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ASPECTS OF HOOLIGAN VIOLENCE

A Reappraisal of Sociological Research into Football Hooliganism

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ABSTRACT:

Systematic and detailed comparative research into hooligan identities constitutes a vital new approach to the study of football hooliganism. Despite the ongoing globalization of football culture and societies at large, there remain important national and local variations in the manifestation of football hooliganism worldwide. These dissimilarities thwart efforts to conceptualize and explain football hooliganism as a homogeneous phenomenon and, more specifically, seriously limit the applicability of dominant sociological theories on the subject. It is argued in this essay that comparative research into football hooliganism should move beyond general explanations in terms of societal fault lines and towards a more detailed analysis of hooligan identities and social interactions between hooligans and significant others. Although emphasizing the great practical heterogeneity of football hooliganism, the author suggests that a number of universal aspects can be identified. On the basis of long-term fieldwork among hooligan formations, the author distinguishes six key aspects of football hooliganism as a transnational phenomenon: excitement and pleasurable emotional arousal; the construction of hard masculine identity; territorial identifications; the individual and collective management of reputation; solidarity and belonging; and sovereignty and autonomy.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Two decades after spectator violence at football matches was first officially recognized as an international cause for concern, with the ratification of the 1985 European Convention on Spectator Violence, the common stereotype of football hooliganism as an exclusively ‘English disease’ no longer prevails. It has been replaced by a belief that, while in Britain football-related violence may be on the decline, hooliganism on the Continent is perhaps more serious and less effectively controlled. Despite the growing public and media focus on hooligan behaviour in other parts of the world, academic research into football hooliganism still concentrates disproportionately on the British situation. In this essay I want to move away from this narrow focus towards a discussion of the diversity of football hooliganism worldwide. I argue that sociologists have been overlooking or undervaluing cross-cultural dissimilarities in the manifestation of football hooliganism. These variations have important implications for the applicability of sociological approaches that tend to explain football hooliganism in terms of the specific class bases of football-related violence or of historical developments in British football. Both types of explanations cannot fully account for the characteristics of football hooliganism in non-British contexts.

The aim of this paper is threefold. First, it seeks to conceptualize the manifestation of football hooliganism in a comparative context. This task is not unproblematic and raises a number of critical issues as to what distinguishes football hooliganism from other types of spectator violence at football matches. Second, I discuss the main sociological approaches to the study of football hooliganism and their limitations in a comparative context. Third, the essay seeks to provide a foundation for future comparative research into football hooliganism through an outline of the key aspects of football hooliganism as a transnational phenomenon. I argue that despite the great practical heterogeneity of the phenomenon, a number of common elements can be identified in the construction of hooligan identities. I illustrate these aspects with examples from my fieldwork among hooligan formations in the Netherlands, England and Spain.

2. WHAT IS FOOTBALL HOOLIGANISM?

There is no precise definition of ‘football hooliganism’. The phenomenon lacks a legal definition and a precise demarcation of membership, and the concept is used to cover a variety of actions which take place in more or less directly football-related contexts (Dunning,

2000: 142; Williams, 2001: 1). Contemporary scholars such as Frosdick and Marsh (2005: 27-29) tend to acknowledge the problems in defining football hooliganism yet they avoid any attempt to propose a (working) definition of the subject in their own studies. The label 'football hooliganism' is, in fact, a construct of the media and politicians rather than a social scientific concept. It is often used in a 'cover-all' sense, in which various forms of minor and more serious 'violence' are grouped together under the umbrella term 'football hooliganism' to refer to football fans who cause 'harm' to society.

In search of a more precise conceptualization of football hooliganism, an ideal typical distinction can be drawn between spontaneous incidents of spectator violence and the behaviour of socially organized fan groups that engage in competitive violence, principally with fan groups of opposing football clubs (Spaaij, 2005b: 1; Giulianotti, 2001: 141; Stokvis, 1989: 148-152). The distinction between spontaneous violence and more socially organized and premeditated forms of spectator violence is historically observable in a shift from a pattern in which attacks on match officials and opposing players predominated over attacks on rival fans, to a pattern in which inter-fan group fighting and fighting between fans and the police became the predominant form of spectator disorderliness (Dunning, 1994: 136). This shift has taken place in various European countries, but at different times.

The genesis of football hooliganism as a widely recognized matter of concern lies in (the media coverage of) the increasingly violent 'youth end' rivalries that emerged in the 1960s in England, particularly in the aftermath of the 1966 World Cup Finals. Compared to the inter-group rivalries that developed from the 1960s onwards, the spectator violence that took place at football matches in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was relatively unorganized, spontaneous and *ad hoc* (Holt, 1990: 343). The concept of football hooliganism in its contemporary sense thus refers to the social genesis of distinctive fan subcultures and their engagement in regular and collective violence, primarily with rival peers (Giulianotti, 1999: 49; Spaaij, 2005b: 1).¹

We should be aware, however, that the proposed definition cannot fully account for the complexity and variability of the phenomenon. At least five conceptual dilemmas can be identified. First, while football hooliganism primarily consists of competitive violence between rival fan groups, hooligans' violent behaviour is not restricted to inter-group fighting but may include missile throwing, vandalism, attacks on police or non-hooligan supporters, or

¹ In a limited number of cases, comparable traditions of football hooliganism existed before the 1960s, such as in Glasgow and Barcelona. These early traditions of football hooliganism differ from their modern equivalents in that they were mostly local or regional and did not involve the regular attendance of large groups of young fans.

racial abuse. At least in some countries, hooligan groups may consider police a 'legitimate opponent', especially in the process of trying to separate warring parties (e.g. Galvani and Palma, 2005). Second, the violent behaviour of hooligan groups takes places not only at or in the immediate vicinity of football grounds, but also in other contexts, for example city centres, pubs, clubs or railway stations (Dunning, 2000: 142). Third, football hooliganism involves a great deal of symbolic opposition and ritualized aggression which is easily confused with 'real' violence (Marsh, 1978). For many supporters identifying with football hooliganism, violence 'is not as central to their association as is sometimes assumed and rather the result of the "game" of confrontation and their willingness occasionally to turn symbolic opposition into physical encounter' (Armstrong and Harris, 1991: 434).

Fourth, even when self-declared hooligans are committed to the use of violence, their behaviour may be triggered by more spontaneous elements, such as aggressive policing or events on the pitch. The term 'organized' may in such cases be misleading. A common error, for instance within journalist and police circles, is to over-stress the degree of organization involved in football violence. This view portrays hooligan groups as paramilitary organizations in which 'ring leaders', 'generals' or 'lieutenants' initiate and coordinate riots. In reality, the degree of social organization involved in football hooliganism appears to vary across cultures and localities. Even within British football the degree of social organization involved in football hooliganism tends to vary significantly, as is suggested by the National Criminal Intelligence Service (NCIS, 2002):

The amount and quality of this organization varies greatly between groups, from a highly disciplined, hierarchical criminal group that associates continuously throughout the week to a more casual grouping that comes on the occasion of a football match with the intention of committing violent acts.

Fifth, dissimilarities between countries complicate the conceptualization of football hooliganism. Self-declared hooligan groups have equivalent counterparts throughout Northern and Central Europe. Quite distinctive fan subcultures exist in more southern parts of Europe and in Latin America. In countries such as Italy, Spain, Portugal and (parts of) France, so-called 'ultras' are militant fan groups, but their proclivities to violence vary substantially (Giulianotti, 2001: 142; Spaaij and Viñas, 2005: 80-81). Most ultra groups feature some elements of formal organization, for example official membership and recruitment campaigns (De Biasi, 1998: 216-218). Their basic function is to provide expressive and colourful support

to the team, and therefore they are not necessarily concerned with defeating or humiliating their peers through intimidation or violence (Giulianotti, 2001: 142; Mignon, 2001: 173). Although militant fan groups in Latin America ('barras bravas' or 'hinchadas') resemble European hooligan groups in some respects, there are also important differences. The barras bravas engage in political activity and, in addition, orchestrate violent confrontations with rival supporters (Duke and Crolley, 1996: 286-289). Configured like paramilitary task forces, the barras bravas 'carry out illegitimate tasks by means of violence and compulsion, and are used by sporting and political leaders for that purpose' (Alabarces, 2002: 34).

The aforementioned dilemmas confirm the idea that football hooliganism is a complex and heterogeneous phenomenon. The level, seriousness and forms of football hooliganism seem to vary across countries and localities, presenting a case of great cross-national and cross-local variability. A fundamental question for sociologists in the field should be how and to what degree existing theoretical frameworks can account for these variations. As we will see in the next section, there is reason to suggest that the dominant sociological approaches cannot fully account for the practical heterogeneity of the phenomenon.

3. SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACHES AND THEIR LIMITATIONS

Scholars studying football hooliganism have long avoided cross-cultural comparisons. From the 1980s onwards, an academic consensus began to emerge that football hooliganism was by no means exclusively an 'English disease' and that investigations of other, non-English forms of football fan behaviour constituted a potentially valuable addition to the growing body of research into the matter. A transnational research community slowly began to develop, evidence of which were various international conference proceedings and non-English research publications on football fan behaviour (e.g. O'Brien, 1987; Roversi, 1991; Giulianotti, 1991; Horak, 1991; Giulianotti et al., 1994). More recently, some important publications have further contributed to the expansion of this field of research, most notably the volumes edited by Gary Armstrong and Richard Giulianotti (1999; 2001) and by Eric Dunning and his associates (2002). However, taking into consideration the very general nature of the analytical frameworks proposed, it is important to note that such approaches represent 'a foundation for further research rather than an end-product' (Dunning et al.: 2002: 218).

Despite the trend towards some form of cross-cultural comparison, Giulianotti's earlier claim (1994: 30) that 'there has been little endeavour by British academics to engage

fully in an international dimension on football hooliganism' is still valid today. A major cause of this situation is the traditional dominance of English sociological theories coupled with their almost exclusive focus on domestic forms of spectator violence at football matches. Within Britain, theoretical perspectives on football fan behaviour have come from a wide range of academic disciplines, including various strands in sociology, urban ethnography, anthropology, psychology, criminology, political science, public administration, communication science, and cultural studies. In contrast, the theoretical input of international scholars has been very limited, and there are no obvious international schools of theory (Young, 2000: 388).²

Among sociological studies of football hooliganism, three quite clearly delineated theoretical approaches can be distinguished: (i) the Marxist approaches by Ian Taylor and John Clarke; (ii) the figurational approach of the 'Leicester School'; and (iii) the postmodernist approaches by Giulianotti and Redhead. These approaches will only be outlined in brief here, since they have been discussed at some length elsewhere (Williams, 1991; Giulianotti, 1994; Young, 2000; Frosdick and Marsh, 2005).

3.1. Marxist approaches

In his earlier contributions sociologist Ian Taylor (1971; 1971a) explained the emergence of football hooliganism in Britain in terms of the economic and social changes in society and football. Major changes in football itself, traditionally a male working-class sport, were believed to have alienated working-class fans from the game: commercialization, internationalization and professionalization. The sense of alienation experienced by working-class fans was further exacerbated by a more general alienation of parts of the working-class resulting from changes in the labour market and the decomposition of traditional working-class communities. Football hooliganism, Taylor argued, should be interpreted as a kind of working-class resistance movement, as 'the democratic response by the rump of a soccer subculture to the bourgeoisification of their game' (Taylor, 1971: 369).

A broadly similar approach was developed by John Clarke (1973; 1978). He argued that hooliganism originates in the way in which the traditional forms of football watching encounter the professionalization and spectacularization of the game: 'it is one of the consequences of the changing relationship of its audience and the game' (1978: 50). Clarke

² The 'societal vulnerability' thesis of Belgian scholars Van Limbergen and Walgrave (1988) may be considered a notable exception. This approach will not be discussed here separately since it has much in common with the 'Leicester School' approach.

stressed that specific subcultural styles enable young working-class males to resolve essential conflicts in their lives. Post-war youth subcultures were all examples of these symbolic attempts to resolve structural and material problems. Football hooliganism, closely associated with the skinhead subculture in the 1960s and 1970s, is one such symbolic attempt.

The explanations of both Taylor and Clarke have been criticized as speculative and lacking any form of empirical confirmation. In his later work, Taylor (1982; 1987; 1989; 1991) developed a different theoretical approach to football hooliganism. Reformulating his original thesis, he now argued that the rise of a 'new' hooligan results from the culture of the upwardly-mobile, individualistic section of the (male) British working-class, which has done relatively well out of the restructuring of British industry and business in the 1970s and 1980s. The 'new' hooligan, in turn, has produced the jingoistic, racist and xenophobic behaviour of some English football fans abroad (cf. Williams, 1991: 173).

3.2. The figurational approach

Responding to what they called an 'orthodoxy' of theories of football hooliganism, including the early approach of Ian Taylor, Eric Dunning and his colleagues at the University of Leicester developed an alternative explanation of the phenomenon. Their 'figurational sociological' approach (Williams et al., 1984; Dunning et al., 1988) draws heavily upon Norbert Elias' theory of civilizing processes (1939). One of that theory's basic assumptions is that throughout recent history values of 'civilized' behaviour have penetrated the social classes in Europe; however, they have not yet fully penetrated the lower strata of the working class. The figurational approach explains football hooliganism in terms of the structure of the lower strata of society and the traditional relationship between members of these strata and football itself. According to Dunning and his colleagues, fighting is one of the few sources of excitement, meaning and status available to males from the lower working class. Their specific aggressive masculinity does not, however, derive simply from the manner in which lower working-class communities are integrated into society at large. Lower working-class communities also tend to generate norms or standards which, relative to those of groups higher up on the social scale, are conducive to and tolerant of a high level of aggression in social relations. The 'rougher' sections of lower working-class communities appear to be characterized by feedback processes which encourage fall-backs on aggressive behaviour in many areas of social relations, especially on the part of males (Dunning et al., 1988: 208-209).

The work of the 'Leicester school' is by now the most widely known and consulted body of enquiry into the causes and nature of football hooliganism (Robson, 2000: 29). It has

been an inspiration for many European scholars in the field for nearly two decades and has been praised on a theoretical as well as on a methodological level (e.g. King, 2002: 4; Young: 2000: 388). Nevertheless, the theoretical framework and methodology employed by Dunning and his colleagues have been criticized on various occasions (e.g. Armstrong, 1998; Armstrong and Harris, 1991; Giulianotti, 1999). It has been suggested that their theoretical approach operates on a high level of generality and has an aura of universalistic applicability and ‘irrefutability’ (Williams, 1991: 177). As King (2002: 4) puts it, ‘in its less self-critical moments, Dunning’s approach tends towards teleology.’ The figurational approach nevertheless remains the most widely consulted body of enquiry into the matter.

3.3. Postmodernist approaches

Steve Redhead’s publications (1985; 1991; 1997) highlight the ‘post-modernist’ influences in football culture. It is no longer possible, he argues, to explain football hooliganism through the classical prism of moral panics.³ Redhead claims that, towards the end of the 1980s and into the 1990s, important changes occurred in masculine football culture. Football hooliganism ‘disappeared’ into post-fandom, signalling a transition of football culture into popular fan and media culture. Redhead’s work concentrates on the relationships between supporter styles and pop music subcultures, within which he locates the ‘style wars’ of the football ‘casuals’ (seen as the new type of hooligans).

Richard Giulianotti (1991; 1995; 1999) has provided more ethnographically detailed descriptions of football fan behaviour. Like Redhead, he claims that football hooliganism ‘in the modern sense’ has evolved into a postmodern phenomenon. Giulianotti’s work primarily concentrates on supporters of the Scottish national team. He argues that Scottish football fan behaviour derives from specific cultural and historical forces rather than from social structural factors. Scottish fans, especially those following the national team, are seen as seeking to distance themselves from the ‘British hooligan’ label and particularly from the unruly behaviour of English fans abroad. Their anti-Englishness has led them, in turn, to create a ‘friendly’ image for themselves. Giulianotti also uses the concept of ‘post-fandom’ to explain football hooliganism. Post-fans ‘represent an epistemic break from older forms of football fandom in that they are cognizant of the constructed nature of fan reputations, and the vagaries of the media in exaggerating or inventing such identities’ (1999: 148). Giulianotti

³ Concept coined by Stanley Cohen in his analysis of the criminalization of British youth subcultures in the 1950s and 1960s (Cohen, 1972).

asserts that the postmodernist epoch of football hooliganism is signalled most obviously by changes in its political and media treatment.

It is not entirely clear in Giulianotti's analysis whether these postmodernist influences have come to replace more 'modern' forms of football hooliganism or co-exist with them in various constellations depending on the specific situations at different clubs and in different countries. Moreover, there appear to be important variations in the national trajectories of football culture and hooliganism, which thwart the division of spectator cultures into the categories 'traditional', 'modern' and 'postmodern'. Giulianotti (1999: 64) acknowledges these issues himself with regard to differences between the English and the Scottish experience. He points out that, in England, the attempt to construct a normalized, pacified, 'post-hooligan' identity sits uneasily with the continuing activities of real football hooligans.

3.4. British theory and European evidence: a reappraisal of sociological approaches

It has been suggested that, despite obvious differences between the main sociological approaches to football hooliganism, they can be located within a common framework with regard to their predictions of the gender, race, age and class backgrounds of the typical football hooligan. In short, hooligans are male, white, working-class young adults (Frosdick and Marsh, 2005: 84-85). In my view, the reduction of these theories to such simplistic equations may have some merit as to identifying the core of the debate, but misjudges the diversity of Giulianotti's approaches. For present purposes, I would like to draw attention to another commonality of sociological explanations of football hooliganism. I argue that, due to their almost exclusive focus on British forms of football hooliganism, the approaches converge in undervaluing and under-theorizing cross-national and cross-local variations in football hooliganism.

The range of international research published on the subject in the 1990s and early 2000s casts doubt over the universal applicability of the theories presented above. It seems unlikely that Giulianotti's notion of 'post-hooligan' identity or that of the 'new' hooligan identified by Taylor are easily transferable to non-British contexts. The applicability of the work of the 'Leicester school' to other European countries which lack the highly specific social class structures found in England may also be limited, despite Dunning's claim that 'research on the social class of football hooligans (...) suggests that hooligans in other countries tend to come from social backgrounds similar to those of their English counterparts' (2000: 159). Dunning's interpretation of European research into football hooliganism seems

to overlook significant contradictions. In the case of the Netherlands, for example, Van der Brug concluded that:

There is a relationship between individual downward mobility and participation in football hooliganism, a situation which is quite different from the pattern in Britain, where the explanatory factors are much more collectivistic and highly related to social class (1994: 179-180).

With regard to Scottish football hooligans, Harper (1990) has stressed that they ‘come predominantly from lower levels of the social scale and are basically working class youths’. In contrast, Giulianotti (1999a: 32) has emphasized the hooligans’ social and economic incorporation within mainstream society, rather than their structural exclusion.

Similar contradictions can be observed in the work of Italian sociologists. In 1991, Roversi stressed that Italian ultras come predominantly from the working class. A decade later the same author suggested that: ‘Even though the self-producing mechanism of the ultras groups closely resembles the principle of ordered segmentation proposed by Dunning, the social basis of the ultras does not consist predominantly of the lowest and roughest strata of society’ (2002: 142). Regretfully, Roversi’s findings are flawed by his failure to distinguish between the ‘genuine’ ultra fan – engaging in the active and colourful support of the team – and the hooligan-type fan regularly seeking violent confrontation. His findings probably tell us more about the class backgrounds of young Italian football fans in general (the ultras) than about those of football hooligans. There are also important dissimilarities in the social composition of Italian ultra (and perhaps hooligan?) groups in different localities. Two studies carried out in Bologna and Pisa suggest that the social origins of the ultras vary according to demographic context (Roversi, 1992; Francia, 1994). Especially ultras based in the richer north of Italy tend to come from more prosperous backgrounds (Podaliri and Balestri, 1998: 94).

Local and regional variations in the social backgrounds of ultras and hooligans also occur in other Western European countries. Ek (1996: 73) has noted that West German hooligans come from all social classes and that, in the 1990s, there was an increasing dominance of young men from middle- or upper-class milieus within hooligan groups. In contrast, football hooliganism in East Germany traditionally contained a strong element of social protest and provocation which can be located within the identity crisis of the East and its depressing social circumstances (Pilz, 1991: 117-119). My own ethnographic research in

the Netherlands shows that the social backgrounds of Dutch football hooligans have become more heterogeneous over time and vary across localities. Whereas the vast majority of Feyenoord hooligans come from working-class backgrounds, members of hooligan groups at clubs such as Sparta Rotterdam and FC Haarlem tend to be relatively highly educated and middle class (Spaaij, forthcoming; Van der Torre and Spaaij, 2003; cf. Korthals, 2005).

In Spain, the ultra subculture has been appealing to young men and women from all social classes from its very beginnings, yet there are important regional and local variations.⁴ Two recent sociological studies seem to confirm this idea. An ethnographic study of militant fan groups in Andalucía suggests that 77 per cent of the ultras are students, though comparatively many of them are engaged in vocational studies (no percentage is noted). Thirteen per cent work, and a further ten per cent are unemployed (Rodríguez Díaz, 2004: 12). A survey among 246 ultras of Frente Atlético (Atlético Madrid) concludes that almost half of the ultras are students, of which 24 per cent at a university level. Nine per cent of the ultras are unemployed (Adán, 2004: 91). Regrettably, both authors fail to draw a distinction between ‘non-violent’ ultras and those fans regularly engaging in competitive violence with rival supporters. Nor do they distinguish effectively between different types of work or education.

The social composition of Spanish ultra and hooligan groups varies in time as well as place. Even within one city or within one club, opposing ultra groups or hooligan formations may have very different characteristics. For example, in Barcelona, where FC Barcelona’s radical fan group Boixos Nois has traditionally had a mixed social composition, the ultras of RCD Espanyol have historically come from higher up the social scale (Spaaij, forthcoming). In contrast, the social backgrounds of members of left-wing ultra group Brigadas Amarillas tend to correspond with the depriving social circumstances in the area. The unemployment rate in Cádiz is among the highest in the country, around 30 per cent. Taking account of these important local and regional variations, historian Carles Viñas (2005: 190) argues that ‘the ultras form a complex variety in terms of their social situations, academic formation and family life.’

In a recent publication, Eric Dunning (2000: 161) acknowledges that ‘it is unlikely that the phenomenon of football hooliganism will be found always and everywhere to stem from

⁴ In this text I use the term ‘ultra’ for the sake of brevity even though its use is heavily debated. I agree with Viñas (2005) that the use of this label to refer to all militant fan groups in Spanish football is, in fact, incorrect since some fan groups do not identify themselves as such but rather as ‘anti-ultras’.

identical social roots.’ He suggests that football hooliganism may be ‘fuelled and contoured’ by the major ‘fault lines’ of particular countries:

In England, that means social class and regional inequalities; in Scotland and Northern Ireland, religious sectarianism; in Spain, linguistic sub-nationalisms of the Catalans, Castillians, Gallegos and Basques; in Italy, city particularism and perhaps the division between North and South as expressed in the formation of the ‘Northern League’; and in Germany, the relations between East and West and political groups of the left and right (2000: 161).

One of the differences that these variable patterns may make, Dunning argues, is that sectarianism and city particularism as bases for football hooliganism may draw in more people from higher up the social scale. A shared characteristic of all societal fault lines is that they involve variants of ‘established-outsider figurations’ (Elias and Scotson, 1965) in which intense ingroup bonds and correspondingly intense antagonisms towards outgroups are liable to develop (Dunning, 2000: 161).

The concept of societal fault lines may provide an important new departure in the study of football hooliganism. Application of the concept of societal fault lines to the study of football hooliganism has two major merits: it increases our awareness of cross-cultural variations in the manifestation of football hooliganism and helps us understand more fully the origins and development of specific insider and outsider relations in football rivalries. However, I see three major reasons why the fault lines concept does not provide a sufficient framework for the explanation of football hooliganism in comparative perspective: (i) it operates on a high level of generality, concealing, for example, more localized or football-related ‘cleavages’ and rivalries; (ii) it cannot account for the subtle yet vital interactions and negotiations between hooligans, non-hooligan supporters, club officials and police officers; and (iii) it fails to account for some of the striking commonalities in football hooliganism worldwide. Key common elements are, for example, the ‘hard’ masculinities and the strong sense of territoriality involved, and the psycho-social pleasure that football hooliganism arouses in its participants – all of these not necessarily epiphenomena of social class but constituent parts of football hooliganism worldwide.

It is these central aspects of hooligan violence that are addressed in the final part of the essay. Before doing so, I will specify the first two reasons why the fault lines concept cannot

fully account for understanding and explaining football hooliganism as a transnational phenomenon.

3.5. Fan cultures as glocal phenomena

Football hooliganism transgresses national boundaries and has undergone processes of globalization (Giulianotti, 1999: 64). Hooligan subcultures historically revolved around British terrace culture. On the continent, football hooliganism underwent a process of cultural creolization as indigenous fan groups merged the adopted patterns with their own distinctive cultural forms (Dunning et al., 2002: 223; Giulianotti, 2001: 143). This diffusion of cultural practices also occurred in a reverse direction, as for example seen in the introduction into British fan culture of continental designer clothing (casual) styles in the early 1980s. Furthermore, the ultra subcultures dominant in countries such as Italy, Spain, and parts of France have come to influence supporter groups in Northern Europe, with similar fan groups being formed, to varying extents, in countries such as Germany, Austria, the Netherlands and parts of Scandinavia. In the 1990s British fan subcultures also started to experiment with aspects of the Southern European model, through the use of Latin chant patterns and musical bands (Giulianotti, 1999: 64). For example, in 2004, an ultra-style group named Leeds Ultras emerged at Leeds United.

Recent changes in the football industry, for example the expansion of the Champions League, are believed to enhance the homogenization of football cultures. However, I would suggest that instead of leading to homogenization, the globalization of football cultures should be viewed as processes of hybridization or creolization (e.g. Nederveen Pieterse, 1995; Hannerz, 1987). The intensity and rapidity of contemporary global cultural flows contribute to the misleading belief that the world is becoming a more singular place (Featherstone, 1990: 1-2). Many of the transnational cultural processes are incomplete and have not affected different countries to a similar extent (Hannerz, 1996: 6). Football is a social sphere in which the complex and dynamic intertwinement of the global and the local can be observed par excellence. The fan cultures of particular football clubs ‘share ritual elements, but at the same time each fan culture exhibits distinct forms of prescribed formal ritual behaviour and symbolism’ (Back et al., 2001: 43). Football fan cultures can therefore be viewed as ‘glocal’ phenomena.⁵ Local historical and cultural traditions and legacies continue to exert a strong

⁵ I should emphasize here that my use of the term ‘glocal’ diverges to some degree from the glocalization thesis advocated by Robertson (1992). The globalization of fan cultures should not be viewed as merely involving local adaptation of a global product or practice, as the localization of the global. I would argue that in most fan cultures, especially at smaller clubs, local traditions and practices continue to exert a strong influence over

influence over patterns of behaviour. Although football culture appears to be changing with unprecedented speed, notions of post-fandom and post-hooliganism are not an evenly distributed and widely recognized phenomenon. In his detailed account of Millwall fandom, Robson (2000: 6) correctly argues that:

[T]hough growing numbers of individuals characterizable as ... post-fans do clearly exist, it is far from clear that the bases of participation for the majority have radically changed. This is likely to be most true, as is the case with Millwall, of small and medium-sized clubs with little or no appeal beyond their own historical and social-ecological limits.

Dissimilarities in the extent and nature of football hooliganism need to be understood in terms of the way hooligan subcultures are nested within the ritual and collective symbolism of each fan culture (cf. Back et al., 2001: 43). Besides important cross-national variations in football hooliganism, we should also take into consideration cross-local dissimilarities in the manifestation of hooligan violence. Academic research into different English hooligan formations shows that not all hooligan groups in England are structured along identical lines in terms of their degree of social organization and violence (Armstrong and Harris, 1991; Dunning et al., 1991; Murphy et al., 1990). We must therefore take into account not only variations in football hooliganism *between*, but also *within* countries, regions, cities and fan communities. Such an approach partly contradicts the fault lines concept as proposed by Dunning since the latter operates on a high level of generality. Although the fault lines of particular societies may help to explain cross-national resemblances and dissimilarities in football hooliganism, they fail to account for more specific spatial and temporal variations.

Within the context of variability we should also examine the interactional dynamics of football hooliganism. Localized forms of football hooliganism revolve around continuous interactions between the authorities, the local football club, its fan community, and hooligans. One way of approaching these inter-group dynamics is to focus on the effects of official attempts to curb football hooliganism. Murphy and his associates have correctly argued that:

patterns of behaviour. Globalization should therefore not be viewed as one larger region (the global economy and culture) replacing the smaller regions (individual societies, regions, localities) (see Urry, 2000: 33; cf. Albrow, 1996: 211).

as the controls imposed by central government, the football authorities and the police have grown more all-embracing, tighter and sophisticated, so the football hooligans in their turn have tended to become more organized and to use more sophisticated strategies and plans in an attempt to evade the controls. At the same time, football hooligan fighting has tended to become displaced from an immediate football context and to take place at times and in situations where the controls are, or are perceived to be, weak or non-existent (1990: 89-90).

Approaches of this kind tend to highlight the large number of measures designed to curb football hooliganism: the segregation of home and away fans, fencing, closed-circuit television (CCTV) systems, identity card schemes, intelligence-led policing, and so forth.

In recent years social psychologists have developed a more dynamic approach to studying the interactions between police officers and football fans. Whereas most scholars tend to concentrate on explaining football hooliganism in terms of the macro-social origins of conflictual norms, these authors emphasize more strongly the ways in which understandings and behaviours develop in context such that even those who initially and ordinarily eschew violence may come to act violently (Stott and Reicher, 1998). I would argue that although cross-cultural differences in policing in Western Europe seem to have diminished (Della Porta and Reiter, 1998: 6), the contents and outcomes of supporter/police interactions vary considerably across localities, depending, among other factors, on police professionalism and culture and on hooligans' and fans' perceptions of the police. Analysis of cross-national and cross-local variations in football hooliganism should also include other forms of social interaction, notably the relations between hooligans and clubs and anti-hooligan initiatives within fan communities. There are, for example, important dissimilarities with regard to the extent to which, and the forms in which, football clubs engage in the prevention of football hooliganism (see Spaaij, 2005; 2005b). These diverse types of inter-group interaction should be viewed in conjunction with the crucial interactions and negotiations between opposing hooligan groups and within hooligan formations.

In this section I have argued that comparative studies of football hooliganism should focus on the ways in which the manifestation of football hooliganism is embedded in individual fan cultures. Moreover, football hooliganism can only be fully understood by taking into consideration the subtle yet vital interactions and negotiations between football hooligans and significant others. As I show in the following section, these others are crucial to the construction of hooligan identities.

4. KEY ASPECTS OF HOOLIGAN VIOLENCE

If we accept that football hooliganism presents a case of great practical heterogeneity, where does this leave us? Can common aspects be identified, or can we merely describe and evaluate the manifestation of football hooliganism in individual settings? I seek to demonstrate in the remainder of this essay that certain universal aspects can be identified in the nature of football hooliganism as a transnational phenomenon. Six key components are distinguished: excitement and pleasurable emotional arousal; the construction of hard masculine identity; territorial identifications; the individual and collective management of reputation; solidarity and belonging; and sovereignty and autonomy. Although some of these key aspects have been identified individually or in combination in previous studies of football hooliganism (Dunning et al., 1988; Marsh et al., 1978; Armstrong, 1998; Giulianotti, 1999; Giulianotti and Armstrong, 2002; Kerr, 1994), only in conjunction do they enable a profound understanding of football hooliganism as a transnational phenomenon. I illustrate the features and social processes outlined below with examples from my fieldwork among hooligan formations in the Netherlands, England and Spain conducted between 2000 and 2005, in particular regarding hooligan groups at Feyenoord, Sparta Rotterdam, West Ham United, FC Barcelona and Espanyol (for a methodological note, see Spaaij, forthcoming).

Excitement and pleasurable emotional arousal

The excitement and pleasurable emotional arousal associated with violent confrontation is one of the key components of the hooligan experience and is a recurrent theme in the narratives of football hooligans.⁶ Hooligans are essentially thrill seekers and fighting is one of their main acts to counter boredom and experience high emotional arousal. Many hooligans perceive conventional lifestyles and careers as boring and unchallenging:

People say, like, you've got your studies and your job so why engage in fighting. But university is just so fucking boring, you know. Most students are absolute wankers,

⁶ The intense emotional states associated with violent conduct are, of course, not limited to football hooliganism. Comparable accounts are provided by many juvenile delinquents in general. For example, from a psychoanalytic perspective, Coleman (1980: 5) argues that the need for intense emotional states, 'including delinquent activities, drug and mystical experiences,' is a key feature of adolescence.

you know, and the classes are boring. Being with my mates and planning a fight is sort of an outlet, to get away from it all. (Sparta hooligan)

Group membership and violent confrontation provide a chance to experience immediate sensation in the form of pleasurable excitement, which is often referred to as an adrenalin rush and 'better than sex'. Compare the following statements: 'The kick of fighting your rivals is overwhelming. You cannot really understand it unless you're in it. It gives you a sense of power, a sense of control. It's an absolute high.' (Feyenoord hooligan); 'The buzz is enormous; it's an incredible adrenalin rush' (Sparta hooligan). Hooligans' will to violence reveals that football hooliganism may be viewed in part as 'just for kicks', as a goal in itself. For hooligans, the pleasurable excitement associated with violent confrontations can only be achieved by violence itself, even though certain alternatives for violence (parading, aggro, pisstaking) may generate a comparable yet less intense 'rush'.

In their seminal piece *The Roots of Football Hooliganism* Dunning and his colleagues (1988: 209-210) relate the meaning of fighting directly to lower-working-class culture. They argue that for lower-working-class males:

Fighting is an important source of meaning, status and pleasurable emotional arousal. (...) Correspondingly, there is a tendency for them to 'back down' less frequently than males from other areas and also on occasions actively to seek out fights and confrontations. Of course, males generally in our society are expected to defend themselves if attacked, but they are less likely than lower-working-class males to be the initiators in this regard.

I have sought to demonstrate in this essay that hooligan confrontations are an important source of meaning, status and pleasurable emotional arousal not merely for lower-working-class males but for a wider variety of young males. The 'buzz' of football violence should not be understood as merely an epiphenomenon of social class, but rather as a constituent element of football hooliganism worldwide.

Intimately related to the 'buzz' of hooligan violence is the issue of (overcoming) fear. The narratives of football hooligans reveal that fear is a recurrent theme in preparing for and participating in violent confrontation. Courage is demonstrated not by a complete absence of fear, but rather by showing sufficient discipline to perform when one is afraid (Collins, 1995: 189-190). Overcoming fear is crucial, for example, in confronting a quantitatively superior

group, and it precisely this overcoming of fear that generates the greatest pleasurable emotional arousal: 'We were standing there facing a much larger group. That's the buzz, you know, but also the fear. And when it's all over you're still standing strong.' (Sparta hooligan) Football hooliganism therefore has to retain an element of physical risk in order to enable intense peak experiences. Without the element of danger, excitement would be reduced dramatically (Kerr, 2005: 111). In the management of individual reputation, however, fear is often ascribed to others, whether they are opposing or fellow hooligans:

The issue of fear, well, I know what you mean. I understand that. I have seen a lot of that in my mates and I think it is healthy to some degree. 'Cause you keep your wits about you, you know? But for myself, I have never been afraid. Honestly, never in my life. I know I can look after myself. (West Ham hooligan)

The construction of hard masculine identity

Hooligan formations celebrate a hard masculine identity based on physical prowess. A key aim of all hooligan groups is to successfully challenge their rivals through intimidation and violence as a way of securing or enhancing their status as a good 'firm' in the hierarchy of hooligan oppositions (Armstrong, 1994: 299). Hooligans' hard, hyperheterosexual masculine identity is constructed primarily in relation to perceived differences between self and the other. The other (i.e. opposing hooligans) is systematically demasculinized through ritual denigration of their physical and heterosexual prowess (real men versus 'poofs' or 'boys'; heterosexual dominant versus gay subordinate), the object of which is to attain an unambiguous sense of one's own masculinity by questioning the masculinity of opponents, according to the indirect, contingent logic that 'I am masculine by not being not masculine' (Free and Hughson, 2003: 151).

Football hooligans' construction of hard masculine identity is also linked to the deployment of 'race' categories. Several Espanyol and FC Barcelona hooligans deploy such categories in constructing their own positional superiority, denigrating 'blacks' and 'blackness' as inferior categories. In contrast, at West Ham and Feyenoord several 'black' participants are endowed with a hypermasculinity to be feared. 'Black' hooligans are often perceived by fellow group members as superior fighters and as having great mutual solidarity, appearing as daunting oppositional threats: 'this large black guy, he was fucking mental' (Feyenoord hooligan); 'these riot negroes are crazier than the whole lot' (Sparta hooligan on

'black' Feyenoord hooligans) (cf. Armstrong, 1998: 280). In these cases, it appears that 'blackness' is:

reproduced as a racist category equated to raw physicality, to the sheer *embodiment* of masculine labor power, hence a caricatured hypermasculinity against which the 'lads'' masculine performances could be measured and the reproduction of ambivalence toward the 'Other' of '*black*' hypermasculinity (Free and Hughson, 2003: 141). (emphasis in original)

Although an overt concern with a self-image of hypermasculinity is characteristic of all hooligan groups under study, the construction of hard masculine identity is always located in particular spaces and times. At FC Barcelona and Espanyol, for example, hooligans construct their hard masculine identity not only in terms of physical prowess and sovereignty, but also in terms of political allegiance (i.e. neo-fascism or radical Catalan nationalism). Their masculine identities can be seen to contain elements of indigenous middle-class masculinity as well as of the values celebrated in some British working-class youth subcultures (e.g. the skinheads), which the Spanish hooligans introduced into their own cultural practices. In contrast, hooligan formations at West Ham and Feyenoord celebrate the core values of their traditional local working-class communities and industries, notably a focus on physical strength and the ability to 'look after oneself.' We find here a strong cultural connection between admired masculinity and violent response to threat. Violence is not merely glorified, it is also so closely tied to masculinity that 'aggression becomes central to the boy's notion of manhood' (Campbell, 1993: 31). From a young age, these boys cultivate 'looking hard': 'I cultivated a way of walking. I mean, I walked perfectly normal up until I was about nine [years old], but then I learned to walk hard, you know. Everybody did. And you cultivated that because it looked hard' (West Ham hooligan).

The above quotation shows that hard masculine identities are not only socially constructed and context-dependent, they are also inextricably related to the body as a meaningful construction itself. Messerschmidt (1999: 200) has shown that different masculinities emerge from practices that reflect different bodily resources, arguing that 'our bodies constrain or facilitate social action and, therefore, mediate and influence social practices.' For some young men, their bodies facilitate masculine agency, enabling successful construction of self as 'superior' to other boys. Due to their capacity for power that they embody, the fighting group is an arena where these male adolescents can bodily express

themselves through physical confrontation. ‘Within the collective setting of ‘me and my boys,’ such practices as individual and group assaultive violence were particularly attractive, providing a public ceremony of bodily domination over and humiliation of others’ (Messerschmidt, 1999: 217).

Similar constructions of the body and masculinity can be found in football hooliganism. Individual and collective reputation and status rely principally upon bodily capacity. ‘Being a good fighter’ and being able to ‘look after oneself’ are viewed as major virtues, and the tallest and physically strongest male adolescents are usually talked about admiringly by peers. The response of peers to their conduct co-shapes the masculine meaning and image constructed by these hooligans through the practice of fighting: ‘People looked up to me ’cause I was big for my age and a good fighter, you know. I was always with older boys and the most notorious gangs in the area’ (former West Ham hooligan).

Three issues need to be addressed with regard to the construction of the body. First, it must be emphasized that hooligans do not equally possess this bodily capacity and that the ‘good fighter’ role is not the only social role available to members of hooligan formations (i.e. ‘organizers’, ‘nutters’, ‘jokers’). These roles are both accorded to individuals by the group, and played up to by the individuals themselves, with varying degrees of seriousness (Giulianotti and Armstrong, 2002: 219). Second, fighting abilities are negotiated and contested, as I will show in the discussion of the individual and collective management of reputation. Third, the construction of the body is also context-dependent. For example, hooligan formations at Espanyol and FC Barcelona construct bodily capacity not merely in terms of fighting ability, but also in terms of physical and mental health. As part of their neo-Nazi ‘ethos’, they celebrate the muscular, athletic body and, in the case of Espanyol, abstinence from drug use – for example, the consumption of marijuana is considered as *algo de rojos* (‘reds’, communists) or *de musulmanes* (Muslims, especially North Africans). In contrast, in Argentinian football hooliganism *ser gordo* (being fat) is considered a major virtue, since it is a sign of a bodily capacity to fight and resist. For Argentinian fans, the ‘fat man’ is better prepared for fights than muscular, well-trained bodies or than those of normal weight. These overweight bodies should be viewed as ‘non-hegemonic’ or ‘oppositional’: they are part of an aesthetics that is different from the dominant masculinity in Argentinian society (Alabarces, 2005: 2). Furthermore, the consumption of drugs is viewed as a symbol of hard masculine identity and distinguishes the ‘real man’ from the ‘not-man.’

Individual and collective management of reputation

Participation in football hooliganism enables young supporters to gain status and prestige among peers. Within hooligan formations, individual reputations are established principally by demonstrating courage, fighting skills and an aura of hypermasculinity. Getting run, collectively, or running away, individually, during confrontations is perceived the gravest humiliation and defeat. But although reputations for hardness are established through successfully challenging rival hooligans, it is crucial that these results are communicated effectively, both internally and externally. Reputations are won or lost merely by intersubjective agreement, that is, 'by calls to order from the group' (Bourdieu, 1977: 15). Collective and individual reputations for toughness and the *post facto* meaning of confrontations are highly negotiable and open to contestation, both between rival groups and within hooligan formations (cf. Giulianotti and Armstrong, 2002: 218; Armstrong, 1994: 320). Individuals of greater status are likely to have a greater influence in the course of this negotiation (King, 2001: 580). Apportioning honour between contestants is nevertheless very rarely settled in full. For example, the legitimacy of an attack by West Ham hooligans on a pub frequented by their Tottenham Hotspur rivals, on 29 October 2003, was heavily contested by the latter group, claiming that the attack did not constitute a 'defeat' since there were no hooligans inside the pub at that time. Contestation also occurs within hooligan formations, as in the case of older Feyenoord hooligans' condemnation of their younger counterparts' 'queer-bashing' activities in 2001 (Van der Torre and Spaaij, 2003).

Hooligans continuously engage in impression and reputation management. The dramaturgic metaphor introduced by Goffman (1959) is helpful to understanding hooligans' presentation of self. Goffman argued that all social interaction is like a theatrical performance in which actors perform one of the many roles available to them, depending on the situation in which they find themselves. Extending Goffman's (1959) analysis of self-presentation, Emler and Reicher's (1995: 112-113) concept of reputation management identifies two great problems for all actors on the stage of everyday life: reputations can decay without constant attention, but they can also persist to frustrate all efforts at personal change or betterment. Reputation management therefore requires that 'one must as far as possible act in ways that are consistent with the reputation to which one lays claim. Additionally, however, one must attend to publicity; there is no guarantee one's achievements will be broadcast.' Friends and enemies must be informed.

As Goffman observed, in all performances there can be problems of ‘expressive control’ caused by momentary lapses, slips and accidents which would convey impressions other than those intended. Therefore, one must also be prepared for reputation repair work, that is, to go out and ‘put the record straight’ (Emler and Reicher, 1995: 113). To retain or re-establish its honour and reputation, the hooligan formation has to respond effectively to (the threat of) defeat. In this context, Katz (1988: 141) has argued that once an attack by another group becomes public knowledge, ‘a failure to respond threatens to make retrospectively ridiculous the pretensions of all in the attacked group.’ He correctly asserts that:

At this point, the history of posturing arrogance by the attacked group suddenly becomes a heavy commitment. What had been playfully under the group’s control is now out of its hands; the group may no longer determine unilaterally to back off because other elite-styled groups see a prize in its defeat. Whether it delivers or receives the first blow, it has become controlled by its own symbolism.

The collective management of reputation is thus central to the evolvment and escalation of inter-group rivalry. Past events and disagreements between opposing groups can become important reference points in sustaining great hostility and triggering violent responses. This spiral of escalating violence has been particularly evident in the rivalries between, for example, FC Barcelona and Espanyol hooligans, Feyenoord and Ajax hooligans, and West Ham and Millwall hooligans. In such deep-seated inter-group hostilities serious injuries and deaths are relatively likely to occur. On the other hand, prestigious hooligan groups tend to consider many opposing formations as not worthy of confronting due to these formations’ lack of status: ‘Why would we attack inferior groups? I mean, of course you have to respond to challenges and this may happen spontaneously, but we wouldn’t go out and seek to confront them. They simply aren’t worth it, and there is usually no particular rivalry with these groups either’ (Feyenoord hooligan). The latter groups, however, are often particularly inclined on inflicting damage on the more prestigious groups as a way of enhancing their status in the hierarchy of hooligan oppositions. Examples of this process are the occasional attacks by less prestigious hooligan formations on alleged members of West Ham’s hooligan group, even though in reality these often turn out to be non-hooligan supporters. A similar dynamics can be observed at an interpersonal level in the ‘added value’ of attacking informal hooligan leaders or notorious fighters: ‘Everybody was talking about this Rolo, like he was a

real mean bastard, you know. He was the one to take on. So on match day I told my mates, “look, I will get this fucking Rolo and beat the shit out of him” (former West Ham hooligan).

Territorial identifications

Territorial identifications play an important role in the construction of hooligan identities and inter-group rivalries. Hooligans identify specific spaces as their home ‘turf’ or territory. Space, in this sense, does not simply exist as an ontological fact; it is endowed with social meanings and regimes of signification (Lefebvre, 1991).⁷ The emergence of youth ends with their exclusive territory within the ground was accompanied by a shift in territorial claims on ground space. While the ground had always been a focus for ‘topophilia’, groups of young fans increasingly began to regard their specific sections of the ground as home turf to be defended against outsiders, that is, opposing fan groups. Violation of this ‘sacred’ space was frequently the immediate cause of the severest of conflict displays (Marsh, 1978: 99). Visiting fans attempted to ‘take’ the home territory to demonstrate their reputation and hardness, while the home fans would try to expel them.

Territorial identifications are not limited to the football ground. The gradual decline in opportunities for fighting within football grounds had the unintended consequence of increasingly relocating hooligan encounters from football grounds to new locales, altering the geographical meaning of the ground for football hooliganism (Giulianotti and Armstrong, 2002: 224). Contested urban spaces include the areas surrounding the ground, pubs, railway stations, city districts or entire cities. As one former West Ham hooligan put it: ‘What we wanted to do as a group, we wanted to defend our territory in the East End of London, which was West Ham, but we also wanted to go out to other parts of London and up and down the country to say “we are the hardest, we are the best and we can take on anybody if we want to”.’

Importantly, home turf is defended only against opposing groups of young fans who share, fundamentally, the same values (i.e. a will to violent confrontation). There is no question of excluding everyone else except your own immediate group (Marsh, 1978: 99). Thus, as we have seen, honour is lost rather than earned when a hooligan formation allows or promotes attacks on non-hooligan supporters or passers-by. Notwithstanding this broadly shared moral convention (which is regularly violated), I have demonstrated that important

⁷ Spatial affinity is by no means limited to football hooligans. Crucially, place attachment is a key feature of football culture in general (e.g. Bale, 1993; Giulianotti and Armstrong, 2002).

local and national variations occur in hooligans' sense of how honour and reputation are won. Among certain groups of Spanish right-wing skinhead fans, individual and collective prestige can be won by assaulting or intimidating ethnic minorities, transvestites or members of rival, non-hooligan youth subcultures (i.e. punkers, left-wing skinheads), all of which are perceived as 'inferior' categories. Occasionally hooligans' territorial identifications blur informal codes of legitimate action. For example, in February 2006, a group of seventy Ajax hooligans attacked and sought to set fire to the 'supporters' home' of ADO Den Haag, a hangout for both hooligans and non-hooligan supporters. During the attack three non-hooligan fans were injured. Later that night the police prevented a group of 150 Den Haag hooligans from travelling to Amsterdam to avenge the attack on Ajax hooligans' own turf.

Special reference should be made to the expression of intra-city hooligan rivalries in cities with two or more professional football clubs. In these intra-city rivalries there is, at the everyday level, a stronger contextualization of time and space in distinguishing the legitimate and illegitimate pursuit of hooligan rivalries (Giulianotti and Armstrong, 2002: 229). To enable the continuation of other forms of social identity the intra-city rivals' full dispensation to initiate violence is rather inhibited. In the majority of social spaces oppositions between hooligan formations tend to be functionally suppressed and intra-city rivalries are generally regarded as sanctioned only within match-day contexts. For example, two hooligan rivals living only two streets away from each other in a central district of Barcelona seem to have achieved some form of informal agreement as to the suspension of their animosities in everyday life:

Of course, we run into each other all the time. Usually I just nodd and walk on. Honestly, there is no point in confronting him in the streets, is there? I mean, where would that end? He knows where I live and I know where he lives. It's a different story when our groups meet on match days. I mean, we have fought each other on various occasions over the years. But during the week there is this kind of mutual understanding (Espanyol hooligan).

Or, as a West Ham hooligan previously working as a bouncer in a London night club commented: 'In all my years as a bouncer I have never been assaulted by rival hooligans. They knew I was working there, but there was no point in mixing up these things, you know. My work had nothing to do with football.' Interestingly, rival hooligans have also occasionally jointly organized and worked as bouncers at dance parties and sporting events.

In many cases some form of balance in the distribution of access to leisure resources is achieved. Particular pubs, nightclubs and streets are routinely regarded as established territory for one side or another. The entry of opposing groups to these spaces is therefore regarded as consciously transgressive and assumed to be intimidatory, unless otherwise explicable (Giulianotti and Armstrong, 2002: 229). At other moments, however, hooligan encounters at concerts, dance parties or political manifestations have erupted into fighting. Furthermore, the personalization of animosities between individual rivals, usually founded in prior engagements, can threaten to break into a restoration of collective violence (ibid.: 229). In the Netherlands, minor conflicts between opposing hooligans during dance events have increasingly transformed such events into legitimate sites for contestation. Importantly, the intensity of intra-city hooligan animosities varies considerably across localities. For example, the intra-city rivalry between Feyenoord and Sparta hooligans has been principally non-violent. The relationship between the two groups is vertical to some degree, in the sense that differences in size and reputation are comparatively large. Sparta hooligans are principally concerned with confronting certain lower-league rivals with whom they have established deep-seated animosities, while Feyenoord hooligans do not consider their local rivals worthy of confronting due to their lack of status: 'Sparta doesn't have any hooligans. I mean, nothing compared to what we've got. I don't dislike them or anything, I simply can't be bothered' (Feyenoord hooligan).

Solidarity and belonging

Although violent confrontation is the highpoint of the hooligan's existence and crucial to the construction of collective and individual reputations, it is not the only source of meaning and identity in football hooliganism. Hooligan formations provide their members with a sense of belonging, mutual solidarity and friendship. Narratives of hooligans reveal how group members claim to 'look after one another' and stick together through thick and thin. Group members are often also among their closest friends and collective experiences strengthen their sense of togetherness: 'When I was in jail, my mates looked after my mum. I'll never forget that, you know. They are my true friends' (Feyenoord hooligan). It is this combination of belonging, recognition and reputation that enables the young males to achieve a sense of personal worth and identity (cf. Marsh et al., 1978). The group is commonly perceived by hard-core hooligans as a major influence in their lives, at least for some time, and some view the group as a substitute for family: 'I always felt that the West Ham lads were my family

more than my home family, despite me coming from a stable family. Maybe we found a family we never had at home' (West Ham hooligan).⁸ Affection for the group tends to be deepest among core members and within close-knit subgroups rather than in the periphery of the group.

The group is also a source of unofficial protection and remedy for grievances. Relations with ingroup members are characteristically those of protection rather than aggression. Even when there is conflict within a group it is normally less serious or significant than conflict between groups (Patrick, 1973). Although some degree of intra-group conflict can be found in most hooligan formations, in very few occasions does this conflict overshadow inter-group hostilities. A notable exception is the contemporary manifestation of football hooliganism at FC Barcelona, which is characterized by an exceptionally high level of intra-group anxiety and intimidation. What we find in this case is that when subgroup differences (e.g. in political allegiance) become more and more emphasized, ingroup identity gradually breaks down and gives way to newly emerging oppositional identities, resulting in overt hostility and confrontation and, eventually, in the collapse of the hooligan formation and the rise of new fan identities.

The sense of group membership is also rewarding in a different sense: it enables peak experiences. Part of the 'buzz' of football hooliganism seems to lie not in violence itself, but in a transcendent, sensual quality of 'being with the mob': 'We were mob-handed and everybody at the place [a boxing arena] was afraid of us, including the bouncers. It was an incredible feeling, a real adrenalin rush' (Feyenoord hooligan). The group is ultimately a place where many things are happening at the same time in a more or less chaotic and spontaneous manner. In this context, Katz (1988: 144) has emphasized:

the delight in discovering the spiritual power of a collective posturing as deviant: how, once the group is constituted, a coherent line of action can spring spontaneously from chaos. The very unpredictability of actions and reactions makes 'being with the mob' predictably exciting. Otherwise unimaginable, transcendent possibilities are now sensed as real.

⁸ My argument here contradicts to some degree Jankowski's study of youth gangs in America. He argued that intra-group solidarity should not be overestimated: 'Regardless of what they say, over time it becomes apparent that members of gangs really do not think of their fellow members as brothers. Gang members are fundamentally loners who have chosen to participate not because the gang represents a family (with brothers) that they have been deprived of, but because they perceive it to be, at least in the short run, in their best interest' (1991: 148).

Besides benefits from group membership there are also duties and risks. Individual interests are bound up with those of the hooligan group as a whole. There is an interdependence of individual action and group fate, which makes it quite distinct from vandalism or theft: 'Non-participation in these latter activities may violate group norms, it may show one to be cowardly or boring, but it does not actively let down other group members. So individuals may also get involved in fights to protect their fellow group members' (Emler and Reicher, 1995: 198). Individuals must protect the group's honour, even at the risk of personal injury, if they are to enjoy the benefits which come from membership of the group (King, 2001: 574). I vividly recall an example from my fieldwork among Sparta hooligans. In the aftermath of a confrontation between Sparta and Dordrecht hooligans, one Sparta hooligan was questioned by other group members as to his whereabouts during the fight, since they suspected he had run off during the fight. He claimed that he got hit by a riot police officer's baton and suffered a concussion. This story was confirmed by other group members who witnessed the incident. Although his story was eventually accepted, unconvinced group members paid extra close attention to his behaviour on following occasions: 'There's just too many guys who say they want to fight but shit their pants when it goes off. We can't rely on people like that' (Sparta hooligan). On the other hand, when faced by a much larger group, collective fleeing is sometimes deemed appropriate, although it does mean the group will 'lose face'. As one Feyenoord hooligan commented:

A lot of people say, like, 'I never run away, I always stand my ground.' That's just non-sense. Listen, if I had never run away during a fight, do you think I would still be here today? I mean, if they confront you with fifty or one hundred people and you are there with ten men, you have to run, don't you? It's simply too dangerous, especially since they might be armed with knives or what have you.

The pressure to participate in violent confrontation does not merely come from the ingroup. Even if a person wishes to avoid a fight, this wish may be ignored by the opposing group. Merely as a member of a rival group this person becomes a target. In fact, individuals do not even have to be in a group in order to become the focus of aggression, they only have to be identified as members of another hooligan group. Just as ingroup pressures can commit individuals to confront members of the outgroup, so outgroup assumptions can draw people into conflict without it being individually willed (Emler and Reicher, 1995: 198). Examples of this kind are the several attacks on individuals allegedly affiliated to the hooligan formations

of FC Barcelona and Espanyol in the late 1980s and early 1990s (see Spaaij and Viñas, 2005; Viñas, 2004).

Sovereignty and autonomy

Closely related to the collective management of reputation are the issues of sovereignty and autonomy. Football hooligans seek to present a self-image of being capable of ‘looking after oneself’, both collectively and individually. This presentation of self contains a number of elements. A first element relates to the presentation of self as a militant force of sovereign rule. Hooligan formations find violence ‘compellingly attractive as a means of sustaining the aura of dread that is an essential element in their project of elite rule’ (Katz, 1988: 137). But violence is not the only way in which sovereignty can be displayed. An important element of enacting inter-group rivalries is the great deal of symbolic opposition and ritualized aggression involved. In its purest form, this ‘aggro’ is ‘the art of subduing one’s rival simply by conning him into thinking that his cause is lost from the outset. The aim is to achieve the end that a violent assault might but without resorting to violence’ (Marsh, 1978: 17). A key component of aggro is bluff; taunts, ‘eyeing each other up’ from a distance and graffiti are very much part of this act. Provocation and intimidation of the opponent and, more generally, of the ‘outside world’ is also enacted through symbols, dress and language. For example, references to ‘ultraviolence’ and one of its main exponents, the character of Alex in Stanley Kubrick’s controversial film of Anthony Burgess’s (1962) *A Clockwork Orange*, have been widespread. FC Barcelona and Espanyol hooligans use such references in their displays and fanzines, while in the early 1970s Fulham hooligans carried walking sticks.⁹

Aggro is closely related to another routine practice of hooligan formations: parading. Parading – within the ground, on local streets and on foreign turf – is the process of walking in apparent unison past a relatively stationary public while displaying insignia of membership in a diffusely threatening group (Katz, 1988: 142). The thrill of the parade may also be achieved by reversing the relationship between viewer and viewed, as when hooligans pace about a public location, gesturing defiance and shouting insults at will. No practice of violence is necessary. Parading plays an important part in the collective management of reputation, allowing the group to sustain its tough image. Moreover, aggro and parading are

⁹ An ultra group at Juventus is explicitly named *Drughi*, after Alex’s friends in violence. Moreover, Armstrong (1998: 236-237) has noted that in the early 1970s some young Sheffield United fans wore boiler suits, boiler hats or pit helmets, and a few fans carried walking sticks or wore face make-up.

routine practices that, in addition to violence, are universally employed to raise the spirit of the group and to prevent boredom. As we have seen, hooligans seek to counter the boredom and restraints of everyday life. Consequently, as Katz (1988: 142) has correctly argued, 'perhaps the greatest danger to the survival of the fighting group as an entity that embraces the lived experience of members is not the strength of other gangs or pressure from the police, but boredom.'

I would argue that the threat of boredom is, in fact, related to pressure from agents of social control. Although on the one hand police surveillance and security measures in and around football grounds enable relatively non-injurious symbolic opposition, on the other hand they limit opportunities for fighting and, thus, for experiencing pleasurable emotional arousal. This may explain why hooligan encounters now tend to occur away from football grounds and why several hooligan formations go to great lengths to escape police observation. When intent on confronting opponents, parading is considered undesirable since it frustrates attempts to remain unnoticed to the police. I recall an incident with the Sparta Youth Crew on an inter-city train. One hooligan provoked passengers and revealed the identity of the group by shouting abuse and chants such as 'Rotterdam Hooligans'. He was told off by the group's informal leaders for attracting the police's attention even before they had gotten off the train: 'Shut up, we don't want to be noticed by the police. We don't want them to await us at the platform, do we?' On other occasions, when opportunities for fighting are seen as limited or when a group fears the opponent (e.g. on foreign turf) or is not prepared to fight, parading can become the main practice for that day. In this context, the public spectacle of having to stroll through a host city with police escort is seen as a relatively safe and effective form of provocation and public protest.

To sum up, while they are important elements of the hooligan experience, aggro and parading alone cannot satisfy the needs of committed hooligans. There has to be at least a threat of physical violence. Aggro and parading should therefore be viewed in addition to violence rather than as replacing physical confrontation. Football hooliganism cannot simply be viewed as non-injurious symbolic opposition since (the negotiation of) violent confrontation is a key component of the hooligan identity and management of reputation. One has to show that one is 'for real', at least occasionally.

Hooligans' presentation of self as sovereign rulers is closely related to their sense of autonomy, that is, their perceived ability to make their own decisions about what to do rather than being influenced by someone else or being told what to do. Two issues are of particular interest here. First, hooligans' sense of autonomy develops in relation to the continuous social

interactions between themselves and agents of social control. In this type of interaction, formal policies are tacitly negotiated, producing informal sets of rules by which the performers involved align their actions. Police officers are generally accepted as being part of the 'game', yet hooligans regularly attempt to manipulate, disrupt or circumvent security regimes (see Spaaij, forthcoming; Van der Torre and Spaaij, 2003; O'Neill, 2005).

Second, several hooligan groups have been successful in 'playing up' their media image as 'paramilitary forces' that engage in meticulously planned confrontation, demonstrating a sense of arrogance of being the toughest 'firm' in the country. Self-identifying hooligans appear on television programmes and documentaries, in press reports, in books, and so on. Experienced hooligans are particularly recognizant of the constructed nature of hooligan reputations and resemble, in some respects, the 'post-hooligan' described by Giulianotti (1999). However, unlike Giulianotti's 'post-hooligan', they are, to varying degrees, still involved in violent confrontation, either as core group members or as 'semi-retired' practitioners.

5. CONCLUSION

In this text, I have sought to demonstrate the great practical heterogeneity of football hooliganism. Cross-national and cross-local variations in the extent and nature of football hooliganism seriously limit the applicability of sociological approaches focusing on the class bases of football-related violence and the specific historical development of British football. But despite these variations it is possible to assert, at least to some extent, the theoretical unity of the phenomenon. This could be achieved by the construction a theoretical framework that accounts for the key elements of football hooliganism worldwide. A useful starting point for the developing of such a framework may be, as Dunning suggests, the identification of the fault lines of particular societies. These fault lines may help us understand the origins and development of specific ingroup and outgroup figurations in football and hooligan rivalries. There are, however, three major reasons why the fault lines concept does not provide a sufficient framework for understanding and explaining football hooliganism as a transnational phenomenon: (i) it operates on a high level of generality, concealing, for example, more localized or football-related 'cleavages' and rivalries; (ii) it cannot account for the subtle yet vital interactions and negotiations between hooligans, non-hooligan supporters, club officials and police officers; and (iii) it fails to account for some of the striking commonalities in football hooliganism worldwide.

A comparative framework of the kind I suggest has yet to be developed. The six key aspects described in this essay function as a first step towards a more systematic and complete theoretical framework for understanding and explaining football hooliganism as a transnational phenomenon. I have sought to demonstrate that although specific notions of hard masculine identity and spatial affinity are context-dependent, the general features and social mechanisms involved have a lot in common. Further research is needed to empirically test and refine the theoretical issues raised in this essay. There remain large gaps in the body of inquiry into football hooliganism, especially in the type of systematic and detailed comparative research advocated in this essay.

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