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# “Soccer Hooligan” Studies: Giving the Marxist Approach another Chance



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## Abstract

In this article I review key studies in the academic literature on soccer hooliganism. This review does not aim to be complete because this literature is voluminous and growing day by day. The academic theories can be divided into: the early-dominant “figurational” or “process-sociological” approach of Dunning et al.; the “anthropological” approach of Armstrong and Harris; the post-modern approach of Giulianotti; the Marxist approach of Taylor, Clarke, and Hargreaves; the “ethogenic” approach of Marsh; the “psychological reversal theory” approach of Kerr; and the historically sensitive / historical approaches of King and Robson. Later in the article I revisit the Marxist theoretical perspective, originally associated with Ian Taylor. I argue that, although Marxist perspectives are now unfashionable throughout academia, this perspective still has something to offer.

**Keywords:** Australian soccer; Crowd behaviour; Football hooliganism; Marxism; Melbourne Knights; Neo-tribes; Soccer hooliganism; Sports history

**Abbreviations:** ICF: Inter City Firm; IMF: International Monetary Fund; MCF: Melbourne Croatia Fans; NF: National Front; BNP: British National Party; BBB: Bad Blue Boys; NSL: National Soccer League; IRA: Irish Republican Army

## Introduction and The Punk Rock Connection

In this article I review key studies in the academic literature on soccer hooliganism from the UK and around the world. This review does not aim to be comprehensive or complete as this literature is growing day by day. I also consider the growing number of popular “confessions” books written by ex-hooligans. In fact, the legendary “black Hammer” turned author Cass Pennant seems to be the main culprit [1-4]! A large number of these confessions books have been written since the hooligan scene wound itself up in the late-1980s. Later in this article I revisit the Marxist theoretical perspective, originally associated with Ian Taylor. I argue that, although Marxist perspectives are now unfashionable throughout academia, this perspective still has something to offer.

Several authors touch on the fascinating intersection between punk rock music and soccer hooliganism. Pennant [1] considers the case of punk rock bands Sham 69 and Cockney Rejects whose East London identifications are well known. These East London identifications made sense within the punk rock scene which has always had a sociologically informed emphasis upon place which can be traced back to the Sex Pistols and the SEX shop run by Westwood and McLaren at 430 The King’s Road, Chelsea [5,6]. Local East London historian John G Bennett (who led a “Jack the Ripper” guided tour I attended in Whitechapel on 10 June 2010) cites Sham 69’s song “George Davis is Innocent” from the band’s debut album 1978’s *Tell the Truth*: “They’re never gonna leave you alone / They’re never gonna leave you alone / You know

<sup>1</sup>Sham (2009) 69 lyrics as cited in Bennett, p. 34.

<sup>2</sup>This picture can be found by Google searching “Cock Sparrer band” and then clicking “Images”.

<sup>3</sup>(2017) See also interview with Cockney Rejects’ frontman Jeff Geggus aka Jeff Turner aka “Stinky” Turner at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9nKdqO279kl>.

<sup>4</sup>(2017) See: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HAsyGA5-a-g>.

where you bloody live / East London is your home!"<sup>1</sup> As Sham 69 was in fact from Hershams in outer south-west London, this song suggests that East London had by 1978 become a romanticized *spiritual locality* uncontainable by its actual geographic boundaries. However, despite song lyrics such as these, the close links between West Ham United's Inter-City Firm (ICF) and band members of The Business, Cock Sparrer, Cockney Rejects, and Sham 69 are less well documented. A famous picture shows the Cock Sparrer band members proudly posing inside the gates at West Ham's Upton Park stadium<sup>2</sup>. As Pennant [1] writes, this known link between certain East London punk bands and West Ham's ICF resulted in Cockney Rejects' concerts in the Midlands becoming sites of *soccer-related violence*<sup>3</sup>. Moving on to today, Cockney Rejects released a very moving new single and video-clip on 11 April 2016 titled "Goodbye Upton Park" about West Ham's permanent move from the Boleyn Ground to the London Olympic Stadium<sup>4</sup>.

It is important to point out that British soccer hooliganism, like British punk rock, was a unique product of time and place. Peter Marsh 1978 explains as follows: "aggro always reflects, in the particular form it takes on, the social forces of a given era". Sociologically soccer hooliganism belonged to the 1970s and 1980s, the time when the post-war "consensus" between the two major political parties had broken down; unemployment was rising appreciably for the first time since the end of World War II; the Labour Party under the late James Callaghan faced the indignity of enforced civil service cuts under an International Monetary Fund (IMF) austerity package; and (later) Mrs Thatcher's economic rationalism and anti-trade union stance rendered life much more difficult for what remained of the industrial working-class [6]. Even in a different era in the UK hooliganism may not have happened or probably would not have happened. Key authors such as ICF leader Cass Pennant and Portsmouth 6.57 Crew's Rob Silvester are happy to talk about hooliganism in the past tense although some firms, especially those from outside London, still operate on a regular basis.

Pennant and Silvester [3] suggest that socio-economic conditions and cramped housing today in Cardiff mean that alienated young gang members will continue to gravitate towards Cardiff City's Soul Crew. This point is somewhat surprising, within the overall context of their book, given that Pennant and Silvester [3] point to the harshness of life in Portsmouth as a factor behind the size of Portsmouth's firm in the 1970s and 1980s but then argue that hooliganism is a fashion which Portsmouth youth have lost interest in. Why then did Portsmouth youth view hooliganism as a passing fashion but Cardiff youth view it as something more integral to their lives? Pennant and Silvester's statement is not necessarily incorrect but it does suggest areas where more detailed research is needed to shed light on regional characteristics and anomalies.

The article is also informed by the author's group interview with Melbourne Croatia Fans (MCF) Pave Jusup and Kova at Melbourne Knights FC, Sunshine North, Australia conducted on 11 January 2011.

### Popular and Academic Theories of Soccer Hooliganism

Dunning et al. [7] outline the major "popular" theories of hooliganism put forward by non-academics in the media and politics. After this they outline the main academic approaches used by the academic researchers. The popular arguments tend to be difficult to shed light on through empirical research and hence difficult to conclusively accept or reject. No doubt most of them contain some degree of correspondence with reality. Another point to note, highlighted in Dunning, et al. [7] review chapter, is that some of the popular theories contradict each other. For example, the theory that hooliganism is due to unemployment appears to contradict the theory that hooliganism is due to affluence. The popular theories are as follows: soccer hooliganism is caused by: "(1) excessive alcohol consumption; (2) violent incidents on the field of play or biased and incompetent refereeing; (3) unemployment; (4) affluence; and (5) 'permissiveness'".

The academic theories can be divided into: the early-dominant "figurational" or "process-sociological" approach of Dunning, et al. [8,9]; the "anthropological" approach of Armstrong [10,11]; the post-modern approach of Giulianotti; the Marxist approach of Taylor, Clarke, and Hargreaves; the "ethogenic" approach of Marsh [12]; the "psychological reversal theory" approach of Kerr; and the historically sensitive / historical approaches of King and Robson (cited in Dunning, et al. [7]). Of the important Australian researchers, cultural studies author John Hughson can be grouped with the Anthropological School or its close-relative the Ethogenic School while sports historian Roy Hay, a stalwart of the North Geelong Croatia club, belongs to the historically sensitive approach.

The anthropological studies, whilst not denying the importance of social class to an understanding of hooligan associations and behaviours, move away consciously from the Marxist position that would portray hooliganism as simply another form of working-class resistance. A Marxist position might either view hooliganism in a very positive light as straight-forward working-class protest or shift to the neo-Marxist stance of the philosophers of the 1960s Theodor W Adorno and Herbert Marcuse who emphasized how the working-class had been bribed and co-opted to serve capital and how challenges to the system as a whole were diverted to ends that were either unproductive or blatantly served capitalism. The neo-Marxist position might then point to hooliganism as a basically negative and reactionary phenomenon whereby members of the working-class waste energy and resources fighting among themselves. Hooliganism

<sup>5</sup>Flynn (2009) Regarding the Catholic-Protestant religious fault-line in Belfast readers are referred to the history of the now defunct Belfast Celtic club.

*could* then be interpreted as a form of fascist behaviour in a society where the working-class revolution never happened. This analysis *could* be supported by the unfortunate association of some hooligans with the National Front (NF), British National Party (BNP), and other organized fascist and borderline fascist groups. This alleged fascist connection has been viewed as important by some authors in the case of Sydney United's Bad Blue Boys (BBB) which has in the past revered Croatia's World War II leader Ante Pavelić. In various places Hughson [13-17] has explored at length the issue of the extent of actual fascism within the BBB.

### Dunning's Theory of "Fault-Lines"

Dunning [8] theorizes that soccer violence occurs around a given city or region's "fault-lines" which might be class-based (as in England); religion-based (as in Glasgow (Flynn [18])); ethnic-based (as in South African soccer and Australia's former National Soccer League (NSL) (1977-2004)); or regional-based; or city-versus-country-based<sup>5</sup>. The equivalent term to "fault-line" within Maoist theory might be "principal contradiction" [19]. In Portsmouth we see fault-lines which are class-based but also centre on the classic city-country divide whereby Portsmouth fans believe that their city and its residents are laughed at by Londoners due to their perceived country backwardness and lack of fashion sense.

Interestingly, Pave Jusup and Kova of Melbourne Croatia Fans (the current hooligan firm of ex-NSL club Melbourne Knights) distinguish Melbourne Knights' "political" rivalries with Yugoslav communist clubs such as Footscray JUST and Serbian clubs such as Springvale White Eagles with the (non-political) "football" rivalries with old NSL clubs such as the Italian community's Adelaide City Juventus and the Greek community's South Melbourne Hellas (group interview with the author, Sunshine North, 11 January 2011). Pave argues that the rivalries with Adelaide City and South Melbourne are "non-political" since they resulted simply from on-field events such as Melbourne Knights' grand final defeats at the hands of those two clubs rather than to Italian-Croatian or Greek-Croatian issues.

Attempting to transplant tension caused by one fault-line to a place where that fault-line is not dominant creates comical or ridiculous outcomes such as when Rangers supporters chant "we're up to our knees in Fenian blood" in the freezing, half-empty stands at Inverness Caledonian Thistle in the Scottish Highlands (where Irish immigration has been minimal). Rangers and Celtic find it difficult to market their clubs overseas, and especially in Asia, where the religious fault-line of Catholic-versus-Protestant has not been a part of the religious histories of those countries most of which have non-Christian majorities [20].

Melbourne Victory A-League fans in Australia have attempted to label Sydney FC "Scum" (while Adelaide United is the "Pissants") but this has not been altogether successful. It may well have been an attempt by English or Scottish Melbourne

Victory fans to replicate the Portsmouth versus Southampton rivalry in Australia since Sydney is also the neighbouring club "just up the coast" from Melbourne. These same Victory fans might then have felt somewhat silly given that new club Melbourne Heart, cross-town rivals to Victory, began playing in the Southampton jersey of red-and-white vertical stripes (before being bought by Manchester City). Will the real Scummers please stand up?

### Dunning's Theory of Fans' Identification with and Pride in the Team

Dunning [8] theorizes that working-class people identify with their football team to the extent that they feel pride and self-respect when the team does well and loss of pride and loss of self-respect when the team does badly. Regarding Australia's ethnic soccer clubs in the former NSL (which was replaced by the A-League in 2004-05 [21], Lynch [22] write that: "Nationalistic loyalty also played a part: a club victory *could* take on the stature of a 'victory' for a homeland, just as a defeat was also somewhat about loss of national face".

The strength of these feelings of pride / loss of pride is based on the degree of the person's identification with the team and with the district and the number of interests that she / he has outside of soccer. For the person with strong identification with the district and few outside interests, the pride or loss of pride felt when the team does well or badly is at the maximum level. This theory can explain the strength of the ICF and Millwall's Bushwhackers during the 1980s as these two clubs are based in the poorer and more stigmatized and isolated regions of East London (West Ham) and south-east London (Millwall), rather than in the west or north. In another Cass Pennant book, about the proto-West Ham united firm Mile End Mob from the pre-ICF era, Millwall fans are derisively termed "gypsies" [4]. Fans' identifications with the club and district merge here with class identifications and perspectives.

Furthermore, West Ham's performances have generally been disappointing to fans over the past 30 years. However, the team did manage to avoid relegation for the main years of the casual firms, 1981-86. ICF lead man Bill Gardner [23] has said that the West Ham fans of the 1970s and 1980s were dispirited and felt a loss of pride because of the first XI's poor showings and lack of effort; this inspired the ICF to become the strongest football firm in the country. The fans felt a lack of respect from other Premier League team followers, and this was a more severe blow than if the club had actually been relegated and performed highly among a less capable set of teams.

In addition, the 6.57 Crew's activities became more committed and serious in the late-1970s when the Portsmouth club was rapidly falling through the divisions. Having had the unique and rare experience of rapidly falling through the divisions, Portsmouth fans in the 1970s were especially touchy. Frequent violence became necessary in order to restore

the universe to its rightful order in the fans' own eyes and to ensure that the firm and the city were accorded proper respect by rivals [10,24]. Portsmouth's on-field experiences also meant that Portsmouth hooligans experienced hooligan firms in all the divisions which increased their profile. Armstrong [10] writes that Sheffield United and Sheffield Wednesday hooligans had the same experience as well as the reverse experience of their team being promoted.

Pennant and Silvester [3], consistent with the "popular" unemployment theory of hooliganism, point to the layoffs and decline in work prospects on the Portsmouth docks in the 1980s and suggest that it was a factor fuelling the growth and activities of the 6.57 Crew if only in the sense that it gave people more "free time" to attend away and mid-week matches. Several names are given by Pennant and Silvester [3] of key 6.57 Crew members who suffered unemployment in the city in the 1980s.

### Fluid "Post-Modern" "Neo-Tribes"

Next I move on to review the ethnographic academic research on hooliganism that began in the 1990s with two landmark PhD theses, one in the UK by Gary Armstrong on Sheffield United's Blades hooligan firm (later published as *Football Hooligans - Knowing the Score*) and one in Australia by John Hughson on Sydney United's Bad Blue Boys NSL firm from the early-1990s. Subsequent articles by Hughson [13-17] synthesize key findings of these two studies and relate some of Armstrong's key findings to the unique context of south-west Sydney's Bad Blue Boys (BBB), a group of Croatian-Australian teenagers who are, or perhaps were, hardcore supporters of the former NSL's Sydney Croatia club (which was renamed Sydney United in the 1990s). It should be pointed out that these "anthropological" authors have been criticized on a number of grounds by other academic researchers (see, for example, Dunning, et al. [7]). Armstrong [10] has also criticized the early-dominant Leicester University School approach of Dunning and Williams.

Using the anthropological approach, Armstrong [10] focuses on the disorganized nature of Sheffield United's Blades' firm and the fluidity of group membership. People come to and go from the Blades according to the needs of their lives at particular stages and no-one is ever "bound" to the Blades in any sense. People connected with the Blades acknowledge that hooliganism is an acquired taste and a profession at the edge of even hardcore fan support [24]. Armstrong [10] talks in terms of fluid "post-modern" "neo-tribes" and this terminology and its associated logic is taken up by Hughson in his ethnographic study of Sydney United's BBB. Armstrong disputes the hegemonic theory of the police and the media that hooligan firms are extremely organized armies. The popular hooligan literature, including Pennant and Silvester [3], largely supports Armstrong's observation.

Armstrong [10] points out that firm allegiance is bounded and held in tight check. It is generally subordinated to ordinary relationships so that a Blades member would put to one side (or suppress) his hostility towards Sheffield Wednesday's "Owls"

hooligans when relating in the normal way to friends, family members, and work colleagues. When Blades and Owls meet outside of match days the context is often ambiguous and people have to determine whether this is a "football context" where fighting is justified or not. When groups of Blades or Owls invade each other's pubs on London Road or West Street on a Friday night this is a football context whereas if Blades or Owls are socializing with women or with non-hooligan mates this is not a football context and so football-related violence is unacceptable.

Similarly, Blades and Owls rarely meet outside of the football season [10] because such meetings are ambiguous and hard to interpret as being football-related. Armstrong (1998, p. 268, emphasis original) writes as follows: The *raison d'être* of the Blades was a football match, and a *collective* identity more or less died outside the football season, to be resurrected at the early August pre-season friendly games". On the other hand, it was *possible* for the Blades' collective identity to assert itself as dominant at gatherings outside of the football season such as a marriage celebration and a 30<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration. Armstrong [10] states as follows: "Blade identity *could* therefore be automatically sustained away from the club and the match in other contexts that did not need a game of football [nor even the football season]".

In one-club cities, such as Aberdeen, Airdrie, Cardiff, Leeds, Middlesbrough, Motherwell, Newcastle, Portsmouth, Sunderland, and Swansea, firms have often been stronger than in two-club or multiple-club cities because identity of club and city are conflated and this simplifies matters. It also reduces the chance of having to relate regularly to opposition firm members in ambiguous non-football contexts. Armstrong's [10] book shows that the *priority* of Blades football-wise was *always* to confront Owls and these confrontations often occurred on Friday nights in and around city-centre pubs when visiting club supporters from outside the city had not yet even arrived in Sheffield for their Saturday fixture(s). Dunning, et al. [7] claim that one weakness of Armstrong's [10] work is his failure to take into account sufficiently the special reality of Sheffield as a two-club city.

### The "Phases of Hooliganism" Theory (Leicester University School)

I now move on to discuss the "phases of hooliganism" theory as outlined in various places by Dunning and his Leicester University School. In the first phase, Dunning argues that violence mostly involved attacks on players and officials. It emerged from uncontrolled passions inspired directly by events on the field [25]. This type of violence, referred to as "spectator disorderliness" by Roversi and Balestri [26], was not pre-planned. Duke and Slepíčka [25] explain that, in the pre-1946 or pre-communist era in the then Czechoslovakia:

"Most of the crowd incidents ... were match related. Attacks on players and officials were characteristic of football spectator behaviour in the first Czechoslovak republic. Battles between

groups of rival fans were not common, and there were no reported examples of the police coming under attack from gangs of fans”.

After the 1960s “core football hooliganism” emerged in England which was rival gangs of super-fighters intent on fighting each other; in this phase the violence was often pre-meditated [25]. Through a process of diffusion, the English hooligan style aka the “English disease” diffused firstly to Western Europe in the 1970s [25,27] and later to communist or post-communist Eastern Europe. In the then Czechoslovakia, Dunning’s second phase did not diffuse into the local setting until the mid-1980s. The reason for the slow diffusion was “because of the relative isolation, restricted media coverage and rigorous repression under the communist regimes”.

Duke and Slepíčka [25] also allege that communist rule was associated, especially in its early years, with a reduction in all types of soccer violence. Spectator disorderliness decreased from its pre-communist levels and core hooliganism started much later and on a much lesser scale in the then Czechoslovakia compared to Western Europe. Duke and Slepíčka [25] attribute this to mass communist repression being effective in its early years but declining in its effectiveness by the 1980s. It was not until the 1990s that the new Czech Republic experienced its first cases of fan attacks upon police. Overall, Duke and Slepíčka [25] concludes that “developments in the Czech Republic occurred later both in terms of the degree of organisation involved and the nature of the violence”. This suggests that hooliganism diffuses at different speeds and to various extents to different regions and that some types of hooliganism are never diffused to some locations.

The Leicester University School’s “phases” theory has been developed beyond that discussed in Duke and Slepíčka [25] and explained in the previous paragraph. According to Dunning, et al. [7], there were three phases of English soccer hooliganism in the post-war era. Firstly, in the 1950s and 1960s, “the conflicts on the terraces were interpersonal in character, took place mainly in the soccer grounds and on trains, and were for the most part directly related to the outcome of the match”. Secondly, during the 1970s, “football hooliganism was transformed into mass violence, which took place outside as well as inside the grounds and took the form of violent collective, or crowd, behaviour”. During the last phase, since the 1980s, “hooligan violence has been displaced from the grounds and diffused into city centres, suburbs and even further away from the ground itself and may take place independently of the outcome of the game, for fighting can begin before or after the game and can continue for a long time”.

It is better to view these phases tentatively as suggesting a broad trend line and they should not be taken too literally. There was fighting outside of English grounds in the 1970s although, in that era, attempting to take over the opposing fans’ end was an important ritual. Roughly, and in terms of fashion,

the second phase was the “skinhead era” and the third phase was the “casuals’ era”. Portsmouth hooligans, interviewed by Pennant and Silvester [3], talk of an away game ritual which involved going first to a pub near the main train station and then heading to the city-centre looking for the rival firm or sub-gangs of that firm. Fans taking the 6.57 train would reach London by mid-morning and the north of England by 1pm so violence *could* occur well before the standard 3pm kick-off time. The timing of the violence and the entrance to the away team’s city became important parts of strategy which began in the 1970s but which were further refined in the 1980s. Another key element of strategy was exiting at a different train station than the one expected and then walking the rest of the way. Attempts to take ends died down as a fashion by 1980 as security and policing methods improved.

In Pennant and Silvester’s [3] book there are chapters that discuss what the Leicester University School refers to in terms of fighting taking place in “city-centres” or “suburbs”. Fights in London would occur frequently, either on a pre-mediated or a spontaneous basis, as supporters of south-of-England teams returning from a day in the north would all arrive back in London at Euston Station. Here they would also meet north-of-England hooligans who had followed their team down to London or to the south coast [10]. Portsmouth fans, before returning to the south coast often in the early hours, would congregate in the evenings around Covent Garden before heading to Waterloo Station. As a result, fights also took place in these three locations [10,24].

Portsmouth supporters were also sometimes involved in hooliganism at matches not involving their club. This was not commonly done by other firms (except for the ICF, Millwall, and Hibernian’s Capital City Service) and it shows a higher level of both strategic thought and determination to engage in confrontation. The 6.57 Crew would sometimes attend Millwall home games to trouble the home fans or otherwise go to the hated Southampton to join forces with the away team firm. This was more often done in cases of early or late kick-offs for the Portsmouth game or as spontaneous last-minute responses to cancelled Portsmouth matches.

The Leicester University School’s “phases” categorization fails to take into account the alleged general hardening up of attitudes and behaviours in England which took place around 1974. We recall that Pennant and Silvester [3] nominate 1974 as a key dividing year in terms of attitudes. Perhaps the 1950s and 1960s phase should be seen as extending as late as 1974.

If there is a fourth phase to be added, for the 1990s and 2000s, I suggest that it might be called the “internet era”. In this extremely self-conscious and politically-correct post-modern era, past events are mythologized, rationalized, and justified online and in the pages of the myriad cheap-paperback “confessions” books penned by now 40-year-old or 50-year-old ex-hooligans. In the present era violence is reserved for a few important strategic self- and others-defining clashes such as West Ham

versus Millwall and Arsenal versus Tottenham. Only the uncool northerners or Welshmen continue with hooligan activities on a regular basis. Armstrong [10] ends his book by describing how Blades would sometimes in 1997 watch games at pubs close to the Bramall Lane ground partly as a protest against rising ticket prices. This is the beginning of, in Armstrong's words, "post-fan" behaviour. Armstrong's data ends in 1997 and so we do not know how the Blades are functioning in the new millennium. Generally rising season ticket prices and the rising cost of train travel have meant that the demographic of football support has changed while improved policing methods are a further factor in creating disinterest in hooliganism.

### The Sub-Gangs

The various sub-gangs of the 6.57 Crew had their own very informal structures and usually people spent time within their own sub-gangs unless they were split up in unforeseen circumstances in which cases the "lost" people would hook up with other sub-gangs. Each sub-gang was associated with a particular government housing project in or on the periphery of Portsmouth. Each sub-gang also had one or more key pubs on its territory from which people would depart from and return to on match days and congregate in at other times. The formation of football crews as amalgamations of neighbourhood gangs may have had a side-effect in certain cases of reducing violence between such neighbourhood gangs. Marsh [12] explains as follows: "By channelling the competitive hostility outwards towards the tribe on the other side of the [usually metaphorical] hill, social bonds within one's own group are reaffirmed and maintained".

Armstrong [10] also produces very interesting data in the form of a list compiled in April 1987 of 190 Blades with ages, occupations, and criminal record (if any) listed. He classifies these into sub-gangs and some of the sub-gangs might have had as few as two or three members. Larger sub-gangs which were part of the Blades include Old Lads, Drug Squad, Suicide Squad, Max's Coach Blades, Villagers, and Rotherham Blades. These last two groups were the most obviously separate since their outside-of-Sheffield locations influenced how they viewed themselves, other Blades, and other firms, and also influenced their willingness to fight. They felt that certain City Blades were too close to certain City Owls and hence sometimes not willing to confront them. Clearly, the out-of-Sheffield Blades were more idealistic and less pragmatic than the City Blades. Being from outside-of-Sheffield it was easier for them to cause trouble and then run away to the relative safety of Rotherham or their villages. Armstrong also recounts the interesting and ironic case of Rotherham Blades fighting Rotherham Owls or outside supporters and, in doing so, defending the honour of a city they do not live in.

### Casual Nature of Group Ties

Armstrong [10] emphasizes the casual nature of group ties and the recognition that a person was not morally bound to the firm in any way if he / she decided to give up football or give up hooliganism as part of a natural evolution within his / her own personal life. Some people might "come out of retirement" for big matches against the Owls or if a confrontation came to them. They would often continue to go to games and London Road Friday night pub sessions but sit with non-hooligan mates or sit with Blades but not leave the pub to meet a challenge outside. Generally, Hughson's research of BBB supports this. He tells the humorous example of one Croatian-Australian hooligan with his girlfriend being ridiculed by the group for his love interest to the extent that over time he, and others in similar positions, disappeared to the fringes of the group or left it entirely. This hooligan was taunted by the Croatian word for "slippers" which signifies domestic bliss and a certain married lifestyle. Key members of the BBB at Sydney United and the MCF at Melbourne Knights believe that one's obviously displayed loyalty should be to the gang, to the soccer club, and to the Croatian community. The fault-line here is the ethnic and religious tension between Croatia and Serbia [21,28]. An additional fault-line today is between the Croatian-Australian youth at MCF, and successor firms to the BBB in Western Sydney such as South West Firm and Edensor Park Ultras, and "mainstream" assimilated and Anglo-Celtic Australians who support "non-ethnic" A-League clubs, Australian Rules, and / or rugby league clubs .

### Giving the Marxist Approach Another Chance

I believe that the Marxist approach can be restored if it is sufficiently nuanced and applied directly to specific localized contexts rather than left to remain in the form of generalizations applied to the whole of a society. The study of Portsmouth FC by non-academic authors Pennant and Silvester [3] opens up with some insightful sociological rumination by the author pair, the ICF's "black Hammer", Cass Pennant, and Portsmouth 6.57 Crew's Rob Silvester. Their book *Rolling with the 6.57 Crew* includes the usual stream-of-consciousness discussions of key matches by a number of different authors grouped together in chapters according to team played and other headings. These long quotations, all in italics font, tend to run into each other and, since they are anonymous, it is hard to be sure how much credence to give to them. They tend to describe only events and people's feelings about the events in hindsight. Since there are so many events, for non-participants reading the book, they tend to run into each other and the incidents become indistinguishable and forgettable. The in my opinion, more interesting sociological rumination is left to the two principal authors and especially to the book's opening pages.

<sup>6</sup>In Sydney this situation has been confused somewhat by the remarkable off-field success enjoyed by new A-League club Western Sydney Wanderers beginning in the 2012-13 season.

The interesting sociological question, in my view, is why a seaside city of 200,000 inhabitants produced one of the best and largest hooligan firms in England whereas neighbouring town Southampton had hardly any firm to speak of? Silvester argues that Portsmouth being a navy town gives it a completely different character to Southampton which is a town of farmers. After World War II large numbers of high-rise council tower blocks were built in Portsmouth and in various estates located at the fringes of the city. These were designed to house military officers returning from the war. Portsmouth was a convenient location to house these people. The city now has a very high population density among cities of a similar population in the UK. All of these facts have produced an alienated proletariat or lumpenproletariat (to use the traditional Marxist terms) in the council housing estates. These estates contributed their own sub-gangs to Portsmouth's 6.57 Crew in the 1980s. Each sub-gang was based around one or more pubs located usually within but sometimes just outside each council estate. Pennant and Silvester [3] also talk about navy people marrying Portsmouth girls and remaining in the area permanently thus increasing the percentage of the population with military attitudes and training as compared to other population centres.

The inter-generational hatred in Portsmouth towards Southampton is indicated by the nickname "Scum" or "Scummers". Pennant and Silvester [3] indicate just how widespread this is by telling an anecdote of two elderly men in a Pompey (Portsmouth) pub. One has a newspaper in front of him and says to the other: "I see the Scummers lost again last night". Although one might think the origin of the name is lost in time, Pennant and Silvester [3] trace it to a strike on the Portsmouth docks defeated by the importation of non-union "scum" labour from Southampton. This indicates the original class basis of Portsmouth's residents' dislike of the inhabitants of their neighbouring town.

### More on the Marxist Approach

Consistent with the Marxist approach is the fact that firm members enjoy it when the police, as representatives of the state and the ruling-class, waste time and resources policing hooligans. Fans also love the irony when the police at times must protect one group of fans from another. It is nice to feel loved and protected even or especially when the attitude is grudging. Hooligans seem to appreciate that the behaviour of hooligans has created an outcome where police resources are now being used to protect fans who are also hooligans. One perhaps subconscious reason for hooligans to fight might have been to mock police and waste police resources, which is much harder to do as an individual or as a small group. People then revel in the power that the crowd gives them. This theorization is not inconsistent with the Marxist approach broadly defined. The established order is also inverted when hooligans feature on TV and in the newspapers when, in the fans' regular week-day capacity as employees or as unemployed, such events would be unimaginable. In Peru, where the "barras bravas" are most

closely integrated with regular neighbourhood gangs, which exist in dynamic two-way interaction with the soccer firms, Panfichi and Thieroldt [29] state that: "almost all the complaints filed with the police [about hooligans] refer to damage to property *that symbolises social division* [and exclusion]: cars, windows of houses and smarter shops, and jewellery and the stealing of wallets". Likewise, one of the main reasons behind 6.57 Crew's pitch invasion at a friendly match in France was to protest against the inept club leadership, clearly a *ruling-class target* within capitalism. Therefore, the generalized argument that "football fans fight each other and not the ruling-class" is not enough to render a Marxist approach completely invalid.

To further amplify on the relevance of Marxism for hooliganism it is important to recall that Marxist theorists, influenced by Freudianism, have argued in the past that the working-class *instinctively* rebels against the rule of capital [30-33]. This means it is possible to be fighting capitalism and its effects without even being (consciously) aware of what you are doing! In his 1859 Preface to his *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Marx (cited in Bosteels [34]) writes that: "mankind always sets itself only such tasks as it can solve". Civil disobedience by soccer firm members was a task that could be accomplished whereas more direct and violent acts against the British state were only likely to result in defeat. The meagre long-term concrete results of the Provisional Irish Republican Army's (IRA) systematic terror campaign, not to mention a century of Communist Party struggle in Western Europe, are testimony to this assertion. French philosopher Alain Badiou [35] writes that: "Lenin already knew that any modern State, including the socialist one, is intrinsically bourgeois" [34,35]. Furthermore, Marx [34] writes that: "social reforms are never achieved because of the weakness of the strong but are always the result of the power of the weak". Now that policing technology and resources have dramatically increased hooliganism has become less feasible and worthwhile and this is a key reason for its decline and near disappearance.

When 1980s hooligans attacked the police and public property, were they expressing an awareness, if only subconscious, of Friedrich Engels' [36] assertion that: "The modern State, in whatever form it takes, is essentially a capitalist machinery, it is the State of capitalists, the ideal collective capitalist"? For the Slovenian post-communist philosopher Slavoj Žižek [37], the "underground spectral life of the ghosts of failed utopias" continues to haunt the present generation, "patiently awaiting their next resurrection". Failed utopias include the Paris Commune of 1871; the Russian Revolution of October 1917; the Chinese Cultural Revolution of 1965-68; and the French student movement and factory strikes of May 1968. Antonio Negri [38] writes in his *Goodbye Mr Socialism* that: "One has to bring capital to recognize the weight and importance of the common good, and if capital is not ready to do it, one has to compel it to do so".

Of course Marxism is only ever a partial explanation for hooliganism and, of course, I do not claim that the majority of hooligans the majority of the time is or was (consciously) fighting capitalism. I do suggest that there may have been a partly or wholly subconscious (and completely reasonable) desire to resist a power base that has alienated working-class hardcore soccer supporters from their true humanity and has utilized the doctrine of private property to exclude them from a just share of the UK's (and the football industry's) wealth and prosperity. Hooliganism was one way that a protest could be registered and police resources wasted which stood a reasonable chance of success or only marginal losses on any given match-day (or at least that used to be the case in the era we are discussing).

In more recent years the rising ticket prices and the move to all-seater stadiums and new corporatist leagues such as Australia's A-League have further alienated working-class supporters because the corporatized administrators of the game offer soccer matches and "the brand" to "consumers" as simply another capitalist entertainment product [39]. Perhaps one reason why people in their late-20s and early-30s drift away from hooliganism is that they become integrated within the capitalist system as (higher) wage-earners or entrepreneurs with mortgages and other financial commitments. They can then afford the better season seats in the stadium and they settle down into "consumer" mode. As the former Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew once remarked, give a young man a motorcycle loan (which is a function of economic development) and he will be more interested in paying off the loan rather than rioting against social ills.

### Social Class

In terms of the socio-economic background of English hooligans, Armstrong's [10] view differs somewhat to that of the Leicester University School. Armstrong, et al. [40], proponents of the anthropological approach, support the "working class in general thesis" whereas Dunning, et al. [41] state that "the core football hooligans come predominantly from the *rougher sections* of the working-class" [42]. The Leicester University School's term "core football hooligans" is relevant when discussing that School's "phases of hooliganism" theory which I referred to earlier in this paper. That theory can be used to analyse the extent and speed of the diffusion of hooligan behaviours and styles to other parts of Europe and around the world. Like violence at American professional sports matches [42], Australian Rules Football crowd violence has not passed beyond the first stage of (occasional) "spectator disorderliness" [26] and is unlikely to do so in the future. However, this does not mean that Marsh's "illusion of violence" is not present.

### Marxist Critique of Armstrong [10]

Armstrong [10] only discusses leaving hooliganism in terms of changing life-stages without also referring to people's changed position in relation to capital. Armstrong [10] uses

the word "capitalism" in mocking inverted quotation marks as if to question either the concept or its relevance or both. At the same time, when he talks about rising ticket prices and the social control of supporters this is within the context, which he does not acknowledge, of professional football moving to a higher stage of capitalism where supporters are re-classified as "consumers". Armstrong [10] also rejects the Althusserian concept of *Ideological State Apparatuses* and the related idea that schools, police, courts, politicians, and media all operate, in the last instance, to further and safeguard the interests of capital. However, the physical rebuilding of Sheffield United's Bramall Lane ground indeed shows the ideological re-interpellation of supporters as consumers whereby the consumers' average spend becomes more important than their degree of passionate commitment. In fact, the traditional supporters' passionate commitment is turned against them by the ruling-class of football so that that passion is now viewed as a liability which must be monitored and controlled [43-45].

### Conclusion

In this article I reviewed key studies in the academic literature on soccer hooliganism from the UK and around the world. This review did not aim to be comprehensive or complete as this literature is growing day by day. I also considered the growing number of popular "confessions" books written by ex-hooligans. A large number of these confessions books have been written since the hooligan scene wound itself up in the late-1980s. Later in this article I revisited the Marxist theoretical perspective, originally associated with Ian Taylor. I argued that, although Marxist perspectives are now unfashionable throughout academia, this perspective still has something to offer. The generalized argument that "football fans fight each other and not the ruling-class" is not enough to render a Marxist approach completely invalid. In fact Marxist approaches work best when analysing the transition of the football industry and policing technologies and resources to a higher stage of capitalism and the resultant increases in alienation associated with the ideological re-positioning of supporter as "consumer". Even when applied to the original casuals era of the 1980s the Marxist approach allows us to explain the excitement of creating mayhem and mischief on days when the power of the mob gave most strategies a reasonable chance of victory and the police would either suffer harm and damage or ironically be forced to defend one set of supporters from another.

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