

THE ROOTS OF FOOTBALL HOOLIGANISM

An Historical and Sociological Study

Eric Dunning, Patrick Murphy
and John Williams

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Foreword by the Rt Hon Lord Aberdare, KBE, GCStJ Chairman of the Football Trust

Football hooliganism is, like education, one of those subjects on which most people consider themselves experts. We all know how to solve the problem, if only *they* (the government, the football authorities, magistrates, parents) would listen. Of course we know how it started, and when, and its causes. Why bother with clever analysis carried out by sociologists?

When Eric Dunning, Patrick Murphy and John Williams started their programmes of research into football crowd violence on behalf of the Football Trust, I heard sceptical comments from several eminent people in the football world. 'Academics never tell us anything we don't know', 'There's nothing new in their reports', and similar remarks greeted their early work. But as time has gone by, their experience and expertise have grown, and the Leicester University Team are now rightly regarded as the country's foremost academic research team in this field.

The Football Trust (and thus its sole funders, the Spotting-the-Ball competition of pools companies Littlewoods, Vernons and Zettors) has contributed substantial sums to Leicester's sociology department for its work in football. For 1985-7 the programme was funded jointly by the Department of the Environment and ourselves. For the next three years from 1987 we have made a contribution of £100,000 to the university, and we look forward to receiving further high-quality reports on the game's problems and the issues they raise.

The principal supporter on the Trust for commissioning

academic research was our first deputy chairman, Sir Norman Chester. Having twice been asked to conduct enquiries into football (once by the government and once by the Football League), Sir Norman was particularly conscious of the lack of research data. It is therefore most fitting that the unit at Leicester University has been officially named 'The Sir Norman Chester Football Research Centre'. He would have liked that, and he would have welcomed the publication of this book. I commend *The Roots of Football Hooliganism* to all students and followers of the game, and privately I dedicate it to Norman Chester's memory.

Preface

This is the second book on football hooliganism based on research we have been conducting since 1978. The first, *Hooligans Abroad: the Behaviour and Control of English Fans in Continental Europe*, was published in 1984.

Although it was published first, *Hooligans Abroad* was actually based on material gathered in the second phase of our project. *The Roots of Football Hooliganism* begins to report the findings of what we consider to be our major research. More particularly, it is an historical study which traces variations in the reported incidence of soccer-crowd disorderliness and football hooliganism from the beginnings of the professional game in the 1870s and 1880s to the present day. Our current research is for *Football Hooliganism: What is to be Done?*, a book on football hooliganism and social policy.

We have tried in the present study to write as far as possible in a manner and style that will make the book accessible to a general readership and not just specialist sociologists. However, since we are attempting here to address the issue of *explanation* systematically and at some length, it has been necessary for us to consider a number of theoretical issues explicitly and in detail. More particularly, in Chapter 1 we look critically at the main popular and academic explanations of football hooliganism that have so far been proposed. In Chapter 9 we subject a number of theories of male aggressiveness to critical scrutiny and construct our own, sociological, alternative. Finally, in the conclusion, we contrast our approach to football hooliganism and working-class

youth to that of the Marxist 'subculturalists', and locate our findings and conclusions in the context of Elias's theory of 'civilizing processes'.

In writing *The Roots of Football Hooliganism* we have been helped enormously by a number of friends and colleagues. Joe Maguire deserves special mention for the data from West Midlands newspapers that he gathered when working on his PhD under the supervision of Eric Dunning. Ilya Neustadt, Ivan Waddington and Tim Newburn read through many of our initial drafts, providing numerous helpful comments and critical suggestions. Special thanks are also due to Aubrey Stephenson of the Leicestershire Library Services, to the Central Photographic Unit at Leicester University for their assistance in recording our historical data, and to members of the Leicestershire Probation Service for their help during the early stages of the project. Ian Stuttard of Thames TV provided a number of important insights in the later stages of the book's preparation. Responsibilities for typing were shared by Margaret Milsom, Eve Burns and Val Pheby, without whose patience and good humour no final manuscript would have emerged! Finally, we should like to express our gratitude not only to the Football Trust and the Department of the Environment for their continuing funding but more especially to the Economic and Social Research Council, for whom the research on which this book is based was originally conducted between 1979 and 1982.

INTRODUCTION

Football hooliganism as a social phenomenon

The need for an historical approach

The fundamental thesis of this study is that football hooliganism is a social phenomenon which is deeply rooted in two main ways. It is deeply rooted first because, contrary to popular belief, forms of it have been a frequent accompaniment of association football in this country ever since the 1870s and 1880s, the period when the game emerged in a recognizably modern form. The incidence has varied considerably over time, but our finding is that there has never been a period in the history of modern soccer when spectator disorderliness on a greater or lesser scale has been entirely absent from Britain. The second way in which football hooliganism is deeply rooted relates to the strength of commitment of those who, nowadays at least, engage in it most persistently. For them, it is part of a way of life and they cling to it despite all the preventative measures that the football authorities and the government have tried.

It is with a review of the principal reasons why we adopted an historical approach in our research that we shall begin these introductory remarks on football hooliganism as a social phenomenon. The fact that we approached the problem historically stems, in part, from the sociological perspective to which we adhere, namely the 'sociogenetic' or 'figurational-developmental' approach advanced by Norbert Elias.¹ This lays stress on the need to study long-term processes and recommends in this connection a synthesis of sociology and

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history. We also wanted to relate the problem of football hooliganism to Elias's theory of 'civilizing processes'. However, our historical approach to football hooliganism had another source as well. We knew prior to embarking on our research that spectator disorderliness had occurred at football matches in this country before the First World War. We were also highly suspicious of the currently popular view that the inter-war years and the years immediately following the Second World War were periods in which the soccer terraces of Britain were totally peaceful places attended solely by good-humoured and well-behaved crowds. Such a view smacks of romanticism, and romanticized versions of the past are always sociologically suspect.² However, at that stage our knowledge was rudimentary and we wanted to know more.

Knowledge of the history of football hooliganism is not simply valuable for the light it throws on the past; it is also vital to an adequate understanding of the present-day phenomenon. More particularly, historical analysis is crucial in order to provide a comparative frame of reference which can highlight what, if any, the distinctive features of the contemporary phenomenon really are. It will also shed light on whether, as seems to be widely believed at present, we are living in an age of excessive and escalating violence in and around our football stadia and elsewhere. Furthermore, such an analysis is crucial in order to follow the build-up of football hooliganism to its current dimensions. And finally, an historical analysis is vital in order to ensure that an appropriate conceptual apparatus is employed in constructing an explanation. Many aspects of present-day football hooliganism are different from earlier forms. That is what one would expect given the social changes that have occurred in this country since the 1880s. However, as we shall show, there are common aspects, too, and we want to avoid the mistake of explaining a long-standing social phenomenon with deep historical roots solely by reference to social processes in the recent past.

The roots of contemporary football hooliganism

Let us now turn to the second way in which football hooliganism is deeply rooted. In a report on football hooliganism published jointly by the Sports Council and the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) in 1978, the authors concluded that 'an element of fashion pervades the behaviour and that like other youth fashions... hooliganism may gradually subside'. Alternatively, they suggested, media interest, which plays an important part in focusing public concern upon the problem, may shift elsewhere.³ Events since this was written, however, suggest that the authors of the Joint Report were optimistic, not only regarding football hooliganism as a form of behaviour but also as a focus for media interest and public concern. In fact, although things on the soccer front were relatively quiet between the end of the First World War and the mid-1950s – as we shall show, that was less true of Scotland than it was of England – by 1978 football hooliganism had been a firmly established part of the British football scene for some twenty years or more. Since that time, moreover, although the annual incidence has waxed and waned, it has continued to be a focus for public anxiety and media concern. This anxiety and concern reached a crescendo with the events at the European Cup Final in Brussels in May 1985.

To say that the football hooliganism of today is deeply rooted is not to deny that an element of fashion pervades it. The forms of dress favoured by young football fans over the last couple of decades provide an example. They have tended to reflect the changes in youth styles that have occurred more generally in those years. In that period, the songs and chants of goal-terrace fans have undergone changes too. So, in some respects, have the contexts in which football hooligan encounters take place. In the mid-1960s, football stadia themselves were the major locations; however, from the late 1960s onwards such encounters took place increasingly outside them. Indeed, after the mid-1970s, English football hooligans ceased to ply their trade solely in the domestic context and became involved more and more in hooligan activities abroad. Having said this, however, such aspects of

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the phenomenon are arguably surface manifestations of something deeper and more enduring, namely the occurrence of violence, vandalism and disorder in and around football stadia or involving travelling fans. Football, of course, is not the only context in which hooligan behaviour occurs but it is a remarkably persistent one. In short, the differences between the phases of youthful misbehaviour that have been evident in a football context since the 1950s and in fact for considerably longer, are probably less significant than either the common characteristics they share or the more slowly-evolving underlying structures that generate them. It is with these underlying structures that we are principally concerned.

Two further aspects of football hooliganism as we have known it since the 1950s are worthy of special note; namely the levels of public and official anxiety expressed about it, and the escalating demands for 'tougher' action. They, too, show how deeply-rooted a social phenomenon it is. The anxiety over football hooliganism, of course, is understandable. So, to an extent, are the demands for tougher action. Football hooliganism can, in extreme cases, cost lives. Not infrequently, it leads to considerable damage to property inside and outside football stadia. It is also sometimes a threat to football fans and ordinary citizens who are not themselves directly involved. Moreover, it has been one factor in the long-term decline of football-match attendances. However, it is important to stress in this connection that, despite their escalating 'toughness', few, if any, of the remedial measures tried so far have succeeded in coming to grips with hooliganism. As a result, the anxiety continues.

Indeed, the currently available evidence suggests that, far from curbing the problem, some measures may have contributed to its escalation; that is, the public anxiety recurrently generated by widely-publicized football hooligan incidents and the reflex imposition by the authorities of harsher punishments and more stringent controls appear themselves to be part of the total problem, in the sense that they may reinforce it. Although it has helped in many ways to make grounds safer for orderly supporters, the practice of segregating and 'penning' rival fans is a possible case in point. It was widely introduced following the recommendations of the Lang

Report in 1969, but there is reason to believe that, by allocating young rival fans to separate sections of terracing, it may have played a part in enhancing their solidarity and in giving them a sense of proprietorship over the goal-end areas of grounds.⁴ Similarly, both segregation and the introduction of more intensive policing *inside* football stadia probably played a part in driving the phenomenon on to the streets outside; that is, into situations where, on the whole, it is more difficult to control. Furthermore, whilst it is probably the case that harsher penalties for football-related offences have deterred some fans from attending matches – such fans, of course, may continue to engage in hooligan behaviour in *non-football* contexts – policies of this kind have clearly failed to eradicate the problem.⁵ Finally, the introduction of more sophisticated strategies by the police appears to have contributed to an increase in the sophistication of the tactics and organization of the hooligans; that is, the authorities and the hooligans appear, to a degree, to be locked into a process of mutual reinforcement.

The fact that football hooliganism is more deeply rooted than is often supposed suggests that the current understanding of its ‘causes’ is deficient. The present study is an attempt to probe these causes – the past and present social roots of football hooliganism – more deeply than has been done so far. More particularly, it is an enquiry into:

- 1 the social circumstances inside and, more importantly, outside the game within which such behaviour is recurrently generated; and
- 2 the reasons why its frequency and seriousness vary over time.

But let us enquire into its present-day manifestations a little more deeply.

The present-day manifestations of football hooliganism

As a form of behaviour, the disorderliness that attracts the label ‘football hooliganism’ is complex and many-sided. In popular usage the label embraces swearing and behaviour

which, in other contexts, might be excused as simple ‘high spirits’ or ‘horseplay’. In fact, many of the fans arrested in a football context have only engaged in such minor misdemeanours. In the more serious manifestations, however, the label refers to pitch invasions that appear to be deliberately engineered in order to halt the match and, perhaps most seriously of all, to large-scale fracas between opposing fan-groups and fights with the police that are often violent and destructive. It is with this latter form of the phenomenon that we are principally concerned. More specifically, as we shall show, the evidence suggests that, although many fans are drawn into hooligan incidents – fans who did not set out for the match with hooligan intent – the hard core – those who engage most persistently in hooligan behaviour in a football context – view fighting and aggressive behaviour as an integral part of ‘going to the match’.

Football-hooligan confrontations take a number of different forms and they can take place in a variety of contexts besides the football ground itself. They can, for example, take the form of hand-to-hand fighting between just two rival supporters or between two small groups of them. Alternatively, they can involve up to several hundred fans on either side. In the most serious incidents weapons are sometimes used. Football-hooligan confrontations can also take the form of aerial bombardments using as ammunition missiles that range from innocuous items to dangerous, even potentially lethal, ones such as darts, metal discs, coins (sometimes with their edges sharpened), broken seats, bricks, slabs of concrete, ball bearings, fireworks, smoke bombs, and, as has happened on one or two occasions, crude incendiary devices.

Missile throwing can take place inside or outside the ground. As a consequence of the policy of segregating rival fans, large-scale fights on the terraces became relatively rare during the 1970s and early 1980s. Small groups of fans, however, still frequently managed to infiltrate the territories of their rivals in order to create a disturbance. Participating in a successful ‘invasion’ – ‘taking’ somebody else’s ‘end’ – is a source of great kudos in football-hooligan circles. Since the introduction of segregation, however, the fighting more usually takes place either in the unsegregated seated sections

of grounds or before the match, for example in and around town-centre pubs. It also takes place after the match, when the police are trying to keep the rival fans apart and to get the main body of away supporters to the railway or bus station without serious incident. It is then that the largest-scale confrontations tend to occur. These often start with a 'run', that is, with a rush of up to two or three hundred young male fans who charge along the street looking for opposing fans or for a breach in the police defences that will enable them to make contact with their rivals. The 'hard core' hooligans, however – those who are most committed in their desire to engage groups of opposing supporters – often operate apart from the main body and use elaborate tactics in their attempts to outflank the police. If they are successful, what usually takes place is a series of skirmishes scattered over a relatively large area involving young males from either side punching, kicking and chasing each other, dodging in and out of moving traffic and, occasionally, attacking vehicles carrying rival supporters. Confrontations can also take place when groups of rival fans *en route* to or travelling away from different matches meet accidentally. On occasions, too, football hooligans on their way to or coming back from a game stop off in a different town and fight with local youths who have not been to a football match themselves. In addition, fights also sometimes occur *within* particular fan-groups, the participants in such cases being drawn, for example, from differing housing estates in the same locality.

This description of some of the main parameters of present-day football hooliganism – before the First World War it seems more usually to have taken the form of attacks on match officials and players of the visiting team – is consistent with the central point we made earlier, namely that the youths and young men involved in the most serious incidents tend to view fighting and confrontations with opposing supporters as an integral part of attending a football match. The songs and chants which form a conspicuous feature of inter-fan-group rivalry, especially inside the stadium, point in the same direction. Although some of the 'hardest' lads regard singing and chanting as 'soft' or 'lacking style' and tend not to get involved in it, during a match the bulk of the rival fan-groups

direct their attention as much, and sometimes more, to one another as they do to the match itself, chanting and gesticulating *en masse* as expressions of their opposition. Their songs and chants are in part related to the match but they also have as a recurrent theme challenges to fight, threats of violence towards the opposing fans and boasts about past victories. Each fan-group has its own repertoire of songs and chants, although many of these are local variations on a stock of common themes. Central in this connection is the fact that their lyrics are punctuated with words like 'hate', 'die', 'fight', 'kick', 'surrender', all of which convey images of battle and conquest.⁶ Apart from violence, symbolic demasculinization of the rival fans is another recurrent terrace theme; for example, the reference to them and/or the team they support as 'wankers', a charge accompanied by a mass gestural representation of the male masturbatory act. Yet another recurring theme is denigration of the community of the opposing fans.

The media treatment of football hooliganism

Although we have been heavily dependent in our research on the press as a source of information, the media treatment of football hooliganism creates specific difficulties as far as sociological analysis is concerned. This issue is worth singling out, not only on account of the part it plays in focusing public concern upon the problem, but also because, along with the government, the police, the courts, the football authorities, the football clubs and, of course the football hooligans themselves, it constitutes an active ingredient in the phenomenon of football hooliganism considered as a social totality. In particular, press coverage appears to have played a part in both de-escalating the problem of football hooliganism in the inter-war years and in escalating it from the 1960s onwards. In short, whilst it cannot be said that newspapers and the other mass media 'create' problems of this kind, neither are they neutral agents which simply report events.

A common feature of media coverage of hooliganism today is the description of the fans involved as 'animals', 'savages', 'mindless morons', 'lunatics' and 'thugs'; that is, in terms of a

rhetoric which dehumanizes them, raises doubts about their sanity or casts them entirely beyond the pale. However, the pre-emptive diagnoses of football hooligans as 'mindless', 'savage' or 'sub-human' – analyses of the sort that are implicit in the majority of popular journalistic responses – actually contribute to perpetuating the problem; that is, they express in an exaggerated manner the social distance that exists between 'ordinary citizens' and 'hooligan fans', and thus help to reinforce the prejudices that each group holds about the other. At the same time, they rule out any possibility of understanding the behaviour of the persons involved and what it is that leads them to act as they do. The crucial point, of course, is that such an understanding is the only possible basis for constructing and implementing rational measures; that is, measures which, because they are derived from observation and analysis and are not solely or mainly an expression of political and other forms of prejudice, will actually stand a chance of resolving the problem.

Understanding is similarly ruled out by another feature typical of the present-day media coverage of football hooliganism – the frequent invocation of a 'conspiracy' involving the National Front. Extreme right-wing groups have for some time been trying, with varying degrees of success, to recruit football hooligans to their cause. However, simple reference to a conspiracy on their part is not a satisfactory explanation. This is because football hooliganism existed for a considerable time before such neo-fascist groups became involved and because one has to explain why football hooligans have come to have characteristics which make them appeal to the extreme right as a likely source of recruits. In its simplicity, reference to an extreme right-wing conspiracy may give intellectual and emotional satisfaction and suggest an easy course of action – 'Ban the National Front' or 'Prevent them from recruiting in a soccer context' – but, to the extent that it is a way of deflecting attention away from the *social roots* of football hooliganism, it makes it seem unnecessary to seek answers to the complex questions that are raised in this connection.

As we have said, media practice in the reporting of problems such as football hooliganism also creates specific difficulties for sociological analysis. This is because media

reports help to shape the attitudes and perceptions of politicians and the general public, many of whom have never been to or even near a football ground themselves or who have never encountered football hooliganism directly. More particularly, to the extent that it fixes an understanding of a phenomenon in people's minds, and because of the political implications that it frequently explicitly or implicitly conveys, media reporting tends to increase resistance to sociological diagnosis. It means that one of the first tasks sociologists have to undertake in approaching a problem of this kind is to cut through the accretion of media definitions, public perceptions and popular understandings, which all too frequently are emotionally and politically loaded, based on superficial knowledge and often simply wrong.

The dominant message of most media reports, especially those of the tabloid press, helps to reinforce the public perception of football hooliganism as always and invariably an extremely dangerous affair. In this way, they contribute to the generation of a moral panic; that is, a reaction to a phenomenon that is perceived as constituting a social problem which distorts and exaggerates its dangers, leading to calls for draconian measures to deal with it – measures of a kind which, as we have suggested, appear to have had the unintended consequence of displacing and reinforcing the problem. As such, reporting of this kind often contains elements of self-fulfilling prophecy.

To the degree that they distort events, exaggerate the threat they pose and play a part in the generation of a moral panic, media reports contribute to the difficulties in penetrating to the roots of football hooliganism in order 'to tell it like it is'. That is, they impede the aim of describing, with as little over- or under- – exaggeration as possible, what goes on in football hooligan encounters and of assessing as accurately as possible the levels and kinds of violence that are actually involved. They help to create an atmosphere in which cool and rational appraisal is difficult, an atmosphere which makes it seem to many people as if factual analysis is used as an apology for violence and vandalism or as a vehicle for underplaying them. We have no wish to deny that football hooligan encounters are often violent, sometimes lethally so.

Our aim is simply to describe and explain them as well as we can without consciously minimizing their seriousness or embroidering upon it. Nor is it our intention to make moral or political judgments, to apportion praise and blame, to condone or to condemn. Rather by taking what Norbert Elias calls 'the detour via detachment', our aim is to contribute to the advance of factual understanding.⁷

Having said this, it is important to acknowledge that we have been heavily dependent for our knowledge of football hooliganism not only on our own direct observations, interviews and surveys, but also on newspaper reports. That is, our critical appraisal of media involvement in the total phenomenon of football hooliganism should not be read as simply dismissive. If one reads them carefully in order to penetrate beneath the surface rhetoric, newspaper reports can often be seen to contain a tolerably accurate account of particular hooligan incidents. Newspapers therefore are sometimes a useful source of *descriptive* information. It is, however, worth pointing out in this connection that a change of reporting styles appears to have occurred, principally in and after the 1950s; a change, particularly in the popular press, in the direction of less factually detailed and more sensationalistic reporting. As will be seen, this change of reporting styles appears to have played a part in the generation of football hooliganism as we know it today.

Despite the events which occurred in Brussels in May 1985 – the outcome of which was exceptional – the level of violence of football hooligan encounters in Britain, although it is excessive in relation to the currently dominant standards, usually falls short of the savagery and mayhem so often conveyed by press reports. This suggests that it is not the level of violence of football hooligan encounters *per se* which is the principal source of public concern about them so much as the interplay between sensationalizing media reports and the fact that the behaviour of football hooligans offends against dominant standards, leads to a lowering of Britain's prestige abroad and thus incurs the wrath of powerful and 'respectable' people.

In conclusion, what is it about the behaviour of football

hooligans that principally causes offence and 'confirms' for members of the general public what are, in many cases, the media exaggerations? Clearly, prime candidates in this regard are the graffiti that they spray on walls, their vandalism, their heavy drinking and swearing, their obscene songs and chants, and, to an extent, their forms of dress. Probably more menacing, however, is the fact that they tend to operate in sizeable groups, pay little regard to certain conventions about behaviour in public places, and, above all, that they seek out fights – which sometimes result in serious injury – and brushes with the law on match days. The sociological problem is to explain why they should behave like this. What is it in the experiences of these fans that makes them want to fight? Why do they fight in groups and choose to fight in public? Why has the game of football come to be one of the favoured contexts for engaging in what is widely seen as their 'anti-social' behaviour but which, as we shall show, is behaviour that is quintessentially 'social' in the sense that it expresses standards that are, though in slowly changing forms, recurrently produced in particular groups, even though these standards bring them into conflict with the standards that are dominant in society at large? Who, precisely, are these groups and why do they tend to behave in ways that regularly bring them into conflict with the authorities and 'respectable' people? These are among the principal questions to which this study is addressed. Before we begin to tackle them, however, it is necessary to explore the popular and academic explanations of football hooliganism that are currently on offer. It is to these explanations that we shall turn in Chapter 1.

Understanding football hooliganism: a critical review of some theories

Introduction

In surveying the explanations of football hooliganism that are currently on offer we shall deal with four popular views first; those that attribute the phenomenon to excessive drinking, violence on the field of play, unemployment, and the so-called 'permissive society'. After that, we shall look at the theories proposed by Marsh, Rosser and Harré,¹ Ian Taylor,² and John Clarke.³

Popular explanations of football hooliganism:

(i) drinking & violence on the field of play

Probably the two explanations of football hooliganism most widely subscribed to at the moment are those that link it, on the one hand, to the excessive consumption of alcohol by fans and, on the other, to the occurrence of violent incidents on the field of play. Both explanations have severe limitations. However, to the extent that they do contain partly valid elements, they need to be set within a wider explanatory framework. Let us elaborate on this.

Drinking cannot be said to be a 'deep' cause of football hooliganism, for the simple reason that not every fan who drinks, even heavily, takes part in hooligan acts. Nor does every hooligan drink. The leaders of present-day hooligan groups such as West Ham's 'Inter City Firm' (ICF) are a case in point. They claim they do not drink before matches because

they need to keep a clear head in order to be able to coordinate the activities of their followers.⁴ In fact, such fans often fight even without drink, though a stress not only on fighting but also on heavy drinking is integrally involved in the norms of masculinity that are expressed in their behaviour; that is, ability to fight and 'hold one's ale' occupy an important place in their beliefs about what it means to be 'a man'. Similarly, violence within a match is not invariably followed by hooligan incidents. Nor are all hooligan incidents preceded by violence on the field. This is obviously the case, for example, with pre-match confrontations. It follows that it is erroneous to single out factors such as these as the sole or major determinants of hooligan behaviour.

To say this, however, is not to deny the fact that consumption of alcohol by fans and the occurrence of violence on the field of play can sometimes play a part in the production of football hooliganism. Matches involving English sides abroad, for example, seem to be regarded by many fans as occasions for especially heavy bouts of drinking, a fact which probably helps to shape the form of English-inspired football disorders on the continent. However, as we said in the Introduction, the behaviour usually lumped together under the label 'football hooliganism' is complex and many-sided. In order to understand it, one has to distinguish between different levels of causation, more particularly between what one might call the 'triggers' that 'spark' specific incidents, the immediate conditions that facilitate their occurrence, and the underlying, more deeply-rooted, structures that exert an influence on why it is some fans rather than others who engage most regularly in violent and destructive behaviour. Again, this requires elaboration.

Almost everyone who drinks before or during a football match enjoys a release from inhibitions. One of the effects of this may be that the commission of acts – swearing, shouting, aggressive demonstrations, or even simple drunken mishaps – which run counter to currently acceptable standards and which are defined by other members of the football audience and even the police as 'hooligan' is facilitated. It is probably also the case that some males who drink heavily do so, at least in part, to show themselves and others that, in terms of

current standards, they are 'men'. Some football fans who drink heavily probably fall into this category; for them, heavy drinking serves on its own as a sufficient demonstration of masculine prowess. This suggests that it is not the consumption of alcohol *per se* that distinguishes fans who fight regularly in a football context from those who do not. Nor is it the consumption of alcohol as an expression of masculinity. Rather, the central distinguishing feature of football hooligan behaviour appears to be the specific norms of masculinity that football hooligans adhere to. These lay stress on heavy drinking as a mark of masculinity. It follows that, whilst drinking can facilitate the occurrence of football-hooligan fighting – for example, by helping to generate a sense of camaraderie in the hooligan group and by aiding fans to combat their fear, on the one hand, of being hurt and, on the other, of being apprehended by the police – it cannot be held to constitute a basic underlying cause. In order to penetrate to a deeper level, one has to look at the norms or standards that persistent football hooligans express and at the social structures within which these norms or standards are produced. Similar considerations apply to what we have called the 'triggers' of football hooligan incidents.

The occurrence of violence on the field of play can act as a trigger for crowd disorderliness at a football match, in the sense of providing a stimulus, signal or pretext for hooligan behaviour. If, for example, one player badly fouls another or is perceived as having done so, missiles may be thrown at him by supporters of the injured player's team. Some of these supporters may even get on to the pitch in order to attack the offender more directly. However, not *all* fans respond in this way. Nor do violent incidents on the field of play *invariably* act as triggers of hooligan behaviour. They are not, moreover, the *only* triggers of disorder; hooligan incidents can also be 'sparked' by refereeing that is perceived to be biased and unfair, by police interventions that are perceived to be injudicious and unnecessarily harsh, or because fans wish to halt a match which their team is losing. More importantly, they can also be triggered by the dynamics of the interaction between the opposing fan-groups. As is shown by the frequency with which incidents occur outside grounds both

before and after matches, these dynamics often have only the most tenuous of links with incidents on the field of play. In fact, hooligan incidents can often be traced to a long history of enmity between particular groups of fans. Examples are the traditional rivalries between the supporters of Celtic and Rangers, Arsenal and Tottenham, Newcastle and Sunderland, West Ham and Millwall, Leicester and Nottingham Forest, and Oxford United and Swindon. This suggests that hooliganism is liable to occur at local Derbies (perhaps especially when the fans involved are drawn from separate *locales*), though in recent years a national, indeed international, dimension has been added to what tended in the past to be a much more local phenomenon.

In short, incidents of football hooliganism can be triggered by a whole variety of situational determinants and not just by violence on the field of play. As we have said, moreover, violent incidents in a match are not invariably followed by crowd disorders, and only a comparatively small proportion of the crowd occasionally reacts to them by engaging in hooligan behaviour. It follows that such triggers cannot be held to constitute an underlying cause of football hooliganism, any more than can the heavy consumption of alcohol. Their occurrence may help to determine whether or not hooligan incidents actually take place and, to a more limited extent, who is involved in them. They may also play a part in determining the relative seriousness of incidents. However, they cannot be said to cause such incidents in a literal sense. The common denominator, once more, particularly in more serious incidents, seems to be the interest in *fighting* shown by particular groups of fans and the disrespect and hostility which they display towards 'respectable' groups. Accordingly, it is this which has to be explained if one wishes to penetrate beneath the surface conditions and situational determinants of football hooligan behaviour to the social roots which, in a fundamental sense, produce it.

Although they, too, can be shown to be more or less deficient in certain aspects, explanations in terms of permissiveness and unemployment are at least an attempt to come to grips with this issue, that is, with the *social roots* of football hooliganism. It is to these popular explanations that our