or written and in the audience's understanding of events, and is important in this study as the aim is to determine the frames of the sports journalists and frames of the comments of the Facebook audience or users during South African rugby player Eben Etzebeth's alleged assault incident.

Individuals associate themselves with traits they share with athletes, while pre-existing structures like education and beliefs influence how they interpret information and perceive information. Adding to this, the social and professional practice of journalism influences the frames they create in stories by highlighting a particular attribute of an athlete, which the audience then associates themselves with (Lewis *et al.*, 2015:223). Framing can manifest in several ways in sports (see table 3.1).

For instance, athletes of colour often face media criticism. In August 2016, American footballer Colin Kaepernick kneeled during the playing of the United States' national anthem in protest of the oppression and brutality taking place at the hands of the police in the country (Boykoff *et al.*, 2020:819). Five publications were analysed over a two-year period, and framing occurred in four phases (Boykoff *et al.*, 2020:835). Firstly, journalists discussed whether his actions were right or wrong. Secondly, when Kaepernick announced himself as a free agent and was not selected by any football teams, journalists began asking why. Thirdly, journalists discussed Donald Trump's involvement after he declared that footballers should be fired for taking a knee, even though Kaepernick was not playing at the time. Lastly, journalists discussed the policy enforced by the NFL, which forced players to stand during the national anthem. After sifting through 301 articles, the most common frames were of Kaepernick as a patriot and a traitor, which contradict each other (Boykoff *et al.*, 2020:837). This highlights how athletes are treated by different publications during different stages of public outcry.

Another example of unfair media criticism is the case study of British tennis player Emma Raducanu, who became an overnight sensation after winning the 2021 US Open in New York. Since winning the tournament at 19 years old, reporting has focused on more than just her performances, which is the result of her increasing popularity and fans wanting to learn more about her background and what she is like off the court (Lewis *et al.*, 2015:222). As a result of her increasing popularity, Raducanu gained a lot of off-court endorsements, which was met with criticism because she was believed to be getting distracted after suffering defeat in the second round of the 2022 Miami Open (Muro, 2022). Social media users highlighted the British No.1 tennis player's expanding list of commercial partners, which Raducanu labelled "unfair" (Fraser, 2022). This is human interest framing as her direct

experience of winning the US Open made her a target for unwanted media attention focusing on her off-court endorsements.

While athletes often draw media attention, scandals in sports are picked up because of how quickly they gain traction with the immediacy of social media (Rowe, 2019:324,330; Storm *et al.*, 2015:293). A media sports scandal happens when, for instance, a private matter involving an athlete becomes common knowledge through a source which is then picked up by the media (Rowe, 2019:324) and the ones that receive the most media coverage are the ones that include the liveness of sports broadcasting and ones that involve social issues (Rowe, 2019:328). In this study, the racial incident was brought to the media's attention through social media right before the Rugby World Cup squad announcement and involved a high-profile player that was accused of using a racial slur. Sports journalists frame scandals using metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, depictions, and images which they select and emphasise from different perspectives (Li *et al.*, 2019:533). Journalists from different countries will use different sources to create news stories which offer different perspectives, so some journalists will focus on the athlete's achievements while others will focus on their appearance (Li *et al.*, 2019:533). Social media and the fact that news is published online means sports scandals are always at anybody's disposal and can be created to generate attention to certain athletes, but the way it is framed by journalists impacts how the story is understood by users (Rowe, 2019:330; Li *et al.*, 2019:533). This is why all the types of framing have been used in this study (see 2.3.1).

A national team sports scandal happened in 2018 when Australia and South Africa were playing a test cricket match. Australian batsman Cameron Bancroft was caught on camera tampering with the ball using sandpaper, which was eventually labelled '#SandpaperGate' on social media. At a press conference initiated by Cricket Australia after the game, captain Steve Smith admitted the decision to tamper with the ball was taken by leadership, which made news all over the world because of Australia's "play hard and play fair" mantra (Ingerson *et al.*, 2019:1). Cricket is also referred to as a 'gentleman's game' so this scandal angered fans and even Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, who felt Australia had brought the sport into disrepute and even more so when Bancroft and vice-captain David Warner were banned from the game (Rowe, 2019:329).

The table below explains how the different types of framing manifest in sports journalism using the examples provided above.

Table 3-1: How framing manifests in sports journalism

Type of framing	Description	Example in sports journalism
Situational framing	Journalists write stories that appeal to fan references and interests.	Australian cricket's '#SandpaperGate' because the team has a "play hard and play fair" mantra but then is accused of cheating on the pitch.
Issue framing	Journalists show different parties competing, but only one prevails.	Colin Kaepernick kneeling during the national anthem was a protest against police brutality, but he was accused of bringing politics into sport.
Responsibility framing	Journalists focus on events that are out of one's control.	Vice-captain Steve Smith had to face media backlash during a press conference after Australia cheated in a cricket match labelled '#SandpaperGate'.
Attributional framing	Journalists accentuate characteristics while avoiding others to make some appeal more than others.	Captain David Warner and vice-captain Steve Smith are being stood down in Australia's leadership after the #SandpaperGate cheating scandal.
Conflict framing	Journalists create a bias between options when there is a difference in opinion.	Colin Kaepernick kneeling during the national anthem to protest police brutality. As an athlete, he was expected not to let it interfere with on-field matters.
Human interest framing	Journalists discuss issues by using a person with direct experience in the issue.	Emma Raducanu became an overnight sensation after winning the US Open at just 19 years old and becoming the youngest British person to win a Grand Slam.
Morality framing	Journalists accentuate injustices to highlight how unacceptable certain behaviour is.	Journalists are reporting on Colin Kaepernick kneeling during the national anthem in protest of police brutality, highlighting what Black Americans experience in the country.

In this study, the way sports journalists frame scandals is helpful because, in the days leading up to the Springboks' World Cup squad announcement, essential for building up the players and showing a united front, a racial incident came to light when South African rugby player Eben Etzebeth was accused of an alleged racial assault. The Emma Raducanu, Colin Kaepernick and Australian Cricket case studies gave the researcher a better understanding of the different types of framing, which have been useful in this study to determine how Springbok rugby player Eben Etzebeth was framed by

journalists during the week of 25-31 August 2019. But this study also focused on how fans framed Etzebeth, an aspect that will be discussed next.

3.3. Fandom

3.3.1. Background

Fandom theory was conceptualised by Henry Jenkins in 1992, where he argued that fans actively produce content inspired by the media to write their own stories about topics they care about as opposed to passive media consumers, so audiences are essential to the circulation and distribution of media content (Grinnell College, 2017; Fisher, 2019). Jenkins (2010) defines fandom as the social structures generated by passionate consumers of mass media and creates several forms of participation, defined as any cultural production that is initiated from grassroots level and allows for wide involvement. Fandom, nowadays, demonstrates contemporary culture as the Internet is the centre of communication, and consumers drive production (Smutradontri *et al.*, 2020:2).

The word 'fan' derives from the Modern Latin term 'fanaticus' meaning "insanely but divinely inspired" and has changed in leaps and bounds since the emergence of the Internet (Van Schaik, 2020; Cavicchi, 2014:52). Fandom is an individual's attachment to a sport and from eight years old, children develop concrete thinking, so they become emotionally attached to sports, teams, or athletes, which can be influenced by their family, media, or by participating in the sport themselves, as well as the narrative the team creates around the club (Van Schaik, 2020; Secret Base, 2016; Joern, 2020; Wu *et al.*, 2022:158). Research shows that diehard sports fans handle conflict better, can mentally prepare for bad things to happen in their life, are good at maintaining relationships, and have healthy ways of dealing with stress, so sports can contribute to a sports fan's mental health in several positive ways (Wahome, 2021).

Over time individuals become sports fans through socialisation and identification. Socialisation occurs when fans begin to understand the culture of the team by learning the jargon of the sport, the history of the team, and player statistics (Mastromartino *et al.*, 2017:5; Ross *et al.*, 2019). This occurs through family, friends, school, and community where they share their experiences, which impacts personality, motivation, competence, and self-esteem (Mastromartino *et al.*, 2017:6; Obiegu *et al.*, 2018:4). Fans can learn more about sports from journalists, who create sport-related content which will educate fans on the sport they follow. Identification refers to the extent to which a fan relates psychologically to a team occurs when individuals see the events that happen to athletes and teams as something that has happened to them, too, with serious fans taking on their attitudes and beliefs as their own (Parry *et al.*, 2014:5; Wann *et al.*, 2021:501). When an individual identifies with a team, they feel happy when

the team wins but also sad when the team loses, feel represented as an individual by the team and feel like they are part of the team themselves (Mastromartino *et al.*, 2017:6; El-Shaboury, 2021).

Fans will attend the matches, buy merchandise, and consume media available to them to construct their community identity (Mastromartino *et al.*, 2017:6; Tamir, 2022:339). International sports events are also a root of pride and a great way to create a national identity (Li *et al.*, 2019:531). Fandom as a social structure is the outcome of a sport that has built connections between people, which relates to social cohesion. Individuals feel like they are part of a community if they can identify with the people within the community. Therefore, fandom can be portrayed as a type of social cohesion in the specific context or can be seen as a tool that can be used to build greater cohesion.

3.3.2. Features of fandom

Individuals become sports fans and can benefit in up to nine ways: positive stress, escapism, entertainment, economic benefit, aesthetic, group affiliation and identification, self-esteem, education, and family needs or bonding (Van Schaik, 2020; Raincock *et al.*, s.a.:5).

Positive stress, or eustress, highlights what the fan experiences when their teams win, allowing fans to escape from stress or boredom by watching sport (Raincock *et al.*, s.a.:5). Individuals turn to sports to relieve themselves from reality and the pressure and anxiety that comes with it, as well as taking their anger out on their rival fans like its free therapy (Burke, 2010; Ashish, 2008; Cohen, 2017:3).

Fans use sports as a form of escapism because they may be dissatisfied with their life and may find joy in affiliating with a team (Cohen, 2017:4). These are fans with strong team identification to fill the void in their reality and are more affiliated with their team during stressful times. Escape is like entertainment in that fans break away from their busy lives and use sport as a hobby rather than a commitment (Cohen, 2017:4; Wann *et al.*, 2008:6; Wiid *et al.*, 2015:388).

Fans use sports as entertainment because of the joy that comes from watching sports and because it can be used to pass the time (Raincock *et al.*, s.a.:5; Wann *et al.*, 2008:7). These fans also enjoy the pre- and post-match entertainment and interactions more than the actual match, so are not very committed, emotionally, or financially, to a team (Wiid *et al.*, 2015:384). They could also watch for the sounds and colours of the team or that they see at the events (Wahome, 2021).

Fans who are motivated by the economic side of sports do so because they are inspired by the economic gain brought about by sports wagering and cannot really be considered fans because they do not have favourite teams or athletes (Wann *et al.*, 2008:7). These fans gamble or bet on teams,

so are highly committed to sports but are focused on the outcomes for different reasons (Wiid *et al.*, 2015:389).

Sports can be aesthetic because of how enchanting it can be to see athletes perform and master their craft, while group affiliation when an individual feels a sense of belonging to a larger group because of supporting a team (Raincock *et al.*, s.a.:5; Cohen, 2017:4). Fandom creates allegiances because sometimes people support teams based on where they grew up, which creates a stronger allegiance to the team because they are familiar with the territory instead of choosing a team because they like them or a specific athlete (McConnell 2015). Fans are also attracted to how teams or individuals play, so they have a strong association with the team (Cohen, 2017:4), which could be the case in this study, as individuals may support the Springboks because they are proud to be South African or because they are a fan of South African rugby player Eben Etzebeth.

Sports fandom can increase self-esteem because fans are able to learn from watching sports and become inspired by others (Raincock *et al.*, s.a.:5). Fans identify themselves through the teams they support and feel like they are “part of the team” when the team succeeds (Ashish, 2008). Individuals like to be associated with success, so they are more likely to wear team merchandise when a team wins and refer to players on a first-name basis; they attend live games and immerse themselves in every action that takes place on and off the field (McConnell, 2015; Burke, 2010; Wiid *et al.*, 2015:385). Whichever team an individual supports represents them. Individuals’ self-esteem also increases with wins, making them more optimistic and increasing their self-worth (Ashishi, 2008).

Fans can find a sense of belonging in sports that they aren’t able to find elsewhere because they feel part of something where it isn’t just a game, and not everyone will understand it (Ashishi, 2008). Fandom reassures our sense of belonging because when fans see people who support the same team as them, they feel instantly connected and share a mutual identity (McConnell, 2015; Stieg, 2020). Fans express their shared identity through chants like “You’ll Never Walk Alone” for Liverpool fans and “Glory Glory Man United” for Manchester United fans, creating a collective experience (McConnell, 2015). This can also be said in a cohesive society, as people coexist happily when they feel a sense of belonging and community like they would when supporting a sports team.

3.3.3. Types of fan behaviour

Sport allows fans to create a shared social identity through their love and passion for the sport. Individuals identify strongly with teams they support and internalise their values and beliefs because they see themselves in the context of their social relationships (Mastromartino *et al.*, 2017:7; Phua, 2010:192; Jacobson, 2003:2). According to the fan intensity spectrum, there are three types of fan behaviour: occasional fan behaviour, regular fan behaviour and daily fan behaviour (Raincock *et al.*,

s.a.:4). Occasional fans follow the masses and are weakly connected to the team and athletes and take part in fandom depending on the situation (Raincock *et al.*, s.a.:4). Regular fans are highly involved with the team and athletes, are focused, and are somewhat connected to the team (Raincock *et al.*, s.a.:4). Daily fans are completely absorbed by the team and athletes, form part of a small audience and are heavily connected to the team (Raincock *et al.*, s.a.:4).

Individuals get so worked up in sports because of their significance of it; to them, sports signify the drama of life and winning and losing feels like a matter of life and death (Pilon, 2017). As stated above, fans use sports to feel good about themselves and boost their self-esteem, so when teams lose, it is more about feeling lost as an individual than just a team losing (Pilon, 2017). Fans live vicariously through athletes, so every cheer, high-five or money spent by the fans is a vote towards whom they want to become.

While sport produces a lot of emotion from fans, it is not always positive (Archer *et al.*, 2019:208). Fans feel disappointed when there are moral failures within the club or amongst players, which was evident when the Super League was announced, and 12 of the best football clubs were set to create their own league. Manchester United fans disapproved, protested, and called for new ownership of the club (Watkinson, 2021). Fans harnessed the power of social media to encourage other fans to boycott the club and its sponsors, using #GlazersOut and #NotAPennyMore to reinforce their message (Sky Sports, 2021). This shows how influential fans can be in bringing about change, suggesting that if fans connect on societal issues, including strengthening or weakening social cohesion, they may bring about change, both positive and negative. Therefore, if fans work together for a common cause, they can achieve social cohesion.

Social media has given fans a platform to find each other but has also brought about toxic fandom, which creates competition amongst fans to prove they are the most authentic and are competitive to prove they are the biggest fans. It has enabled arguments amongst fans that would usually take a long to develop from taking place online at a much faster pace to a much more public audience (Treksptise, 2018).

Social media is relevant to social cohesion because of the role it plays in contributing to culminating an online community. While social media can be used to bring people together through online communities and create a shared sense of community, it can also be perceived negatively as fans can behave in ways that are unkind and aggressive, which is not conducive to social cohesion. Sports journalists use social media to disseminate news and reach larger audiences which cultivates an online community, and while they can control what they publish on their own platform, they have no

control over how fans will react and whether that will contribute to social cohesion or not. This will be discussed in more detail in the next section.

Theoretical statement four: Fandom refers to social structures created by mass media consumers. It is a form of cultural production emanating from various forms of grassroots participation and wide involvement. In the context of sports, it is an attachment to a team, athlete, and sport.

Fans become sports fans through socialisation and identification, which occurs when fans learn about sports from the community around them or form a psychological attachment to a team. The internet is a tool that strengthens fandom as a social structure because its immediacy allows news to be shared quickly and gives fans a platform to share opinions in real-time.

3.4. Social media

3.4.1. Background

Social media as a concept has various definitions but are social network sites or web-based applications that allow people to (Du Plessis *et al.*, 2020:4):

- Create a public profile online,
- Communicate and interact with other users they are able to connect with; and
- View profiles of other users on the same platforms.

Social media can, therefore, be defined as online platforms that provide global collaboration and allow users to share information and ideas with all other users (Dwivedi *et al.*, 2016:3; Seo *et al.*, 2016:290). The rapid growth of the internet has increased the network bandwidth and technology available to the public, which, in turn, has increased the volume of user-generated content there is while also encouraging two-way communication or interactivity. Sites like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and YouTube are renowned for being microblogging and image-sharing sites for users all over the world and have made news more personal (Bossio, 2017:7; Alejandro, 2010:9). According to Kemp (2022), more than half the world (59%) uses social media. Of the 4.7 billion users, 227 million joined social media networks in the past 12 months, and the average time spent on social media daily is two-and-a-half hours.

Social media can be a linear model of communication or an interactional one, and for the purpose of this study, it will be an interactional model. The interactional model is a two-way model of communication where the sender (journalist) codes a message and sends it to the receiver (fans)

through a medium (Facebook) that provides feedback (comments). Both the sender and receiver use their personal experiences to encode and decode the messages (Du Plessis *et al.*, 2020:8).

Facebook was founded in 2004 and has grown from a Harvard University resource site to one of the most popular social media platforms (Soukop, 2018:3). Facebook allows individuals to showcase friendships but is renowned for two characteristics: the type of content shared is personal, and it serves as an archive for users, and it has grown in stature because of how user friendly it is, and businesses are able to contact their audience directly (Harper, 2010; Seo *et al.*, 2016:230). A 2020 study showed that half of American adults get their news from social media, with Facebook leading as the main platform, with 63% of social media users having Facebook profiles, whereas 80% of South Africans are active Facebook users, and 39% of those users comment on the news (Reuters Institute, 2019; Shearer *et al.*, 2021; Facebook, 2021). Facebook is the most-used social media platform, with over a billion users daily and the biggest demographic being 25–34-year-old men (Ryan *et al.*, 2017:1, Kemp, 2022).

Facebook is also a public domain, so posts are not protected and are available for anyone with an account to see depending on privacy settings, and journalists are free to use this information and publish it on their publication's Facebook pages which can reach a global audience (Independent Press Standards Organisation, s.a.). When sharing information aggregated from social media, journalists in South Africa are advised to verify allegations and rumours before sharing them to ensure credibility, which is also set out in ethical codes and media law (Press Council, 2020; Milo *et al.*, 2013). Social media as a news platform has now made journalism, including sports journalism, a forum for an exchange of views as the power of social media lies in the way it provides a platform for marginalised individuals to also share their views and tackle cultural issues and politics (Pradhan *et al.*, 2018:49; Reifsnnyder, 2018:25).

Social media allows users to create and share an identity or event online through networking and content creation, view and share content with other social media users, and connect with other users online (Bossio, 2017:7). Users can share their interests, provide their own opinions and perspectives, and even contribute to community building by providing commentary on current events which happens online as well as offline (Bossio, 2017:8; Pit *et al.*, 2022:120, Ryan *et al.*, 2017:2). This relates to fandom because individuals see others online who are like them, so they feel a greater affiliation and sense of identification and community. Daily fans, who feel a strong affiliation with their team, will be more likely to share their views and opinions on social media, while occasional and regular fans will take part in the conversation depending on the situation (see 3.3.3.1).

Individuals who feel a stronger sense of belonging are more likely to join social media sites and view them in a positive way. A social media platform like Facebook is not just a tool for online connection; it is also an archive of an individual's life they are able to access any time they like from anywhere they like (Knowles *et al.*, 2015:313). Active Facebook users refer to individuals who engage with others on the platform through posting content and commenting or reacting to others' while passive users consume the content without engaging with others (Pit *et al.*, 2022:120). Active Facebook users can improve social connectedness when they share information with others to make them feel like they are part of a larger group of people, which in turn strengthens relationships and facilitates new ones (Pit *et al.*, 2022:120). This is relevant to the study because the study focuses on active Facebook users who have commented on the publication's post, so they are active consumers on social media and will, therefore, have an influence on social cohesion. Individuals may also follow publications like *SA Rugby magazine*, *TimesLIVE* and *Sport24* for the online community cultivated by the new organisations' Facebook pages.

Social media encourages audiences to be more involved in the creation and distribution of content because citizen journalism, which is a type of journalism where stories are published by non-professionals, allows them to work collaboratively with journalists to ensure that news is dialogic and diverse in nature (see 2.2.2) (Bossio, 2017:10; Ritonga *et al.*, 2019:79). The plus side to this is that the more people involved in the production and dissemination of news, the more likely it is that the information will be disseminated to a global audience due to its democratisation and pluralisation, which ensures that diverse information and viewpoints are available and accessible, so individuals are able to make their own choices (Bossio, 2017:12; Brogi, 2020:1). However, this also raises questions about the quality of content that is produced as ordinary user-generated content does not necessarily apply journalistic ethical principles such as verification, which has the potential to fuel the sharing of false information or rumours. So, while social media can have a positive influence on society, it has also been criticised for promoting negativity like racism and bullying (O'Hallarn *et al.*, 2018:389), which will be explored further in this study.

Nowadays, a journalist's workday starts the moment they wake up and check social media, scrolling through personal and media profiles (Bossio, 2017:1). As a result of convergence (see 2.3.2.6), journalists now work across print, online and social media, and are responsible for monitoring stories on social media while updating the website with any new information provided (see 2.3.2.7) (Bossio, 2017:1). Emphasis has shifted the quality of research and production to fast and short journalism (Pradhan *et al.*, 2018:49). However, social media has also changed news production values as news content now needs to be more interactive, the production of news needs to be more transparent and news needs to be available to the audience 24 hours a day (Bossio, 2017:9). This is relevant in this study as South African rugby player Eben Etzebeth's alleged assault incident was posted about on

social media as soon as it happened, which sports journalists would have picked up on and published on their website on 25 and 26 August 2019 due to the immediacy and short shelf-life of sports coverage. It is also relevant because the interaction between the news organisation on Facebook and fans is relevant and has been explored in the next section.

3.4.2. Social media and sports journalism

“The way in which race in sport is portrayed by the media can have a profound impact on our own perceptions and interpretations of race” (Ash *et al.*, 2020:390; Bell *et al.*, 2018:372). South Africa has one of the most diverse and independent news sectors in Africa, with 90% of South Africans sourcing their news online, while 72% find their news on social media (Reuters Institute, 2019). According to a Facebook study, 60% of Facebook users are interested in sports, and 75% of them stated that their main use for social media is to get live sports event coverage (Meta for Business, 2019). 55% of Facebook users also get their sports news on the platform (Moore, 2018:506). Social media can be used as a second screen for fans, who enjoy using social media to engage with friends during matches (Meta for Business, 2019).

As pointed out in chapter 2 (see 2.3.3. and 2.5), In addition to reporting, strong writing skills, objectivity, and ethical reporting, sports journalists should educate the public, which can be achieved through reporting on the news, observing power, writing about injustices, and sharing interesting and relevant stories (Moore, 2018:503). Sports media aims to build connections between fans, athletes, and teams by providing the ‘spectator experience’ with either live footage from games or through social media updates (Lowes *et al.*, 2018:308). The immediacy, intimacy and interactivity that come with social media make it the perfect place for sports fans to connect (Harris, 2021). By reporting on news and writing about injustices, fans are educated by sports journalists on social issues, and their need for group affiliation and identification is met because there is a larger representation in the media. This could advance social cohesion because by reporting accurately and ethically, sports journalists build mutual trust with fans.

Social media can have a positive impact on sports because it offers various platforms for players and fans to interact while also offering individuals an inside look at organisations (Bell *et al.*, 2018:372; Reifsnyder, 2018:17). Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat are some of the most popular platforms due to the access of information that athletes would previously have relied on traditional media platforms for (Bell *et al.*, 2018:372). Fans are also able to see sides of athletes that they don’t normally have access to, which allows them to form their own opinions or perceptions about them and can discuss topics beyond sport (Bell *et al.*, 2018:372). It allows fans to defend athletes when they believe they have not been treated fairly, mobilise the online community, and share in sports rituals

(Cranmer *et al.*, 2019:3). But race, gender and ethnicity can influence a fans' emotional association with an athlete (Bell *et al.*, 2018:372). This could be because of beliefs and outside influences which cause fans to have intrinsic beliefs, whether they are aware of their biases or not.

Old media has not been replaced by digital media because magazines, newspapers and televised broadcasts are still prominent today, but social media and streaming services now give fans the same rush at a more immediate pace and from anywhere in the world (El-Shaboury, 2021). The access to teams and the abundance of content allows the fans to feel like they have a more personal relationship with teams and players, which could lead to entitlement and, in turn, racism and harassment (El-Shaboury, 2021; European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2010:11). The open access to content does not make for better fan experience if it justifies bad behaviour, much like the racist backlash England footballers Marcus Rashford, Bukayo Saka and Jadon Sancho, who are all players of colour, received after missing penalties in the UEFA Euro 2020 final, with one fan saying "*When you score, you're English. When you miss, you're an immigrant*" (Gillett, 2021). This is relevant to the criticism of fandom, as fans appear to think, in societies where there is freedom of expression, that their beliefs and perceptions are the most important and may not always be beneficial to others. Entitlement, racism, and harassment are what cohesive societies aim to minimise and eventually eradicate, so toxic fans do not contribute positively to the community.

As stated in chapter 2 (see 2.3.4) sports media has been criticised for how they portray athletes of colour, which may shape how audiences understand racial and ethnic identity through these portrayals of athletes of colour (Grainer, Newman & Andrews, 2006). As social media allows fans to share racist thoughts online, anonymously, this has led to an increase in hate speech and cyberbullying (Oshiro *et al.*, 2020:4). Athlete activism creates racist reactions, the rejection of fandom, and criticism from the audience who claims to support them (Oshiro *et al.*, 2020:4; Cranmer *et al.*, 2019:3). This is called cyber racism, which is the use of racist language on online platforms, and although social media can be considered the public sphere, it does not meet the characteristics outlined by Habermas when the "public sphere" was conceptualised (Oshiro *et al.*, 2020:4). The public sphere according to Habermas is an area where social, political, economic, and cultural issues can be discussed within a state, so individuals are able to discuss life around them (Rosas *et al.*, 2018:2032; O'Hallarn *et al.*, 2018:390).

Social media has been offering sports journalists a new opportunity to broaden the news agenda, as social media sites are not restricted by time or space, which allows for a larger scope of representation (Ramon *et al.*, 2022:925). Historically, racialised patterns of brawn and brain frames have been identified within a variety of media channels such as newspapers, live commentary, blogs, and magazines (Eagleman & Martin, 2013). Cranmer *et al.* (2014) argued that the wide use of these

frames results from the socialisation of journalists or institutional processes that surround the creation of media content (e.g., assignment of stories, editorial processes) rather than the features of specific channels (e.g., the role of subconscious bias in live commentary) (Ash *et al.*, 2020:391) so the content can be controlled by the newsroom but what is said on live broadcasts is not always something that can be managed.

An example of an athlete harnessing the power of social media is Maria Sharapova. In March 2016, she live-streamed the press conference on her own website to let everyone know that she failed a performance-enhancing drug test which allowed her to control what was said about her because she disclosed the information herself instead of a third party who could frame her (Bell *et al.*, 2018:369). This also highlights the value that social media adds because she was able to promote and stream to anybody anywhere in the world, where everyone had the same access to the same information (Bell *et al.*, 2018:370).

Based on the literature, a theoretical statement has been formulated to define social media in the context of this study.

Theoretical statement five: Social media is a global online platform that allows users to share information and ideas with all other users. It gives sports journalists a platform to collate and distribute news while giving fans a place to read news and share their views and opinions. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter allow for two-way communication and are more personable to make fans feel part of a community even if they do not personally know athletes or journalists.

3.4.3 Social media and fandom

Social media is influential in the context of fandom as a social structure because fans have one place to find news and share opinions, which allows for two-way communication and enhances connections. It provides more than live broadcast coverage of games but also information, replays, statistics and inside information, which creates a well-rounded experience (Phonthanukitithaworn, 2017:1480). Therefore, fans can stay informed about the teams they support and athletes they admire no matter the time of day.

Before social media, when fans were angry, there was no platform for them to convey these thoughts and feelings for everyone to see, and rather thoughts were shared in a vacuum (Alexiou, 2020). Nowadays, in sports especially, people feel like they can share whatever they want and choose whether they want to do so anonymously or not, creating a toxic fan culture which results in athletes receiving death threats and unnecessary slander (Alexiou, 2020). Sports, as mentioned, can be a

toxic environment because fans surround themselves with other fans who share a mutual admiration for their team and athletes, so it's easy to get caught in the moment when things don't go in their favour (Alexiou 2020). But there is a fine distinction between a passionate fan and a toxic one, and that can be established through social media when they get so invested that they do not think about the impact of what they say on others around them (Alexiou, 2020).

For the purpose of this study, a sports fan will be differentiated from a sports spectator. A sports fan is someone who takes an interest in the sport and follows and identifies with the team or athletes, whereas a sports spectator are individuals that attend matches or watches broadcasts (Mastromartino *et al.*, 2017:4; Chadborn, 2018:241). Fans believe they can influence the outcome of games, while spectators are not as devoted and are not as influenced by results (see 3.3.4) (UK Essays, 2018).

According to Facebook IQ (2018), fans engage with athletes in three ways: connecting with the athletes, cheering on competitors, and experiencing emotion. Fans connect with athletes by following them on social media and interacting with their profile through comments or likes; fans cheer on competitors because when rivals congratulate opposition on social media, it is usually one of the most liked and engaged posts, and lastly when athletes show emotions, fans use the comment section to share their support and love for the team or athlete. While daily, regular, and occasional fans would be the type of fans to engage on Facebook, daily fans would be the most engaging with the content, regular fans would stay up to date, while occasional fans would check for updates when it suits them as opposed to using Facebook as a source for their information. The key features of fandom and social media in sports will be discussed in the next section.

3.4.4. Key features of fandom and social media in sports journalism

Table 3.2. Key features of fandom and social media in sport

Feature of fandom	Fandom	Social media	Social media as a sports journalism platform
Eustress	Being a fan is a way for individuals to escape boredom or stress.	Using social media is a way for a fan to escape boredom or stress.	Fans can use watching/reading the news as a way to escape from boredom or stress and rely on journalists for 'feel good' stories, so journalists will use their online platform as a way to disseminate news stories to fans.

Escape	Fans can use watching sports to escape the reality of their day-to-day life.	Fans can use social media to escape from their responsibilities.	Fans can use sports journalism to escape life as they know it and get information about sports in real-time.
Entertainment	Fans watch sports for entertainment.	Fans use social media as entertainment, like watching videos to pass the time.	Fans rely on both social media and sports for entertainment, so social media platforms are used to share information that fans are easily able to access when they are looking for something to avoid boredom.
Family needs or bonding	Fans can watch sports because their family does so.	Fans can use social media to connect with the family online.	Fans can watch sports as a way to connect with their family, so they are able to keep in touch with what is happening in the sports world through social media and share this information with their family.
Aesthetic	Fans watch sports to see athletes master their craft.	Fans follow certain people on social media because of the lifestyle they portray online.	Fans use social media to get insights into what athletes do on a daily basis.
Group affiliation and identification	Fans watch sports to feel part of a community.	Fans use social media to keep up with the latest trends and to stay up to date with what those around them are interested in.	Fans may choose to follow a certain journalist or publication on social media because they feel that they relate most to them or because they feel part of the online community.
Education	Fans watch sports as a way of learning about team history and demographics.	Fans can use social media to learn new things, such as by watching YouTube videos.	Fans can use social media to access new information about sports or learn about news as the story breaks and can receive constant updates about stories. Fans can also use social media as a way to learn more about sports through journalists.

From this section, it is possible to conclude that the features of framing can be applied to fandom as it comes to the fore on social media platforms that focus on sports, including sports news pages. Getting public attention can be achieved through entertainment, group affiliation and education. Persuading beliefs and opinions can be achieved through entertainment and education. Influencing behaviour can be achieved through escape, family needs, group affiliation and education. Defining and structuring reality can be achieved through positive stress, escape, entertainment, group

affiliation and education. Defining legitimacy can be achieved through education, and lastly, informing in a timely manner can be achieved through group affiliation and education.

3.5. Summary and conclusion

In this chapter, the research aim was to determine how the features of framing can be applied to fandom and social media as a platform for sports news in the South African context, according to the literature. Fandom and social media have similar uses amongst their audience, which includes the establishment and maintenance of connections and shared solidarity, and framing influences what individuals see on social media and how they view the sports teams they support.

Framing places emphasis on an issue to make it more salient than another and has the potential to influence fan behaviour. The six features of framing identified in this study guided the researcher during the empirical analysis and are as follows: getting public attention, persuading beliefs and opinions, influencing behaviour, defining, and structuring reality, defining legitimacy, and informing in a timely manner.

Fandom refers to an individual's attachment to a sport, and individuals take an interest in sport to decompress, escape, for entertainment, family needs or bonding, the aesthetic of sport, group affiliation and identification, which are the same reasons fans and sports journalists can use social media as a news platform.

Two of the ways individuals become sports fans are through socialisation and identification. When fans learn about the history of the sport through family or their community and pick up on the common terms used, socialisation occurs. When fans become psychologically invested in a team or athlete and their mood is affected by the outcome of matches, identification occurs. Fans are passionate consumers of media, which encourages participation on social media and creates a platform for sports journalists to disseminate news. Sports journalists have a responsibility to educate readers by showing an understanding of tactics and strategy, which encourages socialisation and identification as it creates a better understanding of sports for fans.

Based on a literature study, a theoretical framework has been created from the discussions of media framing, fandom, and social media in the South African context. This framework has been used in the next chapters to come to develop the measuring instrument for the empirical section of the study using content analysis to determine how the features of framing were applied to fandom and social media in a specific case study in the South African context.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODS

4.1. Introduction

This study focuses on how, in a context of social cohesion, South African rugby player Eben Etzebeth was framed on the Facebook pages of selected news organisations following claims of an alleged racial assault incident on the Facebook pages of selected news organisations. This is being undertaken to understand how sports journalism can foster social cohesion, which has been identified as a process that is necessary for South Africa after its history of segregation and marginalisation during the Apartheid era (see 1.2). Sports journalists, like all journalists in South Africa, are expected to follow ethical codes to ensure they report in a diverse and inclusive manner, achieved by representing various cultures and eliminating bias and marginalisation. Nowadays, sport news is often distributed on social media platforms, like Facebook, and gives fans a platform to provide comments and share views and opinions (see 3.5.5).

In chapter one, it was indicated that sports journalism and fandom are important in the context of social cohesion in South Africa. The significance of South African rugby player Eben Etzebeth's alleged racial assault incident in Langebaan significance, was also placed in the context of social cohesion.

In chapter two, the relationship between sports journalism and social cohesion was explained in the context of South Africa. Sports journalists are expected to be ethical and transparent in their reporting and can contribute to social cohesion by focusing on inclusion, belonging participation, legitimacy, or the lack thereof, and the building or breakdown of relationships within the sporting community – both on and off the field.

In chapter three, it was explained that fandom and social media are both influential as fans use sports and social media for reasons such as eustress, escape, entertainment, family bonding, aesthetics, group identification, and education. Also, it was mentioned that the framing of certain issues or events by the news media, social media, in particular, can influence the way people perceive those issues because of the elements placed on them.

In this chapter, the researcher discusses the research paradigm, research approach; the research design; theoretical statements; concepts and constructs; research methods; sampling; measuring instruments; operationalisation of constructs; data processing or interpretation of information. This helped the researcher to determine how South African rugby player Eben Etzebeth was framed in the

alleged racial assault incident on the Facebook pages of selected news organisations in a context in which sports journalism and fandom are elements that inform social cohesion.

4.2. Research paradigm

Constructivism refers to individuals creating and interpreting meanings of the world around them (Paley *et al.*, 2011:956), which will allow the researcher to interpret the data based on their own experiences, interaction, and observations. Constructivism suggests that knowledge can't exist outside of one's mind, truth is not certain, knowledge is created on experiences, knowledge is personal and socially constructed, and learning requires individuals to make sense of the world (Yilmaz, 2008:162; Fox, 2001:23).

Constructivism is appropriate for the study as it will allow the researcher to constantly reflect and make their own assumptions and interpretations when undertaking the analysis. This will ensure that the researcher takes initiative, data gathered is rich and the analysis will be subjective. The research approach will be discussed in the next section.

4.3. Research approach

A qualitative research approach was undertaken in this study to determine how South African rugby player Eben Etzebeth was framed by selected news organisations that posted news reports on their Facebook pages as well as the comments section of Facebook users in these reports of said media in Langebaan's alleged racial assault incident during the week of 25-31 August 2019.

Qualitative research focuses on an individual's perceptions, emotions, behaviour, values, opinions, attitudes, experiences, social movements, and cultural phenomena (Rahman, 2016:103; Hammarberg *et al.*, 2016:498). So, this approach helps to create an in-depth understanding of attitudes, behaviour and interactions that happen in real life, which helps the researcher understand how real life is impacted by social structure, order, and other kinds of social forces (Crossman, 2020). Therefore, it investigates meanings, symbols, and the processes and relations of social life (Crossman, 2020; Asenahabi, 2019:81). Understanding social phenomena involves the use of empirical methods such as case studies, personal experiences, interviews, observation, group discussions, and qualitative content analysis (Renz *et al.*, 2018:824; Hammarberg *et al.*, 2016:499; Du Plooy, 2009:98; Hennik *et al.*, 2011:9; Merriam *et al.*, 2019:5). Therefore, qualitative content analysis was an appropriate approach to analyse the meanings deduced from news stories and comments related to the South African rugby player Eben Etzebeth's Langebaan alleged racial assault incident. Also, the literature, social and historical life experiences were used to understand and interpret the meanings drawn from the texts of the selected news publications and Facebook

users' comments during the week of 25-31 August 2019. The aim was to understand their meaning in the context of social cohesion.

Much like quantitative research, qualitative research aims to yield findings that are trustworthy, credible, applicable, and consistent (Hammarberg *et al.*, 2016:500). As the researcher is responsible for collecting and analysing data, they must identify biases and control them to ensure the interpretation of data is consistent (Merriam *et al.*, 2019:6; Crossman, 2020). The results of this research approach are also rich and descriptive. Instead of using numbers and metrics like a quantitative study, words are used by the researcher to show understanding, and findings can be supported by quotes, documents, and photographs (Merriam *et al.*, 2019:6). Therefore, this approach is beneficial to this study as it aims to give a descriptive analysis in showing the understanding of the meaning of texts deduced from selected media houses Facebook posts and Facebook user's comments regarding the South African rugby player Eben Etzebeth during the Langebaan alleged racial assault incident.

The scope of this research approach is, however, sometimes limited so findings are not generalisable, and researchers should ensure they don't use personal bias when making findings (Crossman, 2020). It is, however, worth mentioning that the aim of this study was not to generalise but to contextualise and understand how Eben Etzebeth was framed by sports journalists and Facebook users of the selected publications during the Langebaan-alleged racial assault incident. Even so, it intends to contribute insights into how sport can both advance and undermine social cohesion in a socially networked society where the sport is a popular pastime.

4.4. Research design

A research design is a plan for conducting research to test and examine research questions in a study which outlines the type of analysis to be done in the study to achieve the desired results, which explains what will be studied and where the study will be conducted (Lavrakas, 2008; Creswell, 2014; Asenahabi, 2019:78). The research design is a strategy for interpreting the data that is analysed so that adequate conclusions can be drawn from the research. In this study, literature review, qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis were employed to examine and test the research questions of this study.

In the first chapter, the research questions were formulated, and research aims were outlined from specific research questions to ensure the general research question could be answered. In the second and third chapters, the literature study addressed the first and second specific research questions by explaining the study's theoretical background. The third and fourth specific research questions (see

1.5) were answered in chapter 5 using qualitative content analysis. The data was then analysed using thematic analysis.

The theoretical statements that were used to guide the empirical research are explained in the next section.

4.5. Specific research questions and research methods

The specific research questions and the methods enabled the study to answer the general research question of this study, which is: How was Eben Etzebeth framed in the Langebaan assault incident on the Facebook pages of selected news organisations in a context in which sports journalism and fandom are the elements that can inform social cohesion, are illustrated in Table 4.1. below.

Table 4-1: Specific research questions and methods

Specific research question	Research method
1. What are the key features of sports journalism in the context of social cohesion in South Africa, according to the literature?	Literature review (Chapter 2)
2. How can the features of framing theory be applied to fandom and sports journalism in the South African context, according to the literature?	Literature review (Chapter 3)
3. How was Eben Etzebeth framed in the alleged racial assault incident by journalists of <i>TimesLIVE</i> , <i>SA Rugby magazine</i> and <i>Sport24</i> in news reports posted on these publication's Facebook pages between 25 and 31 August 2019?	Qualitative content analysis (Chapter 5)
4. How was Eben Etzebeth framed in the alleged racial assault incident by social media users in the comments on the Facebook pages of the publications mentioned above between 25 and 31 August 2019?	Qualitative content analysis (Chapter 5)

4.6. Theoretical statements, concepts, and constructs

To answer the research questions above, theoretical statements were formulated through a literature study to guide the empirical study. Table 4.2. indicates how the general research question was answered.

Table 4-2: Theoretical statements, concepts, and constructs

Theoretical statement	Concept	Construct
1. Social cohesion is defined as the extent to which individuals coexist despite their differences through a shared sense of solidarity by eliminating marginalisation. Social cohesion is achieved through creating a sense of belonging, aiming for equality, improving social relations, and ensuring legitimacy and good quality of life. It is achieved at three levels, individual, community, and institutions and all contribute to how included an individual feels within their community.	Social cohesion	Co-exist Shared solidarity Eliminating marginalisation
2. Sports journalism comprises print and social media, broadcast, and photojournalism, centres around the production of news during sports-related events and issues. While the platforms used to disseminate may have changed over the years, the key features are interviewing, writing, and reporting, creativity, understanding of the sport, networking, confidence, meeting deadlines, objectivity, and ethics. Honest reporting and following ethical guidelines such as being honest about sources and not discriminating against race, age, gender, or disability.	Sports journalism	Production of news Ethical guidelines
3. Framing emphasises a certain topic to make it appear more salient than others, which is achieved through text, image choice, and font size. Through framing, the media can influence behaviour, define reality and legitimacy, and inform fans about prominent issues in a timely manner. Framing occurs in seven ways, namely situational framing, issue framing, responsibility framing, attributional framing, conflict framing, human interest framing and morality framing.	Framing	Influencing behaviour Defining reality Legitimacy Informative Situational framing Issue framing

		Responsibility framing Attributional framing Conflict framing Human-interest framing Morality framing
4. Fandom refers to social structures created by mass media consumers. It is a form of cultural production emanating from various forms of grassroots participation and wide involvement. In the context of sport is it an attachment to a team, athlete, and sport. Fans become sports fans through socialisation and identification, which occurs when fans learn about sports from the community around them or form a psychological attachment to a team. The internet is a tool that strengthens fandom as a social structure because the immediacy of it allows news to be shared quickly and gives fans a platform to share opinions in real-time.	Fandom	Attachment Participation Socialisation Identification
5. Social media is global online platforms that allow users to share information and ideas with all the other users. It gives sports journalists a platform to collate and distribute news, while giving fans a place to read news and share their views and opinions. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter allow for two-way communication and are more personable to make fans feel part of a community even if they do not personally know athletes or journalists.	Social media	Two-way communication

Each construct has been assigned an operational definition to guide the empirical research. This helped to determine if the articles and user's comments frames were related to social cohesion or not. Table 4.3 explains the construct's relevant operational definition.

Table 4-3: Constructs and operational definitions

Construct	Operational definition
Co-exist	In this study is outlined as Sports journalism that strengthens living in harmony despite differences in race, gender, beliefs, and background.

Shared solidarity	In this study is outlined as Sports journalism that shares the same interests, ideas, and feelings of unity.
Eliminating marginalisation	In this study is outlined as • Sports journalism that eliminates the wrongs of the past and reporting fairly on all races and not favouring any. • Sports journalism that treats others as equals in society. Sports journalism that abides by ethical guidelines.
Production of news	In this study is outlined as • Sports journalism using criteria such as relevance and timeliness in determining which stories to publish. In this case, publishing the stories related to the incident under study, during the time the incident happened. • Sports journalism making news available to the public. In this case, making the news about the incident available to the public.
Ethical guidelines	In this study is outlined as • Sports journalists abiding by ethical guidelines set out in the Associated Press Sports Editors guidelines.
Influencing behaviour	In this study is outlined as • Fans being influenced by what journalists have written in the text.
Defining reality	In this study is outlined as • Sports journalists using particular words and phrases to create a narrative.
Legitimacy	In this study is outlined as • Sports journalism being an accurate and reliable source of news.
Informative	In this study is outlined as • Sports journalists reporting accurately and sharing information with fans.
Attachment	In this study is outlined as • A fan's attachment to a sport, athlete, or team.

Participation	This study is outlined as • A fan's involvement on social media in the day-to-day of an athlete, team, or sport.
Socialisation	In this study is outlined as • A fan behaving in a manner that is accepted by others and shares views and opinions with other fans.
Identification	This study is outlined as follows: • How a fan relates to events that happen to a team or athlete and the impact, it has on them.
Two-way communication	This study is outlined as • Sports journalism and fandom enable two-way communication through posting and commenting on Facebook posts shared by a publication.

4.7. Research methods

The research method is divided into two components, the literature review and the empirical method, which take the form of qualitative content analysis. The research methods will be discussed next, followed by a discussion of the sampling population.

4.7.1. Literature review

A literature study is defined as “a systematic and thorough survey of publications that are relevant to a research project” (Du Plooy, 2009:63). It is a critical process during which the strengths and weaknesses of a publication are assessed by providing an overview of previous research (Du Plooy, 2009:63; Denney *et al.*, 2013:218). The aim of a literature study is to determine what research has already been done in a specific field, what research methods were used, the outcome of the research, and what the research was used for (Du Plooy, 2009:64). It is used to build on knowledge in an existing field and determine any gaps, gain understanding on certain concepts, give the researcher ideas for their own research, and how researchers apply concepts in real-life applications (Western Sydney University, 2017:1; Knopf, 2006:127). When conducting a literature study, it is important to compare the existing literature and evaluate it, and then integrate how the study links and relates to the topic at hand to create a framework for outlining the importance of the study (Western Sydney University, 2017:1; Denney *et al.*, 2013:218). The aim of the literature review for this study was to determine what research already exists to highlight the relationship between social cohesion, sports

journalism, and fandom and get a better understanding of media framing in sports journalism. This helped the researcher to determine how social cohesion and fandom manifest in online media and helped formulate the theoretical statements to derive concepts and constructs for the empirical analysis.

The databases used to review the literature for this study were *EBSCOhost*, *Google Scholar*, *JSTOR*, *Juta*, *ResearchGate*, *SAGE Journals*, *Taylor and Francis*, *Scopus*, and *Science Direct*. The literature is very diverse as most of the sources are academic journals, but textbooks, blogs, published and unpublished dissertations, and websites were also used. After searching databases, it became clear that this study has not been done in South Africa. Studies have been done about social cohesion and sport, such as Eliza Stander's study on fan engagement, meaning, and life satisfaction among South African football fans and Valerie Moller's study on happiness, national pride, and the 2010 World Cup, which were helpful in guiding this study. However, this study differs because it explores the relationship between social cohesion and sports journalism and not the role that sports play in the lives of South Africans.

The following section discusses the empirical method and outlines how data were selected and analysed.

4.7.2. Empirical analysis

4.7.2.1. Qualitative content analysis

Historically, content analysis was used as early as the 1940s to understand the presence of words or concepts in a text, as well as the frequency of the words. As the technology evolved, the focus shifted to concepts and semantic relationships to understand the linguistic, historic, and emotional use of words (Renz *et al.*, 2018:825). Content analysis is one of several research methods used to analyse text data, and emphasis is placed on context as well as to analyse the meaning of words and visuals, like metaphors, definitions, images, symbols, and generalisations in a way to uncover the general discourse patterns (Renz *et al.*, 2018:824; Crossman, 2020; Avraham, 2017:281; Preiser *et al.*, 2022:270). Content analysis is an idea of classifying a lot of words of text into much lesser groups, but it also depends on whether each category consists of one, several, or many words. When words, phrases, or other units of texts are presumed to have a similar meaning, they are classified in the same category. Synonyms can be grouped together, or several words representing a concern with a conception can be grouped together, depending on the purpose of the research. Therefore, it is significant that grouping is consistent so that the researcher can make valid inferences from the text (Wimmer and Dominick, 2011).

Qualitative content analysis is a subjective, category-based approach, so it focuses on the meanings and patterns of the text rather than the text itself (Mayring, 2019; Prasad, 2019:7; Crossman, 2020). The general goal of qualitative content analysis is to make the meaning discovered using various analytical methods more recognisable and explain the dominant discourses while also providing a concise summary of key results (Preiser et al., 2022:272; Erlingsson, 2017:94). Therefore, qualitative content analysis enabled the analysis of text data deduced from selected news organisations and the Facebook users in the comments sections of said media, to understand how South African rugby player Eben Etzebeth was framed in an alleged racial assault incident. The aim was to gain insight into the use of certain words. Content analysis allows the researcher to be closer to data; it is reliable due to the systematic nature of research and does not require interaction with participants (Renz *et al.*, 2018:825).

In this study, qualitative content analysis was conducted in the following four steps: identifying the units of analysis, determining the coding categories, coding the content, and identifying the research instrument.

4.7.2.1.1. Identifying the units of analysis

The unit of analysis refers to the objects that are under study and the focus of the study, which can be measured and observed (DeCarlo, 2018; Dolma, 2010:169). For the purpose of this study, news articles from *Sport24*, *TimesLIVE* and *SA Rugby* magazine published on the Facebook pages of these titles and comments of users on these posts related to South African rugby player Eben Etzebeth's alleged racial assault incident were selected.

On 25 August 2019, South African rugby player Eben Etzebeth was leaving Die Watergat (translated to mean 'watering hole') in Langebaan in South Africa's Western Cape province with his cousin and friends when he was accused of assaulting and using racial slurs against a homeless man. Yorayda Papier-Jansen posted on Facebook: "Brutally attack while walking me and my couz home, by Eben Edzebet, Ryan, Emile and friends, calling us hotnots and swearing masep***ste, this is not on. Gunpointing innocent people and assaulting a poor innocent mean who have done absolutely nothing to u. Eben Edzebet u the biggest racist coz how can you ask (Hotnots wat suk julle nog op straat) and yet you a public figure." This post was picked up by journalists who published it as news online.

A complaint was laid at the Human Rights Commission, where South African rugby player Eben Etzebeth appeared before his departure to the Rugby World Cup to answer questions. After he was included in the squad, there were calls for him to be removed until the matter was resolved; however, coach Rassie Erasmus stated he would only remove Etzebeth from the squad if there was evidence

and grounds for him to do so. Erasmus emphasised the player-coach relationship over what is said daily on social media about players and would only act when proven otherwise.

Articles written by journalists in *TimesLIVE*, *SA Rugby magazine* and *Sport24* that were related to this South African rugby player Eben Etzebeth's alleged racial assault incident were the main units of analysis in this study. These three publications were selected because they are credible publications with an engaged audience and a strong editorial sports section that provided a lot of coverage on the matter (see 1.8.1.2).

4.7.2.1.2. Determining the coding categories

The second step was to determine the coding categories. Coding for categorisation requires the researcher to closely read the text and reflect on what is written by writing down interpretations (Renz *et al.*, 2018:824; Preiser *et al.*, 2022:272; Crosswell, 2018). This is the process of aggregation where texts are abstracted and grouped together under higher-order subheadings. Abstraction, therefore, helps in emphasising explanations and understandings on a logical level. This leads to the creation of "codes, categories, and themes" (Elo *et al.*, 2014).

To determine the dominant themes in this study, coding categories were determined by reading through the articles and Facebook users' comments about South African rugby player Eben Etzebeth's alleged racial assault incident and writing down the dominant themes. Headlines, paragraphs, sentences, words, and phrases were analysed to understand the meaning of the text in order to find out how Eben Etzebeth was framed in this incident. Both the manifest and latent meanings of the texts were analysed. The manifest content analysis focuses on describing what is present in the text and the literal subject matter, while latent content analysis focuses on the underlying meaning of the text, which can be interpreted differently by every individual (Kleinheksel *et al.*, 2020:3; Alam 2020). The manifest content is more objective, whereas latent content is more subjective.

Latent and manifest content analysis occurs in four stages: decontextualisation, recontextualisation, categorisation and compilation. Decontextualisation identifies the meaning, recontextualisation compares the data, categorisation separates the data into homogeneous groups, and compilation draws realistic conclusions. The difference between latent and manifest analysis is that manifest analysis brings the subjects together during categorisation, while latent analysis condenses meaning before bringing them together. Thereafter manifest analysis uses the words associated with the text, whereas latent analysis determines the underlying meaning of the text (Bengtsson, 2016:9).

This was a significant step in this study because it helped the researcher to understand the journalists' and Facebook users' perceptions towards South African rugby player Eben Etzebeth's alleged racial incident, during the week of 25-31 August 2019, in the context of social cohesion

4.7.2.1.3. Coding the content

Coding is defined as assigning meaningful ideas with the data being used in the study or extracting specific words and phrases relevant to the data (Williams, 2019:8). Texts that have the same meanings, either with the manifest or latent meaning, are grouped together to form one category. The content was then coded, each category given a code, aiming to identify some dominant themes. Themes such as “*hero*” and “*racist*” were then identified. Comments that make no mention of South African rugby player Eben Etzebeth's alleged racial assault incident were excluded from the study.

4.7.2.1.4. Identifying the research instrument

In this study, a coding or code sheet that contains all the necessary information to help the researcher interpret the data was used. The code sheet was essential in coding all the data in a standardised manner. A code sheet is defined by Weston *et al.* (2001) as an instrument for the development and evolution of a coding scheme that is an essential method for documenting the codes and procedures applied to them. Therefore, a table was created in a document online so all the information could be stored in the same place and reduce the risk of any information getting lost. Each headline, paragraph, sentence, word, phrase, and comments were then transferred into a column under their designated themes. Also, the text in the table was labelled as whether they are framed in positive, negative, or neutral frames. To avoid confusion later, a column was added to state whether it was a text from the article or a comment from a Facebook user. The code sheet is attached in Addendum A.

4.8. Sampling

4.8.1. Sampling population

A sample refers to a portion of a population used to learn more about the entire population, and sampling refers to selecting that portion in relation to a research area to represent the whole population (Vehovar *et al.*, 2016:327). Three publications were selected as the sampling population for this study: the *Sunday Times* (and its daily online publication *TimesLIVE*), *Sport24*, and *SA Rugby magazine* (online), and the articles that were published on their Facebook pages between 25-31 August 2019. The week-long period of 25-31 August 2019 was selected to ensure the study remained narrow and focused because that is when the topic was dominating headlines. Facebook was selected as the platform of choice because 80% of South Africans use Facebook (the most popular

social media platform) and 39% of these South African Facebook users comment on news articles (see 3.4.1.9), so the data collected was rich.

The researcher chose the three publications because the journalists are specialist sports writers, their news is always accessible on their Facebook pages, where they engage with their audience, and they have different audiences (see 1.8.1.2). The *Sunday Times* and *Sport24*'s key demographic are black males between 35 and 49 years old, while *SA Rugby magazine* is white men between 18 and 35 years old. While *Sunday Times* and *Sport24* serve the same audience, the different topics discussed on their website allowed the researcher to gather rich data. The contents of 13 news articles and 498 Facebook comments were manually collected and saved in a document on the cloud in May 2021 to ensure the contents were preserved and protected because news organisations sometimes delete content. The researcher then applied a non-probability sampling strategy to select the sample necessary for this study.

4.8.2. Non-probability sampling strategy

This study applied a non-probability sampling strategy. A sample refers to a portion of a population used to learn more about the entire population (Vehovar *et al.*, 2016:327). Non-probability sampling uses non-random methods to select the sampling elements based on the researcher's selective judgement (Landreneau, 2009). The researcher plays a central role in the study as the participants are selected through the researcher's judgement (Anello, 2021). It is highly unlikely that the precision of the results can be estimated, but it provides the researcher with a timely manner to collect data (Anello, 2021).

Non-probability sampling was selected for this study to allow the researcher to select news articles and Facebook users' comments that were relevant to the topic and would answer the general research question. Non-probability sampling was helpful in this study because by selecting relevant samples, the study became more valid and reliable and focused on a specific incident instead of all the articles written by the selected publications in the weeklong period shortly before a major international sports event, the Rugby World Cup, which generated high volumes of news. Non-probability sampling methods include quota sampling, judgemental sampling, convenience sampling, and snowball sampling, and the sampling method used in this study was purposive or judgemental sampling technique and will be discussed in the next section.

4.8.3. Purposive or judgemental sampling technique

The purposive or judgemental sampling technique is one of the non-probability sampling techniques. Purposive or judgemental sampling relies on the researcher to use their judgement when selecting a

sample, and purposive sampling means participants are selected based on specific criteria which are pre-determined by the researcher (Given, 2008:562; Acharya *et al.*, 2013:332). By conducting purposive sampling, the researcher can make generalisations that are analytical and logical because the sampling technique has a specific goal (Sharma, 2017:751). Researchers use purposive sampling when focusing on a specific subset of people that fit a profile outlined at the beginning of the study (Alchemer, 2021).

Since this study focuses on South African rugby player Eben Etzebeth's alleged racial assault incident (see 4.4.2.2.5), the researcher purposely selected articles on the Facebook pages of three news organisations, namely *TimesLIVE*, *Sport24* and *SA Rugby magazine* (online), and their comments sections, that covered this incident. The aim was to focus on the content that is related to this incident only. The researcher, therefore, used the judgemental or purposive sampling technique because she believes that this kind of sampling provides the necessary data without complications; moreover, the sample is quicker and easier to draw. The researcher chose this sample so that it provides answers to the questions posed in this research study. The contents of the news articles posted by these organisations on their own Facebook pages between 25-31 August 2019 were selected for analysis. The one-week period was selected because it was immediately after the incident came to light and was dominating news headlines, and the data captured during this period is rich enough for in-depth findings in this study.

The data collected was then analysed using the thematic analysis method which is discussed in the next section.

4.9. Data analysis

4.9.1. Thematic analysis

Thematic data analysis is a method used to code content to uncover the inherent meaning or patterns by identifying, analysing, and reporting on the repeated patterns to make sense of the data (Preiser *et al.*, 2022:272; Kiger *et al.*, 2020:847; Scharp *et al.*, 2019:117; Maguire, 2017:3353). Thematic analysis places emphasis on social, cultural, and structural contexts that influence experiences and enable knowledge and typically answers the question: what is the theme? (Kiger *et al.*, 2020:847; Scharp *et al.*, 2019:117; Maguire, 2017:3353). A theme explains underlying meaning from an interpretative level, intended to communicate with the reader on both an intellectual and emotional level (Erlingsson, 2017:94). Themes are selected based on how well they answer research questions and how well they explain the phenomenon being studied and they create meaning from what they discern in the data (Preiser *et al.*, 2022:274; Finlay, 2021:104). Thematic analysis is useful to

summarise key findings, understand the different perspectives of people and highlight the similarities and differences, which has the potential to generate unexpected insights (Nowell *et al.*, 2017:2).

To analyse the data in this study, the researcher read through the articles to familiarise herself with the text and subject matter. Next, codes were identified, and comments were categorised as positive, negative, or neutral. Themes were then identified according to patterns and concepts that repeated themselves throughout the text. Next, the researcher reviewed the themes to ensure they aligned with the subject matter and constructs. The themes were then defined in the context of the study so the discussion could be created.

An example of the code book used to analyse the data can be found below.

Table 4-4: Example of the code book used for analysis

PUBLICATION& DATE	DESCRIPTION OF EBEN ETZEBETH'S ALLEGED ASSAULT INCIDENT (HEADLINES, WORDS, PHRASES, SENTENCES OR PARAGRAPHS, COMMENTS)	THEME	NOTES	DECRPTION OF FRAMES	POSITIVE NEGATIVE OR NEUTRAL
<i>TimesLIVE</i> , 26 August 2019	Springbok Eben Etzebeth denies 'assault' in Langebaan	Involved in assault	The article's headline suggests that, according to Etzebeth, the incident was an unfounded accusation of assault.	Issue framing	Negative

In this study, a thematic analysis provided a better understanding of how Etzebeth was framed in the alleged racial assault incident. By analysing the contents of the news articles and user comments, the researcher was able to determine the relationship between sports journalism, fandom, and social cohesion. Reliability and validity are important to this study to ensure it can be replicated with the same results and will be discussed in the next section.

4.10. Study reliability and validity

4.10.1 Reliability

Reliability refers to the extent to which a study can be repeated and draw the same conclusion and how precise and consistent the measurement process is (Hammersley, 1987:74; University of Miami, 2020). When different people perform the study, they should be able to reach the same conclusions, no matter how often the study is repeated, so the tools used in the study should be stable and consistent (Drost, 2011:106; Phillips *et al.*, 2021:3; Leung, 2015).

Systematic errors and random errors can lead to a study becoming unreliable. A systematic error means the study doesn't measure the intended construct and a random error occurs when the researcher guesses, gets distracted or uses the wrong sample (University of Miami, 2020). Random errors can cancel out if repeated on a single person, but systematic errors cannot (Drost, 2011:106).

This study is reliable because the measuring tools and research process has been explained in detail, to enable data coding to be consistent no matter how many times this study is repeated. Therefore, generated data, i.e., on the code sheet, can be reproduced if the study is conducted in the same way and is accurate in that the text is in line with the standard process. Operational definitions (see table 4.5.2) have been drafted to ensure instructions are clear, and codes are formulated. Validity will be discussed in the next section, as a reliable study does not always guarantee a valid one (Drost, 2011:107).

4.10.2. Validity

Validity refers to the measurement that shows the researcher has done what was intended and how correctly the conclusion is drawn from the application of measurement (Hammersley, 1987:74; University of Miami, 2020). Research is considered valid if it can accurately mirror the construct it was intended to measure (Phillips *et al.*, 2021:3).

Research is valid when the components of research are meaningful, which is achieved through internal validity, construct validity, and external validity (Drost, 2011:114). Statistical conclusion validity refers to the relationship that is tested, internal validity refers to the validity of the research itself, construct validity refers to the cause-and-effect behaviours in the study, and external validity refers to how generalisable the study is across individuals, settings, and time (Drost, 2011:120).

To ensure the construct validity of the study, the researcher should ensure the concepts and constructs are true reflections of the research phenomena (Du Plooy, 2009:124). Operational definitions should be linked to the theoretical model to ensure the constructs are reliable (Du Plooy,

2009:126). This study is valid because the constructs of this study were drawn from the theoretical statements that were drawn from the literature that built this study. Also, constructs definitions were clearly outlined before the study was conducted, so conclusions were in line with the data.

4.11. Ethical considerations

The study has followed the guidelines set out in the NWU research ethics [policy](#), guided by beneficence and non-maleficence, equality, and respect.

Although the study has been classified as low risk by the NWUS's Basic and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee and comments by users on the Facebook pages of *TimesLIVE*, *SA Rugby magazine* and *Sport24* are in the public domain as the articles are not behind a paywall, the actual usernames were anonymised to user 1, 2, 3, etc to ensure the identity of the users remained anonymous. The Eben Etzebeth case study deals with a racial incident in a sport that has been known to be predominantly white and in which racial issues have surfaced over the years, so there are sensitivities.

However, the study still contributed towards an understanding of social cohesion in a society where sports has played both a unifying and divisive role in the past. Mindful of my own possible biases, I have benefited from supervisors from different backgrounds, one white and one black, and we have and can continue to discuss these issues to avoid bias in the analysis of data. Given the wide-ranging use of social media and the speed with which news and comments spread the role, it has been playing in a social context in which race issues remain a concern makes it an important communication study in South Africa.

The ethics number for this study is **NWU-00955-22-57**.

4.12. Conclusion

In this chapter, the research instrument for this study, based on a theoretical framework emanating from the literature on social cohesion, sports journalism, fandom, and social media, was created to enable the qualitative process of data collection and analysis

The aim of this chapter was to determine how South African rugby player Eben Etzebeth was framed by journalists and fans during the alleged racial assault incident by discussing the research approach, the research design based on the theoretical statements, research methods, sampling, measuring instruments, operationalisation of constructs, and data processing or interpretation of information that were employed to answer the research questions of this study. The research methods used are a

literature review and qualitative content analysis as empirical methods, which used the concepts and constructs identified from theoretical statements deduced in chapters two and three.

In the following chapter, the findings of the empirical phase of the study are presented and discussed.

CHAPTER FIVE: PRESENTATION OF EMPIRICAL RESULTS

5.1. Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the research methods that were used to gather and analyse the empirical data. The aim of this chapter is to present empirical results that answer two specific research questions and achieve the research objectives set out in Chapter 1 (see 1.5). The questions are:

1. SRO 3: To determine, using content analysis, how Eben Etzebeth was framed in the assault incident by journalists of *TimesLIVE*, *SA Rugby magazine*, and *Sport24* in news reports posted on these publications' Facebook pages between 25 and 31 August 2019.
2. SRO 4: To determine, using content analysis, how Eben Etzebeth was framed in the assault incident by social media users in comments on the Facebook pages of the publications in 5.1.1 between 25 and 31 August 2019

In chapter two, the theoretical statements that were used to formulate relevant concepts and constructs derived from the literature studied. These served as measuring tools for further investigation of how Eben Etzebeth was framed by journalists and Facebook users following an alleged racial assault incident. Social media platforms, which for the purpose of this study is Facebook, are used by journalists to publish sports news and give fans a platform to share their opinions in the comments. These discussions and their contribution to social cohesion have been the focus of this study, which has helped the researcher to determine whether sports journalists address the issue of social cohesion when a racist off-field incident makes the news ahead of an international sport which in this instance was the 2019 Rugby World Cup.

In chapter three, the features of framing, fandom, and social media were discussed. Framing was described as an unconscious process where some topics receive more prominence than others, which influences how the audience understands the topic (see 3.2.1.1). Fandom refers to an individual's attachment to a sport, which is achieved through socialisation and identification, which is enhanced through social media because it provides a platform for fans to access news and information from anywhere in the world at any time of day. Framing in sports journalism manifests in two ways: in the media discourse, which can be spoken or written, and in the fan's interpretation of events (see 3.2.2). This is useful in this study which set out to determine how sports journalists and fans framed Springbok rugby player Eben Etzebeth online and in Facebook comments after claims of an alleged assault incident.

In this chapter, the content of the *TimesLIVE*, *SA Rugby magazine* and *Sport24* magazines are analysed, and the themes are discussed in the context of social cohesion in South Africa. Thereafter, the fan comments are analysed, and the themes discussed in the context of fandom in South Africa. This helped to determine how Etzebeth was framed in the Langebaan racial assault incident by sports journalists and fans and answer the general research question.

5.2. Content analysis of the news articles

In this section, the researcher analyses the content of the news articles related to South Africa Eben Etzebeth's alleged racial assault incident. The aim is to determine how Etzebeth was framed in the assault incident by journalists of *TimesLIVE*, *SA Rugby magazine* and *Sport24* in news reports posted on these publication's Facebook pages between 25 and 31 August 2019. To achieve this aim, theoretical statements were formulated through a literature review that has been guiding the empirical study.

According to **theoretical statement two**: Sports journalism comprises print and social media, broadcast, and photojournalism, which centres around the production of news during sports-related events and issues. While the platforms used to disseminate may have changed over the years, the key features are interviewing, writing, reporting, creativity, understanding of sports, networking, confidence, meeting deadlines and objectivity. Adherence to ethical guidelines, including refraining from discrimination based on race, age, gender, or disability, is also key.

Also, according to **theoretical statement three**: Framing emphasises a certain topic to make it appear more salient than others, which is achieved through text, image choice and font size. Through framing, the media can influence behaviour, define reality and legitimacy, and inform fans about prominent issues in a timely manner. Framing manifests in seven ways, namely situational framing, issue framing, responsibility framing, consequence framing, conflict framing, human interest framing and morality framing.

5.2.1. Sports journalism, news production, and framing

To ensure they meet ethical journalistic requirements, sports journalists in South Africa have to report on sporting events, such as matches and athletes, but also on aspects that mitigate social cohesion, such as inequalities and exclusions determined by race, gender, class, age, disability, or any other differences either reduced or completely removed (see 2.2.3.5) (Weedon *et al.*, 2020:1387), which could explain why claims of Springbok Eben Etzebeth's alleged assault incident were picked up by all popular sports publications.

Through framing, the media can shape the public agenda to allow fans to interpret the world around them (see 3.2.1) (Lundahl, 2020:1104; Penn State; s.a.). In this case study, sports journalists' framing of Etzebeth's alleged incident could enable Facebook users or fans to interpret the incident in a context of social cohesion so that it becomes a public agenda that shapes a culture of a socially cohesive society. Media frames reinforce one another by organising issues to make a certain issue more salient than others through media hype (Beyer *et al.*, 2018:252). Framing in the news context could manifest as a conflict between parties, human interest, attributional, morality, and responsibility framing (see 3.2.1.6). This theory on framing has helped in the analysis below to determine whether journalists focused on Etzebeth's alleged racial assault as social cohesion or not.

The theory on framing has helped in the analysis below to determine whether journalists focused on Etzebeth's alleged racial assault as a social cohesion issue or not. To do this, four TimesLIVE articles were analysed, five SA Rugby magazine articles were analysed, and four Sport24 articles were analysed. The data will be presented according to the themes identified in the articles. *TimesLIVE* will be presented first, followed by *SA Rugby magazine* and then *Sport24*.

5.2.1.1. Analysis of TimesLIVE articles framing

This section analyses how Eben Etzebeth was framed in the alleged racial assault incident by journalists of *Times LIVE*. For this study, four articles were analysed and three were written by sports journalists and appeared in the sports section. The first article appeared in the sports section but was written by a crime, justice and human-interest reporter for *TimesLIVE* which indicates that the publication was treating the developing story as a hard news story. The remaining three articles were written by sports journalists and the headlines, captions, body text and images were analysed in all articles to ensure reliability in the study.

According to the content analysed, Eben Etzebeth was framed as the following:

5.2.1.1.1. Involved in the argument between two groups

Although Springbok rugby player Eben Etzebeth allegedly used racial slurs, *TimesLIVE* framed him as a person who was part of a group that was involved in a mere argument with another group. The article extracts below to explain that.

"It is alleged there was an argument between two groups."

(TimesLIVE, 26 August 2019).

"It's claimed (although the identity of the accuser is unknown) that two groups clashed in the venue."

(TimesLIVE, 26 August 2019).

The two extracts suggest that there was only an argument between the two groups, which was fuelled by a clash in the venue, which frames Etzebeth as heated because the conversation reached a point where it became confrontational. The use of the words “*alleged*” and “*claimed*” suggest that it is still an unproven claim, and there has been no concrete confirmation about the incident.

The journalists were unbiased and objective by referring to the incident as an argument between two groups and by stating that the identity of the accuser was unknown as it was probable that there was no indication that it was a racial incident. However, as new information became available, it was framed as a racial incident.

5.2.1.1.2. Engaged in assault

Other news articles suggest that Eben Etzebeth was involved in an assault that took place at the establishment, which left other injured people taken to hospital. A case of assault was then opened against Etzebeth by the complainant.

“Eben Etzebeth in Springbok World Cup squad despite assault claims”

(TimesLIVE, 26 August 2019).

“Police spokesperson Sgt Noloyiso Rwexana confirmed an assault case was opened after an alleged incident at a pub in Langebaan.”

(TimesLIVE, 26 August 2019).

“There were people who were injured and transported to hospital.”

(TimesLIVE, 26 August 2019).

These extracts suggest that Etzebeth was implicated in the assault and had injured people badly enough that they needed to be taken to hospital, which frames Etzebeth as violent and aggressive.

The headline “*Eben Etzebeth in Springbok World Cup squad despite assault claims*” suggests a sense of surprise at his inclusion in the squad after being accused of something as substantial as assault. Although people were injured and taken to hospital, the journalist’s use of “*alleged incident*” indicates their reports are based on available evidence. This indicates that there was an incident, but there is no clear indication or evidence yet as to what happened.

5.2.1.1.3. Involved in racial assault

TimesLIVE initially reported on the incident as an argument between two groups and an assault, but once more information became available, it was framed as an alleged racial assault. The extract below implies that Etzebeth and his family got into a fight with another group of people, and he made

comments that could be interpreted as a racial attack. This shows that *TimesLIVE*'s framing of the incident changed as more information was made available.

"The 27-year-old lock was accused of assaulting a man and using racial slurs at the weekend in Langebaan, about 120km north of Cape Town."

(TimesLIVE, 26 August 2019).

"It was alleged that Etzebeth, who was with members of his family and friends, was involved in a fight and that he made racial slurs."

(TimesLIVE, 29 August 2019).

This extract suggests that Etzebeth may have been influenced by his family and friends that he was with when he got himself into a fight and used racial slurs, which frames him as aggressive and intolerant of other races. Suggesting that a rugby player who represents his country internationally is racist is a bold statement, and the journalist's choice to include that could indicate a lack of trust in Etzebeth to be an upstanding citizen.

5.2.1.1.4. Involved in intolerable act

TimesLIVE mentioned that SA Rugby also makes it clear that racial and assault incidents are not taken lightly, as they must abide by the laws of the country. Thus, if the alleged incident was true, he would have committed an intolerable act.

The South African Rugby Union is a law-abiding member of South African society and has no tolerance of acts of violence or racial abuse."

(TimesLIVE, 26 August 2019).

"We will cooperate with the authorities in any way necessary. Our Rugby World Cup squad will have no place for anyone who transgresses those principles. But we also trust our people to act responsibly and tell the truth," SA Rugby said."

(TimesLIVE, 26 August 2019).

These two statements suggest that the South African Rugby Union has strong values against people who are racist or unjust, and the members that make up the squad are committed to mitigating social cohesion. SA Rugby states that because Etzebeth is a squad member, they trust that he has not lied

and has acted in a way that upholds their values, which frames Etzebeth as an honourable person and representative of the country.

5.2.1.1.5. *Involved in similar allegations*

The news articles also suggested that the South African Rugby Union deal with a lot of allegations against rugby players on a regular basis, so this Eben Etzebeth circumstance isn't unfamiliar to them, and they have procedures in place to deal with them.

"When something like that happens, and a lot of things on social media, not just about Eben but a lot of players we have to handle daily."

(TimesLIVE, 29 August 2019).

"A lot of things get said and emails get thrown to us about a lot of players which is something we ignore because often it is just nonsense."

(TimesLIVE, 29 August 2019).

"Obviously this one has become a big thing. I have to believe what the player tells me because we have a relationship."

(TimesLIVE, 29 August 2019).

The extracts suggest that because of the frequency of allegations lodged against players, most of them are disregarded because of a lack of evidence to take them any further.

Calling the allegations "*nonsense*" suggests that they are not believable, and people are taking their chances, which frames Etzebeth as in the clear from any allegations. This may also raise questions about SA Rugby, which, as a national sporting body, should be so easily swayed when racial allegations are made public news. However, it was announced in 2021 that the prosecuting authority decided not to pursue a case against Etzebeth after the judge who made the findings stated that SA Rugby needed to meet with Etzebeth to discuss how his actions had consequences and the negative impact it can have on people's perceptions of him, and that all Springbok players needed to be spoken to to understand how their behaviour of those nearest to them can negatively impact them (Pijoos *et al.*, 2020).

5.2.1.1.6. Vehemently in denial

The statements below suggest that Etzebeth has emphatically denied the claims made on social media, and SA Rugby supports him.

"We have spoken to Eben and he categorically denies any physical or racial abuse on his part as has been alleged in social media.

(TimesLIVE, 26 August 2019).

"It is completely untrue and unfounded to claim that I physically or racially abused anyone in Langebaan, as has been reported on social media. Multiple witnesses can corroborate that."

(TimesLIVE, 26 August 2019).

"I am and will always strive to be a true ambassador to this beautiful rainbow nation."

(TimesLIVE, 26 August 2019).

"We have spoken to Eben and he categorically denies any physical or racial abuse on his part as has been alleged in social media.

(TimesLIVE, 26 August 2019).

"Amid calls for SA Rugby to stand Etzebeth down from the RWC squad until the matter is resolved, Erasmus said unless there is evidence to the contrary he has to believe the player's version of events."

(TimesLIVE, 29 August 2019).

"The 27-year-old has, however, vehemently denied "unfounded" reports posted on social media about the alleged incident."

(Time LIVE, 26 August 2019).

These extracts frame Springbok rugby player Eben Etzebeth as in denial because he took to social media to distance himself of any involvement in the incident, and SA Rugby stipulated that if that was the case, he would no longer represent the Springboks.

The use of the words "categorically" and "vehemently" suggests how strongly Etzebeth denied what he mentioned as the "untrue" and "unfounded" claims.

The journalist made a choice to include a quote from Etzebeth stating that he is an “*ambassador*” to the “*rainbow nation*”, which shows that he is aware of his role in attempts to mitigate social cohesion, that as ambassador to the country, he has an obligation to keep the notion of a “Rainbow Nation” intact by removing himself from any racist activities. As pointed out in chapter 2, the term “Rainbow Nation” has been used to express social cohesion in South Africa (see 1.1.1).

5.2.1.2. Analysis of *TimesLIVE* images

All the stories included images of Etzebeth, but the first two articles written about Etzebeth included the same image (see 5.2.1.2.1) so there were four images analysed in this study.

5.2.1.2.1. *Aggressor*

The image below of Springbok rugby player Eben Etzebeth shows him playing for South Africa, and his facial expression and hand movements can be interpreted as confrontational. The photo used alongside the caption suggesting that he denied physically or racially abusing someone contradicts each other because, in the photo, he looks aggressive (see article: “*Springbok Eben Etzebeth denies ‘assault’ in Langebaan*” and “*Eben Etzebeth in Springbok World Cup squad despite assault claims*”).



Springbok lock Eben Etzebeth, who is expected to be included in the Rugby World Cup squad when the team is announced on Monday, has denied that he physically or racially abused anyone over the weekend.

(*TimesLIVE*, 2019).

5.2.1.2.2. *An accused*

Although the photo used in the article below is questionable, it shows Etzebeth injured on the sidelines during a rugby match. The photo is included in the article, which states that he had allegedly

assaulted a homeless man. The caption also indicates the stature of Etzebeth as he was one of the most experienced players to be included in the squad, which avoids the social cohesion issue and rather focuses on him as a player, which shows that *TimesLIVE* were inconsistent with their frames (see article: *Springbok lock Eben Etzebeth appears at the Human Rights Commission*”).



Eben Etzebeth is one of the more experienced players in the Springboks squad.

(*TimesLIVE*, 2019)

5.2.1.2.3. Ambassador

The photos below show Etzebeth at the Rugby World Cup squad announcement and at a Springboks press conference, where he appears to be happy. The first caption mentions his inclusion in the squad, while the second caption just says his name. Both these images show Etzebeth as a representative of his country (see article: *“Springbok lock Eben Etzebeth appears at the Human Rights Commission”* and *“Etzebeth to be named in Springbok World Cup squad after SA Rugby’s conditional backing”*).



Eben Etzebeth is scheduled to leave for the Rugby World Cup squad with the Springboks.

(*TimesLIVE*, 2019)



Eben Etzebeth. File photo.

(*TimesLIVE*, 2019)

5.2.1.3. Summary of *TimesLIVE* frames

According to the data presented above, during the week of 25-31 August 2019, *TimesLIVE* framed Eben Etzebeth as a player that was involved in an argument between two groups, in an assault, in a racial incident, in an intolerable act, an instance where similar allegations had come up, and Etzebeth was in denial.

Firstly, the journalists framed the incident as an argument between groups. Afterwards, the incident was also framed as a racial incident after a video circulated on social media where Etzebeth was alleged to have assaulted a man on a night out. *TimesLIVE* sports journalists also framed the incident as a racial incident where Etzebeth was believed to have assaulted a man and used racial slurs and is clear through the use of a direct quote from Etzebeth where he denies “*physically or racially*”

abusing anyone. The same article mentioned that a police spokesperson confirmed that a case of assault was opened, which framed Etzebeth as implicated in the incident. This shows that information changed over time as more and more became available, which shows that the journalists could have been influenced by what was being said by social media users.

The journalists also reported that the South African Rugby Union deals with allegations made against players on a regular occasion, so this was not new territory for them, which frames the incident as a regular occurrence. Meanwhile, Etzebeth was also framed by the journalists as being in denial about the incident because of his firm refusal.

It is clear that the photos used in the articles were selectively chosen depending on the topics of the articles, which is one of the ways that journalists frame issues (see 3.2.1.4). When Etzebeth was alleged to have assaulted someone, the photos used of him showed him more aggressively on the field. When there were claims that Etzebeth had injured the victim in an alleged assault and himself also denied the implication of the incident, the photo used of him was a photo of him injured on the sideline of the field. When Etzebeth was included in the Rugby World Cup squad, the photo used to announce his inclusion was one where he appeared more pleasant and was wearing a Springbok blazer to make him look more professional.

Lastly, during the week under study, the *TimesLIVE* articles that made mention of Eben Etzebeth were articles that focused on breaking news rather than sports or feature articles. By including direct quotes from Etzebeth, Springbok coach Rassie Erasmus and police spokespeople, the news articles were more credible and trustworthy, so the journalists were in line with the ethical codes set out in Chapter 3 (see 2.2.3.5). Legitimacy in this study refers to sports journalists being an accurate and reliable source of news (see table 4.5.2). By using several sources such as a police spokesperson, the establishment owner, Springbok coach Rassie Erasmus, and a statement from Etzebeth, sports journalists ensured they were accurate and credible in their reporting because all the information they were reporting could be traced to a source and all quotes from sources were direct quotes and not paraphrased to guarantee legitimacy.

Because the incident was first framed as an argument between two groups, then an assault, and then a racial assault, which could be a result of some details of the incident were only made available at a later stage, which could have been the influence of the social media users wanting to know more about the alleged incident. Etzebeth's involvement in the Springbok team, the number of times he represented his country, and the Rugby World Cup were accentuated by journalists in every article, while other characteristics, like the video that appeared on social media and his meeting with the Human Rights Commission, were not. Cases go to the Human Rights Commission when there are

human rights and equality infringements (South African Human Rights Commission, 2016), so not making any mention of it implies some discrepancies in this issue's coverage, possibly because it is a social cohesion issue. This could have swayed the reader's opinion of Etzebeth, and journalists had the responsibility to share both sides of the story.

Framing makes certain topics appear more salient than others (Love *et al.*, 2021:180), and from the analysis, it is clear that Etzebeth as a rugby player and his involvement in the Rugby World Cup squad was made more apparent than his involvement in the alleged assault incident. Equity and mutual trust are key components of social cohesion (Manca, 2014; Fonseca *et al.*, 2019:235) (see 2.4.1.8), which was not achieved through *TimesLIVE*'s framing as Etzebeth's version of events was given preference over the victim's which would cause a lack of trust from the reader.

Over the course of the week, Etzebeth was framed positively 20 times, negatively 16 times and neutrally seven times, so it can be concluded that *TimesLIVE* framed Etzebeth positively. The media can influence behaviour and can do so using quotes from Etzebeth where he refers to himself as a "true ambassador" and South Africa as a "beautiful rainbow nation" by saying SA Rugby "threw its weight behind him". And by constantly referring to him as a "Springbok lock" instead of using his name.

The *TimesLIVE* journalists ensured inclusivity by reporting on both parties – Etzebeth and the alleged victim but were not open and transparent in their reporting because they accentuated Etzebeth's status as a rugby player instead of focusing on the alleged assault incident. The journalists attempted to promote national unity by referring to Etzebeth as a "Springbok" and how many caps he has for South Africa, but this is also diverting from the social cohesion issue. By including more than one source in the articles and approaching a police spokesperson and Rassie Erasmus for comment, journalists established their news organisations as legitimate sources of news.

The defining reality in this study refers to sports journalists using particular words and phrases to create a narrative (see table 4.5.2). By using words like "vehemently", "unfounded", and "categorically" to describe how Etzebeth refuted the allegations, fans could get a sense of how untrue the allegations were. By referring to the allegations as an "assault", "incident" and "racial incident", the journalists were able to create a narrative for what they wanted the readers to take from the story, which influenced their reality (see 1.7.1.2).

5.2.2.1. Analysis of SA Rugby magazine articles framing

This section analyses how Eben Etzebeth was framed in the alleged racial assault incident by journalists of SA Rugby magazine. In this study, five articles were analysed that were written by

specialist rugby journalists at it is a rugby-specific publication. The headlines and body text was analysed in all articles to ensure reliability in this study.

Eben Etzebeth was framed as the following:

5.2.2.1.1. Involved in an empathetically refuted rumoured incident

Although it was claimed on social media that Springbok rugby player Eben Etzebeth was involved in an alleged racial assault incident when *SA Rugby magazine* first reported on it, they stated that he was just involved in an “*empathetically refuted*” rumoured incident.

“Emphatically refuted rumours and a video doing the rounds alleging he was involved in an incident over the weekend in Langebaan.”

(SA Rugby magazine, 25 August 2019.)

“A video suggested Etzebeth had been involved in an incident with ‘homeless guys’ in the seaside Cape town of Langebaan.”

(SA Rugby magazine, 25 August 2019).

“Twist in Etzebeth case”

(SA Rugby magazine, 30 August 2019)

Even though SA Rugby framed the incident as “*emphatically refuted rumours*”, the extracts further provided more information about what happened and that there was a video suggesting that Etzebeth was allegedly involved in an incident with victims that were believed to be homeless. However, the journalist made no mention of any racial slurs and assaults and did not mention what the twist in the case was. This calls into question their legitimacy because suggesting there was a twist in the case when there was no mention of a twist shows that they did not fulfil their responsibility to the public to be a reliable and honest source of news (Ethical Journalism Network, 2014) (see 2.3.7).

5.2.1.2.2. In denial of any involvement in a racial assault

After Springbok rugby player Eben Etzebeth released a statement where he mentioned that he did not physically or racially abuse anybody, it appeared as if he was in denial about his involvement in the incident.

“It is completely untrue and unfounded to claim that I physically or racially abused anyone in Langebaan as has been reported on social media. Multiple witnesses can corroborate that,” he stated.”

(SA Rugby magazine, 25 August 2019).

“On Sunday, Etzebeth also took to social media to defend himself.”

(SA Rugby magazine, 27 August 2019).

The extract above suggests that the incident was framed by the journalists as an alleged assault where racial slurs were used. However, Etzebeth was in denial of the claims against him, and he stated that he had witnesses to corroborate his version of events.

5.2.1.2.3. Involved in racially connotative assault rumours

This extract below provides more information about the assault incident rumours that were racially connotative.

“On Sunday, rumours emerged on social media to suggest that Etzebeth had been involved in an ‘assault’ that allegedly had racial connotations.”

(SA Rugby magazine, 26 August 2019).

“We have spoken to Eben and he categorically denies any physical or racial abuse on his part as has been alleged in social media.”

(SA Rugby magazine, 26 August 2019).

“This followed a social media storm, which erupted on Sunday to suggest that Etzebeth had been involved in an ‘assault’ that allegedly had racial connotations.”

(SA Rugby magazine, 30 August 2019).

These extracts suggest that rumours appeared on social media which implicated Etzebeth in an alleged racial assault. Assault appearing in quotations implies that it was an assault with racial connotations.

5.2.1.2.4. *Involved in an unsavoury incident*

SA Rugby magazine also stated that Etzebeth was meeting with the Human Rights Commission, which gives the impression that the allegations were being taken seriously by the police and Etzebeth was working to clear his name ahead of the Rugby World Cup.

“Springboks lock Eben Etzebeth met with the Human Rights Commission (HRC) on Thursday in relation to allegations of his involvement in an unsavoury incident in Langebaan last weekend.”

(SA Rugby magazine, 30 August 2019).

This extract above frames the incident as unsavoury, which implies that the behaviour of Etzebeth and the groups was not socially acceptable and rather unpleasant. Only cases that violate the Bill of Rights go to the Human Rights Commission (Western Cape Government, 2022), so stating that Etzebeth met with them implies that the case is being taken seriously and there may be more to it than appears on social media.

5.2.1.2.5. *Innocent*

As more information became available during the week as investigations were ongoing, Etzebeth was framed as not being implicated in the alleged assault and had the assurance from authorities that this was the case.

“Eben Etzebeth: I can focus on World Cup” and “Etzebeth to remain with Boks – SA Rugby”

(SA Rugby magazine, 27 August 2019)

“Eben Etzebeth says he has been assured by police that he will not be implicated following allegations of an unsavoury incident in Langebaan on the weekend.”

(SA Rugby magazine, 27 August 2019).

“The 27-year-old was included in the Bok’s 31-man squad for the World Cup on Monday. He told Netwerk24 that he has already spoken to the police about the incident. ‘They said everything is fine,’ Etzebeth said. ‘Now I can just focus on the World Cup.’”

(SA Rugby magazine, 27 August 2019)

This extract suggests that Etzebeth has done what he needs to do to be cleared by police and has been assured by them that his involvement has been understood, which means he is allowed to focus on his job, which is being a rugby player. This extract suggests that while the incident that

took place in Langebaan was not socially acceptable, Etzebeth was framed as not to blame for what took place, and by not being implicated, he is cleared of any involvement in the incident.

5.2.2.1. Analysis of SA Rugby magazine photographs

SA Rugby magazine did not include any images in their web articles, but images were included on Facebook to pique the reader's interest and entice users to click on the article. Four images were analysed in this study.

5.2.2.1.1. Ambassador

All images used by *SA Rugby magazine* framed Etzebeth neutrally because they showed him wearing his South African rugby kit. The use of the four pictures would not influence the interpretation or evaluation of the alleged racial assault incident (see 3.2.1.4) because they were all used in context.



(*SA Rugby magazine*, 2019)



(*SA Rugby magazine*, 2019)



(SA Rugby magazine, 2019)



(SA Rugby magazine, 2019)

5.2.2.2. Summary of SA Rugby magazine articles

During the week of 25-31 August 2019, *SA Rugby magazine* framed Eben Etzebeth as involved in an emphatically refuted rumoured incident, in denial of any involvement in a racial assault, involved in racially connotative assault rumours, involved in an unsavoury incident and innocent.

Firstly, Etzebeth was framed as involved in an emphatically rumoured incident. After a video surfaced on social media instigating him in an alleged assault incident, Etzebeth came forward to distance himself from any involvement and “*emphatically refuted*” the claims. The journalists framed Etzebeth as being involved in an incident but did not state what the incident was, and while it is the responsibility of the journalist to inform and educate the audience with factual information, this could be because of the short shelf life of stories and the journalist wanting to be one of the first publications to break the news (see 2.6). And by failing to disseminate factual information, the journalist is compromising social cohesion.

However, in the second article on 26 August 2019 about the incident, *SA Rugby magazine* framed Etzebeth as being involved in assault rumours which had racial connotations. Socially cohesive societies mitigate racial injustices, so Etzebeth being involved in an assault and racial incident does not foster social cohesion.

When Etzebeth met with the Human Rights Commission, the incident was framed by the journalists as unsavoury, which implies that his behaviour was not acceptable in society. Social relations in this study refer to the relationships between individuals and groups who work towards a common goal, so Etzebeth not behaving in an acceptable manner does not contribute to social cohesion (see 2.4.2.4).

However, in the same article, *SA Rugby magazine* included direct quotes from Springboks head coach Rassie Erasmus which stated that Etzebeth was going to remain with the squad and that he had been assured by police that he would no longer be implicated, which frames Etzebeth as innocent and SA Rugby's ongoing commitment to creating a shared sense of solidarity and contributing to diversity within the Springbok team (see 2.4).

The framing attributes were situational framing as the journalists wrote about Etzebeth rather than the incident, avoiding the issue of assault and racism. Journalists are expected to be objective and report on issues equally by reporting both sides (see 2.6.3), but this was not the case, and it could be argued that because it is a rugby-focused magazine so they knew what would appeal more to fans.

In terms of inclusion, belonging, and equality, *SA Rugby magazine* gave more prominence to Etzebeth than they did to the victim and the social cohesion issue, and this was highlighted by the journalist's intentional inclusion of Springbok coach Rassie Erasmus calling the allegations "*nonsense*". Although the articles were a legitimate source of news, it can be argued that the journalists showed boosterism which did not uphold the values and social views of journalism, which is to report ethically.

During the week of 25-31 August 2019, Eben Etzebeth was framed positively 21 times and negatively 14 times. While he was framed negatively by journalists, the focus remained on Etzebeth and his accomplishments as a rugby player when discussing the assault to divert from the issue of social cohesion, which would not be constructive as it was a social cohesion issue in South Africa.

The next section will analyse the frames of the *Sport24* journalists.

5.2.3. Analysis of *Sport24* articles

This section analyses how Eben Etzebeth was framed in the alleged racial assault incident by journalists of *Sport24*. For this study, four articles were analysed and all four were written by sports journalists, which shows that the publications treated the news as sports news instead of hard news.

The headlines, captions, body text and images were analysed in all articles to ensure reliability in this study.

Eben Etzebeth was framed as the following:

5.2.3.1. Vehemently in denial of unsavoury allegations

When news first broke about the incident, *Sport24* stated that an unsavoury incident took place, but Etzebeth “*vehemently*” denied the claims, which could explain how desperate he was to distance himself from those claims.

“Springbok star second-rower Eben Etzebeth has vehemently denied social media suggestions that he was involved in an unsavoury incident in Langebaan over the weekend.”

(Sport24, 26 August 2019).

“A video doing the rounds suggesting the 27-year-old lock had assaulted and pointed a gun at a homeless man in the West Coast town.”

(Sport24, 26 August 2019).

“It is completely untrue and unfounded to claim that I physically or racially abused anyone in Langebaan as has been reported on social media. Multiple witnesses can corroborate that.”

(Sport24, 26 August 2019).

This extract suggests that the allegations have been blown out of proportion, and the use of “*vehemently*” shows how strongly he distances himself from the claims.

However, by referring to Etzebeth as a “*Springbok star second-rower*”, the journalist frames him as a well-recognised and impressive rugby player. Framing the incident as “*unsavoury*” gives the reader the impression that the incident was violent.

5.2.3.2. Involved in an assault and gun-pointing incident

While the incident was initially reported as just an unsavoury incident, *Sport24* expanded on what the incident was by suggesting that a video had surfaced online which allegedly showed Etzebeth assaulting and pulling a gun on a homeless man after an altercation happened inside the establishment that Etzebeth and his guest visited.

“A video doing the rounds suggesting the 27-year-old lock had assaulted and pointed a gun at a homeless man in the West Coast town.”

(Sport24, 26 August 2019).

“An incident inside the bar then took place at around midnight, which saw one man involved in a scuffle in the upstairs section of the bar with certain members of Etzebeth's party.”

(Sport24, 26 August 2019)

“Something happened there ... I'm not sure what happened with the fighting, or whatever, with the Etzebeths. I wasn't there and I can't tell you what happened.”

(Sport24, 26 August 2019)

This extract suggests that the pub owner is only aware of what happened inside his establishment and does not clear Etzebeth of any wrongdoing in the altercation that took place outside. Previous allegations stated it was an altercation between two groups, but this implies that it was not a group but rather a homeless man he attacked and pointed a gun at. This frames Etzebeth as malicious and irresponsible.

5.2.3.3. Innocent

Although Etzebeth was implicated in the alleged assault, after speaking to the owner of the establishment, *Sport24* framed Etzebeth as not being implicated in any incident after CCTV footage clearly showed his whereabouts despite what was alleged on social media.

“Reeders said he had examined the CCTV footage from the incident inside his bar, and that Etzebeth had not been involved in the scuffle.”

(Sport24, 26 August 2019)

“Eben and his brother were not involved in that,” he said.” And “I looked at the footage yesterday morning and they were sitting at the table with the women or whatever ... they weren't part of it.”

(Sport24, 26 August 2019).

“Cape Town - Springbok lock Eben Etzebeth says police assured him he will not be implicated in an assault case following an altercation outside a popular Langebaan watering hole over the weekend.”

(Sport24, 26 August 2019).

"They said everything is fine. Now I can just focus on the World Cup," Etzebeth said.

(Sport24, 27 August 2019).

These extracts suggest that Etzebeth has cooperated with authorities who have assured him he was not part of the investigation, which is a big step in clearing his name. Referring to the establishment as a “*watering hole*” also suggests that people go there often to get drunk and may be one of the reasons Etzebeth goes, but it could also be a play on words as the establishment he was at was “De Watergat” which translates to a watering hole in English. Evidence of CCTV footage frames Etzebeth as innocent in the incident, as this places him at the location but not involved in the scuffle that took place.

5.2.3.4. *Involved in social media rumours*

After attending a press conference where the Springbok head coach was present, journalists framed Etzebeth’s involvement in the alleged assault as a rumour which was aimed at questioning the credibility of him as a player and the team.

“Rassie backs Etzebeth: It’s only a rumour at this stage” and “After announcing his squad, Erasmus dismissed the Etzebeth reports as just “a rumour” at this stage.”

(Sport24, 26 August 2019).

““I’m pretty comfortable with what he’s told me and obviously you can’t just believe what someone else says on social media.”

(Sport24, 27 August 2019).

This extract from the text suggests that there is no more evidence to the claims besides what was claimed on social media, and because of that, Springbok head coach Rassie Erasmus couldn’t side with social media when he had a conversation with Etzebeth to understand what happened. This extract from the text suggests that there are no grounds for the allegations, and the Springbok head coach believes they are only rumours which implies he has not seen any proof to implicate Etzebeth.

5.2.4.1. **Analysis of Sport24 images**

Sport24 did not include any images in the articles published online and only used two images across the four articles written between 25 - 31 August 2019.

5.2.4.1.2. Neutral

All images used by *Sport24* framed Etzebeth neutrally because they showed him in his warm-up kit ahead of a match and a photo of head coach Rassie Erasmus at a press conference (see articles: “*Pub owner gives version of alleged Eben Etzebeth incident*” and “*Rassie backs Etzebeth: It’s only a rumour at this stage*”). The use of the two images would not influence the interpretation or evaluation of the alleged racial assault incident (see 3.2.1.4) because they were all used in context.



(*Sport24*, 2019)



(*Sport24*, 2019)

5.2.4.2. Summary of *Sport24* articles

During the week of 25-31 August 2019, *Sport24* framed Eben Etzebeth as vehemently denying unsavoury allegations, being involved in an assault and gun-pointing incident, innocent, and involved in social media rumours.

When the video first surfaced on social media implicating Etzebeth in an alleged unsavoury incident, *Sport24* journalists framed him as vehemently in denial over the claims, which shows the extent to which Etzebeth wanted to distance himself from the claims. However, referring to Etzebeth as the “*Springbok star second-rower*” is a way for the journalist to ensure that the reader is familiar with Etzebeth and gives an orientation as to who he was.

The *Sport24* journalists then expanded on what the “*unsavoury*” incident was by suggesting that Etzebeth was accused of assaulting and pulling a gun on a homeless man after a video appeared on social media. The pub owner also stated that something happened outside the establishment involving Etzebeth, which places him at the scene where the alleged incident took place.

However, after speaking to the pub owner, the journalists framed Etzebeth as innocent after the pub owner suggested there was CCTV footage to confirm that Etzebeth had not been involved in a scuffle, which is good journalistic skills because *Sport24* is a different source to other publications, avoiding publishing false or misleading information (see 2.3). Sports journalists frame scandals using metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, depictions, and images which they select and emphasise from different perspectives (Li *et al.*, 2019:533), so referring to the establishment as a “*watering hole*” implies that people often go there to get drunk, and the intentional inclusion of the phrase implies that Etzebeth enjoys drinking with family and friends and could influence how fans view him as he comes across as more negative.

Lastly, after attending a press conference with Springbok coach Rassie Erasmus, the journalists framed the incident as social media rumours. Erasmus suggested that SA Rugby had looked into the incident, and after hearing Etzebeth’s version of events, they considered it a rumour that was started on social media because there was no real evidence to back up the claims, which could bring into question SA Rugby’s commitment to social cohesion because racial incidents involving players should be treated with a level of importance, by not looking only into the accused version. Social cohesion emphasises diversity, justice and equity and works towards eliminating what goes against it (see 2.4.3), so all players and allegations should be taken seriously, even if they are found to be just rumours, and all parties involved should be heard. According to the South African Government (2020) (see 2.4.1.2), all sectors have a role to play in promoting democracy, equality, and a society free of

racism and sexism, so SA Rugby dismissing the claims on the grounds that they were just a rumour shows a lack of interest in social cohesion from a national governing body.

In terms of inclusion and belonging, *Sport24* did not achieve this because they showed clear favouritism to Etzebeth by referring to him as a “*Springbok star second-rower*” and calling him a “*star*” and “*lock*” as opposed to focusing on the incident he was allegedly involved in. However, referring to him as a “*Springbok*” and “*star*” while being involved in an alleged assault creates more conflict than it does national unity because a Springbok player and rugby “*star*” should not be in the spotlight for such negative behaviour. While this could be seen as an attempt from the journalist to build social relationships by promoting national unity and empowering Etzebeth as an athlete, it is diverting from the issue by focusing on his rugby career rather than a national team player being accused of racism and assault on the cusp of a Rugby World Cup.

Sport24 established itself as a credible and legitimate source of news by getting comments from the pub owner, the only publication of the three to obtain this information. *Sport24* did not achieve equality because they showed favouritism to Etzebeth by referring to him as a “*star*” and Springbok player and made the focus of their articles Etzebeth rather than the assault incident. This would also cause a lack of mutual trust and confidence from the readers (see 2.4.1.8) (Mekoa *et al.*, 2017:108) because the journalists could be seen to be making a case for Etzebeth to be included in the Rugby World Cup squad because the experience he would bring to the squad.

Sport24 journalists framed Etzebeth as positive 35 times, negative 12 times, and neutral nine times, so the alleged Langebaan incident was framed as overwhelmingly positive. This can be seen as attributional framing because journalists accentuated Eben Etzebeth’s prominence as a rugby player while avoiding the social cohesion issue of racism and assault.

5.3. Content analysis of Facebook users’ comments

In this section, the researcher analyses the content of the Facebook comments related to South Africa’s Eben Etzebeth’s alleged racial assault incident. The aim is to determine how Eben Etzebeth was framed in the assault incident by Facebook users in the comment section of *TimesLIVE*, *SA Rugby magazine* and *Sport24* between 25 and 31 August 2019. To achieve this aim, theoretical statements were formulated through a literature review to guide the empirical study.

According to **theoretical statement four**: Fandom refers to social structures created by mass media consumers. It is a form of cultural production emanating from various forms of grassroots participation and wide involvement. In the context of sports, it is an attachment to a team, athlete, and sport. Fans become sports fans through socialisation and identification, which occurs when fans learn about

sports from the community around them or form a psychological attachment to a team. The internet is a tool that strengthens fandom as a social structure because its immediacy allows news to be shared quickly and gives fans a platform to share opinions in real-time.

And according to **theoretical statement five**: Social media is a global online platform that allows users to share information and ideas with all other users. It gives sports journalists a platform to collate and distribute news while giving fans a place to read news and share their views and opinions. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter allow for two-way communication and are more personable to make fans feel part of a community even if they do not personally know athletes or journalists.

5.3.1. Social media and fandom

Social media allows users to create an online profile, communicate and interact with other users, and share information and ideas (Du Plessis *et al.*, 2020:4; Dwivedi *et al.*, 2016:3; Seo *et al.*, 2016:290). Facebook, the social media platform studied, allows users to share personal content, provide opinions and perspectives, and create a digital archive for users (see 3.4.4) (Harper, 2010; Seo *et al.*, 2016:230). This is like fandom because fans are drawn to people who are like them, which creates a greater affiliation and sense of identification (see 3.4.5). In this study, the Facebook users' interaction and sharing of their ideas regarding Etzebeth's alleged racial assault allegations were taken into consideration.

A sports fan takes an interest in a sport and follows and identifies with the team and athletes (see 3.5.4) (Mastromartino *et al.*, 2017:4; Chadborn, 2018:241). Social media gives fans a lot more than live coverage; it provides information, replays, statistics, and inside information, which keeps fans informed about the teams and athletes they follow no matter the time of day (see 3.5.1) (Phonthanakitithaworn, 2017:1480). The immediacy, intimacy and interactivity that comes to The Facebook users who commented on the posts could be viewed as daily fans and active Facebook users. Daily fans like to be informed about the day-to-day activities of a team (see 3.3.3.1), while active Facebook users engage with posts by either commenting or reacting to what is posted, creating a sense of connectedness with other fans as they bond over sport (see 3.4.1.6). Therefore, this section analyses how Facebook user's framed Eben Etzebeth when the allegation of his involvement in the racial assault was circulating in the media.

In the context of social cohesion, which entails belonging, equality, social relations, and shared values, among others (see 2.2.2), the comment can show whether fans feel comfortable and

'recognised' enough to participate in society express their views about aspects such as race, but also whether the comments itself reveal whether they feel part of a collective identity.

5.3.1.1. Analysis of the *TimesLIVE* Facebook comments

This section analyses how Eben Etzebeth was framed in the alleged racial assault incident by Facebook users in the comments of *TimesLIVE*. For this study, 165 comments were analysed according to the theme of the comment. Comments were also labelled as positive or negative, determined by whether they perceived Etzebeth positively or negatively. If fans used words like "hero" or "innocent", the comment was considered positive. If fans used words like "racist" or "guilty", the comment was considered negative.

According to the content analysed, Eben Etzebeth framed as:

5.3.1.1.1. Unbelievable

Once the news broke about the alleged racial assault incident, the fan comments suggested disbelief as to whether the social media allegations were true or not. Fans wanted to believe Etzebeth was innocent so he could go to the Rugby World Cup but wanted more information to make informed decisions.

"I hope you are telling the truth because frankly the Springbok wants you"

(TimesLIVE, 26 August 2019).

"hoe se dai ooms van Langebaan"

(TimesLIVE, 29 August 2019).

"What did he say?"

(TimesLIVE, 29 August 2019).

"I will never believe that he will start a fight on the public for fun...but the truth will come out"

(TimesLIVE, 26 August 2019).

"We all know that they don't want you and Aphiwe in World Cup squad..."

(TimesLIVE, 26 August 2019).

“Oh please, of course after the incident he would try to discredit etzebeth, too easy to just claim racism now days, someone just looking for attention! He said she said!”

(TimesLIVE, 29 August 2019).

“Some people would love to see this country burn and everything that they and we still fighting for can we just let Etzebeth go and bring that Webb Ellis Home and stop trying to ruin the World Cup”

(TimesLIVE, 29 August 2019).

Fans indicated that they wanted to believe he was innocent because he was needed within the squad. The news about the alleged assault incident happened at around the same time another South African rugby player had been accused of doping, so there was mistrust amongst fans about ulterior motives from third parties. The fan comments also suggest that there is an ulterior motive behind the incident – to exclude Etzebeth from the World Cup squad. The extracts suggest that Etzebeth is not the type of person to behave inappropriately in public, and eventually, the real story will come out, which implies a sense of mistrust. This shows that fans identify strongly with Etzebeth and the Springboks, and the connection and attachment they have to the team overrides the allegations and are willing to dismiss the social cohesion issues and claims against Etzebeth. Coming to Etzebeth’s defence on social media strengthens fandom because it allows fans on the platform to share their opinions in real time, and fans share the same sentiment.

Attachment in this study is outlined as a fan’s attachment to an athlete, sport, or team (see table 4.5.2). The fans of *TimesLIVE*, *SA Rugby magazine* and *Sport24* can be considered to have a strong attachment to the Springboks and Eben Etzebeth and could even be considered daily fans (see 3.3.3.1) because they take a particular interest in rugby and the level of detail in the comments suggest they are followers of the team and aware of his past.

Socialisation in this study refers to fans behaving in a manner that is accepted by others and sharing views and opinions with other fans (see table 4.5.2). The fan behaviour in the comments was more positive than it was negative across all three publications, with fans commending Etzebeth and SA Rugby for what they believe was the right decision by including him in the Rugby World Cup squad. However, some fans did use the allegations to share their opinions on race in the country and more specifically, some fans shared their dislike for Afrikaans people by stating that his behaviour was to be expected because he was Afrikaans. This could indicate a crack in social cohesion because some of the comments did not suggest socially acceptable behaviour.

Identification in this study refers to how a fan relates to events that happen to a team or athlete and the impact it has on them (see table 4.5.2). It was evident throughout the analysis that some fans were bigger Springboks fans than others, with *SA Rugby magazine* fans taking a particular interest in the incident and crediting Etzebeth as a player and for defending himself. However, the incident also caused some fans to distance themselves from the player and the team, as they felt that it was disappointing that the South African Rugby Union would stand by Etzebeth after such serious allegations were made against him.

5.3.1.1.2. Disruption

The extracts suggest that the charges against Etzebeth will cause disruption in the Springbok camp if he is allowed to stay, which frames Etzebeth as a distraction. Because of the timeliness of the allegations, fans saw this as a distraction ahead of a very important tournament for Etzebeth. Fans were disapproving of the allegations being made so close to a Rugby World Cup, which also shows the impact that Etzebeth has on the squad.

“Why those shenanigans appear towards major sports events? We need all our guys in control...not distracted please”

(TimesLIVE, 26 August 2019).

“How can our Springbok focus if one of our crucial players is distracted by lawsuit”

(TimesLIVE, 29 August 2019).

“Eish Mzansi for Fvcks sake. This who made what and said what is getting annoying now. The lads are going to the WC, and we need their all. And they need our support.”

(TimesLIVE, 29 August 2019).

“After the World Cup please, we need this guy.”

(TimesLIVE, 26 August 2019).

“We need the strongest team to represent us IJ’pan ... we’ll come back to assault claims after the Word Cup”

(TimesLIVE, 26 August 2019).

So, there is uncertainty about his involvement in the incident and how this impacts his inclusion in the Rugby World Cup squad. There is also an underlying tone that questions why these kinds of incidents

only emerge before major events. This suggests uncertainty due to how much information was readily available to the public. The use of the word ‘*shenanigans*’ implies that the incident was mischievous, which frames the incident as mischievous.

This comment suggests the case should be put aside until the conclusion of the World Cup so the Springboks can have the strongest squad representing them. This shows the fans’ commitment to the sport and team, and they are willing to override social cohesion concerns for the sake of winning the Rugby World Cup, which shows their attachment to the team as they view the team’s success as their own. The comments suggest people will do anything to discredit the Springboks, and people should be fighting harder to support the Springboks, which indicates that the fan’s attachment to the team overrides any social cohesion concerns there may be.

Fandom is an individual’s attachment to a sport and from eight years old, children develop concrete thinking, so they become emotionally attached to sports, teams, or athletes, which can be influenced by their family, media, or by participating in the sport themselves, as well as the narrative the team creates around the club (Van Schaik, 2020; Secret Base, 2016; Joern, 2020; Wu *et al.*, 2022:158) (see 3.3.1.2).

Of the features of fandom, only three were prevalent in the analysis: group affiliation, identification, and education. Individuals like to be associated with the teams they support as they feel the team represents them (see 3.3.2.7), which is why fans came to Etzebeth’s defence and framed him as a hero, “*yster*” and ambassador to the country. Fans suggesting that Etzebeth did not deserve to be removed from the squad indicate a sense of identification as they were proud to associate themselves with the Springboks and a player like him.

5.3.1.1.3. *Possibly guilty*

Other fans did not trust Etzebeth’s version of events.

“That’s what all they say. We will eventually come out. And you’ll be crying in court”

(TimesLIVE, 26 August 2019).

“That notion of us being a rainbow nation is just a myth there is no such”

(TimesLIVE, 29 August 2019).

“Nothing new here. At all.”

(TimesLIVE, 29 August 2019).

The words *“that’s what all they say”* suggests that for everyone who is ever accused of racism, their first step is to deny any involvement, even if they are guilty. And *“you’ll be crying in court”* implies that it is only the law that is trusted to reveal the truth. The remark about the country not being a “rainbow nation” indicates there is some mistrust and frustration from fans, who believe players put on a united front to save face. Fans do not identify with Etzebeth or the Springboks and appear sceptical about social cohesion.

The term “rainbow nation” as an expression of overcoming divisions and a connected society is referred to negatively, suggesting that the user did not feel part of a cohesive society (see 1.1.1).

5.3.1.1.3. Involved in exaggerated racism accusations

Some fans interpreted the allegations as an attack, not only on Etzebeth but on white people, so they felt that the allegations were blown out of proportion and made out to be a racial incident because it was an incident between Etzebeth and a homeless man. However, the race of the victim had never been disclosed, only assumed.

“The only thing I can say is, black people need healing, everything is about race to us these days. White people are not supposed to cough they’re racist.”

(TimesLIVE, 26 August 2019).

“Yeah yeah. All pink people are racist. All brown people are not racist. We get it”

(TimesLIVE, 26 August 2019).

These comments suggest that the incident was exaggerated and that it might not be about racism by virtue of the country’s history. It suggests that the incident is founded based on the popular belief that all white people are racist and the unpopular belief that black people are not, which frames the incident as an exaggerated allegation.

5.3.1.1.4. Set-up

Fans also believed the allegations were a set-up to try and get Etzebeth excluded from the squad.

“Why shouldn’t he be added into a team, just because he was set up mxm.”

(TimesLIVE, 26 August 2019).

“Eish Eben did you have 2 take the bait....., very disappointing, 1st Aphiwe now it's you.....”

(TimesLIVE, 29 August 2019).

“Another R150k loading”

(TimesLIVE, 29 August 2019).

These extracts suggest that Etzebeth was set up by someone wanting to make him look bad. One fan believed Etzebeth was provoked and should not have fallen for the trick; the use of an ellipsis shows the fan's disappointment at him potentially missing out on a Rugby World Cup place because of the allegations. In 2016, a South African woman was fined R150 000 for hate speech, so the fan comment suggests Etzebeth would also be fined for hate speech.

5.3.1.1.5. Racist

Some fan comments suggested they had underlying anger towards the people of the country, as fans were using the Etzebeth allegations to express their own feelings about racism in the country.

“Racism and Rugby go together like Klippies and Coke in this country.”

(TimesLIVE, 29 August 2019).

“Why are only white people being called to appear what about all the other races that can say and do what they like when they like and how they like. We need to live in a just society what is good for one must be good for all. This way one will stop the race conflict in our country so we can unite as one nation to build a future fir all.”

(TimesLIVE, 29 August 2019).

“This people will never change as if they own our Country if u dnt wanna live in South Africa or Africa as a whole go to europe this is our country nd continent we belong here...we tired of racist they must live our country nd live us in peace.....”

(TimesLIVE, 29 August 2019).

These extracts suggest that South Africa and Africa belong to Black people and that racists should go to Europe if they don't like the country. Fans also suggested that rugby and racism are as synonymous as brandy and Coca Cola in the country, which is an alcoholic drink that people who get into bar fights are renowned for drinking. This highlights the idea that people have disagreements about race in the country, but they also feel like they are able to share their views and ideas freely.

5.3.1.1.6. Summary

During the week of 25-31 August 2019, Facebook users in the comment section of *TimesLIVE* framed the incident as unbelievable, involved in destructive mischief, mistrust, involved in exaggerated racist accusations, a setup and a racist.

Facebook users framed the accusations as unbelievable because they were not sure if the allegations were enough to make such a statement against Etzebeth. This was partly because they felt that Etzebeth would be needed for the Rugby World Cup and because the video wasn't posted alongside the article, so fans wanted to see the videos to make an informed decision. The fan comments like "*I will never believe that he will start a fight on the public for fun*" suggests that Etzebeth knows the responsibility he has to the country as a prominent rugby player, and "*Some people would love to see this country burn and everything that they and we are still fighting for*" suggests the accusations against Etzebeth are not mitigating social cohesion and do not show a sense of community working towards a common goal. Suggesting that Etzebeth should be allowed to play in the Rugby World Cup and bring the trophy home shows a sense of national pride and commitment to supporting the Springboks on an international stage, which shows group affiliation and identification because their desire to win the Rugby World Cup was more important to them than social cohesion. Fans use rugby to create a sense of belonging and inclusion, so to think that Etzebeth is guilty goes against that behaviour.

Fans framed Etzebeth as being involved in mischief by referring to the incident as "*shenanigans*". Fans were willing to put their personal views aside for the Rugby World Cup, which shows their attachment to the team and less attention to the allegations. They wanted Etzebeth to be allowed to focus on what they could achieve in Japan and shouldn't have to worry about the accusations. Referring to South Africa as "*Mzansi*" shows a sense of solidarity. Fans being willing to put the allegations aside for the sake of the Rugby World Cup highlights their commitment to supporting their country, their national pride, and unity despite their different views.

Other fans framed the incident as "mistrust" and believed it wasn't surprising that Etzebeth had been accused of racism and assault, and when he was proven guilty, he would be crying in court because his true colours would be shown. This could mean fans were thinking about racial incidents that happened in the past where the accused denied any involvement in allegations but was then found to be guilty. This shows a lack of trust in a national player, which shows a lack of social cohesion.

The incident was framed as a set-up after fans believed he was provoked, and it was an attempt to either have him removed from the squad or pay a fine for hate speech. Etzebeth being set-up to have him removed or fined goes against social cohesion, which aspires for individuals in a community to

work together towards a common goal, which in this instance would be national pride when the Springboks compete at the Rugby World Cup.

Etzebeth was framed as a racist, and the comment *“racism and rugby go together like Klippies and Coke in this country”* suggests a lack of social cohesion and that rugby is the most racist sport in the country, which is particularly concerning when there is a national rugby team involved. Another fan comment suggests Etzebeth should move to Europe if he wants to be racist because South Africans are tired of experiencing racism. The comment *“we tired of racist”* suggests that this is still an ongoing issue which indicates a lack of social cohesion.

The next section will analyse the frames of the *SA Rugby magazine* journalists.

5.3.1.2. Analysis of the *SA Rugby magazine* Facebook comments

This section analyses how Eben Etzebeth was framed in the alleged racial assault incident by Facebook users in the comments of *SA Rugby magazine*. In this study, 204 comments were analysed according to the theme of the comment. Comments were also labelled as positive or negative, determined by whether they perceived Etzebeth positively or negatively. If fans used words like *“hero”* or *“innocent”*, the comment was considered positive. If fans used words like *“racist”* or *“guilty”*, the comment was considered negative.

According to the content analysed, Eben Etzebeth was framed as:

5.3.1.2.1. Possibly guilty

Fans were not convinced by Etzebeth’s version of events because of what he is like as a player on the field and because he is Afrikaans.

“Be honest – Eben is one of the dirtiest players in rugby.”

(SA Rugby magazine, 26 August 2019).

“Wouldn't put it past him, he's a boer after all the rage & hate is bound to show no matter how hard tries to camouflage it with this rainbow nation fallacy.”

(SA Rugby magazine, 26 August 2019).

“How do the police arrive at that conclusion. The case has been opened and he is a suspect. His already implicated by the complainant.”

(SA Rugby magazine, 27 August 2019).

“Let him do a polygraph test to prove his innocence”

(SA Rugby magazine, 27 August 2019).

Suggesting that Etzebeth should prove his innocence by doing a polygraph test implies a lack of trust because the fan would rather rely on the use of technology to prove his innocence rather than trust his word. Because Etzebeth has faced disciplinary issues on the field, where he is considered an aggressive and cruel player, fans suggest that he could be capable of harming someone off the field. The comments also suggest that because Etzebeth is Afrikaans, he is capable of racial slurs and assault, even if he tries to hide it. Calling the rainbow nation a “*fallacy*” not only implies a lack of trust in Etzebeth but in South Africa as a country.

5.3.1.2.2. Guilty

Some fans chose to believe that Etzebeth was guilty based on the information that was provided in the articles and because of his history of violence on the rugby field.

“For the guys doubting if it's EE, I can confirm it's definitely him, you can see and hear his voice on very dark video!”

(SA Rugby magazine, 25 August 2019).

“Guilty by association! Even if it wasn't him, he should've been the one stopping it as a Springbok captain this is uncalled for. He allowed it which means in his private circles its OK to discriminate other races. Suspend him immediately.”

(SA Rugby magazine, 25 August 2019).

“Hy bly maar ń gemors. Op die rugby veld is hy altyd in ń fight.”

(SA Rugby magazine, 27 August 2019).

This comment suggests that it is in Etzebeth's nature to be a bully because when he plays, there is always a fight, and in the video, he is clearly identifiable through his voice. Also, because he has previously captained the Springboks, he should be suspended for not putting a stop to the incident whether he was involved or not, which puts a responsibility on him because of his fame.

5.3.1.2.3. Hero

The news of Etzebeth “defending” himself in an altercation was well-received by some fans who believed he was well within his rights to defend himself and would not compromise his career over a small fight.

“Give him a bells. He is a upstanding guy and if he acted differently he was pushed to do so. Hats of to him. Great guy awesome example.”

(SA Rugby magazine, 25 August 2019).

“Geweet hy sal nie sy hele loopbaan op die spel plaas en ek sal ook twee keer dink voor ek met hom moeilikheid soek. Ek ondersteun al die Springbokke, maar Etzebeth is my gunsteling”

(SA Rugby magazine, 27 August 2019).

“Great for you Eben. Put that incident behind you and go and play your game with all your heart and soul. You are an amazing rugby star. Good luck to you and your Bok squad.”

(SA Rugby magazine, 27 August 2019).

“Stop this They wound kill the Boks Vibe Go Bokke we proud of you Eben don’t even read all this nonsense You my hero go bokke”

(SA Rugby magazine, 30 August 2019).

“Forget rubbish politics..You a great Rugby player and make us proud in the World Cup..You A ambassador for SA..”

(SA Rugby magazine, 25 August 2019).

These extracts suggest that outcry has political motives, and Etzebeth should focus on making South Africans proud at the World Cup because fans see him as an ambassador. And if there was an incident, he did the right thing by defending himself and setting an example for others by defending himself when he was put in that position. Fans look up to Etzebeth as an amazing rugby player who should be allowed to play good rugby instead of face allegations, so he does not deserve to be targeted.

5.3.1.2.4. Racially attacked

Some fans interpreted the news about Etzebeth as a racial attack on him rather than Etzebeth being a racist. The incident could be interpreted as an incident between people of different races instead of concluding that because the incident happened, Etzebeth is a racist.

“Sounds like a racial thing, notice didn’t say racist. Some people can’t tell the difference”

(SA Rugby magazine, 30 August 2019).

“These guys get provoked at times... and the fact that there was alcohol involved makes the story even more juicy... through in some hearsay racism and you have front page news. Everyone wants to jump onto the bandwagon without having any concrete facts at hand. Disgusting.”

(SA Rugby magazine, 30 August 2019).

“Hopefully there is positive outcome ... doubt he was racist, he is one guys that make up the leadership group in the Bok and Stormers teams”

(SA Rugby magazine, 30 August 2019).

“And the useless racist HRC always has to have a say!!”

(SA Rugby magazine, 30 August 2019).

Because the Human Rights Commission got involved, fans implied that they always get involved when it comes to athletes trying to save their careers, but Etzebeth will be out of luck as they view all incidents as racist. Another comment suggested that fans provoke rugby players for media attention, but given his leadership role in the team, it is unlikely that he was racist.

5.3.1.2.5. Innocent until circumstantial evidence

Some fan comments suggest they were not convinced by what they were reading in the article. Just because he was at the establishment does not automatically implicate him in the incident if he was not the one using racial slurs or assaulting anyone.

“The guy was only standing there”

(SA Rugby magazine, 25 August 2019).

“There are cameras at the centre where the incident took place. I just hope that it was operational to prove him innocent or guilty and that the perpetrator/s is brought to book.”

(SA Rugby magazine, 26 August 2019).

“Mhmmmm this will be very interesting. I hope he doesnt get recalled from the squad. We know how these things works and how dragging they are.”

(SA Rugby magazine, 30 August 2019).

“It is simple, until there is evidence, it is not possible to conclude much from media reports with no substantial evidence.”

(SA Rugby magazine, 26 August 2019).

“Can someone identify the guy who made the video and please ask him to post the full video or ask someone one of his friends who I believe also made one to please post it. There is always 3 sides of the story 1) Eben side 2) whoever the other guy is 3) the truth.”

(SA Rugby magazine, 26 August 2019).

Fans could not clearly decide the extent to which Etzebeth was involved in the incident and decided that until the full video was made available, no conclusions could be drawn because, according to reports, he was only standing at the scene. Fans were also worried about how long issues are dragged out in South Africa, so Etzebeth should not get his hopes up because at that point in time it was too early to know if he was guilty or not based on the evidence provided.

5.3.1.2.6. Distracted

The fan comments suggested the timing of the incident would throw Etzebeth off his game right before the Rugby World Cup, and players should not be allowed to be distracted by such incidents ahead of such occasions.

“Eben kom tog net na vore. Se sorry , gee hulle n wp trui neem paar fotos. Lets move on and get into the world cup spirit” (Translation: Eben just come forward. Say sorry, give them WP⁴ jerseys and take a few pictures. Let us move on and get into the World Cup spirit).

⁴ WP jerseys are Western Province rugby jerseys that Etzebeth will have had because he played rugby for Western Province at the time.

(SA Rugby magazine, 26 August 2019).

“Capetown AB⁵ supporter causing kak before the world cup”

(SA Rugby magazine, 26 August 2019).

“Lets leave all that aside and deal with it after the world cup”

(SA Rugby magazine, 26 August 2019).

These extracts suggest that Etzebeth can make up for his actions by apologising, giving away a rugby jersey and taking photos with fans to move on. However, other fans suggested that a fan who supports the All Blacks and who are from Cape Town is trying to distract Etzebeth before the tournament. The Cape Crusaders are a sub-culture of South Africans who mostly reside in the Western Cape and started supporting the All Blacks during Apartheid (Villet, 2017). Fans choose to still support the All Blacks for two reasons: their father or grandfather supports them or because the Springbok badge is still representative of Apartheid where fans of colour were not allowed to sit with whites at Newlands, a stadium in Cape Town (Villet, 2017). This highlights the relationship between sport and politics, both during apartheid and post-apartheid, as well as the impact of fandom.

5.3.2. Summary

During the week of 25-31 August 2019, Facebook users in the comment section of *SA Rugby magazine* framed the incident as potentially guilty, guilty, a hero, racially attacked, innocent until proven otherwise, and distracted.

Fans framed Eben Etzebeth as potentially guilty because he is Afrikaans and because of his behaviour on the field. Suggesting that Etzebeth is one of the dirtiest players in rugby frames him as aggressive and would make it easy to believe that he's capable of assaulting someone. Suggesting that because he is Afrikaans and *“all the rage and hate is bound to show no matter how hard he tries to camouflage it with this rainbow nation fallacy”* suggests a real lack of trust and faith because the fan believes that Etzebeth is a racist and just hides his feelings well. However, some fan comments suggested they were not convinced by his version of events and more should be done to investigate his involvement. The implication that Etzebeth is guilty because of his mother tongue suggests a lack of social cohesion because the fan is making the allegations a race issue.

Other fans framed Etzebeth as guilty because the voice in the video matched his voice, even though the video was too dark to identify any bodies, and because of his behaviour on the field. Because

⁵ AB refers to New Zealand rugby fans because the team is called the All Blacks.

Etzebeth has previously captained the Springboks, one fan had an expectation that he would hold himself to the same standard off the field and should be suspended for his behaviour which highlights that, as a role model and leader, fans think Etzebeth has a role to play in upholding social cohesion.

Fans came to Etzebeth's defence and framed him as a hero defending himself in the altercation. "*You are an amazing rugby star. Good luck to you and your Bok squad*" shows an attachment and sense of national pride that Etzebeth represents the Springboks. Referring to Etzebeth as an ambassador does the same. This shows the fan's affiliation and identification with him, and watching rugby and supporting Etzebeth makes them feel part of the community.

Other fans framed the incident as a racial attack on Etzebeth as opposed to Etzebeth being a racist. Because of the leadership role that Etzebeth has in the team, fans came to his defence, hoping for a positive outcome against "*hearsay racism*" which implies that there are no grounds for the racism allegations.

Other fans framed Etzebeth as innocent until proven otherwise because his being at the establishment when there was a fight doesn't mean he's guilty and should be implicated in it, and the CCTV cameras at the place should be able to prove this. No conclusions can be drawn until all facts are provided, and part of that is getting the full video, so fans are able to make their own informed decisions. Fans could be following the story for educational purposes - to learn more about the breaking news and to get the news straight from sports journalists.

The incident was framed as a distraction ahead of a major tournament, and Etzebeth should have been allowed to disregard the allegations until after the World Cup. Fans were willing to put the social cohesion issue aside for the sake of the Rugby World Cup and let Etzebeth represent his country on the field before returning to South Africa to deal with what happened off the field.

Etzebeth was framed positively by *SA Rugby magazine* 56 times, negatively 56 times and neutrally 40 times. So, while some fans were quick to defend Etzebeth, other fans were concerned about the social injustice the incident had caused through the alleged assault.

The next section will analyse the frames of the *Sport24* journalists.

5.3.3. Analysis of the *Sport24* comments

This section analyses how Eben Etzebeth was framed in the alleged racial assault incident by Facebook users in the comments of *Sport24*. For this study, 129 comments were analysed according to the theme of the comment. Comments were also labelled as positive or negative, determined by whether they perceived Etzebeth positively or negatively. If fans used words like "*hero*" or "*innocent*",

the comment was considered positive. If fans used words like “racist” or “guilty”, the comment was considered negative.

According to the content analysed, Eben Etzebeth was framed as the following:

5.3.3.1.. *Disrupted*

This comment suggests there is an ulterior motive in trying to disrupt the Springboks ahead of their World Cup preparations.

“Dyantyi, Bombi and the Ballboy and now this. Clearly there's a third party with an agenda to put these guys in a bad before world cup time. They can't get it right with throwing quota issues at the team so they'll try to disrupt them in other ways. Boks must just lay low now and focus. Wouldn't put it past a few jealous parties to pay people to try and cause a ruckus”

(Sport24, 26 August 2019).

5.3.3.2. *Related to a family with a questionable reputation*

The fan comments suggest a level of mistrust towards Etzebeth because of his family's reputation and a lack of trust in the system because of how appropriately timed the incident took place. And mentioned that the Etzebeth family has a reputation for being violent, so anybody who believes otherwise is falling for the media's tricks.

“If you believe this version of events then you will also believe the version of Gavin Watson's suicide. The reputation of the Etzebeth brothers are well known in Langebaan”

(Sport24, 26 August 2019).

“One guy want to mess with a group of 15...including Eben and his brother...you must be a special kind of stupid...”

(Sport24, 26 August 2019).

5.3.3.3. *Hero*

The fan comments suggest a sense of pride in what Etzebeth allegedly did, and because of his size and what he's like on the field, he was able to defend himself in an incident that could have ended very badly for him.

“What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas Etzebeth ju yster Imp2”

(Sport24, 26 August 2019).

“EBEN JOU YSTER.”

(Sport24, 26 August 2019).

“Maybe Eben didn’t moer the oke...he just stood and watched as his friends did and didn’t try to stop the thugs. Or wait....maybe he didn’t see what was happening because he was pissing himself wet from being gesuip? Or uhm...maybe he was watching and supporting the thugs, confining the man getting pistol whipped. What a hero”

(Sport24, 27 August 2019).

“Not even the police can touch Ysterberg!!”

(Sport24, 27 August 2019).

These extracts suggest that Etzebeth is immune from anything and is untouchable by even the police, and “Ysterberg” could be a play on words meaning he is strong and invincible. Other fans believed that whatever happened should be a secret because he was so cool and that he is a hero for what he did to defend himself. Calling him a “yster” suggests that the fan looks up to him and admires what he did.

5.3.3.4. Unbelievable

The fan comments suggest they wish it is just rumours because Etzebeth is well-respected in the rugby community, and his omission from the Rugby World Cup squad would be a big loss for the Springboks.

“Hope its not true, great player. But would he admit that he did it, more often than not when things happen the immediate response is a big no.”

(Sport24, 26 August 2019).

“I hope Etzebeth is not implicated in this incident”

(Sport24, 26 August 2019).

This comment suggests the individual is hopeful Etzebeth is not implicated in the charges because there would be repercussions, and it is close to the Rugby World Cup; he is a great rugby player,

and it would be a great loss to the team if he was guilty. There is an underlying tone of mistrust as the user does not think Etzebeth would come forward if the allegations were true.

5.3.3.5. Racist

The claims against Etzebeth rubbed some fans the wrong way as they took the claims against Etzebeth personally and shared their strong opinions on racism in the country.

“In South Africa affidavits is sometimes not worth the paper its written on. In so called racism cases witnesses can be bought. Amazing how many people are so sure Eben is guilty,based on what,just because he is white ? I dont like Eben I dont like his legacy as a fighter, but his haters did not only find him guilty, they want to decide on the punishment as well. THAT makes me wonder. Isnt the people who shout racism, racism the real racists ?”

(Sport24, 27 August 2019).

“A so call black rugby player are charged with doping can't go to World cup. A so call white player assault a colored man his charged but go to World cup. Minister of sport come on.Mark Alexander come on . You are RUGBY SA PUPPETS. JULIE ROUX AND RUSIE ARE IN CONTROL OF RSA RUGBY .RUGBY SA WILL NOT WIN THE WORLD CUP.”

(Sport24, 27 August 2019).

“Shew, the irony of people jumping to defend their savior really is too much. Always innocent until proven guilty for some lol. Hypocrisy at its finest. Such hotheaded hooligans and their families could be recorded in front of hundreds of eye whitenesses but they'd defend them to the death. Just another day in SA I guess”

(Sport24, 27 August 2019).

“Given our country's bad record in terms of political history its unexceptable 4 a high profile athlete 2 become involve in rassist insidents. He must be released from his Springbok duties and be withdrawn from RWC Squad. Alligations like these are not just set up. What type of respect does he apply to his mutual players like Herchelle Jantjies and Warwick Galant...”

(Sport24, 27 August 2019).

These extracts suggest that high-profile athletes should not get away from such allegations so easily because of the nature of the allegations, and consideration should be made for how people of colour in the squad feel about it. Some fans always see the good in Etzebeth instead of seeing the story for

what it is, which is typical in South Africa. However, some fans believed that South Africa will not be successful at the World Cup because of the favouritism they show to white players and can be easily influenced. This comment suggests that Etzebeth has only been implicated in the assault because he is white and there are no real grounds for what a racist really is. “Isn’t the people who shout racism, racism the real racists” suggests that racism is a term that is thrown around very freely and those who use it unnecessarily should be held to account.

5.3.3.6. *Victim of sensationalism*

The fan comments suggest that Etzebeth is the victim of sensationalism, and *Sport24* is guilty of framing Etzebeth negatively to get people to read their news.

“Typical journalists behaving like the cntz they are...”

(Sport24, 26 August 2019).

“Its probably a rubbish story. Sensationalism. He probably had an argument with a non white person and then the racist card was grabbed again. Same old story every day.”

(Sport24, 26 August 2019).

“This morning it was assault and a gun and now it is assault and racist slur?”

I am going to go out on a limb and say that someone might have been assaulted but he wasn’t involved. Just sensationalism!”

(Sport24, 26 August 2019).

“More and more sensationalism slowly seeping through the 24 group.”

(Sport24, 26 August 2019).

*“Video doing rounds on social media? Why not post it on this article so we can see if its him or not?
Please Sport24”*

(Sport24, 26 August 2019).

These extracts suggest that there is no merit to what *Sport24* reported about Etzebeth, and the more information that became available, the more *Sport24* changed its narrative, which shows that they were inconsistent with their frames. This framed Etzebeth as a victim of sensationalism as a result.

5.3.4. Summary

During the week of 25-31 August 2019, Facebook users in the comment section of *Sport24* framed the incident as a disruption related to a family with a questionable reputation, hero, unbelievable, racist, and sensationalism.

Fans framed the incident as a disruption to the Springbok squad because of the timing of the allegations. First, there was the issue of the quota system, but because people got nowhere with that, they tried to single out players individually to slowly disrupt different members of the squad. This shows the fans' commitment to the sport because they want cohesion in the team ahead of the Rugby World Cup. Socialisation has occurred because fans care about the culture of the team and players, which influenced their motivation to support the team at the Rugby World Cup (see 3.3.1.3).

Fans framed Etzebeth as untrustworthy because of the reputation his family has built in Cape Town and that anyone who believes Etzebeth's version of events is gullible. This shows a lack of trust in Etzebeth, which is an indication of an absence of social cohesion due to the lack of legitimacy and orientation to the greater good. The incident brings the values and social views of the sport into question, and there is a lack of national unity amongst fans who associate Etzebeth and his family as aggressors.

Etzebeth was framed as a hero by some fans in the comments who called him a "yster", which is the Afrikaans word for awesome. Fans framed him as a hero for standing up for himself and defending his friends and family from harm, which shows their attachment to Etzebeth and their willingness to overlook social cohesion issues if it means South Africa can send their strongest team to the Rugby World Cup.

Other fans were not convinced by the allegations and framed the incident as unbelievable, and fans remained hopeful that he was innocent. This again shows their attachment to the sport because instead of assuming the worst, they wanted to wait until more information was available to make an informed decision. It was the responsibility of the journalist to ensure the information shared was accurate and done in a timely manner, which at the time was all the information that would have been available.

Fans framed Etzebeth as a racist and took the claims more personally, which shows their commitment to social cohesion and equality, as they were not willing to let Etzebeth's skills as a rugby player override his behaviour off the field.

Fans also framed the incident as sensationalism and shared their disappointment in how *Sport24* reported on the incident. Fans were frustrated at the reports because they did not see any merit in what was being reported. This shows a lack of legitimacy on the part of the journalist because fans do not trust the news being shared and do not feel that Etzebeth was being treated fairly. Including the video that allegedly appeared on social media would have enhanced the credibility of the journalists.

Fans framed Etzebeth positively 42 times, negatively 42 times, and neutrally 45 times.

The next section will be a discussion of the results.

5.4. Discussion of findings

The data presented above illustrate how the Springbok rugby player Eben Etzebeth was framed by different journalists and Facebook users' comments on *TimesLIVE*, *SA Rugby magazine*, and *Sport24*, during the week of 25-31 August 2019, when the alleged racial assault allegations against him surfaced. This section interprets the findings of Eben Etzebeth's frames in the context of social cohesion.

According to **theoretical statement five**: Social cohesion is defined as the extent to which individuals coexist despite their differences through a shared sense of solidarity by eliminating marginalisation. Social cohesion is achieved through creating a sense of belonging, aiming for equality, improving social relations, and ensuring legitimacy and good quality of life. It is achieved at three levels, individual, community, and institutions, and all contribute to how included an individual feels within their community.

5.4.1. Social cohesion in sports news

Production of news in this study refers to the timeliness of the articles being published and ensuring the news was available to the public (see table 4.5.2). According to the content analysis results presented above, this study found that sports journalists fulfilled their social cohesion role through criteria such as relevance and timeliness in determining which stories to publish (see table 4.5.2). In this case, publishing the stories related to this alleged racial assault incident during the time the incident happened and made this news available to the public. Also, the alleged incident broke during a time in which social cohesion is a contentious issue in South Africa.

Sports journalists nowadays can engage readers and fans by talking up stories rather than turning a blind eye to them and restricting sincerity and morality (Moritz, 2019; Nettingham, 2020:54). By discussing stories that would usually be seen as uncomfortable, journalists are able to connect with

their fans on a deeper level because it is the reality of what goes on in the world, which should not be avoided (Moritz, 2019). In that regard, sports journalists didn't turn a blind eye to the seriousness of the alleged racial assault incident. They published it on a platform where engagement with their readers is possible so that they voice out their perceptions regarding the matter. In the context of social cohesion, sports journalists became inclusive.

All three publications published the story as soon as it broke; however, *SA Rugby magazine* was the first to post about it as they posted about it on 25 August 2019, whereas *Sport24* and *TimesLIVE* posted about it on 26 August 2019. The news was available to the public because it was posted on their website, and the article was not behind a paywall, and the link to the web article was also shared on their social media platforms like Facebook so social media users could access the article there and enable two-way communication which is equivalent to the public's participation inclusion on their social cohesive related news.

5.4.2. Social cohesion in fan participation

Social cohesion prevails when justice allows all members of society to interact with each other (Brown *et al.*, 2015:10; Chan *et al.*, 2006; Stewart, 2010). Therefore, social media allows sports journalists to publish stories on a platform that enables two-way interaction with fans through posting the story and allowing readers to comment (Dwivedi *et al.*, 2016:3) (see 3.4.1.2). Social media offers sports journalists a new opportunity to broaden the news agenda, as social media sites are not restricted by time or space, which allows for a larger scope of representation (Ramon *et al.*, 2022:925) (see 3.4.2.6).

Because the news of the incident first broke on social media, the journalists had to act quickly and were able to report on the matter throughout the week in addition to the team announcement for the Rugby World Cup, which can be seen to have enhanced representation. Also, that allowed two-way participation in social cohesion, which manifested when publications shared web articles related to this alleged racial assault incident on social media and opened a platform for fans to engage with it. Two-way communication took place as all of the articles that were analysed above were all web articles that were shared to the Facebook pages of the relevant publications, and fans all added comments sharing their thoughts and opinions on the article that was written and that enabled active participation of fans in the issue. Participation in this study refers to the fans' involvement on social media in the day-to-day of an athlete, team, or sport (see table 4.5.2). Of the three publications, *SA Rugby magazine* (204 comments analysed) had the most engaged audience and received the most comments under the posts compared to *TimesLIVE* (165 comments analysed) and *Sport24* (129 comments analysed).

Below are the dominant themes that have been found in the frames of journalists' news and fans' comments presented in the above sections.

5.4.3. Frames of the journalist and fan comments in the context of social cohesion

5.4.3.1. Involved in an argument

TimesLIVE framed Etzebeth as involved in the argument between two groups but gave no real information about who the victim was. The headline mentioned an attack and the news report racial slurs. The journalist and the publication emphasis, or lack of emphasis on race, may flow from the fact that they did not have adequate information about the racial incident. By presenting only what they could confirm, they applied ethical guidelines. This prevented the reader and journalist from jumping to any conclusions by making it a racial issue between two groups (see 2.4.1.2). This might also imply that an argument between two groups might not necessarily mean they have been influenced by acts of racism. In this way social cohesion did not appear to have been affected.

This is issue framing because the journalist made the argument issue more prominent than the race of the victim to elicit a certain interpretation of the issue (see 3.2.1.6), which was that an argument had taken place between Etzebeth and another group. Framing makes certain topics appear more salient than others (Love *et al.*, 2021:180), and from the analysis, journalists wanted to eliminate unfounded racism rumours until they found circumstantial evidence.

By framing Etzebeth as involved in an argument with another group, he is framed negatively by the journalists because as a national rugby player and representative of his country, he should not be involved in any potentially harmful behaviour. In the context of social cohesion, journalists reported on the incident without any favouritism (see 2.4).

The journalists therefore acted as gatekeepers. Although they steered clear of making the incident out to be a racial incident, one may argue that in terms of ethical journalism principles they did not report the full context. So by omitting information they may, in terms of social cohesion, contribute to building social relationships, but at the same time undermine the legitimacy of their contribution because they did not report on all aspects of the alleged incident.

5.4.3.2. Involved in an assault incident

Both *TimesLIVE* and *Sport24* framed the incident as an assault where Eben Etzebeth allegedly assaulted someone on a night out in Langebaan and pulled a gun on the victim. *TimesLIVE* reached out to a police spokesperson to confirm whether a case of assault had been opened, and *Sport24* reached out to the pub owner to verify whether an assault had taken place and if Etzebeth was

involved, which shows incentive from the journalists to verify the allegations of whether the assault incident took place or not, and to also provide new information to the reader and to also do so in a timely manner (see 2.3). By using credible sources to verify the allegations of Etzebeth's involvement in the assault and providing readers with new developments on the information, the journalists enhanced the legitimacy of what was published and ensured social cohesion was achieved (see 2.4.3).

This is issue framing because the framing of the incident as an assault came after new information had surfaced. Therefore, the journalist can be said to have interpreted the issue based on the new information that was made available about the incident.

By framing Etzebeth as engaged in assault, *TimesLIVE* framed him negatively because it was reported that people were injured and taken to hospital, which creates a very negative perception of him in the mind of the reader. In the context of social cohesion, journalists recognised injustice by reporting on an assault involving a high-profile rugby player (see 2.3.5) and built trust and confidence with fans (see 2.3.8). In terms of social cohesion, this emphasises the importance of equality. In other words, negative reporting about a well-recognised sports star despite the allegations against him.

5.4.3.3. Involved in a racial incident

TimesLIVE and *SA Rugby magazine* framed the incident as a racial incident where Etzebeth was accused of using racial slurs during an argument outside a Langebaan establishment. Both publications included Etzebeth's statement on social media, which suggested it was a racial incident after he stated, "*It is completely untrue and unfounded to claim that I physically or racially abused anyone*". This is attributional framing as Etzebeth being involved in a racial scandal ahead of a Rugby World Cup, which aspires to advance national unity in a cohesive society, puts him at risk when he is framed negatively, and fans will view him negatively.

The *TimesLIVE* and *Sport24* fans also framed Etzebeth as racist after new information was made available through the video that did the rounds on social media. Both the journalists and fans relied on additional information instead of taking what Etzebeth, the police, and the pub owner said in their statements. This shows the intent of the journalists to share both sides of the story and ensure accuracy and legitimacy in their reporting (see 2.4.3.1). This also shows the fans' attachment and identification (see 3.3.4), as they were willing to dismiss Etzebeth as a rugby player for his behaviour that is not conducive to a cohesive society which is responsibility framing.

Individuals, communities, and institutions are responsible for promoting a society free of racism and sexism to be considered a cohesive society (see 2.4.2) (South African Government, 2020), so the

TimesLIVE journalists played their part by reporting on the racial allegations and fans to call-out the acts of racism. Social cohesion recognises injustices and works towards eliminating them (see 2.4.3) (Le Roux *et al.*, 2018:2).

This is conflict framing because the journalist highlighted the conflict between two races as a racial incident had occurred. The incident was framed as a conflict between groups, where one race was accused of attacking another. By framing Etzebeth as involved in a racial incident, he was framed negatively by journalists because social cohesion aims to eliminate inequality and injustice (see 2.4). Etzebeth will be perceived as disrespectful and intolerant of other races, which undermines social cohesion (see 2.4).

5.4.3.4. *Committed an intolerable act*

TimesLIVE reported that Etzebeth was allegedly involved in a fight and made racial slurs while out with family and friends, which framed him as violent and an aggressor, even in the company of people that he knows. As a result, *TimesLIVE* framed the incident as an “*intolerable act*”. In line with that, *SA Rugby magazine* also framed this same incident as “*unsavoury*”. By referring to the act as “*unsavoury*” and “*intolerable*”, the serious intolerance to racial allegations in South Africa is illustrated, and journalists may have intentionally selected these words to show intolerance of actions influenced by racism in that they fulfilled their role of highlighting racism as intolerable act in social cohesion in society. By reporting on a racial incident, journalists also fulfilled their responsibility to social cohesion as they broadened representation in the media.

This is responsibility framing because it puts the responsibility of social cohesion on rugby players as people whom the rest of the world looks up to and should not be involved in such incidents. This frame also has a negative connotation in social cohesion because any intolerable or unsavoury actions like racism have negative effects on social cohesion. Based on the literature on social cohesion, the idea behind social cohesion is that businesses, government, and civil society will have to work collaboratively to instil change caused by racial privilege. All sectors have a role to play in promoting democracy, human rights, and equality, promoting a society free of racism and sexism and one that is equal and in solidarity, promoting unity amongst South Africans, and encouraging individuals and communities to heal (South African Government, 2020). By agreeing to cooperate with authorities in any way necessary, SA Rugby was acknowledging its role in fostering social cohesion and was willing to commit to promoting a society free of racism and inequality.

This is responsibility framing with reference to SA Rugby, who were willing to acknowledge their part in the incident as the governing body for South African rugby and hold Etzebeth to account if needed.

By framing Etzebeth as involved in an intolerable act, Etzebeth was framed negatively by the publication because, as a role model to children across the country, he should be giving them a positive sense of direction and being involved in violence is not setting a good example (see 2.5.2). In the context of social cohesion, sports journalists did well by emphasising the intolerance of racism.

5.4.3.5. Involved in similar allegations

TimesLIVE included a quote from Springbok coach Rassie Erasmus which stated that there were several occasions where rugby players were accused of doing things on social media that would have them removed from the squad, so it was not a once-off incident but rather a frequent occurrence. This framed the incident as a regular occurrence and one that would only be taken seriously if hard evidence became available. However, this brings the credibility of SA Rugby to the fore because, as a national governing body, racial incidents should be dealt with as a matter of urgency and not disregarded so easily, as it had appeared to be.

The literature also confirms that in South Africa, there have been several incidents where players have spoken out about racism. As a result, in 2020, South African cricketer Lungi Ngidi called on his teammates to support the Black Lives Matter movement but was met with criticism from former white players who believed farm murders were more important, while players of colour came forward to discuss their experiences in the national team (Vahed *et al.*, 2021:201). According to the literature focusing on social cohesion in South Africa, the responsibility of individuals, communities, and institutions to promote a society free of racism and sexism is shared. When SA Rugby disregarded the incident so quickly, their commitment to enhancing social cohesion should be questioned (see 2.4.2). Sports journalists highlighted this instance where other racism allegations get disregarded without proper investigations because that means they might be other similar issues that have been disregarded like this, and that needs to be rectified to advance social cohesion.

This is also responsibility framing because it puts the responsibility of social cohesion on SA Rugby to hold players to account and uphold the values and goals that the country has been trying to achieve since 1994 (see 2.4.3.1).

By framing the incident as something that happened often within the Springbok team, Etzebeth was framed negatively because he was allegedly involved in behaviour that hinders social cohesion. Coach Rassie Erasmus saying he believed Etzebeth's version of events showed a disregard for racism because he trusted Etzebeth who was the accused and with no real information from the investigation. This emphasises SA Rugby's need to deal with such situations, as it contradicts inclusivity and equality as building blocks of social cohesion.

5.4.3.6. Denying

All three publications reported that Etzebeth had denied any allegations of assault and racism that were made against him, which framed Etzebeth as denying the incident. Both *TimesLIVE* and *Sport24* reported that Etzebeth “vehemently denied” the accusations, while *SA Rugby magazine* reported that he “emphatically refuted” the claims, which shows Etzebeth’s knowledge of the need to commit to social cohesion by distancing himself from any intolerable behaviour. This also shows that Eben took the allegations seriously because he is aware of the country’s stance on racism and felt the need to provide answers to the public and clarify the allegations. In this instance, sports journalists ensured that Eben also provided answers to the public because of the serious nature of his allegations by allowing his side of the story to be heard. In that, they played their inclusive, socially cohesive role.

This is attributional framing as fans would be wanting answers from Etzebeth because of him being implicated in serious allegations like assault and racism close to a Rugby World Cup. Framing him as denying the incident would appeal more to the interests of those whose priority and interest are winning the world cup than those whose interest lies in social cohesion.

Framing Etzebeth as denying the incident frames him positively because as an athlete he is expected to be a role model who brings people together (see 2.5), and as a role model there is an expectation of honesty and integrity. By denying the claims, he is clearing himself of any wrongdoing and distancing himself from injustice in the context of social cohesion. In a democracy, individuals are expected to work together to achieve a common goal (see 2.4.2.4), which in this instance would be winning the Rugby World Cup, so by denying any involvement in the claims and referring to himself as an “*ambassador*” to the country, he is acknowledging the role he needs to play in working towards a common goal of building a socially cohesive society.

5.4.3.7. Aggressor

The photo used in the *TimesLIVE* article when they announced that Etzebeth had been included in the 2019 Rugby World Cup squad framed him as an aggressor and confrontational even though the caption framed him as denying the incident. Including a photo of him playing rugby for his country is an attempt to promote national unity, but the choice of the photograph and the placement of it right under the heading “*Springbok Eben Etzebeth denies ‘assault’ in Langebaan*” frames him as confrontational.

This is attributional framing as the journalist used the photo to accentuate his appearance as aggressive while playing down the assault by stating that he was denying any involvement: “*Springbok*

lock Eben Etzebeth, who is expected to be included in the Rugby World Cup squad when the team is announced on Monday, has denied that he physically or racially abused anyone over the weekend."

By framing Etzebeth as an aggressor, he is framed negatively as fans looking at the picture will think he is aggressive and click on the images to read the article because of his personality on the field. Photojournalists are required to be accurate and comprehensive when representing subjects, and the inclusion of the image of Etzebeth appearing aggressively on a rugby field is not an accurate representation of what he is like off the field (see 2.3).

5.4.3.8. *Accused*

TimesLIVE framed Etzebeth as an accused. In the article where the publication discussed Etzebeth's inclusion in the Rugby World Cup squad, he was framed as accused of assaulting a homeless man with a photo of him injured on the side-lines. Li *et al.* (2019:533) believe that sports journalists frame scandals using metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, depictions, and images that they select to emphasise certain perspectives, which would be the case with this frame.

This is choice framing because *TimesLIVE* appears to have intentionally used a photo of Etzebeth injured on the side-lines while speaking about his involvement in an alleged assault incident where the victim was injured, which frames him negatively.

TimesLIVE fans also framed Etzebeth as involved in exaggerated racism accusations, while *Sport24* framed him as a victim of sensationalism. *TimesLIVE* fans framed the accusations as exaggerated racism because all white people are supposedly racist no matter what the claims are; despite the efforts of building a non-racial society, fans believe that a white person is still considered a racist, which is why fans Springbok came into Eben's defence. This can be a result of fans associating with Eben's experience of being accused because of his skin colour. And this shows the extent to which fans want an inclusive society, where skin colour shouldn't dictate someone's racialism.

Sport24 fans framed the incident as sensationalism from the publication. This shows the significance of sport because fans got so worked up about the unfounded racism accusations, which are meant to provoke the public's interest and came to Etzebeth's defence by showing their disappointment with *Sport24* for how they reported on the incident (see 3.3.3.3).

This is attributional framing because fans focused on how the incident was reported on and disregarded Etzebeth's involvement in the alleged incident. That means journalists were not successful in influencing fan behaviour because they disregarded what the journalist was saying.

Fans framing Etzebeth as being accused frames him positively because the emphasis is placed on the issue as allegations, which might be true or false, so he remains innocent until found guilty. This shows an attempt at inclusion from the fans and their orientation to the greater good, which in this instance would be succeeding at the Rugby World Cup.

5.4.3.9. *Ambassador*

TimesLIVE used a photo of Etzebeth walking onto the stage at the Rugby World Cup squad announcement after he was included in the team, which framed him as an ambassador, in his team jacket, to the country despite appearing at the Human Rights Commission for racial assault claims.

A cohesive society exists when individuals can live together despite their differences and have a shared sense of solidarity, contributing to diversity and unity (Chipkin *et al.*, 2008:61; Fonseca *et al.*, 2019:232). Sport also gives youth a sense of direction because they see athletes as role models and aspire to be like them (Bhattacharyya, 2019), so fans look up to Etzebeth and see his success at the Rugby World Cup as their own.

This is attributional framing as it frames Etzebeth as responsible for upholding the values and morals of the country as a representative on the international stage and not getting involved in accusations that go against this (2.3.1), so the attention was on Etzebeth rather than the incident. This is evident through the findings from the case, where it was recommended that SA Rugby met with Etzebeth to discuss the implications his actions could have on fan perceptions of him and that all Springbok players needed to be spoken to understand how the behaviour of those nearest to them can negatively impact them (Pijoos *et al.*, 2020) which shows a commitment to foster social cohesion.

5.4.3.10. *Innocent*

SA Rugby magazine and *Sport24* both framed Etzebeth as innocent when they reported that he was to remain with the Springboks after being assured by police that he was not being investigated. *SA Rugby magazine* framed Etzebeth as innocent after authorities assured him that he would not be implicated in the incident. Meanwhile, *Sport24* framed Etzebeth as innocent after CCTV footage provided by the pub owner did not place him at the scene. Journalists ensured legitimacy in their reporting by using credible sources, like the police and pub owners, and relayed the information in a timely manner (see 2.2.1.6). This shows the extent to which journalists played a part in ensuring that they produced accurate news regarding the matter to eliminate conflicting views. This is attributional framing as Etzebeth appearing innocent after being accused of racial assault would align with fan interests and preferences (see 3.2.1.5).

Also, *SA Rugby magazine* fans framed Etzebeth as innocent until there was circumstantial evidence to prove otherwise because his being at the pub does not imply that he is guilty by association. This shows the extent to which people's unwillingness to allow racism allegations to divide the nation without concrete evidence, and that proves their eagerness to build a socially cohesive society.

Social media gives fans instant access to the daily lives of athletes and allows fans to defend athletes when they feel they believe they have been treated unfairly and are able to mobilise the online community (Van Schaik, 2020; Cranmer *et al.*, 2019:3). Fans also feel strong emotions towards their team, feel represented by them and even feel like they make up part of the team (Mastromartino *et al.*, 2017:6; El-Shaboury, 2021). So, this shows the fan identification (see 3.3.1.2) because they looked up to Etzebeth and wanted to see concrete evidence before deciding. The fans use the publication as a source of information and education (see 3.6) which is why they were reluctant to accept the information as it was provided to them.

This is responsibility framing because fans took it upon themselves to ensure they received substantial evidence before implicating Etzebeth in racism claims, which is a practice that should be commended in a cohesive society to strengthen coexistence.

5.4.3.11. *Involved in a rumour*

Both *SA Rugby magazine* and *Sport24* journalists framed the incident as rumours. *SA Rugby magazine* journalists framed the incident as social media speculation, whereas *Sport24* journalists framed Springbok coach Rassie Erasmus' remarks about the incident as a rumour. *SA Rugby magazine* suggested that a video appears on social media but chose not to embed it in the article to avoid sharing misinformation and remain a credible source of news for fans (see 2.3.7). The journalists' traditional role of gatekeeper and control, that can determine what content what fans see and the way they see it has changed as teams and athletes can communicate directly with fans, but they are still able, as gatekeepers, to filter certain content and what they choose not to show or tell is equally as important as what they do show (Reifsnyder, 2018:26).

By reporting on former Springbok coach Rassie Erasmus dismissing the incident as a rumour, the sports journalist did not fulfil their role of maintaining social cohesion because a social cohesion incident is a public interest issue, so by dismissing the rumours without a proper investigation, this goes against social cohesion. However, journalists did ensure legitimacy by using a credible source, the Springboks head coach, ahead of an important decision regarding Etzebeth's inclusion in the Rugby World Cup squad.

When an allegation is made that could potentially be seen as an injustice, sports journalists have a responsibility to educate the public through reporting, observing power, and sharing interesting and prominent stories (Moore, 2018:503) (see 3.4.2.2). Throughout the week, *TimesLIVE*'s framing of the incident manifested as situational framing, defined as interpreting situations in a way that aligns with the preferences and interests of the individual (Ninan *et al.*, 2021:2).

5.4.3.12. *Unbelievable*

TimesLIVE and *Sport24* fans framed the alleged assault incident as unbelievable. Fans were hoping that Etzebeth was innocent for the sake of the Rugby World Cup, which shows their identification with the team because they see Etzebeth's success as their success. Fans were willing to diminish the claims against Etzebeth because of how badly they wanted him in the Rugby World Cup squad.

Individuals get so worked up in sports because of the significance of it; sports signify the drama of life and winning and losing feels like a matter of life and death (Pilon, 2017), so Eben Etzebeth being removed from the squad and not being able to play in the Rugby World Cup would have a big impact on the fans.

This is situational framing because fans were more concerned about Etzebeth's eligibility for the Rugby World Cup than the racial issue. Fans felt so strongly affiliated and connected to the Springboks that they were willing to disregard social injustice, which could also indicate that they watch rugby for self-esteem, as it makes them feel good when their team wins (see 3.3.2.1) and they consider this to be more important than societal cohesion.

5.4.4.13. *Involved in disruption*

Fans from all three publications framed Etzebeth's involvement in the incident as a disruption to the Springbok team, who were preparing for a major tournament. Fans were willing to disregard the issue until after the World Cup to allow Etzebeth to represent his country, which shows a compromise of social cohesion because these types of issues need to be dealt with and should be treated with the same level of importance as the Rugby World Cup. This shows that socialisation has occurred because fans were concerned for Etzebeth and what this meant for the Springboks at the Rugby World Cup, influencing their motivation ahead of the tournament (see 3.3.1.3). This could compromise social cohesion because social cohesion issues like racism need to be prioritised and dealt with, they are important just like the World Cup.

Individuals like to be associated with success and immerse themselves in every action that takes place on and off the field (McConnell, 2015; Burke, 2010; Wiid *et al.*, 2015:385), so Etzebeth being

embroiled in the allegations ahead of a Rugby World Cup would be cause for concern for fans who just wanted the strongest squad to head to the Rugby World Cup with the Springboks. In the context of social cohesion, this shows that fans didn't care about what Eben did off the field, they cared about his expertise and skills on the field, which is problematic in a socially cohesive society.

This is situational framing because fans cared more about what he was capable of on the pitch and avoided the fact that he was accused of alleged racism and assault. Framing the incident as a disruption frames Etzebeth positively because it shows the fan's commitment to the Springboks and team, which shows their orientation to the greater good because they were willing to overlook social injustice to watch the team succeed at the Rugby World Cup.

5.4.4.14. Possibly guilty

Fans from all three publications framed Etzebeth as possibly guilty of the alleged accusations. Fans from the publications did not show any identification with Etzebeth and were more sceptical about the incident as a social cohesion issue because of his behaviour on the field and because of his family's reputation.

Fans feel disappointed when there are moral failures within the club or amongst players (Watkinson, 2021), so the thought of Etzebeth being racist and violent did not sit well with fans. However, social cohesion has been criticised for being a convenient concept to drive political agendas, which devalues it (Abrahams, 2016:98). It cannot always be achieved in society due to individuals' inability to forget the past and wrongdoings, as some members of the community will always be excluded and cultures and identities clash over representation (Johnson, 2021:725; Baillie, 2018:425). This was evident through fans expressing their disappointment that the "*Rainbow Nation*" was a "*myth*". The idea of the "Rainbow Nation" has been used in South Africa to describe social cohesion (see 1.1). So, in the context of social cohesion, the alleged incident brought back memories of the past to fans. And due to Etzebeth's previous violent behaviours, fans find it easy to associate him with the allegations.

This is issue framing as fans were more concerned about Etzebeth being a racist and assaulting people and what that means for the country rather than anything to do with rugby.

5.4.4.15. Set-up

TimesLIVE fans framed the alleged assault incident as a set-up in an attempt to get Etzebeth removed from the squad. Fans believed that because Etzebeth had been provoked and because someone was looking to target him, it did not warrant his exclusion from the Rugby World Cup squad. This shows the fans were willing to overlook racism as a social cohesion issue for the sake of a tournament which

shows their identification with Etzebeth and the sport. It may also show the ignorance of fans as off-field issues may jeopardise social cohesion and what it means for the orientation to the greater good.

Again, individuals like to be associated with success (McConnell, 2015; Burke, 2010; Wiid et al., 2015:385), so fans did not take the assault allegations lightly and felt that Etzebeth was being targeted by both the publication and fans. This is situational framing because fans interpreted the claims to align with their own interests, which was to have the strongest squad represent the country at the Rugby World Cup.

Fans overlooked the social cohesion issue to frame Etzebeth positively and came to his defence. Through identification and socialisation, fans wanted the strongest team to represent the country at the Rugby World Cup and felt that the timing of the incident was too close to the squad announcement to be a coincidence. These fans watch sports to affiliate and identify with their community and bond over the mutual interest in sports (see 3.3.2).

5.4.4.16. *Guilty*

SA Rugby magazine fans framed him as guilty because of his history of confrontation and violence on the rugby field. Fans believed that because he had previously captained the Springboks, he was responsible for setting a good example and an orientation to the greater good and not being involved in violence as a role model to other fans.

This is responsibility framing because, as a national rugby player, he has a responsibility to behave in a way that is acceptable and promotes national unity. Like Bhattacharyya (2019) says, sport assists in building a nation because it reminds individuals that discipline, teamwork and determination are important, and once you participate in sport, you learn that ethics and showing good sportsmanship are nation-building characteristics because children see sportsmen as role models and aspire to be like them, therefore, being involved in any violence makes one lose all those nation-building characteristics.

Framing Etzebeth as guilty is negative because fans who identify with the Springboks will distance themselves from racism claims because he is part of the leadership set up in the team who are the face of the country. This shows a lack of mutual trust and tolerance of the team (see 2.3), and as the governing body of rugby in South Africa, SA Rugby has a role to play in promoting a society free of racism and sexism (see 2.3.2), which cannot be achieved if a player is being framed as guilty by fans. Social cohesion promotes unity amongst South Africans and encourages individuals and communities to heal, which is not the case when a player appears guilty of assault and racism (South African Government, 2020)

5.4.4.17. Hero

Both *SA Rugby magazine* and *Sport24* fans framed Etzebeth as a hero who acted in self-defence if he was, in fact, assaulted. Fans were willing to dismiss the allegations based on their admiration for Etzebeth, which shows their identification and pride in associating with the Springboks (see 3.3.1.3).

Sport, and watching sports has been attributed to raising awareness and decreasing a cultural divide by creating strong societal bonds and self-esteem for younger individuals journalists have the ability to influence how the fans view athletes when they choose to discuss their physical, social or intellectual characteristics (Zafar *et al.*, 2021; Wille *et al.*, 2019:5). Fans framed Etzebeth as a hero for his behaviour on the field, and sports journalists were not able to influence how fans portrayed him because in this instance, he was praised for his size as he would have been able to defend himself if he was involved in an alleged assault.

This is human-interest framing because fans were more concerned for selfish reasons and how it impacts Etzebeth's rugby than how issues like racial issues affect South Africa as a country striving for social cohesion. This shows the fan's attachment and socialisation on the fan's part because they do not think off-field matters could jeopardise social cohesion.

Through socialisation, fans have learned about Etzebeth and the significance of the Rugby World Cup and were willing to overlook the social cohesion issue if it meant success at the Rugby World Cup. These are the types of fans who are closely affiliated with the team and will bond through their mutual love for the sport (see 3.3.2.1). This fosters social cohesion as fans feel a sense of belonging and inclusion.

5.4.4.18. Racially attacked

SA Rugby magazine fans framed Etzebeth as racially attacked rather than him racially attacking anybody. Fans believed that because Etzebeth was part of the leadership group in the Springboks squad, it would be unlikely that he racially abused anybody and that the Human Rights Commission always intervenes when it's not necessary for them to do so. Fans coming to Etzebeth's defence show their attachment to the Springboks and the trust they have in Etzebeth, to the extent that they were willing to dismiss social injustice in the sport.

Fans can find a sense of belonging in sports that they aren't able to find elsewhere because they feel part of something where it isn't just a game, and not everyone will understand it (Ashishi, 2008), which could explain why they came to Etzebeth's defence and turned the tables to the complainant and claimed that it was, in fact, Etzebeth had been racially attacked and not vice versa.

This is conflict framing because fans were more concerned about Etzebeth being framed negatively than they were about an issue pertaining to social cohesion. This could again showcase the ignorance of fans who don't think off-field matters could have an impact on social cohesion. Etzebeth being framed as racially attacked frames him positively because fans were quick to come to his defence, and through socialisation and identification, fans took the claims personally because they felt that an attack on the Springboks is more personal.

5.4.5. Summary

Answering research question 3, sports journalists framed the incident as issue framing, which is the way an individual views a topic based on how they feel about the topic, by addressing the importance of equality because even athletes need to be held accountable, no matter their social status which contributed to social cohesion. Conflict framing focused on the breakdown in relationships caused by the claims and how such claims undermine social cohesion. Responsibility framing and attributional framing focused on the journalist's orientation to greater good, and Etzebeth's responsibility as an athlete and role model to promote unity and instil change while upholding the values of sport as an ambassador, which contributes to social cohesion. Choice framing undermined social cohesion because the selection of the image showed Etzebeth injured in an article about an alleged assault caused by Etzebeth, which is intentional and unfair on Etzebeth.

In terms of the fans and answering research question 4, the incident was framed as responsibility framing which contributed to social cohesion because fans waited to ensure there was credibility to the claims before making assumptions about Etzebeth's involvement, which emphasises inclusion and belonging. Situational framing undermined social cohesion because fans were willing to overlook Etzebeth's involvement in the alleged claims for the sake of a successful Rugby World Cup, which shows a lack of inclusion and belonging and orientation to greater good. Responsibility and human-interest framing contributed to social cohesion because fans showed their orientation to greater good and inclusion and belonging by distancing themselves from Etzebeth and showing their strong affiliation to the Springboks by supporting him after he was cleared by police for any involvement. Conflict framing undermined social cohesion because some fans took the claims against Etzebeth as an attack on their nature, so they disregarded his role in the alleged assault because of their identification with the Springboks.

5.5. Conclusion

This chapter focused on the presentation of data and a discussion of findings after the researcher employed qualitative content analysis as a method of data collection. The purpose was, firstly, to determine how Eben Etzebeth was framed in the alleged racial assault incident by journalists of

TimesLIVE, *SA Rugby magazine* and *Sport24* in news reports posted on the publications' Facebook pages between 25 and 31 August 2019. Secondly, the goal was to establish how social media users framed the same aspect in their comments on the Facebook pages of the same publications during the same period.

To code the data and made it understandable, a code sheet was used which guided the researcher in interpreting and discussing the themes to achieve these goals. To summarise the empirical findings, and make them accessible, a table (Table 5-1) was compiled.

Table 5-1. The framing of Eben Etzebeth by fans and sports journalists on the Facebook pages of *TimesLIVE*, *SA Rugby magazine* and *Sport24* in the context of social cohesion

Frames of Eben Etzebeth	News organisations	Fans (users) (positive/negative and type of frame)	Sport journalists (news reports) (positive/negative and type of frame)	Classification of frames in a context of social cohesion. Frames have either contributed or undermined social cohesion. Some frames did not fit into either category. Constructs of social cohesion include: co-existence, shared solidarity, eliminating marginalisation, sense of belonging, aiming for equality, improving social relations, and ensuring legitimacy and a good quality of life.
Involved in an argument	<i>TimesLIVE</i>		Negative (issue)	The contribution to social cohesion in this example is not unequivocal . On the one hand the researcher argues omitting the race dimension is preventing readers from jumping to conclusions, possible when all information is not yet available, but on the other hand , the

				journalist did not report the full context.
Involved in an assault incident	<i>TimesLIVE</i> <i>Sport24</i>		Negative (issue)	Contribute. The frame focuses on equality as a construct of social cohesion: The journalists contribute to social cohesion, by contributing to the reporting of details, even if the details could disrupt the sense of belonging people feel. They are adhering to the importance of equality – that even if you are star, and you are seen to be an important part of a South Africa's Rugby World Cup onslaught, you will be confronted if you have been involved in alleged racial actions. This also contributes to adding legitimacy to what they do.
Involved in a racial incident	<i>TimesLIVE</i> <i>SA Rugby magazine</i>		Negative (conflict)	Undermine. The frame focuses on a breakdown in social relationships. Both fans and sports journalists framed the player negative. The frames suggest an undermining of social cohesion because solidarity and co-existence are affected.
	<i>TimesLIVE</i> <i>Sport24</i>	Negative (responsibility)		Contribute. The frame focuses on equality as a construct of social cohesion. Fans emphasised that Etzebeth's actions were unacceptable, thereby putting social

				cohesion ahead of the admiration they might have possibly had for Etzebeth as a player.
Committed an intolerable act	<i>TimesLIVE</i> <i>SA Rugby magazine</i> <i>Sport24</i>		Negative (responsibility)	Contribute. The frame focuses on orientation to greater good as a construct of social cohesion. Journalists focused on Etzebeth's responsibility as a rugby player and role model to promote unity and instil change, as well as the impact of unsavoury behaviour on individuals, communities and institutions.
Involved in similar allegations	<i>TimesLIVE</i>		Negative (responsibility)	Contribute. The frame focuses on orientation to greater good as a social cohesion construct. The journalist emphasised SA Rugby's responsibility to hold players to account and Etzebeth's responsibility to uphold the values and goals of the country.
Denying	<i>TimesLIVE</i> <i>SA Rugby magazine</i> <i>Sport24</i>		Positive (attributional)	Contribute. The frame focuses on orientation to greater good as a construct of social cohesion. The sports journalists framed Etzebeth positively by focusing on his role as an athlete working to achieve the common goal of winning the Rugby World Cup and his commitment to being an ambassador for the country.

Aggressor	<i>TimesLIVE</i>		Negative (attributional)	Undermine. The frame focuses on social relationships and the building of trust. The journalist (photo) frames Etzebeth as an aggressor, calls into question his commitment to building relationships, something which the publications appear to suggest with the choice of the picture.
Accused	<i>TimesLIVE</i>		Negative (issue)	Undermine. The frame focuses on legitimacy as a construct of social cohesion. Using a photo of Etzebeth injured on the sidelines in an article about his involvement in an alleged assault undermines social cohesion.
	<i>TimesLIVE</i> <i>Sport24</i>	Positive (attributional)		Undermine. The frame focuses on inclusion and belonging as a construct of social cohesion, in particular the lack of it. Fans came to Etzebeth's defence and placed more emphasis on his success as a player instead of a social injustice issue.
Ambassador	<i>TimesLIVE</i>		Negative (attributional)	The contribution to social cohesion in this example is not unequivocal . On the one hand, framing Etzebeth as an ambassador promotes inclusivity and belonging as a rugby player. However, being a Springbok player does not negate racism claims.

Innocent	<i>SA Rugby magazine</i> <i>Sport24</i>		Positive (attributional)	Contribute. The frame focuses on legitimacy as a construct of social cohesion. The journalists frames as innocent after sources confirmed he was not being implicated, which enhances their credibility by reporting accurately and eliminating conflicting views.
	<i>SA Rugby magazine</i>	Positive (responsibility)		Contribute. The frame focuses on inclusion and belonging as a construct of social cohesion. Fans wanted to ensure there was credibility to the claims before making claims that Etzebeth had assaulted anybody.
Involved in a rumour	<i>SA Rugby magazine</i> <i>Sport24</i>		Negative (situational)	Undermine. The frame focuses on social relationships as a construct of social cohesion. The journalists frame as a rumour undermines social cohesion because a social justice issue that is of interest to the public was disregarded by SA Rugby with no thorough investigation.
Unbelievable/Disbelief	<i>TimesLIVE</i> <i>Sport24</i>	Positive (situational)		Undermine. The frame focuses on inclusion and belonging as a construct of social cohesion. Fans were willing to disregard social injustice to see their team and a player they like win because it makes them feel good.

Involved in disruption	<i>TimesLIVE</i> <i>SA Rugby magazine</i> <i>Sport24</i>	Positive (situational)		Undermine. The frame focuses on inclusion and belonging as a construct of social cohesion. Fans compromised social cohesion by focusing on the Rugby World Cup. This analysis suggests fans cared more about Etzebeth on the field than Etzebeth off the field.
Possibly guilty	<i>TimesLIVE</i> <i>SA Rugby magazine</i> <i>Sport24</i>	Negative (issue)		Contribute. The frame focuses on orientation to greater good as a construct of social cohesion. Fans expressed their disappointment at Etzebeth's behaviour and previous on-field incidents. The fans were more focused on what his behaviour meant in the context of the country than what it meant for his chances at the Rugby World Cup.
Set-up	<i>TimesLIVE</i>	Positive (situational)		Undermine. The frame focuses on inclusion and belonging as a construct of social cohesion. Fans ignored how an off-field incident may jeopardise social cohesion as they wanted the strongest team at the Rugby World Cup which shows that they put their interests above the country's.
Guilty	<i>SA Rugby magazine</i>	Negative (responsibility)		Contribute. The frame focuses on orientation to greater good as a construct of social cohesion. Fans distanced themselves

				from the racism claims and felt that Etzebeth had a responsibility as a leader in the squad to behave in a professional manner.
Hero	<i>SA Rugby magazine</i> <i>Sport24</i>	Positive (human-interest)		Contribute. The frame focuses on inclusion and belonging as a construct of social cohesion. The fans showed a strong affiliation to the team and a bond for their mutual love of sport and were willing to support Etzebeth if it meant success at the Rugby World Cup.
Racially attacked	<i>SA Rugby magazine</i>	Positive (conflict)		Undermine. The frame focuses on inclusion and belonging as a construct of social cohesion. Fans were quick to come to Etzebeth's defence and took the claims personally because of their affiliation to the Springboks. However, this undermines social cohesion as they disregarded any role Etzebeth may have had in the alleged assault incident.

By looking at the data in the table above (see table 5-1), *TimesLIVE* framed Etzebeth positively once and negatively eight times, *SA Rugby magazine* framed him positively twice and negatively three times, and *Sport24* framed him positively twice and negatively three times. In total, Etzebeth was framed positively twice and negatively nine times. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that Etzebeth was framed more negatively by the journalists of all three publications in the context of social cohesion.

In the context of social cohesion, by framing Etzebeth negatively, sports journalists were not gatekeepers in the sense that they did not just focus on the impact of the allegations on Etzebeth and South Africa as a sport-loving nation's Rugby World Cup hopes, but also the impact of his action

on social cohesion, which remains fragile in South Africa considering the constructs of inclusion and belonging, social relationships, legitimacy, orientation to greater good and equality. The dominant frame amongst the publications was attributional framing, which occurs when journalists accentuate characteristics while avoiding others to make certain issues appeal more to the audience than others, as the journalists focused on his role as an athlete and role model and how national representatives have a responsibility to enhance social cohesion. Journalists focused on the orientation to the greater good, and how such incidents undermine social cohesion, which shows their ongoing commitment to social cohesion in South Africa. By showing their orientation to greater good, journalists tried to eliminate the social divide that could have been caused by the incident and abide by the values of journalism through ethical and objective reporting (see table 2-1).

By looking at the data in the table (see table 5-1), the fans from all three publications framed Etzebeth positively four times and negatively twice. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that Etzebeth was framed more positively by fans in the context of social cohesion.

The dominant frame amongst fans was situational framing as fans placed the incident in the context of the Rugby World Cup as opposed to the context of social cohesion. Fans focused on inclusion and belonging by discussing Etzebeth's inclusion in the Rugby World Cup and showed their affiliation to the Springboks by overlooking the social injustice for the sake of representing South Africa at the Rugby World Cup. Inclusion and belonging allowed individuals to feel like they are part of something special, which gives them satisfaction in life (see table 2-1).

It is here that the issue of sports versus general journalism comes to the fore and unlike the criticism against sports journalists for sometimes avoiding off-field incidents, did not do so. This could be partly due to the fact that, apart from SA Rugby magazine, we do not know if the journalists of TimesLIVE (a general news publication) and Sport24 (which may use journalists who cover all sports) actually wrote the stories. But the news reports in general showed that the journalists covered the incident based on the information they had available to them, which addressed it as a social cohesion issue.

The fans from all three publications framed the incident more positively. This could be because they put Etzebeth, the Springboks, and the possibility of doing well at an international tournament ahead of social cohesion. This aligns with the literature on fandom as fans watch sport to feel part of a community, but this is a community based on support for a specific team or athlete (see 3.1). The fan frames in this study appear to confirm theoretical statement three (see chapter 3) that fans develop a psychological attachment to the team, in this instance the Springbok rugby team and its players, based on socialisation and identification, that could be seen as cultural production. Based on the empirical results and analysis presented in chapter 5 fandom appears to be a stronger force than commitment to social cohesion in a South African context.

With specific research question 3 and 4 answered and research goals 3 and 4 achieved, the next chapter will provide a summary of the study.

CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

6.1. Introduction

The focus of the study was to determine how Springbok rugby player Eben Etzebeth was framed in the alleged Langebaan racial assault incident on the Facebook pages of selected news organisations. To do this, sports journalism and fandom were explored in the context of social cohesion in South Africa. In chapter one, a broad outline of sports journalism and social cohesion in the South African context with reference to fans and social media was given to indicate the significance of sports journalism and fandom in South Africa.

When social cohesion issues such as racist off-the-field incidents appear, some sports journalists pay more attention to the player winning instead of the issue of social cohesion, and fans may favour the player rather than the incident. Therefore, in chapter two, the relationship between sports journalism and social cohesion was explained while in chapter three the significance of fandom and social media was explored.

The framing of Springbok player Eben Etzebeth in the alleged racial assault incident on the Facebook pages of selected news organisations by journalists and fans in a context like South Africa was explored to understand how sports can advance or undermine social cohesion. To do this, in chapter four the research approach was discussed and the research design; theoretical statements; concepts and constructs; research methods; sampling; measuring instruments; operationalisation of constructs; data processing or interpretation of information was outlined. Meanwhile, chapter five focused on the presentation of data, analysis, summary, and a discussion of findings.

This chapter use the literature outlined in chapters two, three, and four and the analysis of results in chapter four to answer the general research question: **How was Eben Etzebeth framed in the Langebaan alleged racial assault incident on the Facebook pages of selected news organisations in a context in which sports journalism and fandom are elements that can inform social cohesion?** The aim is to assess if this study achieved its research goals or not. This will be achieved by answering all the four specific research questions stated in chapter 1 and indicating if whether the research objectives were met for each specific research question and how it was met.

The outline of the chapter is as follows: Firstly, this chapter answers the theoretical questions that were stated in the literature chapters 2 and 3, which is: 1) What are the key features of sports journalism in the context of social cohesion in South Africa, according to the literature? And 2) How can the features of framing theory be applied to fandom and sports journalism in the South African context, according to literature?.

From there, this chapter move on to answering the specific research questions pertaining to the empirical study based on the results obtained in chapter 5, and those specific research questions are as follows: 3) How was Eben Etzebeth framed in the alleged racial assault incident by journalists of *Times LIVE*, *SA Rugby magazine* and *Sport24* in news reports posted on these publication's Facebook pages between 25 and 31 August 2019? And 4) How was Eben Etzebeth framed in the alleged racial assault incident by social media users in comments on the Facebook pages of the publications in 5.3 between 25 and 31 August 2019?

These specific research questions lead to the next part of the chapter which is to answer the general research question of this study. From there on the study indicates the recommendations for future studies.

6.2. Specific research question one

Specific research question one (see 1.3.2.1) is as follows: **What are the key features of rugby journalism in the context of social cohesion in South Africa, according to the literature?**

Sport is a cultural phenomenon, and sports journalism is one of the most important functions of the news media. (Ramon *et al.*, 2021:604; Peltz, 2010:154). Sports journalism is a tool that brings fans closer to the different aspects of sports through match reports, the presentation of facts and log standings, and analyses of the performances of athletes and teams (Indeed, 2021; Srivastava, 2020:220; Bhawsar, 2018). One of the ways sports journalists bring fans closer to sports is through social media, which has helped the journalists to promote their organisation, obtain information, network, share posts, monitor their audience, and interact with other users (Dlamini, 2020). In this way, sports and sports journalism can build connections between people, which relates to social cohesion.

Social cohesion is defined as the extent to which individuals are connected and in solidarity within communities, with emphasis on their sense of belonging and the relationships of the individuals with the community (Manca, 2014). It emphasises diversity, participation, and reconciliation, as well as justice and equity (Le Roux *et al.*, 2018:2) which is especially important in South Africa due to the history of racial inequality and unemployment. The goals of social cohesion are equity, sustainable economic growth and avoiding social fractures and ensuring individual well-being is taken care of, and marginalisation is eliminated (Manca, 2014; Fonseca *et al.*, 2019:235). In addition to the goals, mutual trust, tolerance, confidence, and active participation are all essential components of a cohesive society (Mekoa *et al.*, 2017:108).

Sports can contribute to social cohesion through participation in sports and bridging the social divide through national team success which promotes pride and unity (Potgieter *et al.*, 2015). Sport, and watching sports has been attributed to raising awareness and decreasing a cultural divide by creating strong societal bonds and self-esteem for younger individuals, journalists can influence how the fans view athletes when they choose to discuss their physical, social or intellectual characteristics, so sport creates a sense of belonging in communities (Zafar *et al.*, 2021; Wille *et al.*, 2019:5).

Sports journalists have an opportunity nowadays to engage readers and fans by sharing stories of athletes and injustice instead of turning a blind eye and restricting sincerity and morality (Moritz, 2019). It is the social and ethical responsibility of sports journalists to create meaning in news and worldviews by supporting or opposing discussions, so sports journalists are expected to cover on-field and off-field matters to create a cohesive, integrated, and diverse part of the media (Wille *et al.*, 2019:5).

Therefore, the key features of sports journalism in the context of social cohesion are to focus on inclusion and belonging, social relationships, legitimacy, orientation to the greater good, and equality. Sports journalists should abide by ethical codes for journalism in general and sports in particular and report on matters accurately and fairly so that every race, gender, and socio-economic background is represented in articles. Fans will feel like they are part of the community if there is representation in the media, which is achieved through inclusion and belonging. To ensure legitimacy, sports journalists should strive to be ethical and transparent in their reporting and use reliable sources to enhance their credibility and build trust with their audience. Orientation to the greater good refers to sports journalists reporting on social injustices in a way that is fair and representative of the world we live in. Lastly, sports journalists can ensure equality in their reporting through diverse and honest reporting and accurately representing reality.

The research objective was achieved because the key features of sports journalism were identified and placed in the context of social cohesion in South Africa.

6.3. Specific research question two

Specific research question two (see 1.3.2.2) is as follows: **How can the features of framing theory be applied to fandom and sports journalism in the South African context, according to the literature?**

Framing is defined as an intuitive process whereby journalists and editors give prominence to certain issues to make them appear more salient than others, achieved by using certain ideas, words, and sources in line with their agenda (Love *et al.*, 2021:180). The mass media frame images of reality in

a patterned way, using elements of text made up of several elements, interpretation, attribution, and evaluation, which are coded to reveal the frames influenced by font, text size and images used to break the news (Linström *et al.*, 2012:22; Matthes *et al.*, 2012:25263; Oh *et al.*, 2020:7). The news media has several effects on the public, such as getting public attention, persuading beliefs and opinions, influencing behaviour, defining, and structuring reality, defining legitimacy, and informing audiences in a timely manner (Linström *et al.*, 2012:22).

Fandom refers to an individual's attachment to a sport, influenced by their family, media or by participating in the sport themselves (Van Schaik, 2020; Secret Base, 2016; Joern, 2020; Wu *et al.*, 2022:158). Individuals become sports fans through socialisation and identification, where socialisation refers to a fan's understanding of the culture of a team, while identification refers to the extent to which fans relate psychologically to a team (Mastromartino *et al.*, 2017:5; Ross *et al.*, 2019; Parry *et al.*, 2014:5; Wann *et al.*, 2021:501).

South Africa has one of the most diverse and independent news sectors in Africa, with 90% of South Africans sourcing their news online, while 72% find their news on social media (Reuters Institute, 2019). Sports media aim to build connections between fans, athletes, and teams by providing the 'spectator experience' with either live footage from games or through social media updates (Lowe *et al.*, 2018:308). Social media is influential in the context of fandom as a social structure because fans have one place to find news and share opinions, which allows for two-way communication and enhances connections (Phonthanakitithaworn, 2017:1480). According to Facebook IQ (2018), fans engage with athletes; when athletes show emotions, fans use the comment section to share their support and love for the team or athlete.

Therefore, all the features of framing theory can be applied to fandom and sports journalism as it comes to the fore on social media platforms that focus on sports, including the sports news pages of news organisations published on these platforms. On these pages, the public's attention is focused on entertainment, group affiliation and education. Persuading beliefs and opinions can be achieved through entertainment and education. Influencing behaviour can be achieved through escape, family needs, group affiliation and education. Defining and structuring reality can be achieved through positive stress, escape, entertainment, group affiliation and education. Defining legitimacy can be achieved through education, and lastly, informing in a timely manner can be achieved through group affiliation and education.

The research objective was achieved because the features of framing theory were applied to fandom and sports journalism in the South African context.

6.4. Specific research question three

Specific research question three (see 1.3.2.3) is as follows: **How was Eben Etzebeth framed in the alleged racial assault incident by journalists of *TimesLIVE*, *SA rugby magazine* and *Sport24* in news reports posted on these publications' Facebook pages between 25 and 31 August 2019?**

The media has several effects on the public, such as getting public attention, persuading beliefs and opinions, influencing behaviour, defining, and structuring reality, defining legitimacy, and informing in a timely manner (Linström *et al.*, 2012:22). There are several factors that determine whether individuals are influenced by frames, such as how frequently the topic occurs and if there are competing frames (Matthes, 2012:250). Framing in sports occurs in two ways: in the media discourse which is either spoken or written and in the audience's understanding of events, which helped the researcher to determine the frames of the sports journalists during the alleged assault incident.

Therefore, sports journalists framed Eben Etzebeth in the alleged racial assault incident as involved in an argument, involved in an assault incident, involved in the racial incident, committed the intolerable act, involved in rumour, involved in similar allegations, vehemently denying, an aggressor, accused, an ambassador, and innocent.

By framing Etzebeth as involved in an argument, journalists framed Etzebeth negatively because as an international rugby player and representative, he should not be accused of any harmful behaviour. Journalists reported on the incident accurately and without any boosterism and respected the confidentiality of the victim by not revealing their identity.

By framing Etzebeth as involved in an assault incident and committing an intolerable act, journalists framed Etzebeth negatively because reporting that the victim was injured and taken to hospital creates a negative perception of Etzebeth to the reader. However, journalists reporting on injustice involving a high-profile athlete advanced social cohesion and built trust with fans as credible sources of news.

By framing Etzebeth as involved in a racial incident, journalists framed Etzebeth negatively because Etzebeth was not able to eliminate inequality and injustice and was perceived by fans as intolerant of other races.

By framing Etzebeth as involved in a rumour and similar allegations, journalists framed Etzebeth negatively because SA Rugby dismissed the incident as a rumour which shows a lack of interest in a public interest issue which should be treated as a matter of importance. However, sports journalists maintained social cohesion by upholding public interest through their reporting, observing power, and sharing interesting and prominent stories.

By framing Etzebeth as vehemently denying the incident, journalists frame Etzebeth positively because as an athlete there is an expectation that he is a role model who brings individuals together through a mutual love for sport, but with that he is expected to be honest and act with integrity.

By framing Etzebeth as an aggressor, journalists framed Etzebeth negatively because fans will look at the picture and click on the article because the picture shows his aggressive nature on the field. Journalists have an obligation to represent subjects accurately, which was not the case in this instance.

By framing Etzebeth as accused, journalists framed Etzebeth negatively because emphasis is placed on Etzebeth sitting on the side of the field injured, when the article is about an alleged assault. Journalists used the image to emphasise his potential involvement and give the reader an indication that he was involved in an assault using images.

By framing Etzebeth as an ambassador, journalists framed Etzebeth negatively because he is an international representative and even if that is the case, he is not above the law and should be treated an equal. By reporting on the incident in this way, journalists created a shared sense of solidarity and contributed to diversity and unity.

By framing Etzebeth as innocent, journalists framed Etzebeth positively because he was cleared of his involvement in the alleged assault incident. Journalists ensured legitimacy by reporting using credible sources and relayed information to the public in a timely manner.

The research objective was achieved by conducting analysis to determine how Eben Etzebeth was framed in the alleged racial assault incident by journalists of *TimesLIVE*, *SA Rugby magazine* and *Sport24* in news reports on the Facebook pages of the publications between 25 and 31 August 2019.

6.5. Specific research question four

Specific research question four (see 1.3.2.4) is as follows: **How was Eben Etzebeth framed in the alleged racial assault incident by social media users in comments on the Facebook pages of the publications in 5.3 between 25 and 31 August 2019?**

Fans become sports fans through *socialisation, identification, and participation* (3.3.1.3) and can learn more about sports from journalists. Individuals form attachments to sports, teams, and athletes from as young as eight years old and are influenced by family, media, or participating in the sport themselves (Van Schaik, 2020; Secret Base, 2016; Joern, 2020; Wu *et al.*, 2022:158) (see 3.3.1.2). Fans can either be occasional, regular, or daily fans (see 3.3.3.1). Social media offers sports journalists a new opportunity to broaden the news agenda, as social media sites are not restricted by

time or space, which allows for a larger scope of representation and audience participation, in the case of this study audience is fans (Ramon et al., 2022:925) (see 3.4.2.6). and can be completely absorbed by the news and actively engage in the comments, the fans in this study are daily fans (Raincock *et al.*, s.a.:4).

Fans showed their socialisation and identification by coming to Etzebeth's defence once the allegations made headlines, and by focusing more on Etzebeth's involvement in the Rugby World Cup squad than the social cohesion issue. Fans were also able to participate because the web articles were published on a social media platform where they could engage with the content in the comments.

Therefore, fans framed Eben Etzebeth in the alleged racial assault incident as as involved in a racial incident, accused, innocent, unbelievable, involved in disruption, possibly guilty, set-up, guilty, a hero, and racially attacked.

By framing Etzebeth as involved in a racial incident, fans framed Etzebeth negatively because fans emphasised how unacceptable his behaviour was as a representative for the country. Fans cared more about the issue of social cohesion and the impact Etzebeth allegedly racially assaulting would have on the country than the Rugby World Cup would have.

By framing Etzebeth as accused and the claims as unbelievable, fans framed Etzebeth positively and came to his defence and criticised the publication because they were more concerned about his success as a rugby player than the issue of social injustice ahead of a major tournament. Fans focused more on the team's success than a potentially serious case of inequality.

By framing Etzebeth as innocent, fans framed Etzebeth positively because they wanted to ensure there was credibility to the claims before making any assumptions about Etzebeth's involvement in the alleged incident.

By framing Etzebeth as involved in disruption, fans framed Etzebeth positively because they were determined to see him included in the Rugby World Cup squad and attending the tournament. So much so that they believed the case needed to be dismissed until after the Rugby World Cup, so Etzebeth had no distractions heading into the tournament.

By framing Etzebeth as possibly guilty, fans framed Etzebeth negatively as they expressed their disappointment at his behaviour by considering his on-field behaviour on previous occasions. Fans expressed concern for what kind of standard was being set with that type of behaviour over any involvement he had in the upcoming Rugby World Cup.

By framing Etzebeth as set-up, racially attacked and as a hero, fans framed Etzebeth positively because they completely disregarded the incident and the implications it could have had on social cohesion because they wanted the strongest team to represent South Africa at the Rugby World Cup. This shows the fan's affiliation to the team as they were willing to put their own interests above the country's.

By framing Etzebeth as guilty, fans framed Etzebeth negatively because fans distanced themselves from the claims and felt that as an athlete and star, he had a responsibility as a leader to behave in a professional and acceptable manner.

The research objective was achieved by conducting a content analysis to determine how Eben Etzebeth was framed in the alleged racial assault incident by social media users in comments on the Facebook pages of *TimesLIVE*, *SA Rugby magazine* and *Sport24* between 25 and 31 August 2019.*

*It is worth noting that there is a balance between the fans contributing and undermining social cohesion. Whereas the results do align with the literature as stated in the last sentence, the fact that the fans did not disregard the claims and choose Etzebeth's side tells us that social cohesion did matter to some fans who are critical of players who do not uphold values such as equality. This aspect may be worth exploring further as fans did not all behave in accordance with expectations in terms of the literature.

6.6. General research question

With the four specific research questions answered and their research goals achieved, the general research question (see 1.3.1) can be answered. **How was Eben Etzebeth framed in the Langebaan alleged racial assault incident on the Facebook pages of selected news organisations in a context in which sports journalism and fandom are elements that can inform social cohesion?**

The key features of sports journalism in the context of social cohesion are inclusion and belonging, social relationships, legitimacy, orientation to the greater good, and equality (see Table 2.1). Journalists were inclusive by reporting on all angles of the story and by offering different perspectives, including Etzebeth's statement, a statement from police and head coach Rassie Erasmus. By facilitating two-way communication through the comment section on Facebook, social relationships were facilitated. The journalists strived to report ethically, transparently, and openly; the journalists upheld the values of journalists to ensure legitimacy. By reporting on social injustice and spotlighting an alleged racial incident, the journalists reaffirmed their orientation to the greater good. Lastly, all races were treated as equal and inclusive through ethical and objective reporting.

6.6.1. News coverage of Etzebeth's alleged racial assault incident

The journalists of the three publications fulfilled their role to enhance social cohesion through news criteria such as relevance and the timeliness at which the stories were published (see table 4.5.2). Journalists were able to connect deeper with fans by discussing issues which may be seen as uncomfortable to some, like a racial issue, but by reporting on the incident instead of turning a blind eye. The reporting was inclusive, which shows that journalists upheld ethical reporting guidelines (see 4.5).

6.6.2. Enabling fan participation in the alleged racial assault incident

Participation in this study was outlined as a fan's involvement on social media in the day-to-day life of an athlete, team, or sport (see table 4.3). The incident was brought to light on social media, so the journalists had to act quickly and report on the matter, and of the three publications, SA Rugby magazine were the only publication to publish an article on the day news broke on 25 August 2019 (see article "*Bok star denies 'unfounded' claims*"). By posting the web articles on the Facebook pages of selected publications, two-way communication was enabled as fans were allowed to interact with the news by commenting and sharing their opinions which encouraged fan participation. Of the publications, SA Rugby magazine had the most engaged audience as 204 comments of the 498 comments analysed across all three publications, which could be expected as they are a specialist rugby publication so the users who follow the page would be engaged rugby fans.

6.6.3. Journalist and fan frames promoting inclusion and belonging

Inclusion and belonging in this study was outlined as the extent to which the news was reported accurately to ensure that race and socio-economic background was represented in the news. Inclusion and belonging could be achieved through making people feel like they are part of the sporting community and working towards the common goal of enhancing transformation (see table 4.3). Inclusion and belonging, particularly the lack of it, manifested in the theme "*accused*" because fans were quick to come to Etzebeth's defence and were more focused on Etzebeth's accomplishments as a rugby player than a social injustice issue. Through this attributional framing, fans undermined social cohesion.

It manifested in the theme "*innocent*" because fans wanted to ensure there was credibility to the claims before making any assumptions about whether Etzebeth had assaulted anybody. Through responsibility framing, fans contributed to social cohesion.

It also manifested in the themes "*unbelievable*", "*disruption*" and "*racially attacked*" because fans were willing to overlook the social cohesion issue and focus on the Rugby World Cup instead, which

highlights their affiliation and identification to the Springboks, but by disregarding the social cohesion issue the fans undermined social cohesion through situational and conflict framing and thus their focus lacked inclusion and belonging.

However, fans did contribute to social cohesion by showing support for Etzebeth if it meant success at the Rugby World Cup through the theme of “*hero*”, which shows that they feel part of the sporting community through human-interest framing.

6.6.4. Journalist and fan frames promoting the building social relationships

Social relationships in this study refers to promoting national unity and empowering athletes (see table 4-3). Social relationships manifested in the theme “*involved in a racial incident*” because the frame focused on the breakdown of social relationships, which undermined social cohesion because solidarity and coexistence are affected.

Social relationships also manifested in the theme “*involved in a rumour*”, where social cohesion was undermined by SA Rugby’s disregarding of the claims against Etzebeth without a full investigation, even though it was a social justice issue that was relevant to the public through situational framing. This causes mistrust amongst fans and a breakdown in the relationships which undermines social cohesion as there will be a lack of national unity and fans will not feel empowered to support the Springboks.

6.6.5. Journalist and fan frames promoting legitimacy in the coverage of the alleged racial incident

Legitimacy in this study refers to journalists being credible, ethical, and reliable sources of news (see table 4-3). When Etzebeth was framed as “*innocent*” by journalists after Etzebeth was cleared by police of his involvement in the alleged incident and *Sport24* journalists spoke to the pub owner who said Etzebeth was not implicated, Etzebeth was framed as innocent through attributional framing. By implying that Etzebeth was innocent after speaking to reliable sources, journalists ensured they were credible and ethical in their reporting which contributes to social cohesion.

6.6.6. Journalist and fan frames promoting the orientation to greater good

Orientation to greater good in this study refers to eliminating any social divide and instilling change, creating a sense of national pride through ethical and objective reporting, and abiding by the values and social views of the sport (see table 4-3). Orientation to the greater good manifested in the themes “*committed an intolerable act*”, “*involved in similar allegations*” and “*denying*” where journalists emphasised Etzebeth’s responsibility as a rugby player and role model to promote unity and instil

change. Emphasis was placed on his alleged unsavoury behaviour and the impact it had on individuals, communities and institutions which shows the journalists' commitment to holding players accountable through responsibility framing, which shows the contribution to social cohesion.

Journalists undermined social cohesion through the themes of "*confrontational*" and "*accused*" because the images used of Etzebeth on both occasions frame him negatively and focus on his appearance instead of the incident, which undermines social cohesion.

It also manifested in the "*possibly guilty*" frame because fans expressed their disappointment at Etzebeth's behaviour and how it would impact South Africans rather than how it would impact on his career. Through issue framing, fans from all three publications contributed to social cohesion by worrying about social injustice rather than a rugby tournament.

Fans framed Etzebeth as "*guilty*" and contributed to social cohesion by expressing their disappointment at Etzebeth's behaviour and what it meant for the country as a national representative, rather than what it meant for his Rugby World Cup hopes through responsibility framing. As an ambassador for the country, fans felt that Etzebeth was responsible for eliminating social divide, promoting change, and creating a sense of national pride, especially ahead of a major tournament so they distanced themselves from him amidst the claims through responsibility framing which contributes to social cohesion.

6.6.7. Journalist and fan frames promoting equality

Equality in this study refers to treating all members of society as equals and promoting an inclusive environment through objective and ethical reporting (see table 4.3). Journalists contributed to social cohesion through issue framing by adhering to the importance of equality when he was framed as "*involved in an assault incident*". This was achieved by treating Etzebeth as an everyday citizen - even if he is an internationally recognised rugby player who was a key player in the Rugby World Cup plans, he was still confronted with alleged racial allegations. By treating Etzebeth as an equal, an inclusive environment was built through objective and ethical reporting.

Fans also contributed to social cohesion through responsibility framing when he was framed as "*involved in a racial incident*" by emphasising how unacceptable his behaviour was, which put social cohesion as more important than the admiration they had for Etzebeth as a rugby player. By viewing Etzebeth as an equal and not highlighting his social status, equality was achieved.

6.6.8. Journalist and fan frames contributing or undermining social cohesion

Through their reporting, sports journalists contributed to social cohesion five times when Etzebeth was framed as involved in an assault incident, committed an intolerable act, involved in similar allegations, denying the allegations, and innocent. However, sports journalists undermined social cohesion four times when Etzebeth was framed as involved in a racial incident, confrontational, an accused, and involved in a rumour. On two occasions, when Etzebeth was framed as involved in an argument and an ambassador, the contribution to social cohesion was not unequivocal.

Journalists can be gatekeepers and control the content fans see, which is why what they show is as important as what they don't (Reifsnyder, 2018:26). This has brought into question the extent to which sports journalism can contribute to social cohesion because not all areas of sport receive attention from journalists. All articles published by *SA Rugby magazine* and *Sport24* were written by sports journalists, and the majority of the frames (seven frames) were positive to Etzebeth. However, at *TimesLIVE* a crime, justice and human interest journalist wrote the story that broke the news about Etzebeth's alleged assault incident. This could explain why Etzebeth was framed more negatively by *TimesLIVE* than the other two publications (seven times - the total of positive *SA Rugby magazine* and *Sport24* frames compared to *TimesLIVE*'s four frames), because the focus of the articles was the social cohesion issue rather than Etzebeth himself, the team he is part of and the tournament that was about to start.

It is here that the criticism against sports journalism come to the fore. As mentioned earlier in this study (see 2.3.4) the literature indicates that sports journalism has been criticised for focusing on sport rather than other potentially negative factors, including racism.

6.6.9. Journalist and fan frames contributing to social cohesion

The dominant journalist frame across all three publications was responsibility framing, where Etzebeth was assumed to be responsible for the alleged incident. As an experienced international rugby player and role model to the youth, Etzebeth is expected to conduct himself in a professional and appropriate manner, so the journalists framed him as responsible for his part in the social media rumours.

While Etzebeth was framed more positively by the fans of *TimesLIVE*, *SA Rugby magazine* and *Sport24* (seven times out of ten), the dominant theme across all three publications was responsibility framing which assigns responsibility to an issue to shape how the public views that issue (see 3.2.1.7). In this case, the journalists assigned responsibility to Etzebeth for an alleged racial assault, which as an international rugby player and role model, is not appropriate behaviour.

Therefore, the general research questions can subsequently be answered.

Sports journalism contributed to social cohesion in the South African context, but marginally so. Although Etzebeth was framed overwhelmingly negatively (nine times out of eleven) and the dominant responsibility frames suggested his behaviour was questionable, there were instances in which journalists underplayed his alleged actions. This has been raised in the literature as a critique against sports journalists (see 2.4).

However, it is not possible to conclude whether fans contributed or undermined social cohesion in the South African context. While some fans recognised Etzebeth's responsibility as an athlete and role model to behave in a manner that is conducive, other fans were willing to overlook the alleged claims for the sake of winning the Rugby World Cup. So, while fans framed him more positively than sports journalists did, these frames' contribution to social cohesion was varied. This aligns with the literature on fandom that suggest that strong team identification and socialisation, in this case relating to the Springbok rugby team, may override other societal concerns, including social cohesion in the South African context.

6.7. Implications of research

This study has helped to create a greater understanding of the role of sports journalism in the context of social cohesion in South Africa. How sports journalists report on off-field matters has been explored by comparing niche rugby publications and general sport publications, as well as the fans. Sports journalists across all three publications reported on the incident which shows their commitment to social cohesion and while Etzebeth was framed more negatively than he was positively, the journalists recognised their responsibility to report ethically.

6.8. Recommendations for future research

More recently, athlete activism has come to the fore with movements like #BlackLivesMatter in Formula 1 and NFL, and American women's football team captain Megan Rapinoe advocating for equal pay. Studies can be done to determine how sports journalists report on these social cohesion issues.

Football players like Marcus Rashford have experienced racism their whole life and advocate against it on social media. Studies can be done from an athlete's perspective to determine how athletes use social media to advocate for social cohesion issues like racism, social status and inequality.

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ADDENDUM A: CODE SHEET

Publication name:

Story content or headline:

Date:

The journalist's frame of the alleged racial assault incident (words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, photos):

The fan comment on the alleged racial assault incident (words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs):

Description of frames manifested (situational, attributional, issue, responsibility, conflict, human interest, attributional, morality):

Publication of frame's attribution (positive, negative, neutral):

Notes:

ADDENDUM B: ARTICLES CODE BOOK

Article 1: *TimesLIVE* (26 August 2019)

Description of Eben Etzebeth's alleged assault incident (words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs).	Theme	Notes	Positive, negative or neutral
Springbok Eben Etzebeth denies 'assault' in Langebaan	Engaged in assault	The article's headline suggests that, according to Etzebeth, the incident was an unfounded accusation of assault.	Negative
Springbok lock Eben Etzebeth has been accused of assaulting a man and using racial slurs at the weekend in Langebaan, about 120km north of Cape Town.	Involved in racial assault	The caption suggests Etzebeth allegedly assaulted and verbally abused a homeless man on a night out.	Negative
The 27-year-old has, however, vehemently denied "unfounded" reports posted on social media about the alleged incident.	Vehemently denying	The story suggests while Etzebeth acknowledges the claims, he is not guilty of the claims against him.	Negative
It is completely untrue and unfounded to claim that I physically or racially abused anyone in Langebaan, as has been reported on social media. Multiple witnesses can corroborate that.	Vehemently denying	The story suggests that, according to Etzebeth, the incident was an unfounded accusation of assault and racism, and witnesses can attest to that.	Negative
Etzebeth, who played 78 tests for the Springboks, is expected to be included in the national side for next month's Rugby World Cup in Japan. The team will be announced on Monday.	Nation-builder / ambassador	The story suggests that the timing of the allegations are right before a very important announcement for Etzebeth, who is due to be announced in the Springbok squad travelling to the World Cup.	Positive
Police spokesperson Sergeant Noloyiso Rwexana confirmed an assault case was opened following an alleged incident at a pub in Langebaan.	Engaged in assault	The story suggests that Etzebeth may have to answer to police after a case was opened following the incident which shows that something did happen that night.	Negative

"I am and will always strive to be a true ambassador to this beautiful rainbow nation."	Vehemently denying	The article suggests that, contrary to the accusations, Etzebeth believes that he is a nation-builder.	Positive
It is alleged there was an argument between two groups.	Argument between two groups	On the other hand, the article suggests that the incident was an argument that happened between two groups.	Negative
There were people who were injured and transported to hospital.	Engaged in assault	The article also suggests that, because of the argument between two groups, some people were injured.	Negative
"The investigating officer is obtaining statements from the victims with no arrests so far. This office have not identified any suspects yet," Rwexana said.	Engaged in assault	The story suggests that while a case has been opened, Etzebeth has not yet been implicated and no arrests have been made.	Neutral

Article 2: *TimesLIVE* (26 August 2019)

Description of Eben Etzebeth's alleged assault incident (words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs).	Theme	Notes	Positive, negative or neutral
Eben Etzebeth in Springbok World Cup squad despite assault claims	Engaged in assault	This headline suggests that despite the allegations against him, Etzebeth has been included in the South African squad for the World Cup.	Positive
Springbok lock Eben Etzebeth has denied assaulting a homeless man or using racial slurs.	Involved in racial assault	This caption suggests that Etzebeth has been accused of assaulting a homeless man and using racial slurs but despite this, he has denied any involvement.	Negative
Springbok lock Eben Etzebeth will be on the flight to Japan for the Rugby World Cup, it emerged just hours after he had to deny	Engaged in assault	The story suggests that the excitement of his inclusion in the World Cup squad was	Negative

assaulting a homeless man in the Western Cape.		overshadowed by the allegations against him.	
The 27-year-old lock was accused of assaulting a man and using racial slurs at the weekend in Langebaan, about 120km north of Cape Town.	Involved in racial assault	The story suggests that Etzebeth is under investigation for using racial slurs and assaulting a man while on a night out.	Negative
Etzebeth vehemently denied the claim, and described it as "unfounded".	Vehemently denying	The story suggests Etzebeth has distanced himself from the incident and denies any allegations against him.	Negative
On Monday, during the World Cup squad announcement, Etzebeth was named as part of the Springboks' forward pack for the tournament.	Ambassador	The story suggests that Etzebeth will still be heading to the World Cup.	Positive
In a statement issued on Monday, SA Rugby threw its weight behind him.	Involved in similar allegations	The story suggests that even though Etzebeth has been accused by the homeless man, SA Rugby believe his version of events.	Positive
"We have spoken to Eben and he categorically denies any physical or racial abuse on his part as has been alleged in social media. The South African Rugby Union is a law-abiding member of South African society and has no tolerance of acts of violence or racial abuse.	Vehemently denying	The statement suggests that Etzebeth has emphatically denied the claims made on social media and SA Rugby supports him. SA Rugby also make it clear that racial and assault incidents are not taken lightly and abide by the laws of the country.	Positive
"We will co-operate with the authorities in any way necessary. Our Rugby World Cup squad will have no place for anyone who transgresses those principles. But we also trust our people to act responsibly and tell the truth," SA Rugby said.	Involved in similar allegations	This statement suggests that SA Rugby has strong values against people who are racist or unjust and the members that make up the squad are in line with those values. SA Rugby states that because Etzebeth is a squad member, they trust that he has not lied and has acted in a way that upholds their values.	Positive

Police spokesperson Sgt Noloyiso Rwexana confirmed an assault case was opened after an alleged incident at a pub in Langebaan.	Engaged in assault	The story suggests that an assault case was opened with the police after Etzebeth's night out.	Negative
No arrests have been made.	Engaged in assault	The story suggests that while a case has been opened, it is still in the early stages as no arrests have been made.	Neutral

Article 3: *TimesLIVE* (26 August 2019)

Description of Eben Etzebeth's alleged assault incident (words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs).	Theme	Notes	Positive, negative or neutral
Etzebeth to be named in Springbok World Cup squad after SA Rugby's conditional backing	Involved in similar allegations	This headline suggests Etzebeth is in clear after receiving the support of SA Rugby in light of the World Cup squad announcement.	Positive
Lock Eben Etzebeth will be named in the Springbok Rugby World Cup 2019 squad later on Monday despite allegations of assault that emerged in social media on Sunday.	Engaged in assault	This suggests that SA Rugby is aware of the allegations but does not believe it is fair to exclude him from the squad without evidence.	Positive
On Monday SA Rugby gave Etzebeth their conditional backing following an alleged incident that took place in a pub in Langebaan, a town about 120km north of Cape Town where Etzebeth spends much of his leisure time.	Engaged in assault	This suggests SA Rugby is aware of the allegations but have chosen to put their faith behind him.	Negative
It's claimed (although the identity of the accuser is unknown) that two groups clashed in the venue.	Engaged in assault	This suggests that Etzebeth was part of one of the groups involved in the altercation.	Negative
"We have spoken to Eben and he categorically denies any physical or racial abuse on his part as has	Vehemently denying	This suggests Etzebeth denies any involvement in the incident	Positive

been alleged in social media," SA Rugby said in a statement.		which came to light on social media.	
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Article 4: *TimesLIVE* (26 August 2019)

Description of Eben Etzebeth's alleged assault incident (words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs).	Theme	Notes	Positive, negative or neutral
Springbok lock Eben Etzebeth appears at the Human Rights Commission	Involved in intolerable act	This article's headline suggests Etzebeth is cooperating to clear his name ahead of the team's departure to the World Cup.	Neutral
Eben Etzebeth is scheduled to leave for the Rugby World Cup squad with the Springboks.	Ambassador	This suggests Etzebeth is doing everything in his power to clear his name ahead of the World Cup.	Positive
Springbok lock Eben Etzebeth appeared at the Human Rights Commission (HRC) to answer questions related to an incident at a Langebaan drinking establishment on Saturday night.	Involved in intolerable act	This confirms that an incident did take place that Etzebeth was involved in either as an aggressor or witness.	Negative
It was alleged that Etzebeth, who was with members of his family and friends, was involved in a fight and that he made racial slurs.	Involved in racial assault	This places Etzebeth at the location where the altercation took place.	Negative
Springbok coach Rassie Erasmus, who has included Etzebeth in his squad for the Rugby World Cup (RWC) due to leave for Japan on Friday, confirmed the lock was to appear in front of the HRC on Thursday afternoon.	Involved in intolerable act	This suggests that Etzebeth appearing before the Commission does not put his spot in the squad at risk as he was clearing his name before his departure.	Positive
"The update I can give you is that there was a complaint (laid) at the HRC. Eben and Eugene (Henning) our player affairs	Involved in intolerable act	This suggests that SA Rugby is doing everything they can to stay informed by sending their	Positive

manager is there this afternoon," said Erasmus.		players affairs manager with the player.	
"They are there in discussions at the HRC on exactly what the claim is. But there is no police or any other thing that we've heard."	Involved in intolerable act	This suggests not even Etzebeth is aware of what the charges are and that is what he was trying to clear up.	Positive
Amid calls for SA Rugby to stand Etzebeth down from the RWC squad until the matter is resolved, Erasmus said unless there is evidence to the contrary he has to believe the player's version of events.	Involved in similar allegations	This suggests SA Rugby has put their trust in Etzebeth and he will not be removed from the squad.	Positive
"Obviously there is a player and coach relationship and there is trust between a player and a coach.	Involved in similar allegations	This suggests that the relationship between players and management is strong and there is trust.	Positive
"When something like that happens, and a lot of things on social media, not just about Eben but a lot of players we have to handle daily.	Involved in similar allegations	This suggests other players are also criticised by members of the public but they are not all dealt with.	Positive
"A lot of things get said and emails get thrown to us about a lot of players which is something we ignore because often it is just nonsense.	Involved in similar allegations	This suggests SA Rugby is aware of allegations made against players and most of the time they don't go further than allegations.	Positive
"Obviously this one has become a big thing. I have to believe what the player tells me because we have a relationship.	Involved in similar allegations	This suggests the relationship between players and management is more important than what is said about Etzebeth on social media.	Positive
"Until something else is proved differently only then we can act," said the coach.	Involved in similar allegations	This suggests that SA Rugby is not going to take drastic action against Etzebeth and will only do so if any more evidence comes to light.	Positive

Article 5: SA Rugby magazine (25 August 2019)

Description of Eben Etzebeth's alleged assault incident (words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs).	Theme	Notes	Positive, negative or neutral
Bok star denies 'unfounded' claims	Involved in unsavoury incident.	The article's headline suggests that, according to Etzebeth, the incident was an unfounded accusation of assault.	Negative
Emphatically refuted rumours and a video doing the rounds alleging he was involved in an incident over the weekend in Langebaan.	Involved in empathetically refuted rumoured incident	This article suggests that, according to Eben Etzebeth, the video that circulated on social media accusing him of assault is not true.	Negative
Inflammatory accusations did the rounds on social media	Involved in empathetically refuted rumoured incident	This article suggests that the video was circulated widely on social media and blew up.	Negative
A video suggested Etzebeth had been involved in an incident with 'homeless guys' in the seaside Cape town of Langebaan.	Involved in unsavoury incident	This article suggests that Eben Etzebeth had assaulted homeless men which was caught on video.	Negative
He took to his Facebook account to emphatically deny the claims.	Involved in empathetically refuted rumoured incident	This article suggests that Eben Etzebeth felt the need to clear his name publicly on his Facebook account.	Positive
It is completely untrue and unfounded to claim that I physically or racially abused anyone in Langebaan as has been reported on social media. Multiple witnesses can corroborate that,' he stated.	Involved in empathetically refuted rumoured incident	This article suggests that, despite the allegations, Eben Etzebeth is not guilty and witnesses can attest to that.	Positive
I am and will always strive to be a true ambassador to this beautiful rainbow nation and the sport that I love.'	Involved in empathetically refuted rumoured incident	This article suggests that despite the accusations against him, Etzebeth believes he is a representative of the country.	Positive

Article 6: SA Rugby magazine (26 August 2019)

Description of Eben Etzebeth's alleged assault incident (words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs).	Theme	Notes	Positive, negative or neutral
Erasmus places trust in Etzebeth	Involved in empathetically refuted rumoured incident	The article's headline suggests that, South African director of rugby Rassie Erasmus trusts Eben Etzebeth's interpretation of events.	Positive
Coach Rassie Erasmus says he trusts Eben Etzebeth's account of events following allegations of an unsavoury incident involving the Bok lock in Langebaan over the weekend.	Involved in unsavoury incident	This article suggests that Rassie Erasmus trusts Etzebeth's version of events.	Positive
On Sunday, rumours emerged on social media to suggest that Etzebeth had been involved in an 'assault' that allegedly had racial connotations.	Involved in racially connotative assault rumours	This article suggests that Etzebeth had been accused of being involved in an assault incident that has to do with race.	Negative
Etzebeth first strongly refuted the claims, while SA Rugby stated on Monday that the lock would remain with the Springboks unless the police require reconsideration.	In denial of any involvement in a racial assault	This article suggests that despite the allegations, SA Rugby believed Etzebeth and he would stick with the squad.	Positive
Addressing the subject following Monday's announcement of the Boks' World Cup squad, Erasmus said Etzebeth's place in the travelling group would have been jeopardised had there been any truth to the story.	Involved in empathetically refuted rumoured incident	This paragraph suggests that if Etzebeth was guilty or if there was any inclination that he was, he would not be included in the squad.	Positive
'I was definitely worried about it when I first heard about it. If there was any truth to it that would have been a massive issue for us, but after chatting to Eben and hearing his side of the story, there is trust between a coach and player. I have to trust him to do	Involved in empathetically refuted rumoured incident	This statement suggests that as a coach, Erasmus trusts Etzebeth to do and say the right thing, and vice versa.	Positive

some stuff on the field and win Test matches, and he must trust me to believe him when he tells me something.			
'I'm pretty comfortable with what he has told me, you can't just believe what someone else says on social media. I'm comfortable that it's not the truth, and if anything like that was the truth then they would not be part of a our team and would not go to the World Cup. But until something like that gets proven, then it's just a rumour in my opinion but, yes, it would be a massive thing if true.'	Involved in empathetically refuted rumoured incident	This statement suggests that Erasmus sees Etzebeth as innocent until proven guilty, and if he was guilty he would not be included in the Rugby World Cup plans like he had been.	Positive

Article 7: SA Rugby magazine (27 August 2019)

Description of Eben Etzebeth's alleged assault incident (words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs).	Theme	Notes	Positive, negative or neutral
Etzebeth to remain with Boks – SA Rugby	Innocent	This suggests that Etzebeth is allowed to stay with the Springboks	Positive
Eben Etzebeth will remain with the Springboks unless the police require the reconsideration of the SA Rugby Union amid allegations he was involved in an assault over the weekend in Langebaan.	Innocent	This suggests that Etzebeth is free to travel with the Springboks unless the police require him in South Africa.	Positive
Etzebeth has already moved to emphatically refute rumours and a video doing the rounds alleging he was involved in an incident over the weekend in Langebaan.	Involved in empathetically refuted rumoured incident	This suggests Etzebeth has disputed the allegations lodged against him.	Negative
The national union has now moved to support the player.	Involved in unsavoury incident	This suggests that Etzebeth has the backing of SA Rugby.	Positive

SA Rugby statement on the matter: 'The South African Rugby Union is a law-abiding member of South African society and has no tolerance of acts of violence or racial abuse. We will co-operate with the authorities in any way necessary. Our Rugby World Cup squad will have no place for anyone who transgresses those principles.'	Involved in unsavoury incident	This suggests SA Rugby believes Etzebeth's version of events and will be treated like every other squad member.	Positive
'But we also trust our people to act responsibly and tell the truth. We have spoken to Eben and he categorically denies any physical or racial abuse on his part as has been alleged in social media.'	Involved in racially connotative assault rumours		
'He is a member of the Springbok squad and will remain so unless police authorities require our reconsideration.'	Innocent		

Article 8: SA Rugby magazine (27 August 2019)

Description of Eben Etzebeth's alleged assault incident (words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs).	Theme	Notes	Positive, negative or neutral
Eben Etzebeth: I can focus on World Cup	Innocent	The article's headline suggests that Eben Etzebeth can focus his attention on the World Cup rather than the assault incident.	Positive
Eben Etzebeth says he has been assured by police that he will not be implicated following allegations of an unsavoury incident in Langebaan on the weekend.	Innocent	This suggests that despite the allegations against him, Etzebeth is not being treated as a suspect in the incident.	Positive

On Sunday, rumours emerged on social media to suggest that Etzebeth had been involved in an 'assault' that allegedly had racial connotations.	Involved in racially connotative assault rumours	This suggests that Etzebeth was involved in an assault incident and used racial slurs.	Negative
Etzebeth first strongly refuted the claims, while SA Rugby stated on Monday that the lock would remain with the Springboks unless the police require reconsideration.	Involved in empathetically refuted rumoured incident.	This suggests that despite the allegations against him, he would remain part of the squad and would only be removed if the police required him.	Positive
The 27-year-old was included in the Bok's 31-man squad for the World Cup on Monday. He told Netwerk24 that he has already spoken to the police about the incident. 'They said everything is fine,' Etzebeth said. 'Now I can just focus on the World Cup.'	Innocent	This suggests that Etzebeth is not guilty of assault because he was cleared by police.	Positive
Bok coach Rassie Erasmus backed Etzebeth after the squad announcement, saying he trusted his version of events.	Involved in empathetically refuted rumoured incident.	This suggests that despite the allegations, Erasmus was confident in what Etzebeth had told him.	Positive
'I'm pretty comfortable with what he has told me, you can't just believe what someone else says on social media. I'm comfortable that it's not the truth, and if anything like that was the truth then they would not be part of our team and would not go to the World Cup,' Erasmus said.	Involved in empathetically refuted rumoured incident.	This suggests that Erasmus chose to listen to Etzebeth's version of events rather than what was said on social media.	Positive

Article 9: SA Rugby magazine (30 August 2019)

Description of Eben Etzebeth's alleged assault incident (words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs).	Theme	Notes	Positive, negative or neutral
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Twist in Etzebeth case	Involved in an emphatically refuted rumoured incident	The article's headline suggests that there has been a change in the Etzebeth case. The use of the word "twist" makes it appear that new information is available and it may not be favourable for him.	Negative
Springboks lock Eben Etzebeth met with the Human Rights Commission (HRC) on Thursday in relation to allegations of his involvement in an unsavoury incident in Langebaan last weekend.	Involved in unsavoury incident	This comment suggests that Etzebeth met with the Human Rights Commission after he was implicated in an alleged assault.	Negative
On Monday, Etzebeth was named in the Boks' 31-man World Cup squad, and subsequently stated that he had been assured by police that he will not be implicated.	Innocent	This comment suggests that Etzebeth has been reassured by police that he wouldn't be implicated further in the incident.	Positive
This followed a social media storm, which erupted on Sunday to suggest that Etzebeth had been involved in an 'assault' that allegedly had racial connotations.	Involved in racially connotative assault rumours	This suggests that social media was abuzz after Etzebeth was implicated in the alleged assault.	Negative
Etzebeth first strongly refuted the claims, while SA Rugby stated on Monday that the lock would remain with the Springboks unless the police require reconsideration.	In denial of any involvement in a racial assault	This suggests that Etzebeth is free to travel with the Springboks unless the police decide otherwise.	Positive
On Friday morning, SA Rugby provided a further update: 'The purpose of the meeting was to advise the player of the role the HRC takes in relation to a complaint received, as well as the subsequent media reports relating to it, and to establish a commitment of cooperation between the two parties.	Innocent	This suggests that both Etzebeth and SA Rugby are cooperating as much as possible to clear Etzebeth's name.	Positive
'Both parties expressed their satisfaction with the envisaged process going forward and	Innocent	This suggests that Etzebeth denied any fault in the alleged	Positive

concluded by describing the meeting as constructive. The player denied any wrongdoing to the HRC and has pledged his full cooperation in the matter.'		assault and would cooperate fully to clear his name.	
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Article 10: *Sport24* (26 August 2019)

Description of Eben Etzebeth's alleged assault incident (words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs).	Theme	Notes	Positive, negative or neutral
Etzebeth denies assault, racist slur in Langebaan	Involved in an assault and gun-pointing incident.	The article's headline suggests that, according to Etzebeth, he did not assault or racially abuse anybody in Langebaan.	Negative
Springbok star second-rower Eben Etzebeth has vehemently denied social media suggestions that he was involved in an unsavoury incident in Langebaan over the weekend.	Vehemently in denial of unsavoury allegations	This article suggests that Etzebeth has denied taking part in any assault that occurred in Langebaan.	Negative
A video doing the rounds suggesting the 27-year-old lock had assaulted and pointed a gun at a homeless man in the West Coast town.	Involved in an assault and gun-pointing incident.	This article suggests that a video shows Etzebeth pulling a gun on and assaulting a homeless man.	Negative
Took to Facebook to deny the reports.	Vehemently in denial of unsavoury allegations	This article suggests that, despite the claims leveled against him, Etzebeth took to Facebook to defend his name.	Negative
Etzebeth has played 78 Tests for the Springboks to date.	Accomplished rugby player	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is a good rugby player, having played 78 Tests for the Springboks.	Positive
A charge has been laid and that at present, all persons involved in the incident are being questioned.	Involved in an assault and gun-pointing incident.	This article suggests that charges were laid against everyone involved in the	Negative

		incident and relevant parties were questioned.	
It is completely untrue and unfounded to claim that I physically or racially abused anyone in Langebaan as has been reported on social media. Multiple witnesses can corroborate that,	Innocent	This article suggests that despite the charges leveled against him, Etzebeth was not involved in the assault incident and he has witnesses to prove it.	Positive
I am and will always strive to be a true ambassador to this beautiful rainbow nation and the sport that I love."	Innocent	This article suggests that Etzebeth is a nation builder who loves his country and the people who form part of it.	Positive

Article 11: *Sport24* (26 August 2019)

Description of Eben Etzebeth's alleged assault incident (words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs).	Theme	Notes	Positive, negative or neutral
Pub owner gives version of alleged Eben Etzebeth incident	Innocent.	This article's headline suggests the owner of the pub where the incident took place gives his version of what happened.	Neutral
Cape Town - Springbok lock Eben Etzebeth and around "12-15" people arrived at popular Langebaan watering hole 'Die Watergat' at around 23:00 on Saturday night, says pub owner Riaan Reeders.	Involved in unsavoury allegations.	This suggests Etzebeth was at the place the alleged incident took place with about 15 other people.	Neutral
An incident inside the bar then took place at around midnight, which saw one man involved in a scuffle in the upstairs section of the bar with certain members of Etzebeth's party.	Involved in unsavoury allegations.	This suggests an argument broke out with people in Etzebeth's group.	Negative
That incident, Reeders says, has resulted in the man who was removed from the premises	Involved in unsavoury allegations.	This suggests the person who was removed from the pub	Neutral

opening a police case against members of the group.		was involved in the altercation later in the evening.	
Reeders says that Etzebeth and his friends then left the pub at around 02:00 on Sunday morning and were then involved in another incident that took place in the streets.	Involved in unsavoury allegations.	This suggests another altercation took place one Etzebeth had left the pub.	Negative
"At around 02:00 Eben and his friends left, and then there was a group of people at the centre across the road from us," Reeders told Sport24 on Monday morning.	Involved in unsavoury allegations.	This comment suggests there were people outside waiting for Etzebeth and his party to leave the pub.	Negative
"Something happened there ... I'm not sure what happened with the fighting, or whatever, with the Etzebeths. I wasn't there and I can't tell you what happened."	Involved in unsavoury allegations.	This comment suggests that the owner is unsure what the altercation was outside the pub and who was involved.	Negative
Reeders said he recognised some of the people accompanying Etzebeth.	Involved in unsavoury allegations.	This suggests that Etzebeth was with people who regularly visited the establishment.	Neutral
"It was Eben, his brother Ryen, his cousin Emile and the other people I didn't know. They weren't local people," said Reeders.	Involved in unsavoury allegations.	This suggests that Etzebeth was with people he was accused of being with.	Neutral
"There were about 12-15 of them, but the wives and girlfriends were with them. Eben's girlfriend was there and Ryen's wife was there."	Involved in unsavoury allegations.	This comment suggests they were with family members.	Neutral
Reeders says the incident that happened in his bar was resolved quickly, and that in his mind it had nothing to do with what happened in the street afterwards.	Involved in unsavoury allegations.	This comment suggests that the altercation that took place in the establishment and then outside were not linked.	Neutral
"It wasn't a related incident. It was just a guy ... it happened upstairs and we took him out," he said.	Innocent.	This comment suggests the incidents were unrelated.	Neutral

"I don't know if there was charges laid there from that group (the incident in the street). I suppose there will be, because the one man was hurt quite badly."	Innocent	This comment suggests that the altercation was quite violent.	Negative
Reeders said he had examined the CCTV footage from the incident inside his bar, and that Etzebeth had not been involved in the scuffle.	Innocent	This confirms that Etzebeth was not the one who assaulted the homeless man.	Positive
"Eben and his brother were not involved in that," he said.	Innocent	This confirms that Etzebeth and his brother were not the ones who assaulted the homeless man.	Positive
"I looked at the footage yesterday morning and they were sitting at the table with the women or whatever ... they weren't part of it."	Innocent	This confirms that Etzebeth and his brother were not the ones who assaulted the homeless man.	Positive
This comes after media reports on Monday placed Etzebeth at the centre of the incident that took place in the street and moved the 27-year-old star lock to publicly defend himself.	Involved in unsavoury allegations.	This suggests that Etzebeth was involved in an incident that took place outside the establishment.	Negative
"It is completely untrue and unfounded to claim that I physically or racially abused anyone in Langebaan as has been reported on social media. Multiple witnesses can corroborate that," Etzebeth stated.	Vehemently in denial of unsavoury allegations.	This suggests that Etzebeth was not the one who committed the assault.	Positive
"I am and will always strive to be a true ambassador to this beautiful rainbow nation and the sport that I love."	Vehemently in denial of unsavoury allegations	This suggests that despite the allegations, Etzebeth believes he is a nation builder.	Positive
Etzebeth, who has 78 Tests to his name, is expected to be named in Rassie Erasmus' 31-man World Cup squad on Monday at 15:00.	Accomplished rugby player.	This suggests that SA Rugby is aware of the incident, but believe Etzebeth's version of events.	Positive

Article 12: *Sport24* (26 August 2019)

Description of Eben Etzebeth's alleged assault incident (words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs).	Theme	Notes	Positive, negative or neutral
Rassie backs Etzebeth: It's only a rumour at this stage	Involved in social media rumours.	This article's headline suggests SA director of rugby believes Etzebeth's version of events.	Neutral
Cape Town - Springbok coach Rassie Erasmus has justified his decision to pick Eben Etzebeth in his 31-man Springbok squad despite the star lock having been implicated in an alleged assault case over the weekend.	Involved in an assault and gun-pointing incident.	This suggests that despite the speculation surrounding the incident, SA Rugby believes Etzebeth's version of events.	Positive
Etzebeth on Monday took to social media to protest his innocence after reports fingered him as being involved in an altercation outside a popular Langebaan watering hole in the early hours of Sunday morning.	Innocent.	This suggests Etzebeth was allegedly involved in an assault incident in Langebaan.	Positive
SA Rugby had also released a statement in which they confirmed that they would cooperate with authorities in the investigation into the incident, but said that Etzebeth would remain a part of the national plans until they were instructed otherwise.	Hopeful	This suggests both Etzebeth and SA Rugby will cooperate to clear his name.	Positive
After announcing his squad, Erasmus dismissed the Etzebeth reports as just "a rumour" at this stage.	Involved in social media rumours.	This suggests that at this stage the rumours are baseless.	Positive
"I was definitely worried about it when I heard about it, of course," he said.	Involved in social media rumours.	This suggests that there was concern on SA Rugby's part when the news broke.	Negative

"If there was any truth in it, it would have been a massive issue for us.	Involved in social media rumours.	This suggests that SA Rugby do not take racism and assault lightly.	Positive
"After speaking to Eben and hearing his side of the story, there is obviously trust between a coach and a player.	Involved in social media rumours.	This suggests that SA Rugby believe Etzebeth's side over what is said on social media.	Positive
"I must trust him to do some stuff on the field for me and win Test matches for us, and he must trust me to believe him when he tells me something.	Involved in social media rumours.	This suggests there is mutual trust between players and coaches.	Positive
"I'm pretty comfortable with what he's told me and obviously you can't just believe what someone else says on social media.	Involved in social media rumours.	This suggests that the speculation on social media is just speculation.	Positive
"I'm confident that that's not the truth what was said on social media and if anything like that happens and it is the truth, then somebody like that would not be part of our team and would not go to the World Cup.	Involved in social media rumours.	This suggests SA Rugby take racism very seriously and he would not be part of the World Cup squad if there was any inclination he was guilty.	Positive
"Until something like that gets proven, it's just a rumour in my opinion."	Involved in social media rumours.	This suggests that the speculation remains speculation.	Positive
Etzebeth (27) has 78 Test caps to his name and is set to feature in his second Rugby World Cup having also represented the Boks at the 2015 showpiece in England.	Accomplished rugby player.	This shows the value Etzebeth adds to the Springboks, with 78 caps.	Positive

Article 13: *Sport24* (27 August 2019)

Description of Eben Etzebeth's alleged assault incident (words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs).	Theme	Notes	Positive, negative or neutral
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Etzebeth: Police say I'm fine	Innocent	This headline suggests Etzebeth is not guilty and has been confirmed by police.	Positive
Cape Town - Springbok lock Eben Etzebeth says police assured him he will not be implicated in an assault case following an altercation outside a popular Langebaan watering hole over the weekend.	innocent	This suggests while there was speculation, Etzebeth has been assured by police that he is in the clear.	Positive
The burly lock was included in South Africa's Rugby World Cup squad on Monday and told Netwerk24 that he had spoken to police regarding the incident.	Innocent	This suggests that Etzebeth is trying his best to clear his name.	Positive
"They said everything is fine. Now I can just focus on the World Cup," Etzebeth said.	Innocent	This suggests Etzebeth is free to travel to the World Cup without hesitation about what will happen when he arrives home.	Positive
On Sunday, Etzebeth also took to social media to defend himself.	Vehemently in denial of unsavoury allegations.	This suggests Etzebeth is doing whatever he can to clear his name.	Positive
"It is completely untrue and unfounded to claim that I physically or racially abused anyone in Langebaan as has been reported on social media. Multiple witnesses can corroborate that," Etzebeth posted on Facebook.	Vehemently in denial of unsavoury allegations.	This statement suggests that Etzebeth was not part of the assault incident and there are people around him who can corroborate that.	Positive
"I am and will always strive to be a true ambassador to this beautiful rainbow nation and the sport that I love."	Vehemently in denial of unsavoury allegations	This statement suggests that Etzebeth is not the type of person to say such things because he is really proud to be South African.	Positive
After announcing his World Cup squad at the SuperSport studios in Randburg, Bok coach Rassie Erasmus dismissed the Etzebeth reports as just "a rumour" at this stage	Involved in social media rumours.	This suggests SA Rugby believes Etzebeth's version of events and is not looking at the social media speculation.	Positive

"I was definitely worried about it when I heard about it, of course," the Bok mentor said.	Involved in social media rumours.	This suggests there was some hesitation around the story when news broke.	Negative
"If there was any truth in it, it would have been a massive issue for us.	Involved in social media rumours.	This suggests that SA Rugby takes such matters seriously.	Positive
"After speaking to Eben and hearing his side of the story, there is obviously trust between a coach and a player.	Accomplished rugby player.	This suggests that Etzebeth has earned the trust of the SA Rugby management and staff.	Positive
"I must trust him to do some stuff on the field for me and win Test matches for us, and he must trust me to believe him when he tells me something.	Accomplished rugby player.	This suggests SA Rugby trusts Etzebeth to play good games, so the same trust will be placed in him.	Positive
"I'm pretty comfortable with what he's told me and obviously you can't just believe what someone else says on social media.	Involved in social media rumours.	This suggests that what was said on social media is just speculation because he has heard Etzebeth's version of events.	Positive
"I'm confident that that's not the truth what was said on social media and if anything like that happens and it is the truth, then somebody like that would not be part of our team and would not go to the World Cup.	Involved in social media rumours.	This suggests that a bully would not be tolerated in the squad so Etzebeth remaining with the squad says something about his character.	Positive
"Until something like that gets proven, it's just a rumour in my opinion."	Involved in social media rumours.	This suggests Etzebeth is innocent until proven guilty.	Positive
SA Rugby also released a statement on Monday in which the governing body confirmed it would cooperate with authorities in the investigation into the incident, but said that Etzebeth would remain a part of the national plans until instructed otherwise by the authorities.	Accomplished rugby player.	This suggests Etzebeth is still set to play at the World Cup, unless he is implicated in the incident.	Positive

ADDENDUM C: USER COMMENTS CODE BOOK

Article 1: *TimesLIVE* (26 August 2019)

Description of Eben Etzebeth's alleged assault incident (words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs).	Theme	Notes	Positive, negative or neutral
"I hope you are telling the truth because frankly the Springbok wants you"	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that the fan wants to believe Etzebeth is innocent because he is needed within the squad. So, there is uncertainty about his involvement in the incident and how this impacts his inclusion in the Rugby World Cup squad.	Negative
"I will never believe that he will start a fight on the public for fun...but the truth will come out"	Set-up	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is not the type of person to behave like that in public and eventually the real story will come out.	Positive
"Why those shenanigans appear towards major sports events? We need all our guys in control...not distracted please"	Possibly guilty	Using the word 'shenanigans' implies that the incident was mischievous. There is also an underlying tone that questions why these kinds of incidents only happen before major events.	Positive
"That's what all they say. We will eventually come out. And you'll be crying in court"	Possibly guilty	This comment implies some mistrust. The words "that's what all they say" imply that all the accused always denies allegations. And "you'll be crying in in court" implies that it is only the law that that is trusted to reveal the truth.	Negative
"I am disappointed; I hope this is not true. To think that he is my favorite player"	Unbelievable	This comment suggests the incident is disappointing and unbelievable.	Negative

"The only thing I can say is, black people need healing, everything is about race to us these days. White people are not supposed to cough they're racist."	Involved in a racial incident	This comment suggests that the incident was exaggerated and that it might not be about racism by virtue of the country's history.	Positive
"Yeah yeah. All pink people are racist. All brown people are not racist. We get it"	Involved in a racial incident	This comment suggests that the incident is founded on the basis of the popular belief that all white people are racist and unpopular belief that black people are not.	Positive
"We all know that they don't want you and Aphiwe in World Cup squad..."	Set-up	This comment suggests that there is an ulterior motive behind the incident – to exclude Etzebeth from the World Cup squad.	Negative
"Some coloured guys recognized Eben outside when he showed his mustang to his friends. They started calling him names and he started saying something back. They then threw a brick at Ebens Mustang to which his friends retaliated. The coloured crew then pulled a gun, Etzebeth the grabbed the gun and beat the guy with it. What would you have done."	Accused	The comment suggests that the incident was a retaliation to the coloured group who started attacking Etzebeth.	Positive
"After the World Cup please, we need this guy."	Disruption	This comment suggests that it doesn't matter what Etzebeth is alleged to have done, the focus should rather be on the upcoming World Cup.	Neutral
"Rugby players in general are usually the least racist."	Unbelievable	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is not racist because in their experience, rugby players are generally not racist.	Positive
"Take this racist off the team."	Racist	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is racist and should be removed from the squad.	Negative

Article 2: *TimesLIVE* (26 August 2019)

Description of Eben Etzebeth's alleged assault incident (words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs).	Theme	Notes	Positive, negative or neutral
Imagine being assaulted by that huge man	Unbelievable	This comment refers to Etzebeth's size and how scary it would be to be assaulted by him.	Negative
Mr/Mrs Admin you wanted him to be omitted although he is one of our best players? Let's let him get back to those so called assault allegations after the WC.	Disruption	This comment takes a dig at the publication suggesting they wanted Etzebeth omitted when he could deal with the allegations when he gets backl.	Negative
It's int him tswane homeless killer mmm	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests Etzebeth is the Tswane homeless killer.	Negative
so what??.. blacks call whites.. pink pigs.. why cant he say what he wants??.. are u or are u not what he said??.. it doesn't matter.. STOP BEING SO SENSITIVE !!!!.. they call blacks the K word.. u know it means disbeliever.. so u get white kaffers also.. man up !!! people..	Involved in a racial incident	This comment suggests people are too sensitive because words have different meanings, which is insensitive to the topic.	Negative
I am not surprised at all!!	Involved in destructive mischief	This comment suggests its not surprising Etzebeth got away with the allegations.	Negative
Hay tsek admin with your fruitless story	Set-up	This comment suggests there is no substance to the article.	Negative
Claims are just claims .no case was reported to the saps	Disruption	This comment suggests while claims were made on social media, there was no case opened with SAPS.	Positive
We need the strongest team to represent us in Japan.....we'll	Disruption	This comment suggests the case should be put aside until the conclusion of the World	Positive

come back to assault claims after the Word Cup		Cup so the Springboks can have the strongest squad representing them.	
Why shouldn't he be added into a team, just because he was set up mxm.	Disruption	This comment suggests there were no grounds for Etzebeth to be excluded in the first place because it was all a set up.	Positive
He must go to World Cup and come back to explain	Disruption	This comment suggests Etzebeth should only have to answer for what happened at the conclusion of the World Cup.	Positive
What if he acted in self-defense against the homeless man?	Set-up	This comment suggests Etzebeth may have acted in self-defense when the altercation took place.	Positive
surely there is no truth in this	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that it is unlikely that the story is true,	Positive
Leave him behind!!	Accused	This comment suggests that Etzebeth should not be allowed to travel to the World Cup.	Negative
Give him a chance to go and get Ammunity and if he brings home the Webb Ellis Trophy, no charge....	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that Etzebeth should be allowed to go to the World Cup and if he wins then all charges against him should be dropped.	Positive
Still not arrested yet a firearm was visible Wonder what would have happened had the roles been reversed	Involved in a racial incident	This comment suggests Etzebeth got off lightly because the firearm was visible which is grounds for arrest and if it was the other way the consequences would be a lot more severe.	Negative
Sandton boys I understand you are still eating prawns and skyping daddy who is in Amsterdam...but please do ur job and copy and paste	Set-up	This comment takes a dig at the publication for not doing independent research and just repeating what has already been reported.	Neutral

Article 3: *TimesLIVE* (26 August 2019)

Description of Eben Etzebeth's alleged assault incident (words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs).	Theme	Notes	Positive, negative or neutral
Shouldn't have been allowed to get on that flight. Even if there was no racism and it was a fight instead of an assault, no Springbok - let alone vice captain - should be out fighting people on the streets. He has brought the team into disrepute. Winning a world cup should never Trump the founding values of the new South Africa.	involved in destructive mischief	This comment suggests that Etzebeth should not be allowed on the flight because he was enjoying a night out and therefore portrayed the Springboks in a negative light. No player should be above the values of a team.	Negative
There's not one iota of proof that he committed so called hate speech. It's these quasi khoi volk wat alles wil opfok vir die white folk	Set-up	This comment suggests the allegations are baseless because there is no evidence and black people have an agenda with white people.	Positive
Ysrer.	Unbelievable	This comment suggests Etzebeth is amazing for getting away with it.	Positive
Saw the people involved total skollies they were from the west coast and had called him a witnaai. One of them had a firearm. They were thrown out of the pup and waited outside to cause trouble. The gun was taken off them and they got a klap well done boys now hopefully the Human Rights which we all know only protects people of other races and not whites let's see them do something about the racist remarks in the bar	Set-up	This comment suggests that the complainants were not credible because of how they acted. The individual comes to the defense of Etzebeth who managed to be the Human Rights Commission.	Positive
because of this shits in this country is why he is moving to france always racist butt the 1 st to shout racist are the real one like the eff	Set-up	This comment suggests South African political parties are racist and the racism in the country is the reason he is taking up a contract offer overseas.	Positive

Shame, what a rugby talent.	Disruption	This comment suggests Etzebeth is a talented rugby player.	Positive
Thank you	Unbelievable	This comment thanks SA Rugby for making Etzebeth available for selection.	Positive
whatever the consequences are...after the world cup please!	Disruption	This comment suggests any punishment Etzebeth could face should be brought upon him at the conclusion of the World Cup.	Positive
People looking for attention and we won't say who!!	Disruption	This comment suggests Etzebeth was set up and people are keeping the name of the accuser quiet.	Negative
Where does this story come from when eben was interviewed he knew nothing and denied everything now the people who are making a case against him had a gun omw fighting back? Hope the story isn't made up because then it would be a shame on you because which is wrong is wrong and what is right is right, why now why not when they interviewed him?	Unbelievable	This comment suggests there is an ulterior motive involved because Etzebeth was not even aware of the allegations when he was participating in an interview.	Positive
Hope all ends well	Unbelievable	This comment suggests hopefulness that he is selected and is able to participate in the World Cup.	Positive

Article 4: *TimesLIVE* (29 August 2019)

Description of Eben Etzebeth's alleged assault incident (words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs).	Theme	Notes	Positive, negative or neutral
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You have just lost a fan Mr Eben Etzebeth. Im so disappointed	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that individuals are disappointed by the allegations and no longer look up to him.	Negative
Let him deal with this after the world cup. Even if he abused me , Ide let him go to Japan and deal with him later. We dont need him distracted Looking at the bigger picture . The NPA can kee the warrent on ice	Disruption	This suggests that Etzebeth should not be distracted before the World Cup, any consequences can be dealt with afterwards.	Positive
I don't believe anything that happens after 12 in the evening. Too many pap sakke in the Cape!	Unbelievable	This comment suggests that anything that is said after midnight in the Cape should not be trusted because people drink too much boxed wine.	Positive
Some people are very brave,,who picks up a fight with this guy	Unbelievable	This comment suggests that people shouldn't pick fights with Etzebeth in the first place.	Positive
Oh please . This is Juss!e Sm0lett all over again. A fake hate cr!me by a d0mkop who craves for temporary fame . I guarantee this so-called victim started the whole thing after being embolded by ANC/SACP/EFF/BLF and he got a rude awakening when he got bl!ksemmed.	Unbelievable	This comment suggests the allegations are political as the complainant was looking for their five minutes of fame.	Positive
The apple doesn't fall far from the tree..RACIST!!	Racist	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is racist because of how his relatives behave.	Negative
More attention from the weaker race !!	Set-up	This comment is insensitive as it suggests there is a superior race.	Positive
All I can Well done Rassie for standing with his player	Set-up	This comment suggests that Rassie Erasmus did the right thing by showing support for Etzebeth.	Positive
hoe se dai ooms van Langebaan	Unbelievable	This comment suggests that the complainants would not be	Positive

		happy with Etzebeth meeting with the Human Rights Commission because he could share his version of events.	
Human Rights Conspiracy more like it	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that the Human Rights Commission is more of a conspiracy than a reputable institution.	Negative
It's Eben though, ons as n land vergewe hom (It's Eben though, we as a country forgive him).	Set-up	This comment suggests that South Africa forgives Etzebeth because it's him.	Positive
Fok weet die mense soek k@k dan gee jy hulle dit dan tjank hulle, los net die rugby spelers uit asb, ek gaan baie kwaad wees as hy nie speel nie, dis soos as jy nie stop by n stopstraat vat hulle sommer jou kar weg... Nee nee nee los die BS (F*ck knows the people are looking for trouble and then when you find it you back away. Leave the rugby players alone please. I'm going to be very angry if he does not play. It's like someone taking your car away because you did not stop at a stop street. No, no, no. Please stop this).	Disruption	This comment suggests the individual will be upset if Etzebeth is excluded over such a small incident, compared to having your car taken away for not stopping at a stop street.	Positive
Geregtigheid moet geskied. Nuwe Suid-afrika. (Justice must be served. New South Africa).	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that justice has been served as black people get away with a lot in the new South Africa but did not get away with false allegations.	Positive
Are the Springboks gonna play with a full squad where they going, looks like they dismissing themselves one by one	Disruption	This comment suggests that allegations are being lodged against the Springboks so often there may be none left to play at the World Cup.	Neutral
What did he say?	Set-up	This comment questions what Etzebeth shared with the Human Rights Commission	Neutral

		after meeting with him. This suggests uncertainty due to how much information was readily available to the public.	
Eben bly sterk staan seun.. Ons glo in jou onskuld... Fokus op die positief nie negatief nie... You go Bokke. (Eben, stay strong, son. We believe you are innocent. Focus on the positives and not the negative. You go Springboks).	Set-up	This comment suggests that Etzebeth should focus on the positives and not the negatives as they believe he is not guilty.	Positive
Oh please, of course after the incident he would try to discredit etzebeth, too easy to just claim racism now days, someone just looking for attention! He said she said!	Set-up	This comment suggests that it is he-said-she-said to discredit Etzebeth as a player right before the World Cup.	Neutral
GAM lieg alweer, think they all black supporters that wants to weaken the boks	Set-up	This comment suggests the Human Rights Commission is dishonest as it is merely New Zealand rugby supporters trying to discredit the Springboks.	Positive
Dis hartseer dat ons landsburgers onder mekaar die lelike goed doen.DIT LYK MY HULLE WIL DIE BOKSPAN KNAK (It's sad that our citizens do such horrible things to each other. It looks to me like they want to break up the team).	Set-up	This comment suggests disappointment that people in the country treat each other like this and will try anything to discredit the Springboks.	Positive
That notion of us being a rainbow nation is just a myth there is no such	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that South Africa is not the rainbow nation it's made out to be.	Negative
Laat hy val waar hy wil	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that whatever happens, happens.	Neutral
Nothing new here. At all.	Involved in racial allegations	This comment suggests that it is not surprising Etzebeth has	Negative

		been cleared to go to the World Cup.	
X stem saam mt jo Robby x is i Eben ven.mense wil lelik wees mt ander dan wil hule media to hardloop (I agree with you Robby. People are ugly to each other and then run to the media).	Set-up	This comment suggests that people are quick to be ugly to others but will run to the media as soon as it happens to them.	Positive
This is a lot of crap. ..look at the history of that low class citizen.	Unbelievable	This comment suggests that the complainant is not credible because of his/her past.	Positive
It is a lot of nonsense.	Unbelievable	This comment suggests the complaint against Etzebeth is a load of rubbish.	Positive
Just pay 100k then case closed. HRC is now a kangaroo court for racists	Disruption	This comment suggests Etzebeth should pay a fine to clear his name because the Human Rights Commission is not as credible as it used to be.	Positive
We,black can't be accused of racism.So white folks be careful.	Involved in racial allegations	This comment suggests black people were previously marginalised so they cannot be racists.	Negative
SAHRC, credible?	Set-up	This comment takes a dig at the Human Rights Commission, questioning how it is credible.	Neutral
It is almost impossible for a white man not to be racist during an altercation or argument with a black man, that's how they are, when we are around them we must record our conversations with them because the racial slur might just pop out of nowhere.	Involved in racial allegations	This comment suggests that any time a white person is involved in an argument with a black person they always use racial slurs so interactions should be recorded.	Negative
Its a genetic urge to insult and belittle Africans. Too bad in return Africans retaliate with ubuntu.	Involved in racial allegations	This comment suggests it is in the nature of white people to belittle black people but black	Negative

		people only retaliate by being inclusive.	
All white people are racist its just the way they are unless they change the way they raise their kids the cycle will just continue ...and their apology means jack	Involved in racial allegations	This comment suggests all whites are raised to be racist so their apologies don't really mean anything.	Negative
Eish Eben did you have 2 take the bait....., very disappointing, 1st Aphiwe now it's you.....	Set-up	This comment suggests that Etzebeth was set up and fell into the trap.	Negative
Excellent Rassie, the truth will prevail	Unbelievable	This comment suggests Rassie Erasmus did the right thing and the truth will show that.	Positive
where is ashwin willemse	Disruption	This comment takes a dig at Ashwin Willemse, who accused his colleagues of racism.	Neutral
Good player,he must work on his anger,I love him on the field	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is a great player but should learn to control his anger.	Positive
150k	Set-up	This comment suggests Etzebeth should pay his way out of the charges.	Neutral
Another R150k loading	Set-up	This comment suggests Etzebeth should pay his way out of the allegations.	Neutral
Sad.	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests it's sad how lightly Etzebeth got off.	Negative
He must be dropped and replaced	Involved in destructive mischief	This comment suggests Etzebeth should not be allowed to participate in the World Cup and should be replaced in the squad.	Negative

Hee this is where our monies are	Set-up	This comment suggests that taxpayers money goes to fighting cases like the Etzebeth saga.	Neutral
Die half.....	Involved in exaggerated racism accusations	This comment suggests that a specific race always cause problems.	Negative
I want him in the sprongbok [Springbok] team now	Set-up	This comment suggests he should be allowed to play.	Positive
Bullocks!	Unbelievable	This comment suggests there is no truth to what is said in the article.	Positive
Eish sorry Boi, things like this suddenly rocks up just like Dyantyi	Set-up	This comment suggests that such issues always arise for players ahead of big tournaments.	Negative
BS.	Set-up	This comment suggests that what is said in the article is untrue.	Negative
Fire him.	Involved in destructive mischief	This comment suggests Etzebeth should be released from Springbok duty.	Negative
Theh stole my laptop and im still waiting on the polise. I'm nobody that's the deference.	Unbelievable	This comment suggests that public figures always get preferential treatment.	Negative
So what is the feedback from SAHRC?	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests what was discussed should be elaborated on.	Neutral
I am not supried and I don't care... I want Eben to bring us that World Cup. Please people can't we focus.	Involved in destructive mischief	This comment suggests that people should focus more on how well Etzebeth plays rugby and what an asset he is in the team instead of the allegations against him.	Positive

Take him off the team. There is no room for racists in S.A.	Racist	This comment suggests Etzebeth should be removed from the squad because it is not a good look to have racists in the team.	Negative
Can we deal with this after the WC please!!! We need the guy!!!!	Involved in destructive mischief	This comment suggests that people should focus more on how well Etzebeth plays rugby and what an asset he is in the team instead of the allegations against him.	Positive
They are all the same	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests all rugby players are the same.	Negative
People they are rehashing the same article over and over. Its a spot boring The sad thing is people react and start twisting the facts. Eish people smell the coffee and wake up	Set-up	This comment suggests news outlets are regurgitating the same information yet people are still twisting what is being said in the comments.	Positive
So is he still playing in the World Cup?	Unbelievable	This comment suggests confusion around whether Etzebeth is still allowed to play or not.	Neutral
Why are we still racial as humans? Is it too much to tolerate and accept each other? Help us God.	Racist	This comment fails to understand how people are still racist and not accepting of each other.	Negative
Dis 'n saak vir die rugby rade. Daai ou wat geskoor het kon mos sien Eben is 2 keer groter as hy. (It is a matter for rugby councils. The guy who started the fight could see that Eben is twice as big as he is).	Set-up	This comment suggests the complainant should have seen how large Etzebeth was and stood down from the fight.	Positive
Who is the guy that took him on, very brave I must say.	Unbelievable	This comment is curious who the complainant who was brave enough to take on Etzebeth was.	Positive

I dnt know why people always defend Racist comments?!!! The thing is they will use Racists comments privately ,bcz it is in their DNA sometimes they forget that they are on public!!! HRC must stop forcing people to pay ,bcz that's how some white people sees us blacks !!	Racist	This comment suggests white people are so used to making racist comments in private that they forget to refrain from using them when they are in public. White people should not be fined for racism because it belittles black people.	Negative
Is it just me or them clothes look like the zcc attire..?	Set-up	This comment suggests the complainants are part of the ZCC.	Neutral
He must be removed from the squad	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests Etzebeth should not be allowed to remain with the Springboks.	Negative
Some people would love to see this country burn and everything that they and we still fighting for can we just let Etzebeth go and bring that Webb Ellis Home and stop trying to ruin the World Cup	Set-up	This comment suggests people will do anything to discredit the Springboks and people should be fighting harder to support the Springboks.	Positive
Kick that guy out of the springbok hes does not deserve to be in our national team squad	Racist	This comment suggests that Etzebeth should not be allowed to represent the country as it does not paint a positive pictures.	Negative
HRC is very biased and he will have a tough time in there.	Involved in exaggerated racism accusations	This comment suggests Etzebeth will not win with the Human Rights Commission as they are biased.	Negative
Well that tells you clearly that we the 1 giving them power now they use it to us well we waiting dont know for what but we waiting	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that the social media uproar gave them power and it is only a matter of time before the outcome is known.	Neutral
No he did nothing wrong. I saw the video he was not part of the fight. The only thing he said was En nou jul bekke groot. Only someone tried to frame him. Eben would be foolish to get himself in	Set-up	This comment suggests that Etzebeth was framed because all he said was they had big mouths, he wouldn't be racist and jeopardise his career.	Positive

such acts knowing how it can affect his career.			
How can our Springbok focus if one of our crucial players is distracted by law suit	Involved in destructive mischief	This comment suggests that the charges against Etzebeth will cause disruption in the Springbok camp if he is allowed to stay.	Negative
I have left endless complaints at the HRC. But obviously I am nobody they have been ignored. Just shows you....if you are somebody newsworthy!!!	Unbelievable	This comment suggests that public figures get preferential treatment.	Neutral
I believe nobody was born as a racist. The families we all grow up in teach us this silly behaviour towards other humans	Racist	This comment suggests it is normalised for white people to be racist because the people in their households raising them don't teach them differently.	Negative
Can't we deal with this after the world cup	Involved in destructive mischief	This comment suggests this matter should only be dealt with at the conclusion of the World Cup.	Positive
I honestly don't believe Catzevelo when he says he apologizes.... HE'S same blood brother came to 94:7fm and confessed my brother is a Racist..... Those, " I apologize words I doubt he means it..... Might be same case here but each case is dealt on its merits.... We shall wait	Set-up	This comment suggests that people are quick to apologise when they are accused of racism but most of the time the apology is insincere.	Negative
All these comments are so sad. What happened to innocent until proven guilty? Irrespective of race and colour? To make things worse the group who accused him did not even pitched for the meeting with the Human Rights Com.	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests people are quick to judge others and at least Etzebeth had the decency to meet with the Human Rights Commission unlike the complainants.	Positive
I bet the problem was started by some little freak who knowing that Eben as a recognised figure, purposely confronted him to raise his possible anger.Now the	Set-up	This comment suggests that people are quick to create allegations to make money	Positive

population want to make an issue of it instead of cleaning up their streets, homes ,and attending to their children.		instead of tending to their families.	
Racism is real and we cannot sugarcoat it or avoid its existence.	Racist	This comment suggests that racism is alive and well in South Africa and is unfortunately unavoidable.	Negative
Why is it all one way traffic????	Unbelievable	This comment suggests that all headlines are directed at Etzebeth instead of the complainant who is allowed to remain anonymous.	Positive
Eish Mzansi for Fvcks sake. This who made what and said what is getting annoying now. The lads are going to the WC and we need their all. And they need our support.	Involved in exaggerated racism accusations	This comment suggests that the he-said-she-said is exhausting and people should focus their attention om the upcoming World Cup.	Positive
That word again...racism...when things do not go your way, just declare "racism from the other party"	Set-up	This comment suggests people accuse others of racism every time things do not go their way.	Negative
You'd think they would call it the Human Wrongs commission.	Unbelievable	This comment suggests that because so many issues are dealt with at the Human Rights Commission they should change their name.	Neutral
Can they please wait until after the RWC... we need this guy, this is the last thing we need going to the world cup, but Etzebeth though that guy he allegedly assaulted looks like a Hobo what kind of places does he drink at to come across such shady looking people. You earn millions you were supposed to go to a decent establishment with clean people who smell nice, look at you now.	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests Etzebeth was not eating out at a good enough establishment if he was confronted by a homeless person, he should hold himself to a higher standard.	Positive
If it turns out that this chap is trying a fast one then the law	Set-up	This comment suggests if the complainant has set Etzebeth	Positive

must take its course and he must be charged		up then he should be charged for false information.	
He should never be allowed to represent the country, we don't need racists!!	Racist	This comment suggests Etzebeth should not be allowed to participate in the World Cup because he is racist.	Negative
I am just wondering. What would you do when you are condemned and criticized and found guilty when it is based on the word of a drunk man calling your name. No evidence to show his guilt. And no I am not a racist. I just believe in justice. No matter what colour, race or language. What have you done for your country? What have you done other than judging. Do you really think the HRC would have let him leave for Japan if he was guilty? They were so quick to call a meeting and an investigation and to look at evidence and yet after all that they could not find anything.	Unbelievable	This comment suggests Etzebeth is not being treated fairly because there is no evidence to prove his part in the scuffle and he should be allowed to participate in the World Cup if the Human Rights Commission doesn't believe he's done anything wrong.	Positive
I like him for playing rugby but i wonder what will he say if i see him and telling him he is a good player,and maybe i will be surrounded by white chicks	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests if the individual ever met Etzebeth he would compliment him so he could be around white women swooning over him.	Positive
Whites and foreigners are a problem in South Africa (speaking on behalf of my friend). Please don't go ballistic at me I'm an orphan.	Racist	This comment suggests white people and people not from Africa create issues in the country.	Negative
It's a pity it's going to the SAHRC because they are totally captured and biased against whites, I don't give Eben any chance of a fair hearing, that's my humble opinion.	Set-up	This comment suggests Etzebeth is doomed from the start as he will not be treated fairly by the biased Human Rights Commission.	Positive
Owner of pub looked at cctv footage they were not even involved. Wel yeah what can i say	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests Etzebeth is not guilty based on the owner's version of events.	Positive

Let him go to the world cup and face all this after that...but angayekwa if he is guilty he must be punished.	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests he should be allowed to go to the World Cup but if he is found guilty there should be serious consequences.	Positive
We seem to be going in circles here. Something doesn't seem right. Why???	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests there is only repetition and no progress in the case.	Negative
What is he doing at pubs at this time of the month? You can't be celebrating before the games have even started... Eish white people!	Involved in destructive mischief	This comment suggests that white people don't think before they act, someone should not be going out right before a World Cup.	Negative
Careful now chappy dont refer to us in general and in derogatory terms. This is case where the individuals that are involved place it before the relevant authorities no need for you to try pronounce on it or involve innocent persons	Involved in exaggerated racism accusations	This comment suggests that people not involved in the case should stay out of it instead of giving their two cents.	Neutral
Let him go win the world Cup will talk about this afterwards for now the country need him maybe with a gold medal he will be forgiven already. You go boys	Set-up	This comment suggests Etzebeth should be allowed to go to the World Cup and if the Springboks win then he will easily be forgiven.	Positive
ek gani kant kies maar ek weet die land is vol uit skoor soekers en dan wil hulle alles toe smeer sal likes om te weet wat het hy vir eben gese of gemaak (I'm not going to choose sides but I think the country is full of attention seekers who want to cover everything up. I would like to know what he said or did to Eben)	Set-up	This comment suggests people like to tell their side of the story without mentioning what they did wrong.	Neutral
This guy is looking for a pay day from Eben Etzebeth.	Set-up	This comment suggests the complainant was being opportunistic and looking to make money off Etzebeth.	Positive
Rassie's mistake....: "A lot of things get said and	Unbelievable	This comment suggests SA Rugby don't take emails sent	Negative

emails get thrown to us about a lot of players which is something we ignore because often it is just nonsense." This is NEVER good enough. Get your house in order!		to them with allegations seriously and it is unacceptable.	
Funny thing that about fights, even family members tend to dish out insults meant to hurt the other party.	Set-up	This comment suggests that even people defending Etzebeth say nasty things about him.	Negative
Probably a cape crusader who wants to distract the preparation of the Springboks at all cost so sad really I so wish this can be settled once and for all so our boys can focus to the world cup.	Set-up	This comment suggests the complainant is trying to discredit the Springboks ahead of the World Cup so the quicker the matter is resolved the quicker the Springboks can focus on the World Cup.	Positive
Bull dust!	Set-up	This comment suggests the article is fake news.	Negative
I honestly dont know what the word racist in SA means anymore. More like disagreeing with someones perspective. If foreigners get attacked its xenophobic, not racist, but they are being attacked for who they are. If you say anything that is an insult to the majority, you are a racist. If you murder people who arent South African, youre xenophobic	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests racism has lost its meaning in South Africa and anything directed at black people is interpreted as racist.	Negative
They are like that,then.they will say I have black friends,white ppl are racists.	Racist	This comment suggests that a racist's defense is always that they have black friends so they aren't racist.	Negative
Times Live full of fake news	Set-up	This comment suggests the publication posts a lot of fake news.	Negative
HRC a bunch of racists looking for any white privilege. Now maybe I will be summoned	Racist	This comment suggests the Human Rights Commission targets wealthy white people.	Negative

Syt kak gesoek nou gebruik sy die ras storie. Hy moes haar n poes klap gegee het	Set-up	This comment suggests the easiest way to defend yourself is to make it racial and Etzebeth should have hit him.	Positive
Racism and Rugby go together like Klippies and Coke in this country.	Racist	This comment suggests that rugby and racism are as synonymous as brandy and Coke in the country.	Negative
Amazing how many people make up there minds on hear say. What happened to innocent before proven guilty???? All a bunch of sheep !!!!	Set-up	This comment suggests people are so quick to jump on the band wagon and accuse others instead of waiting for justice to be served.	Negative
We will deal with him after the world cup, why are they trying to push this agenda so quickly	Involved in destructive mischief	This comment suggests that the allegations are happening too quickly and should rather be resolved at the conclusion of the World Cup.	Positive
Why are only white people being called to appear what about all the other races that can say and do what they like when they like and how they like. We need to live in a just society what is good for one must be good for all. This way one will stop the race conflict in our country so we can unite as one nation to build a future fir all.	Unbelievable	This comment suggests white people are treated unfairly in the country because they are accused of everything whereas other races get away with saying whatever they want.	Positive
How about we start making the Human Rights Commission take to task all black racists who get away with every racial slur??	Set-up	This comment suggests black people should be taken to the Human Rights Commission as quickly as white people are.	Negative
I only blame his parents no 1 born a racist never.	Racist	This comment suggests his parents are to blame because nobody is born a racist.	Negative
If true, disgusting, racists must face punishment. Hope its another hoax story, Eben has always represented the country with pride and honour, doubt a 27 year old man of his stature will be dumb enough to compromise his	Set-up	This comment suggests that racists should be held accountable but it's unlikely he is a racist because of how successful his career has been and if he would be willing to jeopardise that.	Positive

career in such a fashion especially with the WC right here.			
Human rights, what a joke. The dumb thing Malema walks around as if it's beyond prosecution, you bunch are useless	Set-up	This comment suggests that politicians get away with saying whatever they want but Etzebeth is questioned over one alleged comment.	Neutral
The SAHRC are a bunch of racists	Involved in destructive mischief	This comment suggests that the Human Rights Commission is racist and not Etzebeth.	Neutral
They have made this racial stuff into a money racket .Its a stupid k word what the hek and what about the whites .The more worried about k than fix this messed up country of ours	Racist	This comment suggests that the easiest way to get money from someone is to accuse them of racism and people care more about it than the sad affairs in the country.	Neutral
I'm sick and tired of the racial jibes.	Racist	This comment suggests all incidents inevitably become about race.	Neutral
Sheme some very poor educated people talking here just to see your name, NOT GOING TO FIX THE PROBLEMS JOOLIAAAS MAL-EMMMA TEA HES THE ROT OF THE SO SCI MENTAK UNZTABABILLTY THE RES BE RERS	Racist	This comment suggests people's negativity is not helping the situation at all and politicians like Julius Malema just add to the problem.	Neutral
He must be recalled from the team, racist imbecile.	Racist	This comment suggests Etzebeth is racist and an imbecile and he should be removed from the squad as a result.	Negative
I'm sure they said to the whites u fokken Boers or fokken whities	Racist	This comment suggests that the complainants probably spoke poorly to Etzebeth and his company.	Positive
They got bliksemed and now call fake racism. Leave Eben alone. There's enough witnesses to state otherwise. They must go	Involved in destructive mischief	This comment suggests that there are enough witnesses to corroborate Etzebeth's version of events and they are claiming it was a racial	Positive

scream for their ALL Blacks and Crusaders. Verraiers.		incident because they were overpowered in the altercation.	
Send him home no space for racists	Racist	This comment suggests there is no place for racism and he should be punished by being sent home as a result.	Negative
RACISTS must fall VERY HARD	Racist	This comment suggests there is no place for racism and there should be dire consequences.	Negative
Leburu ke leburu and that would never change	Racist	This comment suggests it is typical behaviour and it will never change.	Negative
You can see just by looking at him that he's retarded. Racists are not a 100% in the head. Then the sound of Afrikaans, just makes them More retarded.	Racist	This comment takes a dig at Etzebeth's appearance and he is racist because of how he looks.	Negative
Hope he gets a lifetime ban and some time with the monkeys in jail.	Racist	This comment suggests Etzebeth deserves a lifetime ban from rugby and should be put in jail for his behaviour.	Negative
Many people has discovered that the term 'racism' can be used to tremendous effect for themselves. As long as you are black of course. A normal brawl between a black and white person automatically becomes a racist incident where without exception the white guy will be the racist. Just like showing the old flag is hate speech while black people who shouts kill all whites are getting of scotfree. This is the ridiculous situation we are finding ourselves in in South Africa.	Involved in destructive mischief	This comment suggests that every time there is an altercation between black and white people in South Africa it becomes racial.	Neutral
It is time to disentangle rugby from the tentacles of the afrikaner language	Racist	This comment suggests SA Rugby is predominantly Afrikaans which is an issue that needs to be resolved.	Negative

This people will never change as if they own our Country if u dnt wanna live in South Africa or Africa as a whole go to europe this is our country nd continent we belong here...we tired of racist they must live our country nd live us in peace.....	Racist	This comment suggests that South Africa and Africa belongs to black people and racists should go to Europe if they don't like South Africa.	Negative
Ebens a racist turd	Racist	This comment suggests Etzebeth is a racist.	Negative
EVERYONE : Agh that's disgustingly Racist Abelungu : Yaaaah boet there always 2 saards to a story hey	Set-up	This comment suggests that white people will always believe there are two sides to a story when another white person is accused of racism.	Negative

Article 5: SA Rugby magazine (26 August 2019)

Description of Eben Etzebeth's alleged assault incident (words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs).	Theme	Notes	Positive, negative or neutral
"We don't need scandals like this so close to the RWC. I hope these allegations aren't true"	Distracted	This comment suggests that allegations like that should not be brought to light before a World Cup.	Negative
"Does Eben appear in the video assaulting anyone with a firearm as claimed by the victim... ???. If he does... charge him with assault with intent to do grievous bodily harm. If not and there are is no positive evidence supporting the assault claim ... then SAPS and SARU should make a statement clearing him of all assault and racism claims and let him carry on with his life... If he is positivly implicated during investigation he should be withdrawn from the team immediately"	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that the evidence is in the video. If it is Etzebeth in the video then he should be removed from the squad and let the law take its course, but if not he should be cleared of any wrongdoing by relevant parties.	Positive

"Clearly their are forces trying to disrupt the progress and confidence of the team ahead if RWC. My issue is with main steam media jumping on this kinda nonsense trying to make profit at the cost of possible reuniting a nation. This goes beyond winning a RWC. News media houses should be ashamed of being easy targets at any costs. Our rugby team is the last little hope we can still be proud of, now they want to take that also.... SA Ruby should ban the players from all social media platforms until the world is done, for their own sake."	Distracted	This comment suggests that the media is trying to frame Etzebeth before a massive tournament. It suggests that social media is only making the situation worse and is dividing the nation with various allegations.	Positive
"Surprised SA Rugby Magazine has reported on this without first finding some facts, evidence & getting the full story from all parties."	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment takes a dig at the publication, suggesting that they are not always factual in reporting.	Neutral
"For the guys doubting if it's EE, I can confirm it's definitely him, you can see and hear his voice on very dark video!"	Guilty	This comment suggests that it is Etzebeth in the video because you are able to identify him by his voice.	Negative
"Give him a bells. He is a upstanding guy and if he acted differently he was pushed to do so. Hats of to him. Great guy awesome example."	Hero	This comment suggests that Etzebeth did the right thing and set an example for others by defending himself when he was pushed to do so.	Positive
"Should have left it to his fist to do the talking in a video he was provoked to to something silly and yet he showed a local up by talking Well done Eben."	Hero	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is innocent and was provoked, and should be commended for standing up for himself.	Positive
"Eben Etzebeth has fought in Super rugby In curry Cup in Springbok friendlys In Championship games.... We know he will fight when sober.... We dont know his character... we dont know these people at all. If a Aussie player push Kolisi on the field, Etzebeth will moer that	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that people should not judge Etzebeth by his aggressive nature on the rugby field and should wait for justice to prevail.	Positive

Aussie guy. So it could be that he helped his friends in a fight. We all been in fights. Dont defend him without facts. Dont crucify him without fact.			
"If I read the reports right Eben had nothing to do with it , and if he sould assualt a person they would still be in hospital."	Distracted	This comment suggests that according to reports, Etzebeth is innocent and because someone his size he would have seriously injured someone if he had done anything.	Positive
"Well this is time to make an example of this individual and jail him for calling someone or framing them for being a racist when they not.... Same thing as this hate speech bs."	Guilty	This comment suggests that Etzebeth should be jailed for hate speech and used as an example so that others think twice before being racist.	Negative
"The quality of the video was poor, poor, poor, poor to say the least. So even if he did beat up somebody there is no proof under the sun. Case over! Move on!"	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that even if Etzebeth is guilty, there is no way to prove it, so there should be no further repercussions.	Positive
"I may not know the guy personally but he's a good lad and strongly believe that he's not racist; he's friends with Siya Kolisi. But what makes me sick or no lemme put it this way what makes me laugh when I read these comments since the story about AP Scarra and now Eben's is hypocrisy and double standards to some section of the society. The "usual suspects" but it's okay we kinda used to that. I like Eben and hope this thing gets resolved without tainting his image."	Hero	This comment suggests that it is the fans who are blowing the story out of proportion because he is friends with Black rugby players, so he is not racist. The comment also suggests because they like Etzebeth they hope the story does no harm to his reputation.	Positive
"Someone wanting their 5 minutes of fame by making accusations it seems."	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that there are ulterior motives, and someone is trying to make Etzebeth look bad.	Positive
"If he is guilty of this despicable behaviour, he must face the	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that Etzebeth should be held	Negative

consequences. No one is above the law."		accountable for his actions because everyone should be treated equally no matter their social status.	
"Guilty by association! Even if it wasn't him, he should've been the one stopping it as a Springbok captain this is uncalled for. He allowed it which means in his private circles its OK to discriminate other races. Suspend him immediately."	Guilty	This comment suggests that because he has previously captained the Springboks, he should be suspended for not putting a stop to the incident whether he was involved or not.	Negative
"Guys if Eben appeared to have assaulted a patron or anyone in the bar,i believe a case of assault should've been opened at the police station,so my question is why ddnt the woman who claims eben was physicall&racially abusive go to the police station before shouting on social media."	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that if Etzebeth had really assaulted someone, the victims would have gone to the police station to report the incident instead of posting about it on social media so Etzebeth is innocent.	Positive
"I believe Eben Etzebeth did something. Whenever these things comes out something definitely happened."	Guilty	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is guilty because stories of such nature would not appear out of the blue.	Negative
"Whatever he did he is guilty"	Guilty	This comment suggests that no matter what he did, he is guilty because he is Eben Etzebeth.	Negative
"This is at most a rumour. Probably false too."	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that there is no truth to the story.	Positive
"Y r people so quick to judge without proof. U can ruin a good mans reputation for nothing."	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is being accused of something that could potentially be untrue, which could tarnish his reputation.	Positive
"Eben must man up oh!"	Guilty	This comment suggests that Etzebeth should face the music if he did something wrong.	Negative

"It's true the guy was drunk drunk drunk"	Guilty	This comment suggests that it was Etzebeth in the video and he is guilty because he was incredibly drunk.	Negative
"The lady that post the stuff is nw Quite."	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that things are not adding up because the lady who accused him of assault is quiet when allegations surface.	Neutral
"Forget rubbish politics..You a great Rugby player and make us proud in the World Cup..You A ambassador for SA.."	Hero	This comment suggests that it is politics that caused the outcry and Etzebeth should focus on making South Africans proud at the World Cup because he really is an ambassador.	Positive
"The guy was only standing there"	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that Etzebeth was not involved in the assault because he was only standing by the scene.	Positive
"Jy bly n drol!!! 99.9% sure the allegations are true!!"	Guilty	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is guilty because of who he is as a person, and the type of person he always has been.	Negative
"He's guilty, Caucasians do these thing's then they going to denail."	Guilty	This comment suggests that white people generally deny allegations against them after assaulting people, so Etzebeth is guilty.	Negative
"Racial issue again, boring!"	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that it is a racial issue due to the nature of sport in South Africa.	Neutral

Article 6: SA Rugby magazine (26 August 2019)

Description of Eben Etzebeth's alleged assault incident	Theme	Notes	Positive, negative or neutral
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(words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs).			
My concern is what if our world cup start with people shaming the boks and Eben on their arrival. What if this thing really going to get the boks in a negative light at world cup and even this recent flag thing been drawn into this thing whole thing. This will surely and constantly hang over the boks throughout the world cup. White if groups against racism urgently put an petition and rally against the boks at the world cup. I would rather let the nation loose in honor then including Eben in the team. Rassie gave me hope and I respect him for a great job but I think he made a mistake by backing Eben. He should rather ask an urgent dealing with the matter to get the mans name cleared.	Distracted	This comment expresses concern for how Etzebeth and the Springboks will be viewed at the World Cup due to the allegations being racial. SA Rugby are making a mistake by trusting Etzebeth and should rather only play him when his name is cleared.	Positive
Was dit nounet die K ...@\$ woord wat gebruik was sou hy Nooit dai vlug gemaak het nie maar om H?\$\$@ te se is ok ...wys hoe pap broekig ons colourds is	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that he got off lightly by using the word he allegedly did because if he used another word there would have been serious consequences.	Negative
Someone put it so nicely "that this is just a hit job on Eben's character "You can't tell me that if you a public figure you are not allowed to get mad. You do have to practice more control then the average person. Believe me Eben did keep his cool coz if he didn't the other guy wouldn't have lived to tell the lie, scratch that ,I mean tale ,my bad.	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that the incident is character assassination because if Etzebeth wanted to harm the complainant then he would have.	Positive
Parlement het meer fights en niemand word geskors of gefire nie vraag is wie verteenwoordig land rerig en moet n voorbeeld stel!	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that rugby players are held to a higher standard in South Africa than politicians are.	Negative

Or let him go to world cup let interpol escort him from the field and bring him back	Distracted	This comment suggests that Etzebeth should be allowed to go to the World Cup because he can easily be escorted home if need be.	Positive
Open that assault of the oupa and arrest eben finish and kla doesnt matter what SA rugby say he needs to face the law of the country but as we all know the oupa will get money to keep quiet	Guilty	This comment suggests that the case should be opened so Etzebeth can be held accountable or the complainant can be silenced by getting a payout.	Negative
Rugby Union better make sure of there facts. No white will call me a Hotnot or any one and then get away with it irrespective the circumstances. They have abused that word too many times in the past. I would also like to believe that the truth is otherwise, but the videos and voice clips going the rounds ask for indepth investigation.	Guilty	This comment suggests that the word used is abused and the videos and voice clips should justify the need for an investigation.	Negative
Where is this supposed leaked video?	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that there is an alleged video but nobody is publishing it.	Neutral
So here is a question to all the haters saying he must be withdrawn from the squad...you are calling from this based on what...that so called video, where it is to dark to see anything...all you can hear is someone with a fowel mouth. Now if you are out with ur friends and ppl provoke / attack you are you just going to stand by and let them hospitilize you...I really dont think so...it is your right to defend yourself regardless of you who are. Wait till all the facts are presented and then see what the outcome is and then remember to put urself in that situation.	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that Etzebeth acted in self-defense but it is also not possible to conclude whether it was Etzebeth or not because the video was so unclear.	Positive
I suppose if you're not wearing a black Jersey, eating cape Town	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that Etzebeth does not meet the	Neutral

McDonalds and pinching bums you're completely innocent		'criteria' to be considered guilty.	
Sticks and Stones will break anyone's bone but name calling won't hurt nobody. Like little children trying to put a dampner on Eben's World Cup.	Distracted	This comment suggests that if Etzebeth did not physically assault anybody then he should not be distracted from th World Cup as words can't do harm to anyone.	Positive
If this guy assaulted anyone i don't think he'd be alive to tell the tale	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that due to Etzebeth's size and strength it is unlikely that the complainant would live to tell on him.	Positive
Let all rugby fans pray that this allegation is baseless. If he is guilty he must face the music and apologise for his wrong doing to the "victim" the team he has let down and his country who will be without his sterling services at the World Cup.	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that if Etzebeth is guilty he will have let his teammates and country down because he is a good rugby player.	Positive
Doesn't matter what was said or done. If it was not a famous person we never would of heard about it. Making name of Eben name	Racially attacked	This comment suggests that the complainant is only taking the issue further because Etzebeth is a public figure.	Positive
This is not Australia	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that South Africa is not like Australia where players get away with a lot more.	Neutral
It sounds like there's a lot of swearing going on in the video, from both sides. A drunken after party brawl. Too much booze involved	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that the fight broke up because too much alcohol was consumed.	Neutral
Ek kry di persoon ani ander kant van dai appels baie jammer	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment shares pity with the person accusing Etzebeth.	Neutral
Eben kom tog net na vore. Se sorry , gee hulle n wp trui neem	Distracted	This comment suggests that Etzebeth should apologise,	Positive

paar fotos. Lets move on and get into the world cup spirit		give them a rugby jersey, take a few photos and move on.	
It is simple, until there is evidence, it is not possible to conclude much from media reports with no substantial evidence.	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that it is too early to know if Etzebeth is guilty or not based on the evidence provided.	Neutral
Can someone identify the guy who made the video and please ask him to post the full video or ask someone one of his friends who I believe also made one to please post it. There is always 3 sides of the story 1) Eben side 2) whoever the other guy is 3) the truth.	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that until the full video is made available then no conclusions can be drawn.	Neutral
Hierdie rassisme ding sal ook nooit stop in SA voordat mense nie kan leer jy hardloop nie met enige ding sosiale media toe nie! Die Bokke en die hele land het nie hierdie verdeeltheid nodig nie. Ander lande se spelers het net die ander spelers om te probeer wen. SA spelers moet altyd veg teen heelwat van hulle eie mense (en hier sonder ek nie kleur uit nie). Ek weet net vra bietjie vir die publiek wat met die Bokke op 'n gereelde basis werk wie is die arrogantste, ongeskikte klein twit . Beslis nie Eben Etzebeth nie en ek noem nie name nie want geen speler en SA as 'n land het hierdie twak nodig nie!	Guilty	This comment suggests that not everything needs to end up on social media because nobody needs this kind of negativity so close to a World Cup.	Neutral
Eben remain with Springboks? What about Scara Ntubeni and Aphiwe Dyantyi? SARU always favour individuals	Guilty	This comment suggests that SA Rugby always favours white players.	Negative
Seriously do u really think before such a big occasion Eben of all people will be so irresponsible.	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that it's difficult to believe Etzebeth would act so irresponsibly right before a World Cup.	Positive

Calm down please peoples. The charge against him is that he omitted to break up or intervene in a fight. The complainant should be grateful he didn't because the result would have been devastating for him	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that Etzebeth was not part of the fight, but tried to break it up and the complainant should be glad because things would have been a lot worse for him.	Positive
Where can we see this video? Would like to make up my own mind about the evidence or lack thereof	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that the individual will believe what they see in the video when they say it, and will not trust what others say.	Neutral
Allegations.. thats all it is. Surely if Eben was involved the damage would have been worse	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that it is nothing more than allegations at this point.	Positive
We need him. End of story. I doubt Eben went out to get onto a fight. Whoever pursued him got what they deserved. Go BOKKE!	Hero	This comment suggests that Etzebeth did not go out looking for a fight and the complainant was probably asking for it.	Positive
Amid fake news allegations. I don't even know why the media is making such a big story about this when its already confirmed to be fake allegations with no proof or evidence. Meanwhile a great ambassador of SA rugby is getting shamed for something he didn't do. Media should really put facts before conclusions	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that the media is giving the story so much attention with so little evidence which is tarnishing the reputation of a great rugby player in the process.	Negative
I find it really funny that it is Cape Crusaders accusing a springbok right before the world cup	Distracted	This comment suggests that Cape Crusaders are doing whatever they can to disrupt the Springbok camp just before the World Cup.	Neutral
Hy het openlik op die rugby veld die jaar iemand 'n P genoem. Jy kon dit sien op tv. Hy speel altyd vuil en wil altyd bakleiery begin. So dit verbaas my nie dat hy dalk gedoen het wat daar beweert word nie. Hy is 'n vuilgat grootkop speler wat nie die boktrui verdien nie	Guilty	This comment suggests that Etzebeth has an aggressive nature so it is not surprising to read of such allegations. As a result he doesn't deserve to wear the Springbok jersey.	Negative

Gaan lees op sport 24. ...die kroeg eienaar se duidelik dat Eben en sy broer nie deel was van die scuffle nie	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that the owner of the bar stated that Etzebeth and his brother were not part of the scuffle.	Positive
Kyk Eben het ou miskien gebliksem of nie the fact remains theres 2 sides to a story en dai video clip bewys fokol en my vraag is vir wat het Eben n groot rugby speler n vuurwapen nodig gehad om n ou man soos dai te slaan jammer ma iets klink nie vir my reg nie.	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that Etzebeth may have beat someone up but the video is not sufficient evidence. Due to Etzebeth's size he would not need a gun to injure someone.	Neutral
I watched the video You cant see thats its him at all the video is almost pitch black The guy in the video could have said its Trevor Noah from the daily show and we wouldn't have known	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that it could be anybody in the video, not Etzebeth specifically.	Neutral
Every action has a consequence and this action deserves punishment withdraw him from the squad	Guilty	This comment suggests that there should be consequences for Etzebeth's actions, and in his case if he is guilty he should be withdrawn from the Springbok squad.	Negative
When the news broke they said a video was doing the rounds on social media. Where is it ?	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that there is supposedly a video but it is not being shared widely.	Neutral
I can not even comment on that matter as i am struggling to get the meaning of the word used by accused .(hotnot)	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that the individual doesn't understand what the issue is because they aren't familiar with the word that was allegedly used.	Neutral
Eben is very much overrated and if this is what SA rugby thinks about the indigenous people of this country they got a thing coming #southafricanrugby	Guilty	This comment suggests that SA Rugby care more about players than how players speak about others.	Negative
He can be replaced. Play stef du toit at lock and make space for	Guilty	This comment suggests that he can be removed from the	Negative

kwagga on the one flank and kolisis on the other. Then you have great locks with good workrate and 2 faster flanks that workrate is also up there		squad because there is enough depth to cover the position.	
Until they can provide evidence, I doubt that it is true.	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that the allegations are baseless if there is no evidence.	Neutral
Steroids and fighting boks you already on the map before the world cup started	Distracted	This comment suggests that the World Cup hasn't even started and the Springboks are already making headlines.	Negative
Why are things like this and Aphiwe's deal in the news so often just weeks before the world cup	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that the timing of the allegations are very convenient.	Neutral
Its because his opponents are afraid of him,now they are trying their little tricks to get him out of the WC	Distracted	This comment suggests that the other teams are using tactics to get him removed from the squad so he doesn't play in the World Cup.	Neutral
Cape Crusaders behind this.	Distracted	This comment suggests that the Cape Crusaders are behind the allegations.	Neutral
Interesting to note the very contrasting reactions to the Scarra and Etzebeth incidents. Especially considering that Etzebeth is a multiple offender.	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is being treated more fairly than Scarra Ntubeni was after disrespecting a ball boy during a match.	Negative
Het daai man met sy kakebeen in n checkers sak by die lykshuis aan gekom? Indien nie, was dit nie Eben wat hom aangerand het nie... Move on.	Distracted	This comment suggests that Etzebeth has nothing to do with what happened and people need to move on.	Positive
Hope whoever tried their luck to have him excluded is choking on it.	Hero	This comment suggests that whoever tried to have Etzebeth excluded from the squad did not succeed.	Positive

I really hope he is not guilty but he remains a liability on the field.	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is aggressive on the field even if he is not guilty in this case.	Negative
Where there's smoke...there's fire	Guilty	This comment suggests that there must be some truth to the matter.	Negative
Erge vuil taalgebruik op video.... hoop hy uiter nie een woord tydens games nie	Guilty	This comment suggests that foul language was used in the video and the individual hopes this isn't the case during rugby games.	Negative
Where are the conspiracy theorists now?	Distracted	This comment suggests that people hoping for him to be guilty have gone quiet now.	Neutral
And what about Dyanti if he is found not guilty, he is out because the Touring Squad is Chosen, so who does Erasmus drop to accommodate him.	Distracted	This comment focuses on another player being excluded from the squad pending the outcome of doping allegations.	Neutral
It is now not a story of assault...it is the words and names the crowd there \$_*-#. was called . Offensive language against the people of the area	Guilty	This comment suggests that it is not about the assault, it is about the use of racial slurs.	Neutral
It was me in the Video just shorter	Distracted	This comment suggests that this individual was in the video, except they are just shorter.	Neutral
Waar oor gaan die bohaai oor eben wat het die ander partei gedoen	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that the story is one-sided and nobody is reporting on what the complainants did wrong.	Neutral
For once somebody made the right decision. He is not guilty. This is a false allegation to get him out of the WC.	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that the decision for him to go to the World Cup is the right one as there was no real basis for the allegations.	Positive

Julle kom vroeg huistoe agv n vrot appel in julle middel	Guilty	This comment suggests that the Springboks won't win the tournament because Etzebeth is included in the squad.	Negative
Hopefully there is will not play on his mind when he is in Japan	Distracted	This comment suggests that Etzebeth will hopefully be able to put the allegations behind him when he plays in the World Cup.	Neutral
No one should b dropped 4 non rugby reasons...xcept murder and rape	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that the allegations aren't serious enough for him to be excluded from the squad.	Neutral
The Cape Town all black fans will do their little haka against Eben.	Guilty	This comment suggests that the Cape Town New Zealand fans will be happy that Etzebeth is being accused of assault.	Neutral
Morals aside temporarily (and I do not endorse thuggery) but on a rugby front it does feel a little good having a "bakkies" in the team again	Guilty	This comment disregards what Etzebeth did off the field because of how well he plays on the field.	Positive
Eben who I rate the Bulls lock higher than Eben. So it does not matter if Eben is in the team or not for me rather not the Bulls lock is far better at carrying ball than Eben so I dont rate Eben at all as a Springbok. Everytime looses the ball in contact or the ball dies on the ground. Plus how many penalties does he concede mighr cost the World Cup. Personally I would rather play Kolisi at lock and Kwagga at flank and let Eben carry bags. Duane can jump for lineouts so no loss at all. It would have been better if Eben stayed at home	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is replaceable in the team so it would not be an issue if he didn't go with the squad to the World Cup.	Negative
People who believe everything they read and hear on the web and news seriously need to get themself checked!!!! You are so	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that people making comments are quick to place blame without knowing the full story or	Neutral

irritating it's unreal! If it is true or not who are you to lay judgment, you perfect ? Amazing how we are quick to point fingers but if we have to look at ourself the mirror will always be broken!!! If you have never been apart of a fight, or defended yourself or in any way been part of ANY racial situation or have used it in anger then by all means go ahead, otherwise just shut up you are just two faced!!		having experienced something similar before.	
Ok, so before a world cup where nzl is on the back after current losses someone came up with a sneaky trick to try and exclude a key rugby player. Its almost as redonculious as Gavin Watson driving straight into a bridge all by himself	Framing	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is being framed as a bully to keep him from attending the World Cup.	Neutral
What a joke.. He is human, yes, and the person he allegedly assaulted is small. And a,"hotnot" if I'm not mistaken. Can't see any logic in why it's being displayed as being fair. As a celebrity, enjoying S. A Springbok status. That's a big no no.	Guilty	This comment suggests that Etzebeth's behaviour is inexcusable not matter who he is.	Negative
The springbok team is a family team... only for Whites	Guilty	This comment suggests that the Springbok team is a family, but only for white people.	Negative
A South African Ben Stokes	Guilty	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is as bad as England's Ben Stokes.	Neutral
Oooh ek hoop almal van julle wat so judge het niks geraamtes in die kas nie . Net God mag Judge lees julle bybels	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that people should not be so quick to judge because everyone has secrets.	Neutral
gewonder wanneer pa en oom se gene gaan uitkom	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that the Etzebeth family is renowned for being aggressors.	Negative

I believe this is fake news created by someone who has a rather stupid agenda.	Distracted	This comment suggests that the media is pushing a certain agenda.	Neutral
Still don't give a f***	Distracted	This comment suggests that the matter is still irrelevant to the individual.	Neutral
Evidence guys,no one can proof that he did it,bring the evidence to the table before you point fingers.. En net n dronkgat maak video's ini nag op sy foon sonder om die flash aan te sit	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that the grounds are baseless if there is no evidence and the video is unclear because it was too dark.	Neutral
As dit waar is mag hy nie oorgesien word nie. Ons sal sien. Die polisie ondersoek die saak	Guilty	This comment suggests that if Etzebeth is guilty it should not be overlooked, but there is still a chance that it is untrue.	Positive
I'm glad! He cannot be replaced!!	Hero	This comment suggests Etzebeth's place in the team is irreplaceable.	Positive
Don't like that this seems to be rumbling on!! Really hope he has not done anything stupid	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that the story is being dragged out but hopefully he is innocent.	Neutral
Ek het n Voicenote gehoor oor sosiale media.... En dit klink nogals rof...	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that there was a voice note surfacing online which was not in Etzebeth's favour.	Negative
He did it to start earlier in Top14	Guilty	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is trying to get out of playing in the World Cup and is trying to take up his contract in France earlier.	Neutral
Die hotnots het presies geweet wie hy is ek het recording tie hulle sy mustang met baksteen slaan toe oes hy hulle die een hotnot het gun getrek eben se een pel gun gegryp wat n lelike storie kon afgegee het die moer hy die boy met gun al op die kop.eben is toe in gevat na binne sy pel is erg	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests the complainants started the fight and that his friend was stabbed.	Positive

in nek en oral gesteek deur die hotnots met ambulans daar weg			
The police themselves are corrupt why should they be involved.	Guilty	This comment suggests that the police shouldn't investigate the matter because they are corrupt.	Neutral
I saw Eben with my own eyes. He was with me (alibi)	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment jokingly suggests that Etzebeth was with the individual who is acting as his alibi.	Positive
Best lock in the world ? Watch him Play I remember Victor Matfield	Hero	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is not the best lock in the world, Victor Matfield is.	Negative
Ah yes!!! All those little mice that had a big mouth now running into the cracks again!!	Distracted	This comment suggests that everyone who suggested he was guilty when news broke are all quiet now.	Neutral
Great news. People should listen to whole Story before speculating	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that people should wait for the full story before accusing anybody.	Positive
Die poppe gaan dans	Guilty	This comment suggests that there will be repercussions.	Negative
i think fans are in for a big suprise with this 1 lol	Guilty	This comment suggests that people will see the side of Etzebeth they don't want to believe exists.	Negative
As jy n ou klap OP n Saterdagagaand. Gaan jou Baas jou Maandag fire by die werk. Polisie kan dit uitsort.	Distracted	This comment suggests that rugby is Etzebeth's job so he should still be allowed to play and the police can deal with the rest.	Neutral
Dankie daar is nog mense wat die mooi in almal sien en verstaan en dat ons kan saam leef geniet die dag	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that people should see the good in others and live in harmony.	Neutral

Capetown AB supporter causing kak before the world cup	Distracted	This comment suggests that a Cape Town New Zealand fan is trying to distract Etzebeth before the tournament.	Neutral
Plaas die idiote die drek wat ons vroue en kinders uitmoor vervolg, nou karring hulle aan Etzebeth. Liewe jimmel ons land het oor as genoeg probleme om tyd te mors met dronkpraatjies.	Racially attacked	This comment suggests that South Africa has bigger issues to worry out and the attention should not be on a drunk argument.	Neutral
If there is video show it.	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that if a video does implicate Etzebeth, it should be shared.	Neutral
Stop the racial KAK PZE He's lucky he didn't end up in ICU	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests the complainant should be grateful he didn't end up in ICU.	Neutral
Lets leave all that aside and deal with it after the world cup	Distracted	This comment suggests the focus should be on the World Cup.	Positive
Dirty on the field ,loves confrontation	Guilty	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is a dirty player who is confrontational on-field.	Negative
ok did these ppl hear the voice notes of his friend lol	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that a voice note from Etzebeth's friend makes him appear guilty.	Negative
Laat Interpol hom bring	Guilty	This comment suggests that Interpol can bring Etzebeth home if he is recalled from Japan.	Negative
My broertjie vertel my hy mos gehardloop ht vi hom en sy vriende	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests the fight broke out because the complainant ran at Etzebeth and his family.	Negative
Almal weer daai doos eben etzebeth is a racist elke wit persoon is racist groot gemaak	Guilty	This comment suggests that there is so much racism in	Negative

daais hoekom die land in sy moer is hier is fokkol liefde nie		South Africa because white people are raised as racists.	
Innocent until proven guilty	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is only guilty when convicted.	Positive
Fake news	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests the article is fake news.	Negative
Klomp stront jy kan niks sien nie	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests the article is untrue because the video gives away nothing.	Positive
If everybody can put so much effort into fixing our country instead of wasting their time commenting about a stupid bar fight then we can maybe fix this country. Why don't you all ask the president to resign. That will already make a difference. Our country is burning and the people now rioting because of illegal immigrants are the same people who called for help from the illegal immigrants in the apartheid era.	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that South Africa can be fixed if people work together to fix real issues.	Neutral
Few disappointments with bok selection... Beast rugby days are done and why isn't elstardt in the team... Surely there are also younger and better hookers in south Africa than Schalk brits	Distracted	This comment suggests disappointment as the selection of the Springbok squad.	Neutral
There are many politicians that are still roaming the streets after much worse e.g. kill the boer or Whiteman arrest them then the rugby player give all a fair trial and let them face the fair judgement you are then in justice .Otherwise well done S A rugby	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that politicians are worse and should be held accountable.	Neutral
Its easy guys. Get rid of the peanut that laid a charge then its over. Eben has no time for ignorant people like this.	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that whoever laid the charges should be removed from the	Positive

		case to help Etzebeth get to the World Cup quicker.	
All of you who think they can judge Eben sitting in your lounge stroking your fat belly's should pull there heads out of there backsides ,you have no right to judge him	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that people have no right to judge Etzebeth because nobody is perfect.	Neutral
Eben, as hulle kak seek Dan bliksem jy hulle.. Finish en klaar.	Racially attacked	This comment suggests that Etzebeth should just beat people up if they cause trouble with him.	Positive
THUG	Guilty	This comment suggests Etzebeth is a gangster.	Negative

Article 7: SA Rugby magazine (26 August 2019)

Description of Eben Etzebeth's alleged assault incident (words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs).	Theme	Notes	Positive, negative or neutral
EBEN IS THE BEST!!!!	Hero	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is the best player.	Positive
Daai bra het geval man	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that the person accusing Etzebeth of assault fell and was not actually assaulted.	Positive
Eben sal nie aan kak vat nie	Hero	This comment suggests that Eben would not fall for tricks so easily and was not looking for trouble.	Positive
Wat ek nie verstaan nie, is die mense wat by sulke insidente gou is om n foon kamera uit te bring en dit viral te maak. Jy wat daai kamera hanteer, is net so bloody	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that the person who recorded the video is just as guilty as the person who committed the assault.	Positive

skuldig soos die ou wat die appels swaai.			
Brandewyn het nie brieke nie	Guilty	This comment suggests that Etzebeth was under the influence and the brandy played a role in what happened.	Negative
This oke is trying another Ashwin move	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that the complainant is trying to get sympathy by making it a race issue.	Neutral
Be honest – Eben is one of the dirtiest players in rugby.	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is a dirty player on the field, so it's possible that he could do something like this off the field.	Negative
Wouldn't put it past him, he's a boer after all the rage & hate is bound to show no matter how hard tries to camouflage it with this rainbow nation fallacy	Guilty	This comment suggests that because Etzebeth is Afrikaans, he is capable of racial slurs and assault even if he tries to hide it. Calling the rainbow nation a “fallacy” not only implies a lack of trust in Etzebeth, but in South African as a country.	Negative
We can only afford the teams right frame of mind now, negativity will set us back.	Distracted	This comment suggests that the attention is being taken away from the World Cup and focus is shifting to off-field issues.	Positive
Suspend him from all rugby activities till he gets his day in court...NO world cup for him	Guilty	This comment suggests that Etzebeth should not be allowed to go to the World Cup until he is cleared by the court.	Negative
Sounds like a setup	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is being framed by the victim and is not guilty.	Positive
There are cameras at the centre where the incident took place. I just hope that it was operational to prove him innocent or guilty	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that video footage should be reviewed to determine whether Etzebeth is guilty or not.	Neutral

and that the perpetrator/s is brought to book.			
I think its time that a person that makes such a comment and its not true must be dealt with. Certainly untrue allegations like that is illegal.	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that the accusations against Etzebeth are untrue and the complainant should be held accountable for what he said.	Neutral
I'm struggling to believe the Etsebeth will jeopardize his world cup place on the 11th hour for something this serious after all the hard work he and the rest of the team put up in the last 18 months or so . We shall see but I hope it doesn't affect the team morale and I am hoping this is not true	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that Etzebeth worked hard for his spot in the World Cup squad and would not jeopardise that on a night out.	Positive
Eben won't waste his time beating up a homeless man. He is actually quite a chilled guy and knows that he is always under surveillance from the public. This story was obviously blown out of proportion as far as Eben is concerned. Somebody did beat the guy up though and that is what police have to establish.	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that while the complainant was beaten up, it wasn't by Etzebeth because he is a calm guy and is aware that he is in the public eye.	Positive
was hy dan gesuip want hy is nie so iemand nie baie sagte mens het hom al ge ontmoet But really this is not good for our Rugby you call you a professional you can do better but yeh we must wait and see time will tell	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that when Etzebeth is drunk he can be aggressive, but only time will tell what really happened.	Positive
Donnerse bully. Iemand sal jou nog hard donner eendag	Guilty	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is a bully and that one day someone will hurt him.	Negative
He is definitely innocent otherwise you would have seen AFBOD at the scene if he did fight and not the ambulance	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is innocent because if he had assaulted someone, more than an ambulance would have been required at the scene.	Positive

We dont need such distractions...whatever the case maybe, all players selected must now be at 100% good behaviour no more kak news please	Distracted	This comment suggests that the incident is distracting from the World Cup and players selected must focus on that.	Neutral
Ai, wat sal All Black ondersteuners nie alles doen nie.	Distracted	This comment suggests that New Zealand fans are framing Etzebeth.	Neutral
I hope in my heart of hearts that Eben Etzebeth is innocent because this "incident" will be devastating to his fans (my 3 sons) If not...let the courts decide on his consequences and he will lose 5 devoted fans in our household.	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is innocent until the court proves him guilty.	Positive
This Coach 🤝	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that Erasmus is doing the right thing by standing by his player.	Neutral
Agree with comments passed by Rassie - also believing that he is innocent	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that Erasmus is right, Etzebeth is innocent.	Positive
Daai Etsebet gene loop dik deur Eben are!!! Die wat vir Skattie en Clifford geken het,sal weet waarvan ek praat!!! Kort van draad en laat nie op n wag vir n fight nie!!!	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that it is in Etzebeth's blood to be aggressive because his family has a short temper and are always willing to fight.	Negative
Jou "YSTER"	Hero	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is a champion for what he did.	Positive
Eish we can't afford to loss this guy hope he is innocent	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is too good a rugby player to lose right before the World Cup so hopefully he is innocent.	Positive
Still gonna be some issues me thinks	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that even though Erasmus trusts	Negative

		Etzebeth, the incident may not sit well with others.	
N so the plot thickens	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that as more news comes to light, the more complicated things become.	Negative
well his friends gave him away with the voice note as well... hy gaan kak en al was hy daar en het nikz gedoen hoekom.nie sy buddies keer nie. jy word aan jou vriende geken so as hy moet kak dan moet hy kak en klaar. nogal hotnots hy sal kak	Guilty	This comment suggests Etzebeth will be guilty even if he did nothing wrong because people will associate him with the people he hangs out with.	Negative
Sounds like the local All Black supporters (or Bok haters) have upped their game, clearly worried about their beloved underperforming boys on the opposite side of the planet.	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is being framed by New Zealand rugby fans.	Positive
Probably best to investigate and bring to Closure before departure then suitable replacement can still be found.	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that the case should run its course before he is replaced in the squad.	Negative
We all know that Eben is no angel but how about a little bit positivity rather than negativity... innocent until proven without a shadow of doubt guilty?	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that despite Etzebeth's track record, he should still be considered innocent until proven otherwise.	Positive
Papsak makes you want to record something or someone and you forget to put on the flash	Distracted	This comment refers to the quality of the video, and the person who recorded it was so drunk they forgot to record the video with flash.	Neutral
Eish if further evidence comes to light then someone will have egg on their face. I hope Eben is telling the truth.	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that the more information becomes available, the easier it will be to determine the truth.	Neutral

Article 8: SA Rugby magazine (27 August 2019)

Description of Eben Etzebeth's alleged assault incident (words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs).	Theme	Notes	Positive, negative or neutral
Don't believe eben beat anyone up, or made the racist remarks as claimed by these people, my problem is , he never stopped his buddies from beating up or making racist remarks toward the victims. As a springbok or even just a fellow south African, he should have done something about the situation.	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that while the user believes Etzebeth is innocent, he still should have intervened because he is a public figure.	Negative
Brother was lucky to be getting in his face calling him a p**sy to not get a klap. I've seen 3 different people now appear on news threads all with cuts and bruises saying Eben abused them..... Publicity is just a wonderful thing	Racially attacked	This comment suggests that people often accuse Etzebeth of assault as a way to get publicity.	Positive
Ek stem saam moet hom nie rondstoot nie want jy gaan defenitief moet suurstof kry of heeltemal vol steke wees Eben ons glo in jou speel jou Bok Game ons wag vir die Beker	Hero	This comment suggests that the user believes Etzebeth's version of events and is looking forward to South Africa winning the World Cup.	Positive
Good. Terrible dat ons so getarget word. Hoop alles werk uit vir jou Eben	Hero	This comment suggests that Etzebeth was targeted and hopefully everything works out for Etzebeth.	Positive
"He said, she said". Move on.	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that people should just move on because it is Etzebeth's word against theirs.	Neutral
Ek dink as Eben wel moes betrokke geraak het, sou Langebaan te min ambulanse gehad het.	Innocent until possibly guilty	This comment suggests that if Etzebeth was guilty, there would have been more injuries.	Positive

How do the police arrive at that conclusion. The case has been opened and he is a suspect. His already implicated by the complainant.	Guilty	This comment suggests that conclusions were drawn too soon as he was only just implicated so it was too soon to reach that conclusion.	Negative
Let him do a polygraph test to prove his innocence	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that Etzebeth should prove his innocence by doing a polygraph test which indicates a lack of trust because the fan would rather rely on the use of technology to prove his innocence rather than trust his word.	Negative
Pro sport is followed by hypocrites...they say the players r out of touch with the supporters on the ground bcoz they get plaid a lot,when players njoy themselves they r called Illdisciplined and rude	Racially attacked	This comment suggests that rugby players are not treated fairly by the public when they are out enjoying themselves.	Positive
Some guys have all the luck,eish	Guilty	This comment suggests that Etzebeth was lucky to get away with the alleged incident.	Negative
Money talks	Guilty	This comment suggests that Etzebeth got off lightly because he is wealthy.	Negative
Happy for him	Hero	This comment suggests that the individual is happy that Etzebeth was cleared of wrongdoing and could focus on the World Cup	Positive
Give it horns my Boytjie	Hero	This comment suggests that the individual wants Etzebeth to try his best at the World Cup.	Positive
I really wish aphiwe was in the squad we really could of used his talent, and we are lucky etzebeth is still in the squad, this is sport we all support the same team let's not make it a racial thing, the media is trying to divide the	Distracted	This comment suggests that the individual is relieved that Etzebeth could go to the World Cup and focus on winning the trophy.	Positive

people as usual but we are stronger than that. The boys need our support to bring the trophy home so let's give it to them			
Hy bly maar n̄ gemors.Op die rugby veld is hy altyd in n̄ fight.	Guilty	This comment suggests that it is in Etzebeth's nature to be a bully because when he plays there is always a fight.	Negative
Ek stem.Eben wys Vir die wêreld hoe vertoon jy op jou beste.	Hero	This comment suggests that Etzebeth should go and show everyone how well he performs at the World Cup.	Positive
My voice won't be behind the Boks if we don't sort this out before the WC. Period	Guilty	This comment suggests that the issue should have been resolved before the World Cup otherwise they would not support South Africa at the tournament.	Negative
Hulle wag vir jou wanneer jy terug kom van Japan af.	Distracted	This comment suggests that there will be repercussions when he returns from the World Cup as it is not over yet.	Negative
Why is he worried?????	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment questions why Etzebeth is worried in the first place.	Positive
former captain, can not believe we stood behind this guy. im done with the boks. i wonder if he is a racist in the locker room as well. Poor brothers must be struggling in camp.	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that the individual is disappointed in the former captain and wonders how the players of colour in the squad feel after hearing the news.	Negative
That's the one bigg fella, move on. Your time is this World Cup.	Distracted	This comment suggests that Etzebeth should put the allegations behind him and focus on the World Cup.	Positive
Are the police in the business of assuring potential suspects that they won't be implicated in ongoing investigations?	Guilty	This comment suggests that the police should be doing more to ensure Etzebeth that he won't be implicated further.	Neutral

Eben moes hulle gebliksem het.	Hero	This comment suggests that Etzebeth should have beat the complainants up.	Positive
Geweet hy sal nie sy hele loopbaan op die spel plaas en ek sal ook twee keer dink voor ek met hom moeilikheid soek. Ek ondersteun al die Springgbokke,maar Etzebeth is my gunsteling	Hero	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is this individual's favourite player, and he wouldn't put his career on the line over something like that.	Positive
Great for you Eben. Put that incident behind you and go and play your game with all your heart and soul. You are an amazing rugby star. Good luck to you and your Bok squad.	Hero	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is an amazing player and should focus on playing good rugby instead of the allegations.	Positive
Springbok or not..... If u talk about my family that way.... U will get bliksemed!!!	Hero	This comment suggests that any racist language is unacceptable and if Etzebeth did use racial slurs he would be beat up by the individual.	Negative
He has been assured by police that he will not be implicated? Really?	Guilty	This comment suggests that it is unlikely that Etzebeth will not be implicated in the incident.	Neutral
They were out with wives and girlfriends, obviously a "goodbye drinks" scenario. I highly doubt it that he or any of his crew would look for trouble knowing their partners could be injured in the mess. I do believe that cowards who under normal circumstances would never taunt him may have taunted him.. just to be able to say "I stood up to Etzebeth".	Racially attacked	This comment suggests that Etzebeth would not put his family and friends at risk by getting into a fight so close to the tournament, it was a stunt for the complainants to say they faced up to Etzebeth.	Positive
What's missing here, is that professional athletes should stay off the booze, and lead a healthy lifestyle - especially just before the WC.	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that as a professional rugby player, Etzebeth should not be out late at night and should rather live by example.	Negative

He either bliksemmed the chap or he did not. If someone else klapped the chap, no issues really	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that it was either him or it wasn't, but it could have been someone he was with instead.	Neutral
Great stuff, Eben. Gaan fokus jy nou net op rugby. Daardie Cape Crusaders outjies het hulle mes in vir jou, en hulle plannetjie het gefail. Jy is anyway groter as dit. Volgende keer moet hulle maar hulle eie mense se eiendom beskadig (soos hulle families en vriende s'n vir wie hulle omgee) en vreemdelinge se goed utlos op wie hulle jaloers is.	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that Etzebeth can focus on rugby now that the jealous people have been dealt with.	Positive
I am his fan, but his racist behaviour won't take him anywhere.	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that while Etzebeth is a good player, it is unacceptable for him to be racist.	Negative
Chances that he will set foot on a plane to Japan is Not yet cast in stone.The plot will thicken soon.Watch this space.	Guilty	This comment suggests that Etzebeth should not get too comfortable as there is a chance he could be recalled from the squad before he even heads to Japan.	Negative
Good luck boys...leave those rubbish in the bin focus on RWC	Distracted	This comment suggests that the allegations are rubbish and he should focus on rugby.	Positive
Cover up.	Distracted	This comment suggests that there is a cover up for Etzebeth so he can go to the World Cup.	Negative
Stand your man Eben. Don't let anyone bugger you around. You don't need that. Just go to Japan and play your heart out for us. Moet jou nie aan twak steur nie.	Hero	This comment suggests that Etzebeth should put his attention to what he is good at and not let people drag his name.	Positive
Now you can just focus on WC mate.	Hero	This comment suggests that now Etzebeth can focus on rugby.	Positive

Focus on the game Eben,son,we got your back	Hero	This comment suggests that now Etzebeth can focus on rugby and people have his back.	Positive
Someone once asked me whats white privilege? I didnt know how to explain it - it can b very subtle: To be given a benefit of a doubt while others aren't jus because of you are white; to sail thru life without anybody questioning your intellect, ability, qualification, intent or honor.	Guilty	This comment suggests that Etzebeth benefits from white privilege as nobody is questioning his intellect, ability, qualification, intent and honour even though he has serious allegations against him.	Negative
We knew from the beginning he would get away with it. Smells like the Skinstad/Kallis cover-ups all over again. How can one support a team with scumbags like this in it?	Guilty	This comment suggests that Etzebeth was always going to get away with it and that it's difficult to support a team when bad people play for the team.	Negative

Article 9: SA Rugby magazine (27 August 2019)

Description of Eben Etzebeth's alleged assault incident (words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs).	Theme	Notes	Positive, negative or neutral
Etzebeth, u far bigger then this nonsense. We see a lot of protest in SA where many in that same community notice many criminal activities (burning down buildings, destroying assets and shops, vehicles, etc.) and they report absolutely nothing for Police to nail that culprits & they here to judge you because you didn't do the correct thing by calling the police. Sorry, but this is nonsense trying to put the blame solely on you. Whatever happened in Langebaan, it is a case the police need to investigate. Whether your friends or family was involved, they will need to answer and accept consequences whatever is punishable. So Eben, go and	Hero	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is being targeted and whether his family is guilty or not, he has earned his spot in the Springboks squad and should enjoy representing his country.	Positive

represent our country like you are destined to do. Go Boytjie...			
This case was brought on by Sammy Claasen who reported it to the HRC This is the guy who was suspended as councilor by the ANC and spends his time reporting 'racist' incidents His reputation is well known	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that Sammy Claasen is being opportunistic even though people know what he is really like.	Neutral
So was the guy a hotnot or not? If not then he can take offense, but if he is a hotnot what's the problem? I'm a mulungu and proud of it.	Possibly guilty	This comment is insensitive towards the matter as the individual does not really understand the implications behind using the word.	Neutral
This was created to try and put the Djanti drug taking affair in the back ground.	Distracted	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is being used to draw attention away from Dyantyi who was found guilty of doping.	Neutral
The Cape has one of the largest All Black support base in SA, who thinks this isn't just a ploy to try destabilise the Boks before the RWC	Distracted	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is being used to distract the Springboks just before the World Cup.	Neutral
Imagine, Eben Etzebeth standing there like a church mouse while he's friends are in a brawl... IMPOSSIBLE	Guilty	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is not the type of person who will sit around and watch a fight.	Positive
Stop this They wound kill the Boks Vibe Go Bokke we proud of you Eben don't even read all this nonsense You my hero go bokke	Hero	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is this individual's hero and does not deserve to be targeted.	Positive
SA Rugby magazine...could we please focus on the rugby. On the fact that we are on our way to the WC. That there are 31 players preparing to play RUGBY. Etzebeth would probably only get 10 minutes worth of play time but speculation on what happend on one night out is taking up a lot of	Distracted	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is being framed by the media pushing a specific agenda when there are 30 other players to talk about.	Neutral

PR time. LET'S FOCUS ON RUGBY!!!!			
Everyone has a different point of view, concerning this matter. Here's food for thought. What if he was set up?	Racially attacked	This comment suggests that Etzebeth could have been set up.	Neutral
The Ben Stokes of rugby. We need him for the RWC though.	Distracted	This comment suggests that even if Etzebeth is guilty, he is necessary for the World Cup.	Neutral
Let the man go to wcup.. He can respond to this nonsense when he gets back.. This is destabilising our team.	Distracted	This comment suggests that this incident will distract Etzebeth before the World Cup and he should be allowed to deal with it when he gets back.	Positive
I really hope this is not one of those all blacks supporters in cape Town trying to pull a stunt before the the world cup to throw the BOKS a curve. Really funny that this should happen now	Distracted	This comment suggests that the timing of the incident suggests that it may have been intentional.	Neutral
Please.... This man is far from a racist. If you look how he carries himself on and off the field with the public and his team mates you can see this is a good bloke. He leaves the anger for the field not off the field. Etzebeath turn your eye to these things and bring the cup home. All the best mate.	Distracted	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is not a racist based off how he carries himself on and off the field.	Positive
Their own media must be trying to sabotage the World Cup! South Africa is a mess as a country. Crime, violence, hidden political agendas. Sad to see.	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that the media shows the worst parts of South Africa with their agendas.	Neutral
Lol Wow I've never seen such uproar, "the Media is trying to destabilize the boks" but why would they do that they are also South Africans who want us to with the Webb Ellis, people making up lame excuses taking Eben's Side, the law must be	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that if Etzebeth is guilty the truth will come out, but for now people should not get ahead of themselves.	Negative

applied Madoda equally, relax gents if he is truly innocent time will tell sanukutsha apha!			
Until a thorough and unbiased investigation is concluded this remains an "allegation".	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that it is nothing more than allegation.	Neutral
Ek kan rerig nie glo dat Eben so dom sou wees nie. As n ou kyk hoe met sy swart spanmaats op die veld is! Dis maar moeilik om te glo. STERKTE OU GROTE	Hero	This comment suggests that because of how many black teammates Etzebeth has, it's difficult to believe he's a racist.	Positive
I hope he doesn't have to switch positions from lock to locked-up	Possibly guilty	This comment is a play on words, suggesting that he would go from being a rugby player to a prisoner.	Negative
When are they going to disclose that one of his friends was stabbed in the neck and the guy who was pistol whipped was pistol whipped with his own gun... Amazes me each time how only one side is published	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that the truth is being hidden by the media as there is more to the story that wasn't told.	Negative
If Ben Stokes can beat up whoever he wants and still play in WC and Ashes then Eben should get a free pass too	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that England lets players play despite off-field incidents, so Etzebeth should also be allowed to play.	Positive
Just a ploy from the Cape Crusaders to disrupt the Bok team. Disgusting. If there is allegations involved keepnit out of the media and deal with it in the due process. Just another small minded person seeking his 5 seconds of fame	Distracted	This comment suggests that they are trying to distract the Springboks and someone is trying to get their five minutes in the limelight.	Neutral
How this countries people become a joke to the world..will try anything to make money out a well known player...try and destroy his reputation is discusting. Rascisim..oh please..so sick of the word.	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that complainant is trying to make money by destroying Etzebeth's reputation and portraying him as a racist.	Neutral

Ek se die man moet ons gaan help om die wereld beker te wen hy kan nie nou sy tyd mors met meetings nie! jjslaaik take a chill pill man mxm	Distracted	This comment suggests that Etzebeth should be allowed to go to the World Cup and shouldn't have to bother with meeting the Human Rights Commission.	Positive
trying to kill the Boks' vibe before the WC? Stop it people just stop	Distracted	This comment suggests that the individual is disappointed that the Springboks have to deal with this right before a World Cup.	Neutral
Dit is omdat ons Springbokke nie in rus en vrede met hulle mense kan kuier nie daar is altyd simpel mense wat hulle pla en as die bekende persoon reageer hardloop hulle skree skree na die media.	Distracted	This comment suggests that Springbok players aren't able to go out in public without being bothered by people and are quick to run to the media when things don't go their way.	Positive
It will actually shock me if the oke with the shortest fuse in world rugby remained completely calm and didn't do a thing as he says... #justsaying	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that because of Etzebeth's short temper it is unlikely that he wouldn't have reacted at all.	Positive
If Eben had punched Sammy Classens, he would have woken up this time next year!	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that if Etzebeth had assaulted anyone they would be hurt for a long time.	Positive
It will be a shame if he's guilty. He have a lot of non white supporters in SA. Me included If Eben is guilty they need to let him do charity work in that community for a year. Not a month	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that if Etzebeth is guilty he should be forced to give back to the community to show that he's sorry.	Neutral
I was never good at Maths simply because i dont understand all the equations. After all these years i still dont get it because we get the following B vs W= Just a fight C vs W= Just a fight W vs W = Just a fight W vs B = Racist W vs C = Racist Math sucks haha	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that whenever a white person argues with a person of colour they are always accused of being racist.	Neutral

The Media is trying everything in their power to get the boks down before the world cup.	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that the media are pushing their agenda just before the World Cup.	Negative
Love it how the media is trying to f@%k up the team's morale with these stories. First it was Kolisi's book and now this! The media wants us to fail! No news is good news!	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that the media always has something negative to say about the Springboks.	Negative
Wonder of Etzebeth dalk vir ashwin willemse daar raakgeloop het, want hy sit seker nog steeds buitekant die hrc se deur.	Possibly guilty	This comment is taking a dig at Ashwin Willemse, who accused his colleagues of being racist.	Neutral
To all the people getting emotional.. He literally just met with the HRC, which is the right thing to do. It doesn't mean he did anything sinister. In all probability he was clearing his name. And he did make a statement. Stop trying to place blame.	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that there is nothing for people to worry about, Etzebeth was taking the necessary steps to clear his name.	Positive
What twist? Gosh, can we please focus the attention on rugby now	Distracted	This comment suggests that attention is being shifted from rugby to Etzebeth.	Neutral
Great stuff. It is about time that the right people hear his side of the story. But SARugbyMag where is the twist?	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that the publication is sensationalizing the news as there are no new developments in the story.	Neutral
Sounds like a racial thing, notice didn't say racist. Some people can't tell the difference	Racially attacked	This comment suggests that people will interpret everything as racist nowadays.	Negative
HRC is a Anti White institution... All their focus is on whites and petty crimes.	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that the Human Rights Commission targets white people/	Neutral
These guys get provoked at times... and the fact that there was alcohol involved makes the story even more juicy... through in	Racially attacked	This comment suggests that people will do whatever they	Negative

some hearsay racism and you have front page news. Everyone wants to jump onto the bandwagon without having any concrete facts at hand. Disgusting.		can for media attention, even provoking rugby players.	
Ag kom ek sê julle. Seker weer van die ouens daar wat jaloers was op hom omdat hulle meisies seker nie hulle oë van hom af kon hou nie! Toe stage hulle die fight en blame hom!!	Racially attacked	This comment suggests that Etzebeth was set up by individuals who were jealous that he was getting all the attention.	Negative
How is this a twist?	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that the article is misleading as no new information was made available to the public in the article.	Neutral
Link not working for me but from what I understood from the first post. They had an altercation inside. So the other group left and waited for them outside? Sounds like they really wanted to provoke Eben and his group.(otherwise why wait for them to finish up inside?)	Distracted	This comment suggests that Etzebeth was provoked and did not go looking for a fight.	Neutral
Hopefully there is positive outcome ... doubt he was racist, he is one guys that make up the leadership group in the Bok and Stormers teams	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that because of the leadership role Etzebeth has in the team it is unlikely that he was racist.	Positive
pay the R150.000 and go to japan and say u are sorry that u klapped this person, but a pity u should have klapped much harder	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that Etzebeth should pay the complainant to be silent and should have hit them harder during the incident.	Positive
Are they referring to the 19 second video? I didn't see anything that implies anything at all. Maybe the HRC should focus on the 50 plus rapes and the 50 plus murders every single day instead of trying to fry white people for stupid reasons.	Distracted	This comment suggests that the Human Rights Commission should focus on the murders and rapes that take place in the country on a daily basis instead of targeting a rugby player over an alleged incident.	Neutral

I agree if he is guilty of being a bone head, he should be punished... If he was a victim of people wanting to celeb-bash him... They should get dealt with. You can hear Eben saying "jy soek nou @&#% die heel aand, nou het jy dit gekry" So maybe this guy was cruisin for a bruise... Maybe Eben just had a bone head mentality... Let's see. Hope justice gets served and not egos.	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that it's possible the complainant was pestering Etzebeth the whole evening and he got fed up but it is also possible that Etzebeth was just being a bully.	Positive
Ou Bra,,,,,Next Time, use that massive head of yours & just stay home with family & Friends 2 days before the Springbok squad announcement, especially when you heading to Japan hopefully for 6 weeks,,,,,Die Watergat In Langebaan will still be there for many Years!!! #GoBOKKE #BringItHome	Distracted	This comment suggests that Etzebeth should not have been out in the first place.	Positive
Mhmmmm this will be very interesting. I hope he doesn't get recalled from the squad. We know how these things work and how dragging they are.	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that things drag out in South Africa so Etzebeth should not get his hopes up.	Neutral
Eben probably did nothing wrong personally but if he surrounds himself with people who willynilly go along with racial slurs then he must pay the price. We unfortunately need to stop this nonsense and it starts by calling out racists.	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that Etzebeth may not have done anything wrong but it does not mean the people he surrounds himself with are not racists.	Positive
Ek dink die All Blacks sit agter hierdie hele storie. Hulle sal wat wil gee sodat Etzebeth nie aan die WC moet deelneem nie.	Distracted	This comment suggests that there is an ulterior motive by New Zealand fans to discredit Etzebeth right before the World Cup.	Neutral
Isn't "Sloeti" maybe behind all of this.	Distracted	This comment suggests that there may be someone else behind the alleged incident.	Neutral
Go enjoy your time overseas after the worldcup. Don't look back at	Distracted	This comment suggests that Etzebeth should not be	Positive

this and go make your money in a first world country!		distracted by the incident and should focus his attention on the future and life after the World Cup.	
So.... where is the twist?	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that there was no twist in the article.	Neutral
Is daar nog n kinkel in die kabel	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that there may be more to the story that comes to light.	Neutral
Was Sammy present?	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that there is someone behind the incident to drag Etzebeth down.	Neutral
Wie het die geveg gesien? Indien wel, lewer dan kommentaar. As jy 'n All Blacks ondersteuner is, bly weg. Ons ondersteun hierdie Bok tot daar genoegsame bewyse is om hom nie te ondersteun nie. Tot dan, Sterkte jou Yster!!	Racially attacked	This comment suggests that as South Africans we should stand behind Etzebeth until he is proven guilty or until real evidence comes to light.	Positive
Ok now what is the twist?	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that there is no twist, as suggested by the headline.	Neutral
Enige iets om ons span se gees te demp.Dit gaan maar so	Distracted	This comment suggests that the media will do anything to dampen the spirits of the Springboks.	Negative
The video is suspect. You don't hear or see Eben	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that there is something off about the incident as you don't see or hear Etzebeth in the video posted online.	Negative
Diversiory tactics - anything to get the Boks to fail.	Distracted	This comment suggests that the media will do anything to distract the Springboks from the upcoming World Cup.	Neutral
The Human Rights commission has no credibility anyway, who	Distracted	This comment suggests that the Human Rights	Negative

cares what they investigate or the conclusions that they come to.		Commission cannot be trusted and nobody should be bothered.	
Why does dis come up when when the rugby world cup is here Why didn't it happen wen he did it to the guy	Distracted	This comment suggests that the timing of the incident is too close to the World Cup for it to be a coincidence.	Negative
And what if the allegations against him is true?	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that there is a possibility that the allegations lodged against Etzebeth could be true.	Negative
You guys can carry on with the investigation after world cup we need this guy focused man vok	Distracted	This comment suggests that the investigation should be put on hold until the conclusion of the World Cup.	Positive
What twist? The only twist is Eben is being set up	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that there is no twist in the article, only Etzebeth being set up.	Positive
I agree John this racism thing is becoming a joke they spend more tax payers money chasing after someone that may have said a wrong word esp if they are white sorry to say instead of fighting real crime and people have become opportunists they antagonize someone and the minute they retaliate its racism then they run to the press and courts. Where were the days when a group got into a fight at a bar because of drinks bliksemed each other and got over it.	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that people will do whatever they can for an easy payout, like antagonizing a rugby player and then taking them to the Human Rights Commission.	Neutral
Its an All Blacks set-up to distract the Bokke Bring it on trolls	Distracted	This comment suggests that it is a plot to distract the Springboks.	Neutral
All Black supporters om hom uit die game te hou	Distracted	This comment suggests that it is a plot by New Zealand to keep Etzebeth from playing them.	Neutral

Waiting for the twist	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that there is no twist in the article, as suggested by the headline.	Neutral
What about certain politicians that use racial slurs all the time and nothing is done. Why is that? I think we all know the answer	Distracted	This comment suggests that politicians can get away with saying whatever they want but it is not the case with others.	Neutral
And the useless racist HRC always has to have a say!!	Distracted	This comment suggests that the Human Rights Commission always gets involved somehow.	Negative
I love this guy hope the allegations are not true.	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that because the individual likes Etzebeth, they hope the allegations are untrue.	Positive
Seems that somebody here is looking for a quick buck!	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that the complainant is looking to make easy money by lodging complaints against Etzebeth.	Negative
The HRC works for the All Blacks. Excuse the pun.	Possibly guilty	This comments suggests that the Human Rights Commission has a political agenda.	Neutral
Ok what twist ?	Possibly guilty	This comment suggests that there is no twist in the article as suggested in the headline.	Neutral
I am sorry to say the reality in South Africa is if you not a murderer,rapist, cash and transit heist specialist then the law or chris nissen and his human right commission wont touch or summons you just a week ago a 1 year old baby girl was raped in mitchells plain few days later the rapist was released due to insufficient evidence my God seriously have South Africa become a joke really using a certain word will ensure you end up in jail but these hardened criminals roam free I cant speculate what happened in	Distracted	This comment suggests that the Human Rights Commission should focus on pressing issues in the country as opposed an allegation against a rugby player.	Neutral

Langebaan between both parties but the human rights commission should rather focus on the burning issues thats pertinent to South Africa where crime is king and everyday citizens are being slaughtered			
Lets wait for the outcome's!.	Distracted	This comment suggests to wait for the outcome of the case instead of making assumptions.	Neutral
Los die man uit hy het homself verdedig...nou net wat hy n Springbok is nou is daar n bohaai gmaak...get real rerag!!!	Distracted	This comment suggests that the story is getting a lot of hype because Etzebeth is a public figure and because he has explained himself there should be no further stories about him.	Positive
We must wait for the facts.	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that the case should conclude before any assumptions are made.	Neutral
Police said Eben is in the clear...finish en klaar!	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is in the clear because the police said so and there should be no more discussion about it.	Positive
En hier gaan julle almal tekere. Daai vliegtuig staan al op die aanloopbaan en ref.... dis sulke tyd... sterkte Bokke!!!! Bring die beker huis toe	Hero	This comment suggests that the individual is unbothered by the claims because Etzebeth has already left to Japan.	Positive
Jamner... ek skaam my dood vir my dorp waarvoor ek so lief is . Ek is seker gereg gaan geskiet. INDIEN jy geheel en al onskuldig is Eben.... Ry hom/hulle tot in daantjie se kaller hok!!!! Weet nie wie word uit geskop, wag buite met n gun en word gem@€r met jou eie gun en sit dan bek op.... Selfverdedigig??? Maar nou ja....nie lus vir n bek geveg... Ek wag vir die beslissing.	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that Etzebeth did not act in self-defense because he was waiting outside already but wishes the Springboks well for the tournament.	Negative

Goooo Bokke moer daai allBlacks!!!!			
Politicians written all over it,these people have a way of taking us back	Distracted	This comment suggests that there is a political drive behind the allegations.	Neutral
Leave the man alone. Let him go play rugby	Hero	This comment suggests that Etzebeth should be left alone to ply his trade.	Positive
Somebody wants money. Thats all there is to it.	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that the complainant is looking for an easy pay out and there is nothing more to the story.	Neutral
They are just harassing the guy to make life difficult for him and distract him from his job in Japan. They've got no shame. In fact they're abusing his human rights.	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that the allegations have gone too far to distract Etzebeth ahead of the World Cup by abusing his human rights.	Positive
What twist? Drink your lemon twist and STFU!	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests there is no twist like the headline suggests.	Neutral
Innocent until proven guilty! ... but, if guilty.	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that Etzebeth should be innocent until proven guilty but should be held accountable if he is guilty.	Negative
I sooo wish that they could leave the Boks alone pleeeeeeeeeez	Distracted	This comment suggests that the Springboks should be left alone as they prepare for the World Cup.	Positive
Human Rights Comission get a life, Our focus is the RWC.	Distracted	This comment suggests that the individual only really cares about the World Cup and not the allegations surrounding Etzebeth.	Positive
Guilty or not, he should get a full pardon if the springboks win the worldcup	Distracted	This comment suggests that Etzebeth should not be held accountable if the Springboks win the World Cup.	Positive

Sammy Claassen en sy cape croesadders.	Racially attacked	This comment suggests that there is a political drive behind the allegations.	Neutral
Baie mense praat lyk hulle was daar	Innocent until circumstantial evidence	This comment suggests that a lot of people have opinions when they weren't there when the incident took place.	Neutral
Aish ja ne, I love him but if he is on the wrong side of the law hardy bou	Guilty	This comment suggests that while Etzebeth is a good player, he should not get off lightly if he is found guilty.	Negative
Sorteer dit tog na die WC uit asseblief. Hy moet saam	Distracted	This comment suggests that the matter can be resolved at the conclusion of the World Cup, he is needed in the squad during the tournament.	Positive
We are behind you Eben. This is just ridiculous!! Go give the real All Blacks horns boet!	Hero	This comment suggests that the allegations are out of line and he should be allowed to play against New Zealand.	Positive

Article 10: *Sport24* (27 August 2019)

Description of Eben Etzebeth's alleged assault incident (words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs).	Theme	Notes	Positive, negative or neutral
AB supporters from the WC trying to get under Springboks skin?	Disruption	This comment suggests that New Zealand supporters are trying to distract the Springbok team as a whole, not just Etzebeth.	Positive
if he was high he might probably forgotten what happened. eiy alcohol is a curse.	Unbelievable	This comment suggests that Etzebeth may have been under the influence of drugs and alcohol, which would have caused him to forget what he did.	Negative

The proof is in the pudding and ao dar there is none	Hero	This comment suggests that there is no evidence to prove that Etzebeth is guilty.	Positive
Why is only fingers being pointed at him and his friends the other guys apparantly homeless started the fight inside the bar ! Suddenly they were drinking tea and coffee by their accounts totally good citizens , minding their own thing not ever swearing or anything HAHAAHAH komaan guys if you live by the sword you must be willing to take a few blows also	Unbelievable	This comment indicates a lack of trust in the credibility of the story because all the allegations are being made against Etzebeth but the user suggests it was the homeless person who started the fight in the first place. This user believes that if the victim started the fight, they should be willing to fight and not run away when it doesn't go their way.	Positive
All I can say is what I've seen. When Eben has been in Langebaan he has always made time for people particularly children. He has been with family and friends but has taken time to pose with kids for pictures and always had a word with them and this very much so across the colour spectrum.	Hero	This comment suggests that Etzebeth always makes time to engage with fans in Langebaan, and should not be called a racist because he engages with fans of all races.	Positive
Rassie must release Eben Etsebeth from Springbok duty and withdraws him from Rugby World Cup Squad	Racist	This comment suggests that the onus is on coach Rassie Erasmus to remove him from the Rugby World Cup, which indicates a sense of uncertainty.	Negative
Leave him alone	Hero	This comment suggests that Etzebeth should be acquitted of any charges and left alone.	Positive
Fool trying to collapse us South African rugby fans.	Distruption	This comment suggests that the alleged victim is trying to turn rugby fans against each other.	Positive
Guy probably said something about his hair and combing it with a fire cracker.	Disruption	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is insecure about his appearance and when the victim made a comment about	Negative

		his hair, that's when the fight broke out.	
I have the video! I want R50000 for it. 😏😏😏😏. Net n ou grappie.	Victim of sensationalism	This user is being sarcastic by suggesting that they have the video and if anybody would like to see it, they can pay to see it.	Neutral
Where is this video?	Unbelievable	This user wants to see the video before coming to any sort of conclusion.	Neutral
So let's hear the other side of this story	Unbelievable	This comment suggests mistrust with some uncertainty as only Etzebeth has been able to share his version of events and only when the victim tells their side of the story will they trust what is said.	Neutral
The VN begs to differ assuming the VN is MC Hammer.. Legit	Unbelievable	This comment suggests a lack of trust because the alleged voicenote that they have heard places Etzebeth at the scene.	Negative
Hope its not true, great player. But would he admit that he did it, more often than not when things happen the immediate response is a big no.	Hero	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is a great rugby player and it would be a great loss to the team if he was guilty. There is an underlying tone of mistrust as the user does not think Etzebeth would come forward if the allegations were true.	Positive
This is not the 1st time. There were other similar incidents involving him being racist....I was a fan of his even though I support the All Blacks. Hy kan nou in sy moer kruip en ek hoop hyt n kak world cup en kom nie weer terug huistoe nie.	Racist	This comment suggests that this is not the first time that Etzebeth has been accused of racism and the fan has lost their trust in him.	Negative
Say it ain't so Richie	Unbelievable	This comment suggests that the reader would like to believe that the allegations are untrue.	Neutral

It doesnt matter if he is racist we need him at the world cup	Disruption	This comment suggests that the allegations should be disregarded until the end of the Rugby World Cup because Etzebeth is a key player in the squad.	Positive
I hope it's not true, he is one of my fav rugby players.	Hero	This comment suggests the reader looks up to Etzebeth and for that reason, they hope he is not implicated.	Positive
He must have been provoked.	Unbelievable	This comment suggests that Etzebeth doesn't act out irrationally, so for him to have done this he would have had to have been provoked.	Positive
Typical journalists behaving like the cntz they are...	Victim of sensationalism	This comment suggests the journalists are creating their own narrative to suit their agenda, which is typical behaviour and expected of them.	Neutral
Its probably a rubbish story. Sensationalism. He probably had an argument with a non white person and then the racist card was grabbed again. Same old story every day.	Victim of sensationalism	This comment suggests that the media sensationalise stories to create a racist narrative when two people who are different races have an argument. This user believes it was just an argument and because it didn't work in his favour he took the story to the media because he knew it would get picked up.	Neutral
Some hobo looking for a payout! Nothing more! Move on!!	Victim of sensationalism	This comment suggests the homeless person who made the allegations is just looking to make money off Etzebeth and the story should be scrapped.	Positive
This morning it was assault and a gun and now it is assault and racist slur? I am going to go out on a limb and say that someone might have	Victim of sensationalism	This comment suggests that as the story is developing, more and more is being added. This user believes it was just a fight but Etzebeth wasn't involved.	Neutral

been assaulted but he wasn't involved. Just sensationalism!			
Will he then admit?	Disruption	This comment suggests as lack of trust in Etzebeth, who the user believes will likely not admit to what they've done.	Negative
The curse of the Etzebeths... ☹️☹️	Related to a family with a questionable reputation	This comment suggests that this is typical behaviour of the Etzebeth family and is to be expected from them.	Negative
More and more sensationalism slowly seeping through the 24 group.	Victim of sensationalism	This comment suggests that Sport 24 sensationalise a lot of their stories and it is starting to show.	Neutral
Some one you keyboard ninjas have nothing better to do get a fucking life plz it's Monday morning Facebook police should contact most of your office and yeah guess who fucked then	Victim of sensationalism		Negative
There's no time or need to see how this issue plays out, i was no witness either so who knows the facts accept the media and most of us go by that, it's true that Eben is bit agro and visible in the games he play, the last couple of games I'd seen him bit calm and just go by his business but when one read this in the media it's hard not to believe since i know Eben is bit agro and not by his status should he go unpunished if facts are true, his a role model to most rugby players and surely many look up to him, he should be punished and so should Scarra Ntubeni who slapped the ball from the ball boys hands that was uncalled for and unprofessional for their status they carry, they should be the example and lead from the front just my take..	Unbelievable		Positive

We are all African wats up with dis black and white thing	Disruption	This comment suggests that a New Zealand supporter is trying to distract South Africans by making issues appear to be racial issues.	Positive
You can see absolutely nothing in the video..... but the person taking the so called video had some nasty and vile comments.	Unbelievable	This comment suggests that nowhere in the video in Etzebeth implicated, but the person taking the video was an aggressor who made unacceptable comments.	Neutral
So where's the video then?	Victim of sensationalism	This comment suggests that until they can see the video, the situation isn't believable.	Neutral
What did you expect ?.. a racist will always be racist..so many pretenders in the Bokteam + coaches and even still in our country??	Racist	This comment suggests that Etzebeth has always been racist and that will never change. The user also suggests a lack of trust in SA Rugby because of how many other coaches and players are racists, which is unacceptable for them to be able to represent the country.	Negative
Always loved the guy,but his personality off the field and his racism turns me off if it's true	Racist	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is incredible on the field, but the user believes he is a racist off the field which makes it difficult to like him as a person.	Negative
It is interesting though to see who are the people who attack him in stead of waiting for the facts.....can you remember the Schweizer Reneke case.	Victim of sensationalism		Positive
Net ñ klomp twak . Oningeligte berig of doelbewiste sensasie wat gesoek word .	Victim of sensationalism	This comment suggests that the journalists are at fault for publishing a story they have sensationalised.	Neutral
For someone who drinks brandy and coke from the try nations cup a few hours after the boks won it,	Racist	This comment suggests that this is typical behaviour to be expected from Etzebeth	Negative

this is not a surprise to me, its part of his character		because of how he celebrates when the Springboks win.	
Etzebeth has always been a trouble maker on the field, I want to recall an incident with Lood De Jager and Sonny Bill Williams. Making trouble fits his character.	Related to a family with a questionable reputation	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is a dirty rugby player, so it is fitting that he would face allegations of assault.	Negative
Bit disappointed hearing about this hes one of our best players and 1000s of kids look up to him, lets see how this plays out.	Disruption	This comment suggests disappointment but slight hope at the allegations, because Etzebeth is a national rugby player and a role model to children.	Negative
Die ou het seker homself so geslaan. Where there's a smoke there's a fire	Racist	This comment suggests the victim injured themselves and is trying to use Etzebeth to cover it up, and should be investigated for making such allegations.	Negative
Well a case has been opened against him. Eyewitnesses has made statements. So yeah lets wait and see.	Unbelievable	This comment suggests that people should wait for more information to become available before making allegations.	Negative
It had to come, it always does.	Disruption	This comment suggests that the timing of the incident isn't coincidental as there are always scandals ahead of large tournaments.	Negative
I hope his telling the truth because this is bad news for not only him but for all of us !	Disruption	This comment suggests that Etzebeth will not be the only one who misses out at the Rugby World Cup, but the fans too, which shows the influence he has on the communtiy.	Negative
Aha, we will be waiting for further developments with keen interest. We know there are many pretenders in that Bok squad.	Unbelievable	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is not the only player in the squad who pretends not to be racist.	Negative
Video doing rounds on social media? Why not post it on this	Victim of sensationalism	This comment suggests a lack of trust in reporting as Sport24 reported a video was	Neutral

article so we can see if its him or not? Please Sport24		circulated on social media, yet did not publish the video which could be to ensure credibility.	
klink soos getroud met rugby (It sounds like the reality show, Getroud Met Rugby).	Victim of sensationalism		Neutral
...I hope it is not a case of where there is smoke there is fire.	Unbelievable	This comment suggests the user is unsure which side to take because generally the rumours are true.	Negative
Lol what reporters will do for a little publicity, sick	Victim of sensationalism	This comment suggests that the journalists are trying to make a story out of nothing, which is at the expense of Etzebeth's reputation.	Neutral
Leave him alone	Hero	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is innocent and should be left alone.	Positive
Notorious.	Related to a family with a questionable reputation	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is renowned for his unacceptable behaviour.	Negative
ANCEFF going after the whitey sportman as well now	Disruption	This comment suggests that political parties are targeting whites sportsmen in an attempt to turn people against each other.	Neutral
Moer hulle!	Hero	This comment suggests that Etzebeth did the right thing by beating the victim up.	Positive
Everyone can say what they want with no consequences but behold a white guy says anything then everyone's a victim. Fucking grow up and get a life. You are weak with a victim mentality or as Juliearse says you are cry babies. For those who commented that he is a troublemaker on the rugby field, that's is job. When you hit another person that is not your color it is not necessarily racially	Hero	This comment suggests that it's Etzebeth's job as a rugby player to intimidate the opposition, and this cannot be an assumption for what he is like off the field and there's a chance that he was provoked.	Positive

motivated. Maybe the other guy was just being an asshole. What does race have to do with it			
Now days if u are white and u let off a FART U ARE BEING RACIST.	Racist	This comment suggests that nowadays doing anything while being white is enough justification to be considered a racist.	Neutral

Article 11: Sport24 (27 August 2019)

Description of Eben Etzebeth's alleged assault incident (words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs).	Theme	Notes	Positive, negative or neutral
If you believe this version of events then you will also believe the version of Gavin Watson's suicide. The reputation of the Etzebeth brothers are well known in Langebaan.	Related to a family with a questionable reputation	This comment suggests that the Etzebeth family has a reputation for being violent so anybody who believes otherwise is falling for the media's tricks.	Neutral
Dyantyi, Bombi and the Ballboy and now this. Clearly there's a third party with an agenda to put these guys in a bad before world cup time. They can't get it right with throwing quota issues at the team so they'll try to disrupt them in other ways. Boks must just lay low now and focus. Wouldn't put it past a few jealous parties to pay people to try and cause a ruckus	Disruption	This comment suggests there is an ulterior motive trying to disrupt the Springboks ahead of their World Cup preparations.	Neutral
Still no arrest, I wonder if we change roles in these attacks if the speed of investigation and time of arrest will be the same, nothing new to our country though remember the school boys in Pretoria, remember Toks, remember Oscar. I am not saying who is guilty but let the justice system work equally fast for all citizens.	Unbelievable	This comment suggests the police favour sportsmen because if Etzebeth wasn't a public figure he would never have been caught.	Neutral

Something fishy here...	Disruption	This comment suggests there is an ulterior motive.	Negative
One guy want to mess with a group of 15...including Eben and his brother...you must be a special kind of stupid...	Related to a family with a questionable reputation	This comment suggests that anybody who tries to pick a fight with Etzebeth and his family are not very smart.	Positive
NZ Hansen's version of Suzi.... circa 2019	Disruption	This comment suggests the story has a similar agenda.	Neutral
The NZ supporters are trying to frame him	Victim of sensationalism	This comment suggests Etzebeth is being framed by New Zealand supporters.	Neutral
What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas Etzabeth ju yster Imp2	Hero	This comment suggests that whatever happened should be a secret because he is so cool.	Positive
It won't work NZ supporters...	Disruption	This comment suggests New Zealand supporters are trying to make an issue of something that isn't.	Neutral
what happened in the street afterwards ?! that's the question .!!	Unbelievable	This comment suggests that whatever happened outside the establishment is not being spoken about.	Negative
Go Eben..... Selfverdediging is nog nie teen die wet nie...	Disruption	This comment suggests self defense is not against the law.	Positive
Hoe kan een outjie vir Eben aan vat, of hy was dronk of net gedink hy sal Eben neersit, kan mens nou so stupid wees.	Disruption	This comment suggests whoever took Etzebeth on was not thinking clearly.	Positive
EBEN JOU YSTER.	Hero	This comment suggests Etzebeth is a hero for what he did to defend himself. Calling him an "yster" suggests that the fan looks up to him and admires what he did.	Positive

Article 12: Sport24 (26 August 2019)

Description of Eben Etzebeth's alleged assault incident (words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs).	Theme	Notes	Positive, negative or neutral
Etzebeth should be temporary dismiss from the springboks until this matter is settle	Racist	This comment suggests that Etzebeth should not be allowed to travel with the Springboks until his name is cleared.	Negative
Not suprised at all!! Typically!	Racist	This comment suggests that it is typical of SA Rugby to let players get away with things.	Negative
This is just a story that was totally blown out of proportion by a group of Cape crusaders. But that failed miserably.	Victim of sensationalism	This comment suggests that the story was blown out of proportion because there were no real grounds for speculation.	Positive
I hope Etzebeth is not implicated in this incident	Disrupted	This comment suggests the individual is hopeful Etzebeth is not implicated in the charges.	Positive

Article 13: Sport24 (27 August 2019)

Description of Eben Etzebeth's alleged assault incident (words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs).	Theme	Notes	Positive, negative or neutral
In South Africa affidavits is sometimes not worth the paper its written on. In so called racism cases witnesses can be bought. Amazing how many people are so sure Eben is guilty,based on what,just because he is white ? I dont like Eben I dont like his legacy as a fighter, but his haters did not only find him guilty, they want to decide on the punishment	Victim of sensationalism	This comment suggests that Etzebeth has only been implicated in the assault because he is white and there are no real grounds for what a racist really is.	Positive

as well. THAT makes me wonder. Isn't the people who shout racism, racism the real racists ?			
Ek bwens mense wil so tekere gaan oor malema en ander idiote wat openlik op TV uitblaker dat hulle witmense gaan doodmaak. Daaroor is julle stil, maar omdat iemand (wat DALK Etsebeth is) n ou gemoer het, nou is die hele wereld op hol. As dit n bruin of swartman was wat die "aanrander" was, het ons nooit eers hieroor op sosiale media gelees nie, want volgens die land se meerderheid, kan slegs witmense rassiste wees. Wys net hoe ongeskoold en ongeletterd die "meerderheid" is...	Victim of sensationalism	This suggests people want politicians to face the same heat that Etsebeth is facing over allegations.	Neutral
A so call black rugby player are charged with doping can't go to World cup. A so call white player assault a colored man his charged but go to World cup. Minister of sport come on. Mark Alexander come on . You are RUGBY SA PUPPETS. JULIE ROUX AND RUSIE ARE IN CONTROL OF RSA RUGBY . RUGBY SA WILL NOT WIN THE WORLD CUP.	Victim of sensationalism	This comment suggests South Africa will not be successful at the World Cup because of the favouritism they show to white players and can be easily influenced.	Negative
Come to Ireland , Bar fights happen a lot , people fight call each other names , lick wounds carry on drinking. Police slaps you on the hand and that is it. Nothing more , but run to social media and carry on like winging, winy cowards and then watch what community does to you. Grow up and move on his has a tough road ahead with world cup.	Disruption	This comment suggests that there is nothing abnormal about the fight as this happens all the time in other countries, this story just made headlines because it was posted on social media.	Neutral
Cape Crusaders are the worst	Disruption	This comment suggests Cape Crusaders were behind the allegations.	Neutral

There's a lot of moffies in RSA. Nothing wrong with a good doeks. Every now and then. Sort a the Boys from the Men. Hahaha. You keep keep going .You good thang. Fuck all the wimps.	Victim of sensationalism	This comment suggests there is nothing new about fighting, South Africans need to be stronger and not run to social media when things don't go their way.	Positive
This absolute nonsense. Stop trying to sabotage our RWC hopes. The video shows nothing. Nothing!!! The whole of SA should stand behind our team and Eben rather than focus on a dismal little pub brawl. Its happens all the time. The media, the devil. Hands off	Victim of sensationalism	This comment suggests the story is an attempt to sabotage the Springboks over a small bar fight which happens very often.	Positive
eben bly by die huis, en sorteer die laaities uit in langebaan, die eerste paar games is nie n probleem nie, kwagga sal die japanese uitsort (Eben stay at home and sort the boys in Langebaan out. The first few games won't be a problem. Kwagga [Smith] will sort out the Japanese players).	Unbelievable	This comment suggests Etzebeth should not travel with the team to Japan and should stay home because there is enough depth in the squad to cover it.	Negative
Facebook, where everyone is a Hero & Correct. You guys crack me up.	Victim of sensationalism	This comment suggests people commenting take the story too seriously and personally,	Neutral
Springbok must beat Japan	Disruption	This comment suggests the Springboks should beat Japan at the World Cup after losing to them in 2015.	Neutral
ofcoz u are fine buddy.. south Africans.. specially coloured people.. are more sensitive than blacks.. go and get them tiger!!.. bring back the cup to us	Hero	This comment suggests the story was always going to make headlines because coloured people are too sensitive nowadays.	Positive
He alleges one of the coloured men then threw a brick at Etzebeth's Mustang, and that's when the fight broke out. He says one of the "hotn**s" took out a gun, but Etzebeth's friend	Victim of sensationalism	This comment suggests that Etzebeth's car was damaged which is how the altercation started but he was not	Negative

took it from him and pistol whipped him in the face. He says Etzebeth's girlfriend came outside and he went to fetch the lock and sent him in. He and Etzebeth's friend apparently stayed behind and one of the coloured men allegedly stabbed the friend, "who was too drunk to run away, in the neck, f**ked up hospitaal toe".		involved as he was told to leave.	
Hier is meer politiek hier betrokke as waarom dit regtig gaan.Eben was aangeval deur all bek ondersteuners.Enige persoon is geregtig om homself en sy eiendom te beskerm.Ek was al by Watergat om rugby daar te kyk en waar daar arrogante all bek ondersteuners is wat uitlokkende aanmerkings maak.As jy wil uitdeel moet jy kan vat ook.	Victim of sensationalism	This comment suggests there was a political drive behind the attack and all the people who usually hang out at the establishment always have things to say about others.	Positive
Dink julle maar Eben is so onskuldig. Daar kom groot verrassings... Watch maar.	Racist	This comment suggests that people will be shocked to learn that Etzebeth is not the saint people think he is.	Negative
Hy mak ni di bokspan. As hy kak aangja ht moet hy di gevolge dra. Bokke gn in elk gval sonder hom wen. Wa da n rokie trek is da bslis n vuurjie. Hou op om dsi donder so te bskerm . (He must not be in the Springbok team. If he starts trouble he must deal with the consequences. Where there is smoke there is fire. Stop trying to protect him).	Racist	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is not irreplaceable and if this is how he behaves then he should probably be replaced in the squad.	Negative
Die son betaal seker goed vir sulke kak stories (The Sun pays a lot of money for rubbish stories).	Victim of sensationalism	This comment takes a dig at the publication for paying money for ridiculous stories.	Neutral
Where's the video etc	Unbelievable	This comment suggests that if there is a video and more evidence it should be made public.	Neutral

Shew, the irony of people jumping to defend their savior really is too much. Always innocent until proven guilty for some lol. Hypocrisy at its finest. Such hotheaded hooligans and their families could be recorded in front of hundreds of eye whitenesses but they'd defend them to the death. Just another day in SA I guess	Victim of sensationalism	This comment suggests that people always see the good in Etzebeth instead of seeing the story for what it is, which is typical in South Africa.	Negative
It seems that Etzebeth was too fast in pronouncing on his innocence. An Attorney who represents the interests of the complainant/s confirmed that 4 people made affidavits to the police. According to the police the investigation is ongoing. What was the other important news in Die Burger (pg3) was that two members of the Langebaan yacht club complain via e-mail about alleged racist conduct by Etzebeth and/or friends of him. The two Victor Khan and Andy Khan is members of the yacht club. Now the silly conspiracy theory is becoming even more absurd	Unbelievable	This comment suggests that Etzebeth was too quick to try and clear his name because 4 people came forward against him which led to the investigation after Langebaan residents complained of his behaviour.	Negative
Good luck for the World Cup Eben Etzebeth you are the man and player for this Contest.	Hero	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is a great player and is the perfect fit for the Springboks at the World Cup.	Positive
Great stuff now he can focus on the game	Hero	This comment suggests relief that Etzebeth is in the clear and can focus solely on the World Cup.	Positive
I just dont know why we must be angry at the news. It was never about rugby . It was about a fair and unbiased process for all concerned. If that process took place we would support it. However I believe your celebration is premature. The senior prosecutor must formally pronounce that they are not going to prosecute him for ANY crime.	Victim of sensationalism	This comment suggests it was a racial issue from the beginning and unfair to the complainants because he was cleared of assault and not racial slurs. The individual also comes to the defense of Cape Crusaders who would have targeted a different player if	Negative

He said he was according to the police in the clear on assault but what about allegedly calling people " Hotnots" . To my mind as serious as the assault charge. Now apparently we (Cape Crusaders) did this because we fear Etzebeth. If we wanted to do the All Blacks a favour the ones we would have targeted must be Herschel Jantjies or Cheslin Kolbe. On the available evidence they pose more of a threat than Etzebeth. Broderick Retallick was born to be the best in the world. So yes silly conspiracy theories started to give the Boks comfort and suddenly fantasy is fact		they really wanted to cause disruption in the team.	
I reckon if you got clapped by Eben you would not be complaining on social media, but rather bragging how you some how lived to tell the tale...	Unbelievable	This comment suggests that the story is unlikely because most people would have loved to share that they got slapped by Etzebeth.	Positive
Isn't that the standard Police response?	Unbelievable	This comment questions the credibility of the allegations because police always have to interview the accused.	Neutral
Yster le aan pale toe	Hero	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is great and should carry on playing good rugby.	Positive
Why are people judging without any facts? I don't know the facts but apparently he was provoked. If there was a racist incident I will withdraw my comments but until such time leave the man alone	Unbelievable	This comment suggests that if it was just assault then it was self defense but if he was racist then he should be held accountable.	Positive
Almal het iets te sê...maar niemand sê wat gelei het tot die insedent ni...ek glo die man wat wat gmoer was het die hele saak begin...en die wat die video gmaak het...is net so rasisties wat hule vloek ok ok Eben.	Victim of sensationalism	This comment suggests that the complainant started the altercation and is just as guilty because of the way they spoke to Etzebeth.	Neutral
Given our country's bad record in terms of political history its unexceutable 4 a high profile	Victim of sensationalism	This comment suggests that high profile athletes should not get away from such	Negative

athlete 2 become involve in rassist insidents. He must be released from his Springbok duties and be withdrawn from RWC Squad. Alligations like these are not just set up. What type of respect does he apply to his mutual players like Herchelle Jantjies and Warwick Galant...		allegations so easily because of the nature of the allegations and consideration should be made for how people of colour in the squad feel about it.	
I guess everyone would have been happier with a different headline?" Springbok lock shot outside bar".	Victim of sensationalism	This comment suggests that people commenting on the post would have preferred for something worse to happen to Etzebeth.	Negative
What is more important is "What do you say???"	Unbelievable	This comment asks the audience what they have to say about the incident.	Neutral
Maybe Eben didn't moer the oke...he just stood and watched as his friends did and didn't try to stop the thugs. Or wait....maybe he didn't see what was happening because he was pissing himself wet from being gesuip? Or uhm...maybe he was watching and supporting the thugs, confining the man getting pistol whipped. What a hero	Hero	This comment suggests that there could be several reasons why Etzebeth chose to or not to get involved, but either way he is a hero for what he did.	Positive
TheFkn Cape Crusader dooses with mis-directed loyalties scared their beloved team of dooses will get panel beaten. Fknlids, fokof	Victim of sensationalism	This comment suggests All Blacks fans should be embarrassed to not support the Springboks.	Neutral
Dankie het nooit die stories geglo nie sterkte bring vir ons fie beker huis toe	Disruption	This comment suggests the individual is relieved they never believed the story in the first place.	Positive
Not even the police can touch Ysterberg!!	Hero	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is immune from anyone, and is untouchable by even the police. Calling could be interpreted "ysterberg" is a play on words meaning he is strong and invincible.	Positive

Typical response from so many experts. They know nothing, weren't there, no evidence of the claims and no IQ, just political hangers on, amazing hate.	Victim of sensationalism	This comment suggests everyone has an opinion even though they have no idea what really happened because they weren't there.	Neutral
Strange how people just jumps on a bandwagon oblivious to what went down but speaks with authority like they were there. No one knows what went down or what happened. Let the process run its course.	Victim of sensationalism	This comment suggests that people are so quick to judge without having all the facts or knowing the full story and should rather let the law take its course.	Neutral
Go you good thing! Eben for President.	Hero	This comment suggests that Etzebeth is amazing and should be president.	Positive
We as the SAPS(SOUTH AFRICAN PEOPLE SERVICE) know nothing of such... are u talking about us Eben	Unbelievable	This comment suggests that the public know nothing of him being cleared.	Neutral
Still don't give a f***, next time ask.	Unbelievable	This comment takes a dig at the publication for publishing so many articles about Etzebeth.	Neutral
Only the doctors can say that you are "fine" Eben And please don't let this distract you, what every happened, you're human afterall, as long as the authorities said it's fine.	Hero	This comment suggests that Etzebeth may be cleared by police after the incident but what about what happened to him mentally.	Neutral
Boetie boetie Langebaan police	Disruption	This comment suggests Langebaan police are a joke.	Neutral
En daar fail die arme cape crusaders se plannetjie. In vervolg moet hulle maar hulle eie familie se eiendome beskadig en dan hulle eie mense probeer frame. Ek is bly die sakie was vinnig afgehandel.	Victim of sensationalism	This comment suggests the Cape Crusaders' plans to frame Etzebeth failed and they were dealt with quickly and with no return.	Positive
Lucky they found a bok supporter in SAPS	Unbelievable	This comment suggests Etzebeth got off lightly because someone who works	Positive

		for the police is a Springboks fan.	
Sounds like a worried man	Unbelievable	This comment suggests Etzebeth was worried he would not be cleared to travel.	Negative
Sure buddy	Unbelievable	This comment suggests Etzebeth is not actually free from the saga.	Negative
Lol what a joke	Unbelievable	This comment suggests it's laughable that Etzebeth got off so lightly.	Negative
The All Blacks started the rumour	Disruption	This comment suggests the rumour was started by New Zealand rugby.	Neutral
Glad to hear that,now go kick some All Black ass	Hero	This comment suggests Etzebeth should give his best at the World Cup.	Positive
funny how there is a race incident 30 days before every world cup.	Disruption	This comment suggests the timing of the incident is no coincidence.	Negative
Why do we always see this shit just before a major tournament? We are our own worst enemies. Good luck Boks and make us all proud.	Disruption	This comment suggests the timing of the incident is no coincidence and things of this nature always happen to the Springboks before a major tournament.	Negative
This absolute nonsense. Stop trying to sabotage our RWC hopes. The video shows nothing. Nothing!!! The whole of SA should stand behind our team and Eben rather than focus on a dismal little pub brawl. Its happens all the time. The media, the devil. Hands off	Victim of sensationalism	This comment suggests that bar fights happen often and people should be supportive of Etzebeth because the video gives nothing away.	Positive

ADDENDUM D: TURNITIN SIMILARITY REPORT

Sports journalism, fandom, and social cohesion: The framing of Springbok Eben Etzebeth's assault incident* on the Facebook pages of selected news organisations

BRD Bain

 orcid.org/0000-0001-8928-1088

Thesis submitted for the degree *Magister Artium* in Communication at the North-West University

Supervisor: Ms. C. Pretorius

Co-supervisor: Dr. N. Metula

Match Overview

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127	Nature Bunch, Ben A.	<1%
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