Football Hooliganism

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Introduction

Hooliganism has been among the most popular topics in football studies for decades. To some observers, the issue is well and truly over-researched (Moorhouse, 2000) and has 'unreasonably biased research into football, so that issues such as the administration of the game and its political economy have been wrongly relegated to a secondary position' (King, 2002: 3). Yet, others argue that football-related violence still warrants systematic academic research. Virtually every country around the world has experienced spectator violence at football matches (Giulianotti et al., 1994; Dunning et al., 2002). In recent years, countries as diverse as Brazil, Sweden, Egypt and Italy have been rocked by football-related deaths (Duarte et al., 2013). The question of how to combat football hooliganism continues to feature on the political and policy agendas of many countries. Over the past thirty years national and international governing bodies have introduced a raft of regulations, policies and strategies to control and prevent violence at all levels of the game (e.g. Asser Institute, 2004; Tsoukala, 2009; Council of the European Union, 2010). This has involved witnessed the progressive consolidation and expansion of judicial powers, stadium security measures, policing tactics and special investigative techniques in the fight against fan violence (Tsoukala, 2009; Spaaij, 2013).

In February 2012, the Egyptian city of Port Said witnessed one of the deadliest episodes of football-related violence in modern history. Seventy-four people were killed and hundreds injured when spectators invaded the playing field after a match between Al-Masry and Al-Ahly. Most of the deaths were caused by concussions, stab wounds and suffocation from the stampede. The sentencing to death of 21 fans on charges of having been responsible for the

brawl sparked fierce protests on the streets of Port Said. In Western Europe, where authorities have long sought to put their house in order, media headlines suggest the issue has not (entirely) gone away. 'An ugly return to fan violence in Europe', wrote *The New York Times* (Hughes, 2010). 'England sweeps hooligan problem under the rug' while 'Argentina losing hooliganism battle', stated Reuters (Pretot, 2014; Gowan, 2015). 'Brazil suffers record number of football violence deaths', *The Guardian* recently reported (Duarte et al., 2013). 'Football violence grips major London rail hub', according to *The Telegraph* (Walton, 2015).

The scholarly attention afforded to football hooliganism has become increasingly globalised, even though theorisation and empirical research on the issue have been skewed towards Europe, and especially to the United Kingdom. It is timely to take stock of these contributions and reflect on how they inform and progress our understanding of football hooliganism and of approaches designed to combat it. The aim of this chapter, then, is to review the contemporary academic literature on football hooliganism. The chapter does not provide an exhaustive overview of the entire body of scholarship on football hooliganism. Rather, it focuses on a discussion of both established and emerging research. While the chapter covers relevant literature across space and time, it will explore Italian research in relatively great detail. The Italian experience is particularly insightful because of the country's rich tradition of research on football-related violence. The country continues to experience vigorous political and public debate on the nature of and responses to football-related violence. The Italian government's introduction in 2009 of the *Tessera del Tifoso*, a compulsory identity card scheme, has reinvigorated this debate (Testa, 2013). Our first task, however, is to attend to the question of defining football hooliganism.

Defining football hooliganism

The problems with the use of the terms 'football hooliganism' and 'football-related violence' are well documented. Definitions of football hooliganism vary considerably and tend to be emotionally charged. The term is often used in a broad sense by media, authorities and researchers to refer to various transgressive and potentially harmful behaviours on the part of football fans (Spaaij, 2007). Such a broad definition is at odds with the way self-identified football hooligans describe their actions (Van Limbergen and Walgrave, 1988; Armstrong, 1998; Spaaij, 2011; Radmann, 2014). In contrast, narrow definitions view football hooliganism a distinctive subculture among predominantly young male partisan fans and their engagement in collective violence which is primarily targeted at opposing fan groups with whom there is

often a history of hostility and confrontation (Spaaij, 2007). This violent competition among groups of football fans constitutes a particular modality of sports crowd violence, one that is highly contextual and culturally specific. While football hooliganism may be considered a 'world phenomenon' (Dunning et al., 2002), its manifestations vary significantly across space and time. For example, Young (2012: 69) argues that North America has been less exposed to football hooliganism (in the narrow sense of the term), and that football hooliganism and North American fan violence 'neither represent social problems of the same magnitude nor are one and the same thing' (cf. Roadburg, 1980). North American research focuses attention on, *inter alia*, post-event celebration and defeat riots (Lewis, 2007; Young, 2012), rather than more organised forms of football hooliganism.

Context is critical when attempting to understand football hooliganism (Radmann, 2014). Quite distinctive football fan subcultures exist in some parts of the world. In Southern Europe, so-called 'ultras' are the most visible 'hard-core' fan groups, but their proclivities to violence vary substantially (e.g. Hourcade, 2007). Ultras typically feature a comparatively high degree of formal organisation, including official membership and recruitment campaigns. 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 rivals through intimidation or violence. However, as the Italian case study below shows, several ultra groups do perform acts of violence akin to what we call 'football hooliganism'. While hard-core fan groups in Latin America (variably termed *barras bravas*, *hinchadas* or *torcidas organizadas*, depending on the country) resemble European football hooligan groups in some respects, there are also important differences (Toledo, 1996; Alabarces et al., 2008; Cunha, 2006; Garriga Zucal, 2010). For example, akin to their Italian counterparts, Argentina's barras bravas engage in political activity in addition to physical confrontations with rival fans. They may 'carry out illegitimate tasks by means of violence and compulsion, and are used by sporting and political leaders for that purpose' (Alabarces, 2002: 34).

Italian research on football-related violence

A variety of disciplinary, theoretical and methodological approaches have been applied to the study of football hooliganism since the 1970s (for an overview, see Frosdick and Marsh, 2005; Tsoukala, 2009; Spaaij, 2014). Contributions have come from a range of disciplines and fields including sociology, criminology, psychology, political science, law, history, and management and organisation studies. This section examines the main studies undertaken in Italy over the

past three decades, which have become part of the canon of international and comparative research on football-related violence.

The ultras, Italy's hard-core football fans, have elicited various responses in academia since their origin in the 1970s. Initially Italian scholars neglected to analyse the phenomenon, and it was not until the 1980s that researchers began to investigate the ultras in earnest. Social psychologist Alessandro Salvini (1988) was one of the first to do so, by building on the work by Peter Marsh (Marsh, 1978; Marsh, Rosser and Harré, 1978) in the UK. Salvini believed that the behaviour of the ultras resulted from a social learning process through which they came to understand socially rewarded actions in tune with their interpretation of the situation they were facing on and off the terraces. The new recruits would gradually internalise a complex system of rules, values, roles and shared meanings and developed a cognitive frame that enabled them to re-interpret their experiences in line with those of the group.

A major focus of Salvini's (1988) work was the ultras' social identity. He argued that violence was a means for self-affirmation. The group provided solutions for young people whose social identity was in flux and subject to modification. In assuming the role of ultra, individuals performed an identity within a framework of behaviours based on established norms and rules which, although not written, were tacitly shared by most of the participants. Aggressiveness was one such trait which in interactions with like-minded others conferred self-confidence, self-efficacy and the admiration of others, and hence enabled ultras to gain social status within the group. Salvini's ideas were provocative and moved the analysis away from the socio-economic determinism which was expressed in the early British literature on football hooliganism (e.g. Taylor, 1971).

While Salvini tried to make sense of the behaviour of the ultras, social anthropologist Alessandro Dal Lago (1990) focused on societal symbols that were represented and enacted by a football team within the symbolic space of the stadium, namely conflict, fight for justice, sense of identity, and the importance of victory. Within the symbolism of the football stadium these metaphors were ritualised in a process that dramatised their contents and made the football environment culturally and socially autonomous. In so doing, the stadium became an environment with its own code of conduct, rules, values and rituals which helped explain football fan behaviour and, in particular, the ultras' violence. Dal Lago's interpretation of football fan behaviour as essentially ritualistic drew heavily on the work Peter Marsh (1978).

Dal Lago (1990) studied the ultras in three Italian cities: Turin, Milan and Bergamo. In explaining the behaviour of the ultras, he develops three assumptions. The first is based on the '*freund und feind*' (friends and enemies) division amongst supporters. This division is based

on the nature of football where two teams, defined by two sets of symbols, compete for victory. This notion could, according to Dal Lago, explain the polarisation on which the hard-core football fans base their social interactions. The second supposition describes a football match as a ritual clash between friends and enemies within an autonomous (and ideal) place to originate and enact symbolic conflicts: the stadium. Dal Lago identifies two factors that influence the intensity of such ritual conflicts: firstly, the historically grounded and evolving relationships of alliances and enmities amongst supporters (cf. Armstrong and Giulianotti, 2001); secondly, events that occur during the football match that could influence the emotive equilibrium on the *curve* (terraces). Dal Lago recognises that symbolic violence can become real violence; however, this only happens when the metaphoric actions of the ultras are misunderstood by ordinary spectators or by the police, which interpret their rituals as threatening to society (cf. Marsh, 1978).

Dal Lago's (1990) final proposition defines the football stadium as an autonomous social setting where certain logics, which can appear incomprehensible or meaningless to outsiders, are largely rational. Inside the stadium, it is possible to feel emotions differently from everyday life, and symbols gain different meanings from those manifested in 'normal' society. Dal Lago thus draws a distinction between the social reality of the stadium and the social reality of 'society'. Once fans cross the imaginary line between these two realities they change their way of acting. He states: 'of course, they are the same people or groups. What they have put on, however, trespassing the invisible membrane that surrounds the stadium, is another mental, cognitive and moral dress' (Dal Lago, 1990: 39). According to Dal Lago, therefore, within the realm of the stadium conflicts between supporters are not necessarily socially meaningful but are rituals, with meanings best understood via a logic of football-related metaphorical hostility.

Dal Lago (1990) was sceptical about the perceived association between football fandom and political ideology. He stressed the groundlessness of claims that the *curve* were directly linked to political groupings or that they were genuine expressions of political beliefs. Instead, he considered the ideological symbols adopted by the ultras as a form of *bricolage*, taken from different sources, collated and re-contextualised to indicate a new meaning (Levi-Strauss, 1966). Such artefacts and their contextual usage can be understood following the aforementioned logic of figurative hostility, notably the metaphor of war. Consequently, all neo-fascists displays within the football stadium should be understood as displays of ritual conflicts explained by the ultras' impulse of appearing in and being part of the show (cf. Dal Lago and De Biasi, 2002). This finding resonates with subsequent research on political ideology among Spanish ultras (Spaaij and Viñas, 2005).

Compared to Dal Lago, the sociologist Antonio Roversi's (1991a, 1992) approach is more pragmatic. Roversi disagrees with the distinction between symbolic and real violence that features centrally in Salvini's and Dal Lago's studies. Instead, Roversi focuses on the notion of morality. Roversi's (1992) research was based on the fans of Bologna FC and sought a quantitative appraisal of the nature of spectator violence. Roversi's main hypothesis was that the ultras should be considered a 'moral community' which permits its members to gain experiences that differ from daily life routine. Such gatherings do not manifest anything particularly *anomic*; instead, they represent for the participants a behavioural and cultural model which satisfies their identity and status needs. This status performs a positive role (temporarily) replacing the initiatory rituals provided by schooling, military service and the church.

Roversi (1991) identified three factors which accounted for the ultras' enduring oppositional stances. The first is the historical legacies evident in the history of Italian football. For example, he notes that 'in many ways hooligan violence is related to and a continuation of the consolidated tradition of fighting between older supporters' (Roversi, 1991: 320). The second element is what Roversi called the 'Bedouin syndrome', an anthropological term that was first applied to the study of football hooliganism by Harrison (1974) (cf. Russell, 2008: 155). The Bedouin syndrome rests on the following principles: (1) the friend of a friend is a friend; (2) the enemy of a friend is an enemy; (3) the enemy of an enemy is a friend; and (4) the friend of an enemy is an enemy (Roversi, 1991: 321; see also Dunning et al., 1988). The third element points to the role that political ideologies play in fueling inter-group rivalries and violence. Roversi (1991: 320) found that political extremism was 'definitively a glamorous example for the young hooligans, not only because its symbolism coincided with the hard-line image they wanted to create for themselves, but also because the organizational and behavioural model it offered fitted their aims like a glove.' As such, Roversi was one of the first Italian academics to take seriously the link between the ultras and political ideology, even if he presented no robust evidence of the ultras' involvement in political extremism beyond the use of neo-fascist symbols (cf. Roversi, 2006). His ideas were relevant and perceptive, but they needed substantiating with ethnographic evidence and historical narrative.

The work of applied sociologist Alberto Testa, in collaboration with social anthropologist Gary Armstrong, identified a gap in the literature in relation to the study of ideologically oriented hard-core football fans. Existing studies of these fans were similar to Roversi's (2006) in that they used externalist approaches. In order to avoid confusion and to clearly identify this type of fandom, Testa and Armstrong coined a neologism using a final

capital 'S' (UltraS) to distinguish neo-fascist fan groups from the rest of the Italian ultras whose behaviour (including violence) was still publically considered as exceeding the 'ordinary' at times, yet who were not guided predominantly by political ideology (Testa, 2009; Testa and Armstrong, 2010a, b). Testa and Armstrong used an ethnographic approach with the purpose of making sense of the complex world of these groups both on and off the football terraces and explaining their logic and the root causes of their violence.

Initially Testa (2009) focused on two major fan groups in Rome: the Boys, who support AS Roma, and the Irriducibili at Lazio. From this ethnography a clear picture emerged about the groups' social dynamics, values, belief systems, organisation and *mentalità* (mentality or logic). The groups studied by Testa displayed deep opposition to capitalism and to the commercialisation of football, with a strong belief in the possibility to resist and change the status quo of Italian football in the name of a common cause. Testa found links to European extra-parliamentary groups and a willingness among the UltraS to suspend or overcome historical football rivalries in order to resist their perceived persecution by the state and to fight a common enemy: the police. This finding is reflected in the violent episodes that have been taking place in and around football stadia in which police were the target of the UltraS' violence. A comparable trend has been observed in other European countries and is indicative of the Bedouin syndrome studied by Roversi and others, a process by which fans of opposing teams can develop ad hoc or more durable alignments against a common enemy.

Established and emerging research agendas

Football hooliganism has been the subject of an expansive body of scholarship. As noted earlier, it is beyond the scope of this chapter to provide an exhaustive overview of this literature. The aim of this section is to identify some of the key contemporary research agendas in the study of football hooliganism, with a focus on research themes that have emerged since the late 1990s.

A well-established research theme is the association between football hooliganism and masculinity. Football hooliganism is primarily the domain of young males. To some extent, this reflects young men's general over-representation in various types of delinquency. Like other societal domains where young males seek excitement and status among peers, participation in football hooliganism offers them pleasurable excitement, subcultural capital and social status (Dunning et al., 1986, 1988). Research consistently shows the assertion of an aggressive masculine identity among male fans as a key source of football hooliganism

(Dunning et al., 2002; Armstrong, 1998; Free and Hughson, 2003). Football hooligans celebrate and perform an aggressive masculine identity which is constructed through violence and derogation of the opponent, with the purpose of attaining an unambiguous sense of one's masculine status (Spaaij, 2008). For example, studies of Argentinian fan groups show the hyper-masculine morality through which football-related violence acquires moral legitimacy amnd recognition among fans (Garriga Zucal, 2010; Alabarces, 2002).

A second established research agenda stems from macro-sociological studies which situate the social identification and group antagonisms highlighted in the Italian research discussed above in a macro-historical context. More recently, this has led to the development of a novel approach which directs analytical attention to the societal 'fault lines' that fuel and shape rivalries and conflicts in football and, by extension, in football hooliganism (Dunning, 1999; Dunning et al., 2002). According to Dunning (1999), a key characteristic of such fault lines is that they involve variants of 'established-outsider figurations' in which intense in-group bonds and correspondingly intense antagonisms towards the out-group are likely to develop. These figurations provide a repertoire of available meanings, interpretations and rituals which are encoded in the shared culture of a given community or society, and which, as such, spectators bring to a sporting event and which can increase or decrease the likelihood of violence. Extending this work, Spaaij and Anderson (2010) contend that the collective (e.g. the fan group) has potency only when there is a basis for contention, grounded in the construction of an out-group or 'enemy', which can be players or fans of the opposing team but also agents of the state or other social groups (cf. Galvani and Palma, 2005). The rivalries between opposing hooligan formations, which also tend to be fuelled and contoured by broader divisions along class, religious, political or ethnic lines, are exemplars of objects of contention. The repertoire operates such that the vilification of that object does not cause an individual cognitive dissonance when compared with acceptable standards of behaviour.

A third strand of contemporary research on football hooliganism shows that the dispositions of football fans are less important as 'causes' of football hooliganism than the situational dynamics of interaction among fans and between fans and agents of social control (King, 1995; De Biasi, 1999; Lewis, 2007). This theme has been most systematically investigated by social psychologist Clifford Stott and his colleagues (Stott and Reicher, 1998; Reicher et al., 2007; Stott and Pearson, 2007), who build on social identity theory (Tajfel and Turner, 1979) to show that if police treat all fans potentially (if not actively) dangerous or react to the violence of some fans by imposing restraint on all, then this will increase the likelihood of violating in-group conceptions of legitimacy and uniting fans in hostility and opposition to

the police, as well as increasing the influence of those advocating conflict in the crowd and undermining informal social control amongst fans (Reicher et al., 2007). Thus, in response to perceived hostility towards fans by the police, or police inactivity in the face of violent attacks on fans, the social identity of the crowd is transformed, making them cohere as a unified group through a sense of common fate. Ordinary fans may see violence as something to avoid; however, when affronted by police they may legitimise it as a form of retaliation or self-defence (Reicher et al., 2007).

In addition to these (and other) established research agendas, at least two emerging fields of research can be identified which build on the rich tradition of scholarship on football hooliganism. The first is the way football hooliganism is portrayed in, and acted out through, media and popular culture. Football hooliganism has long been a popular genre for the global media and entertainment industry. While this process is not new (Hall, 1978; Murphy et al., 1988), what is new in the contemporary period is that football hooliganism has become increasingly commodified. A global market in the reproduction and simulation of football hooliganism – in print, film and games – has emerged. The available products include an ever-expanding range of books, fanzines, documentaries, films, websites and digital games, enabling audiences to 'peer into and voyeuristically experience this "deviant" culture' (Crawford, 2004: 151).

Scholars have addressed several aspects of this nexus between hooliganism and popular culture (Crabbe, 2003; Crawford, 2004; Redhead, 2004, 2015; Poulton, 2006, 2007, 2008a, 2008b). For example, Crabbe (2003: 418) emphasises the voyeuristic appeal of football-related violence and points out that the labelling and moralising which surrounds the discourse of hooliganism 'are wrapped up in a wider commercial enterprise which constitutes a "reality" through the need to feed the consumption of the spectacle of violence.' Media representations play a key role in providing a repertoire of texts or cultural resources 'upon which those fans who are attracted to the "adventureland" drama of the England fan reputation can construct identities and play out fantasies in their own terms before a willing audience' (ibid.: 419). Recent research in this area also examines how self-identified football hooligans construct and perform their identities through social media and popular culture (e.g. Zaitch and De Leeuw, 2010; Radmann, 2012; Redhead, 2015).

A second emerging area of research focuses on measures designed to combat football hooliganism and, more broadly, the security governance and risk management technologies that have become part and parcel of football as a spectator sport. This research shows that football constitutes a key site for the production and diffusion of coercive and/or consent-based

security and risk management strategies (Giulianotti and Armstrong, 1998; De Biasi, 1999; Tsoukala, 2009; Warren and Hay, 2009; Eick, 2011; Giulianotti, 2011; Mastrogiannakis and Dorville, 2012, 2015). Reflecting the dominant risk logic in late modern society, the security and risk management strategies developed and applied in football seek to pre-empt and minimise the probability of undesirable conduct by football supporters in the future. Pre-emptive risk management in the governing of spectator behaviour at football matches implies the identification, classification and close monitoring of risk and 'risky' populations, and involves the imposition of punishments, surveillance and the expansion of legal powers. However, this approach is contested; not only has it marginalised and criminalised significant sections of football supporters (Pearson, 1999; Stott and Pearson, 2006; Tsoukala, 2009; Giulianotti, 2011) and impact on football fans' civil liberties and match-going experience more generally (Testa, 2013; Pearson, 2012; Van der Torre et al., 2008), but it has also given rise to new forms of fan activism and resistance (Spaaij, 2012; Testa, 2009).

This nascent field demonstrates the pervasive aspirations of securitisation and the ever increasing range of surveillance and control measures surrounding football. This security assemblage, which transcends public/private and civilian/military boundaries, has become increasingly standardised across time and space through transnational and multi-agency collaboration and knowledge transfer. There are strong homologies with other areas of security governance in this regard, most notably in the areas of sports mega events (Richards et al., 2010; Bennett and Haggerty, 2011) and social movements (Spaaij, 2013).

Conclusion

Football hooliganism continues to attract a vast, diverse and multidisciplinary body of global scholarship. This chapter has discussed a number of longstanding research themes, such as the association between football hooliganism and masculinity, and the situational dynamics of crowd-police interactions. In addition, two emerging research agendas in the social scientific study of football hooliganism were identified. The first research theme examines the way football hooliganism is portrayed in, and performed through, (social) media and popular culture. The second emerging research agenda focuses on the security governance and risk management strategies that are designed to counter football hooliganism. These nascent fields suggest that rather than taking the nature and causes of football hooliganism as the primary locus of investigation (as was common in earlier sociological studies), the recent literature focuses on insider and outsider representations of, and responses to, football hooliganism.

These research agenda open up new lines of inquiry by drawing critical attention to the consumption of football hooliganism and to the impact of security governance on football fans' civil liberties and match-going experience. In so doing, they have the potential to reinvigorate the critical study of football hooliganism.

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