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Filmic Representations of British Football Hooliganism

(Filmski prikazi fudbalskog huliganstva u Velikoj Britaniji)

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Abstract

This study examines the portrayal of hooligans in film through the prism of the propositions regarding hooliganism made by the Leicester School of Football Hooliganism. The study aimed to present how the hooligans played in the film fit in with the theoretical framework created by the Leicester School regarding their sociological background as well as the various psychological factors surrounding hooliganism. Though hooliganism was most prominent in the 1970s and 1980s, the study has, moreover, taken into account the more modern renditions in order to offer different perspectives on the same topic. The selected films which were analyzed were *The Firm* (1989) directed by Alan Clarke, *The Football Factory* (2004) director Nick Love's adaptation of the identically titled novel written by John King and finally, *Green Street* (also known as *Green Street Hooligans*) (2005) directed by Lexi Alexander. The films were analyzed both on the basis of the visual deductions regarding the sociological structure of the hooligans in the firm but, additionally, address the psychological factors beneath hooliganism through the analysis of the dialogue. The study found that the films in question did not display the expected sociological structure proposed by the Leicester School and that the hooligan groups (or firms) shown on screen cannot be simply described as working-class groups but are complex in structure, containing both the lower as well as the higher strata conjoined by similar psychological motivations regardless of their social class. Through the comparison of film dialogue and interviews of real-life hooligans, the study also showed that the majority of the psychological factors underlying hooligans and their activities are universal to nearly all hooligans, with a few exceptions which are unique to a film or a particular character.

Keywords: belonging, buzz, firm, masculinity, subculture/counterculture, The Leicester School, violence, working-class

Introduction

According to the Online Etymology Dictionary, the first use of the term "Hooligan" almost certainly came about from a variant of the Irish surname Houlihan, which represented a commonly used comic name in music and newspapers in the 1880s and 90s ("hooligan (n.)"). The word did not initially strictly denote fan violence however during the mid-20th century, due to the rise of hooligan activity in Great Britain, it would become the word of choice to describe people that took part in such activities. The modern meaning of the word hooligan is defined by Merriam-Webster as "a usually young man who engages in rowdy or violent behavior especially as part of a group or gang" ("hooligan"). As we can see, the scope of meaning remained the same throughout history, but presently the word is almost unequivocally synonymous with sports fan violence both on and off the football ground. However, interviewed hooligans tend to reject the term "hooligan" and they perceive it as an inappropriate descriptor of what they are. During an interview conducted by Radmann with a young hooligan named Joakim, the young man describes a hooligan as "someone who likes vandalism and throwing bottles and smashing shop windows. Actively vandalizing and destroying things, that's what a hooligan is. I'm a thug, a lad, I have style and class and I like fighting" (in Radmann, 2014, 23). Others, like former hooligan Mattias tend to agree with him, explaining that "We have to get rid of the term hooliganism. Because of sports-related violence, violence in and around the stadium is taboo. With good reason. But being part of a firm and being called a hooligan, it's a subculture." As we can see above, hooligans don't really see themselves as such, but rather simply as "lads that like fighting". Mattias adds that he perceives their activities as a subcultural phenomenon and whether hooliganism can be considered a subculture of its own will be a topic of discussion in the next chapter (7-8).

During the mid and late 20th century, hooliganism stood in the media spotlight as the problem to solve for the British government. Although it is believed that there was a rise in hooligan activity during the early 1960s there is also a certainty that hooliganism brought about a moral panic over football fan behavior. The hooligan problem, which was formerly considered to be purely in the jurisdiction of the football authorities, would become a problem of national significance and would begin to be addressed by the local and state government (in Spaaij, 2006, 78).

The year 1985 stands as the turning point when the British government started to take a more proactive approach to combat hooligan activity. On 11 May 1985 tragedy stuck as 56 people were killed and more than 200 were hurt as a fire broke out on a wooden stand at Bradford City. On the same day, a 15-year-old boy died after a wall collapsed during a hooligan clash between

Birmingham City and Leeds United fans and the police. Three weeks later, a tragedy unfolded at the Heysel stadium in Brussels when 39 people died after a wall collapsed during a hooligan clash.

Following the tragic events that unfolded in such a short time span, the international football authorities were forced to respond and deal with the hooliganism that ran rampant. As a result, English clubs were banned from European competitions for a period of five years, and the British government was forced to take steps to combat both domestic and international hooliganism (Spaaij 82-83). A key figure during this process would be Margaret Thatcher. Through the introduction of identification cards and membership schemes, the authorities could regulate who enters the stadium and thereby deny entrance to known hooligan firm members. Her methods, even though criticized, brought a steady decline in hooligan activity (in Spaaij, 83). More attention will be given to the effects of Thatcher's policy later on in the paper, as her policy, in addition to Tony Blair, significantly impacts the hooliganism in the film. Presently, even though hooliganism is nowhere near as widespread as it was during the 70s and 80s, mostly due to the proactive measures first undertaken by Thatcher's government, it continues to fascinate the public. The fascination with hooligans could not evade the film industry, and several somewhat accurate (and less so) films were made that touched upon the topic that had held the attention of the media and the public for such a long period. However, films are an interesting media through which to analyze hooliganism as they offer a different, more involved peek into hooliganism. Regarding the sociological approaches to hooliganism, like the one made by the Leicester school, Gibbons argues that such approaches were often criticized for neglecting sociological theory and deemed as descending into "uncritical journalism". One of the most vocal critics was Anthony King, who accused the researchers as being proponents of "false populism" and deeming their theories as lacking in regards to empirical detail and interpretation (in Gibbons, 2008, 30). Nevertheless, we will discuss the theories proposed by the Leicester school in more depth in a latter chapter. Going back to the hooligan films which will form the most important part of the corpus, they are often based on what Steve Redhead called "hit and tell" literature, or soccer culture memoirs. Redhead described this "hit and tell" literature as frequently offering a more convincing picture of the history of hooliganism than a significant amount of ethnographic work or even undercover police or journalists (30). This paper will be taking a look at three films, firstly *The Firm*, released in 1989 and commonly described as the most true to life of the three. Secondly, we will take a look at the more recent *The Football Factory* (2004) and finally, the last film to be analyzed will be *Green Street Hooligans* (2005), a similarly modern rendition of a very popular theme in British cinematography. While the three films are somewhat different in their approach to the subject they, nevertheless, share many similarities as the consequent films borrow material from the films that came before them, such as the *Green Street*

Hooligans adopting much of the themes and plot elements from *The Firm*. Through these three films, the paper will attempt to draw a comparison between what is shown in the film and the real-life analyses and deductions on football hooliganism made by sociologists. Additionally, the analyses of all three films will not necessarily address the same aspects of hooligan sociology or psychology but will delve into certain topics that are best represented in a given film. I will mainly use excerpts of dialogue and my retelling of important parts of the plot, as well as real-life hooligan testimonies, to find the similarities and differences between the two but, additionally, to attempt to prove that the theories such as the one made by the Leicester school do not encapsulate and define hooliganism as it appears in film form. I will also attempt to show that the films disregard the typical classifications often placed upon hooligans, particularly classification regarding the sociological factors, as they are not cinematically displayed as uniform as they tend to be perceived by both the researchers and the general public. This lack of sociological generalization in films and literature represents in fact their biggest asset when discussing hooliganism compared to the attempts at unifying concepts which is typically done in large-scale studies. Additionally, I will discuss the various psychological aspects which make each chosen film unique and the ideas which are best represented in a given film will be prioritized. The films will also be analyzed from the perspective of the media, as they were often criticized and demonized for their content. Poulton argues that the critics of the media's portrayal of hooliganism often make "grand assumptions" about the media's impact (in Gow and Rookwood, 2008, 74). Others, however, believe that the media is clearly generating a false image of hooliganism through the reliance on sensational language and powerful imagery (74). Nevertheless, my goal is to avoid such "grand assumptions", as Poulton refers to them, and try to present a fair analysis of the imagery shown in the films.

Regarding the authors which I referred to in order to to prove my hypotheses, firstly, I referred to Spaaij in order to form the historical background of hooliganism, as well as gain insights into real-life hooligan psychology. Clarke et al. (1975) provided answers to the questions surrounding the defining and classifying of subcultures, while Radmann offered real-life interviews of current and former hooligans. The corpus also consists of Poulton and Rehling, who provided comments on various aspects such as the media handling of hooliganism, among other authors who were used more sparingly. The next chapter discusses whether hooliganism can be considered a subculture, a counter culture or if neither classification truly applies. Following the discussion on the classification of hooliganism, I will present the theoretical background on which I will draw upon when proving my hypotheses. Following the theoretical background, I will present the individual analyses of the three films and draw comparisons between them and, finally, I will also point out some hooligan peculiarities which make them unique among other groups and subcultures.

Hooligans – A Subculture?

After defining who the hooligans are, the next step is to define their position in society in relation to mainstream culture. The question is whether hooliganism can be considered a separate subculture, a counterculture, or are they purely an offshoot of other subcultures that dominated the landscape of Great Britain. Firstly, we are faced with the difficult task of defining what a subculture is. Numerous definitions have been proposed, and their number alludes to the fact that subcultures are difficult to clearly define since a subculture can display and represent many different ideologies and styles. Clarke et al. describe subcultures as groups gathered around similar "focal concerns", representing the ideologies or activities which brought upon the creation of the subculture. They continue by stating that while subcultures partially (or somewhat) differ from the dominant (or mainstream) culture, most notably in regards to their different aforementioned "focal concerns", they, nevertheless, share certain characteristics, such as, for example, the displays of masculinity commonly associated with the working-class that are as well displayed by hooligans through violence on and off the football grounds (13-14). It is, therefore, safe to assume that subcultures are, nevertheless, undeniably tied to the dominant culture and their existence depends on the existence (and dominance) of the dominant culture.

Now, it is important to describe the focal concerns that are commonly associated with the hooligans. Firstly, violence is the focal concern through which the hooligans assert their views on the world. It serves as a sort of outlet through which the hooligans show their masculinity and mark their territory. Both masculinity and territoriality represent key themes in the hooligan portfolio. Faux masculinity is ever-present in hooliganism, as much of a typical hooligan representation consists of displays of masculine traits through fighting and the intimidation of rivals while territoriality serves as a motivating factor for hooligan activity, integrating a much needed they-us mentality which further drives the hooligans to commit violent acts on those they perceive as "trespassing on their territory".

Hebdige, on the other hand, views subcultures as a type of resistance through symbols whereby they steal symbols from the dominant culture and assign to them their own meaning. By doing this, the members of the subculture resist the hegemony but are inevitably always subordinate to it as their existence is directly dependent on their resistance (1979, 2-3).

Nevertheless, we run into an issue with defining hooligans as a separate subculture when we start to look at their style. With regards to their style, the hooligans during the 1960s could be most closely associated with the, at the time, already prominent Skinhead subculture. As the skinhead

subculture has a penchant for displays of masculinity through violence, they were naturally drawn to hooliganism as an opportunity for such aggressive displays. In the late 1960s, the subcultural scene in the South of England begins to be dominated by a new subcultural movement called the Skinheads. "Aggressively proletarian and chauvinist, the skinheads constructed their collective identity and style in sharp contrast to the image and dress style of the mods" (Hebdige, 55). The skinhead subculture attempts to reaffirm chosen aspects traditional to the working-class and does this in a uniform that can be viewed as a kind of caricature of the typical worker (buzzcut, Doctor Martens boots, sta-prest trousers, Ben Sherman shirts) (in Hebdige, 55). The skinheads added their common style and uniform into the mix in Southern England, as well as an enhanced sense of collective identity celebrating aggressive masculinity and physical toughness. These features seem to have contributed to the intensification of collective territorial identifications and inter-group rivalries (Radmann, 79).

Some interviewed hooligans disagree with not classifying hooligans as a separate subculture, like former hooligan Mattias arguing that: "There are books, films, clothes, all the makings of a subculture. And you can't ban a subculture. It's impossible. People have always grouped together, AIK-supporters, Djurgården-supporters (supporters of two Swedish football teams), we're people, we're animals, we're herd animals. That's it." Mattias clearly differentiates hooligans as a separate subculture with its own style and possessing all the characteristics which a subculture requires (9).

Hooligans would, however, change their appearance later on in an attempt to avoid police attention, thereby creating the casual subculture, which is characterized by expensive brand clothing that stands opposite to what a hooligan would have worn earlier (Spaaij, 81). This visual change would not evade the film industry and would be incorporated into the publicly perceived typical hooligan outfit, with film hooligans wearing designer clothing like Stone Island coats and jackets, Ralph Lauren sweaters, and Adidas sneakers. However, the casual style of clothing can, moreover, be looked at through the prism of Hebdige's resistance through symbols that was mentioned earlier, with the expensive clothing (formerly a symbol of belonging to a higher class) being modified by the Casuals and being assigned a new meaning through close association with hooliganism.

Perhaps it is possible to define hooliganism as a counterculture, which, as the name implies, stands opposite to the hegemony and places forth values that challenge the mainstream society. However, typical countercultures, like the hippies, generally extend their resistance to the hegemony to all facets of their everyday lives and some see their resistance as being anti-establishment rather than an activity (albeit an anti-social one) that they partake in on match days. Researchers like Spaaij disagree with hooliganism being labeled as a counterculture as they do not always separate themselves from the dominant culture as is the case with West Ham United

hooligans living in London's East End. The East End hooligans simply promote a higher and more glorified version of the core values that the East End community and others like it already possess (128).

Therefore, it is questionable whether hooligans had characteristics that truly separated them from other subcultures that came before them and that were unique to them or whether they are true countercultures. It might be sufficient to consider hooliganism to be a way (or opportunity) through which established subcultures display their aggressive traits as, for example, skinheads tended to gather on football terraces and engage in violent displays to show their masculinity and as a result, "became" hooligans as well. (Clarke, 1973, 7)

Theoretical Overview

Before we begin with the analysis of the films, it is necessary to present an overview of the contributions that the Leicester School had made towards the research of football hooliganism. During a period of 20 years, Eric Dunning and other members of the Leicester School of Football Hooliganism have established themselves as possibly the most influential researchers on sport sociology. King considers the research of the Leicester School to be "exemplary" due to the fact that the research is done with consideration to sociological theory (in Bairner, 2006, 592). The School's research is based on the figurational approach that was first introduced by the German sociologist Norbert Elias (584). Elias' figurational approach is based on his theory of civilizing processes, which proposes that during recent history, values of civilized behavior have been integrated into the social classes in Europe. But, on the other hand, the lower parts of the working-class have not yet been fully "civilized", like the rest of society, and this is evident due to the rampant hooliganism during the 1970s and 80s. Furthermore, the Leicester School places fighting in the foreground as one of the only sources of excitement, meaning, and status that are available to working-class males (Spaaij, 25).

Additionally, the displays of masculinity through fighting are not purely tied to the way in which the working-class is integrated into society but are rather supported by working-class norms that provide a fertile ground for such displays. Furthermore, Dunning points out the “feedback processes” which “encourage fall-backs on aggressive behavior in many areas of social relations, especially on the part of males” (in Spaaij, 25). Based on the above, the Leicester School separates the working-class into the “incorporated” and the “rough”, where the rough is not yet fully “civilized” (25).

However, with regards to this paper, the most important and relevant propositions presented by the Leicester School are that football hooligans tend to be members of the lower working-class, who are generally educational underachievers or unemployed/low-income people and that violence at the football ground is not a new phenomenon but rather has become the focal point due to increased media attention (Giulianotti, 1997; Best, 2010, 580).

Furthermore, the School proposes that hooliganism is not a new phenomenon, nor an exclusively British (or English) one, but rather something that has existed for a long period, and is present worldwide (Best 578).

Nevertheless, taking into consideration the considerable influence that the Leicester School exhibits on sports sociology, some criticism is unavoidable. Critics have challenged, in particular,

the aforementioned statement that hooliganism is primarily a working-class phenomenon arguing that it is rather, like Giulianotti points out, a more complex issue which cannot be confined or tied to a single social class (Bairner, 588). Additionally, their separation of the working-class into the "incorporated" and "rough" has been a point of conflict and a commonly disputed characterization (in Rehling, 2011, 164; Best, 583).

Carnibella points out that the lack of attention which the Leicester school paid to working-class alienation and deprivation, as well as institutionalized and legitimized violence (such as police brutality), along with the class assumptions inherent to their work, has inevitably met with criticism, not only in terms of their deployment of the overly schematic and universal "civilizing process" (even from Williams, who later parted company with Dunning and Murphy on this matter). Additionally, other researchers like Armstrong and Harris argue that hooligans come from a variety of social backgrounds (in Rehling, 164). When dealing with criticism, Dunning and his colleagues (2006) admit that there is a lack of hard evidence to support their theory on the sociological structure of hooliganism but, nevertheless, they claim that between 70 and 80 percent of football hooligans are lower-class people that generally work in manual professions and that they readily resort to anti-social behavior (including violence) due to the "rough" state in which they find themselves as a social group (Bairner, 586-87).

Finally, former hooligans themselves have challenged the theories put forth by the Leicester School. Bairner refers to Jonas and Rivers who claim that "the majority of football boys are, believe it or not, decent lads with good jobs and families, out for a release from the day-to-day pressures of life." They continue by stating that "there are Cardiff lads who have run around with the Soul Crew while holding down jobs like solicitor and doctor and a couple are even linked to the club in some capacity (in Bairner, 588)."

Nevertheless, this study will include relevant criticism of the propositions made by the Leicester School of Football Hooliganism in an attempt to find which theories fit best with the conclusions gathered from the analysis of the films.

I. The Firm: Territory, Masculinity and Belonging under Thatcherite Threat

Considered the most realistic representation of the hooligan phenomenon, *The Firm* (1989), directed by Alan Clarke, has received critical acclaim and has established itself as a cult classic (Oliver, 2001).

Led by the charismatic Bex, who is portrayed by Gary Oldman, the film follows the hooligan activities of the ICC hooligan firm as they attempt to establish their reputation and battle rival firms for the spot of the most dominant hooligan firm in the country which will lead the other firms to Europe. The ICC firm is loosely based on the notorious Inter City Firm made up of West Ham fans during the 1970s and 1980s and therefore takes inspiration from a real-life hooligan firm. The film itself presents an interesting image of the hooligan subculture that is unlike the more modern presentations due to its bleak imagery and visceral portrayals of hooligan violence and psychology. From the very beginning until the end, the viewer is shown the grim reality of hooliganism and violence that accompanies it. This is done in several ways. Firstly, almost no accompanying music is used in the film, barring the very first scene, intentionally done to enhance the suffocating atmosphere that is present throughout. The use of a particular song (Dean Martin's "That's Amore") for the intro during which the characters are shown playing football is seemingly quite sarcastic, as the hooligans in question show very little love (or care) for football during the film. Secondly, the color palette used in the film is very depressing and indicative of the period which the characters inhabit, but more will be said regarding the political situation in the next subchapter. The two aforementioned stylistic choices together create a grim, documentary-like view of hooliganism and the violence that accompanies it. Clarke himself comments indirectly on the atmosphere as there is very little football shown, stating that there are no shots of football matches because "it's not about football... It's about tribes" (in Rehling, 165). However, underneath the dark atmosphere, the film offers a unique look into the hooligan sociological background and psyche as it is quite different from the other renditions of the same subject.

The goal of the film analysis is to take a look at the sociological and psychological circumstances under which hooliganism occurs and how these circumstances are presented on the big screen. The deductions made in this paragraph will be compared to the propositions made by the Leicester School of Football Hooliganism as well, particularly in regards to how they fit with the working-class framework that was introduced by the school. The analysis will focus on both the sociological and psychological factors of hooliganism as well as with territoriality, faux masculinity, and similar topics related to the aforementioned factors that are most present in the

film. However, before the in depth analysis of the films, it is important to discuss the political context under which the events in the film unfold and the effect that it has on the characters in the film as the effect is quite profound.

a) Socio-political Context

The political context under which the events in the film unfold had a tremendous effect on the setting, as well as the overall psychology of the characters and an introduction is therefore crucial to help us understand hooliganism. When discussing the political context, particular attention has to be given to the effect of the political system implemented by Margaret Thatcher. Thatcher's policy is not only interesting due to her anti-hooligan activity, but, more importantly, due to it's widespread economic and sociological effects and the way in which they impacted the hooligans in the film. According to Edwards, Thatcher's policies centered on three major aspects: free economy and reduced inflation, limitations on the power of unions, and finally, attacks upon the perceived enemy of free enterprise, socialism, and Labour controlled Local Councils (206). Given the focus which sociologists like Jessop place on the development and promotion of free enterprise under Thatcher (4), it is therefore no surprise that the increased focus on individualism during this period would impact the class structure represented in the film. The previously mentioned civilizing process, introduced by the Leicester school feeds directly into the overarching story regarding the sociological structure of hooliganism, as well as the story on society under Thatcher. However, while the Leicester school maintained that hooliganism is a result of the incompleteness of the civilizing process regarding the lower working-class, the situation might be considerably different. For example, Rehling argues that society under Thatcher had lost some of the traditional class distinctions and that the world had moved from the collective to the individual (167). Therefore, it is safe to assume that class was a very different notion during Thatcher's period when compared to the earlier post-war consensus and *The Firm* reflects this as class is a far more "fluid" term during this period. This would directly challenge the idea of incomplete civilizing processes due to the weakening of traditional class distinctions during Thatcher's period but also due to the diversity and complexity of the social structure on display. The idea of the fragmentation of the classes will be discussed later on using examples from the film.

When discussing the characters in the film, Rehling points to Bex as the ideal example of a "neo-liberal" in many regards, serving as a sort of living embodiment for the system that Thatcher implemented. Bex, who propagates his belonging to the working-class in the film, is the exact

opposite in many ways. For example, he works as a real estate agent who has considerable wealth and possessions and perfectly embodies the characteristics of capitalist individualism despite his personal beliefs. Bex's friend Simon, while a somewhat different character to Bex, nevertheless, also excellently exemplifies the time in which he lives in. During his trip with the Hornchurch boys, a group of very enthusiastic hooligans singing hymns about their bravery and masculinity, Simon, who was very elated to engage in hooliganism earlier, is dismayed to find his car set on fire by Yeti. When first seeing his car set alight, Simon exclaims "My Car!", visibly saddened by the event and not concerned about revenge and reputation but rather about losing his prized possession (*The Firm* 00:27:21). The event also leads Simon to have a falling out with Bex, as he is unwilling to join Bex in his hooligan exploits, with his concerns fully focused on receiving car insurance for the damages (00:43:40). Just like Bex, Simon nearly perfectly exemplifies the times in which he lives in, even though Simon is even more "neo-liberal" than him.

Another key concept to discuss in relation to Thatcherism and the capitalist policies which formed the backbone of the system is the concept of ownership. The desire for ownership is not limited simply to financial ownership but is ingrained in Bex's entire life. Firstly, his role as a leader of the firm is a clear example of this. He desires to be a leader and in a way "own" a group of young impressionable adults. Furthermore, his ambition for attaining more ownership extends to a national scope as he desires to "own" his rivals as well by leading them to Europe to fight on a national level. The leaders of rival firms also share the same desire, and along with Bex serve as the best examples of neo-liberal or capitalist individualism. When discussing the idea of rivals uniting for a "greater cause", it is important to mention the concept of ordered segmentation coined by American sociologist Gerard Suttles. Ordered segmentation asserts that while larger neighborhoods (or in this case rival firms representing their neighborhoods) maintain independence, they nevertheless unify in an ordered way (under a single leader figure in the case of *The Firm*) in the event of opposition or conflict (in Dunning, 141). This concept rings true when discussing the events which occur in *The Firm*, as the rival firms, which were previously sworn enemies, are in the end united into a single "front" to oppose the hooligans in Europe. Even Bex's death does not interfere with the idea of seemingly necessary ordered segmentation. However, falling back to the concept of ownership as it is displayed in *The Firm*, it does not materialize simply through the forms of ownership discussed above, but also overflows into Bex's relationships, most notably his relationship with Sue, and the nature of their relationship will be discussed in the next subchapter.

It is also important to note that the key idea in a capitalist system, which Thatcherism certainly represents, is best phrased as "by any means necessary", where the end goal of winning is more important than the means of winning. For example, hooligans often discuss the ideals of

masculinity which have to be followed and which directly dictate their actions, such as the avoidance of blades or guns during fights. However, their implementation of these rules is not so uniform and consistent as they frequently argue, and this is particularly true during Thatcher's period. This idea of the importance of winning is echoed in numerous scenes in the film but is best represented during the final clash between Yeti and Bex. As Bex triumphantly looks down on the badly hurt Yeti, the other pulls out a gun much to Bex's surprise and kills him (01:03:35). This scene is the perfect example of the precedence that winning takes over everything else, such as the means used to achieve it, which is particularly characteristic of Thatcher's economic policy.

b) Getting the Buzz and Looking for Validation

It is perhaps best to begin the sociological and psychological analysis with the simplest and most straightforward details that, nevertheless, give significant insight into the hooligan life. Through straightforward analysis of the visuals presented to us in the film, we can make several deductions about hooligans such as their desires, motivations and even attain a sneak peek into their everyday lives, as well as their social status. The most glaring element of the visual style presented in the film is the clothing of the characters. Throughout the film, the viewers are shown images of well-dressed men, wearing suits and ties, dressed in clothing that is generally not affordable to working-class men. Bex, the top boy of ICC firm, is seldom seen not wearing a suit, not unlike the other firm leaders with whom he clashes with. Additionally, the men in the film, in general, drive quite expensive vehicles, which seem out of reach to most working-class citizenship. In the very first scene of the film, Yeti, the leader of a rival firm, is seen driving a luxury car (Volkswagen Golf GTi cabriolet) across the field on which Bex and his firm members are playing football. Additionally, Simon, a friend of Bex's, drives a very luxurious BMW which is later set on fire by Yeti. Both of the aforementioned cars do not seem affordable to working-class citizenship at the time. Regarding the residences of the characters in the film, Bex's 2-story home is frequently shown and appears somewhat out of reach for a working-class man as well. Little is shown about the careers of the hooligans, except for Bex, who works as a real estate agent, and his friend Simon who is either an office worker or broker but, nevertheless, through the analysis of their possessions we can make certain deductions about their social standing.

On one hand, all of the above stands at odds with the proposition of the Leicester School that the hooligans consist primarily of working-class people. The film presents an image of financially well-standing people that pursue activities commonly associated by researchers with the working-

class while also working jobs that cannot be described as working-class. On the other hand, Bex calls himself a working-class member and strongly desires to become a local hero, a feat which he believes he can achieve through violent clashes with rivals and by helping his firm attain the position of the most dangerous firm in England. The social structure in the film appears more complex than the structure that the Leicester School used to define hooliganism.

Rehling argues that the films that discuss the topic of hooliganism, like *The Firm*, often display the fragmentation of social classes which occurred during Thatcher's period (167-68). This idea is discussed directly in the film in the excerpt below, where the sociologist interviewee directly references the fact that hooligans are not as sociologically uniform as it was believed earlier but consist of all social classes and upbringings. The interview will be split into 2 parts that will appear in 2 different paragraphs as the interview touches upon both the sociology as well as the psychology of the hooligans in the film.

(a. 1.)

- Interviewee: We must distinguish, I think, between the bovver boy, yobbo-type hooligans, so representative of the 1970s and today's more sophisticated, more disciplined hooligans. Most of them have jobs. In fact, some of them have quite skilled jobs and quite a comfortable lifestyle (*The Firm* 00:15:45–00:16:00).

In the first part of the interview that deals with the sociological background of hooligans, the sociologist differentiates between the typical representation of hooligans, which would fit in with the propositions made by the Leicester School as being working-class men, and the more "sophisticated and "disciplined" hooligans who work skilled jobs and live comfortably. The interviewee directly challenges the working-class theory proposed by the Leicester School and can be perceived as one part of a larger critique of hooliganism and of the narrative that typically follows the sociological discussions on hooligans and a direct criticism of the hypothesis presented by the Leicester School. Additionally, the excerpt shows the fragmentation mentioned earlier, as people moved away from the role of collective producers to individual consumers who's individualism bypasses the more traditional notions of class distinctions (Rehling, 167-68).

Regarding the scenery and its clues on the class structure, Scovell points to *The Firm* as a South London based film, except for a minor trip to Birmingham during the Oboe fight, and continues by stating that Clarke avoids the bias of restricting the people that engage in hooliganism to certain areas to show the firms in his film as being almost exclusively run by yuppies and higher-class men rather than the stereotypical hooligans belonging to the lower classes, most notably the

working-class. The film successfully blends in both the affluent as well as the poor areas, with Bex who is a decently wealthy man, for example, spending his time in a "run-down boozer in the estate". Clarke leaves no area of London as out of bounds to the film, nor to the characters in it, and presents the viewer with a complex sociological structure, which is uncommon in typical presentations of hooliganism (Scovell, 2021).

Beneath the portrayals of violence commonly displayed in the film, there is also a deeper psychological structure at play. The best way to describe the strongest drive of the hooligans in the film is a pursuit of meaning. Most of the characters in the film are shown to lead pleasant lives, they have money, cars, are married, have good jobs and so forth, but lack meaning to their life. They do not know what to do with their time and this leads them in pursuit of ways through which they can fulfill their desire for meaning and find the excitement that they so restlessly desire. Their chosen way of pursuing adrenaline is through clashing with rival fans. Bex himself, perhaps, put it best, when he said that he needs a buzz, one which can almost certainly never be satisfied through domestic trivialities. In pursuit of "the buzz", Bex seems willing to sacrifice his family relationships and career and even his life, as it would later happen. He is simply unable to live a life that other people would deem as "normal", and this ultimately leads to his demise, as he feels a constant to assert his masculinity and bravery through fighting. For him, match days are merely a disguise, as he does not seem at all interested in his team but rather the violence that accompanies being in a firm and organizing fights under the pretense of fighting for the team's pride. Clarke himself said that he refused to insert football match scenes and described the film as "it's not about football, nothing to do with it. It's about tribes" (in Rehling, 165).

He discusses his desire for adrenaline with his wife through a short argument that repeats several times in the film. Two of the dialogue excerpts will be shown below.

(b. 1.)

- *Sue*: What I want to know is what's so bad about being normal, eh?

- *Sue*: What's wrong with being bloody normal?

- *Bex*: I told you, I need the buzz (00:50:59-00:51:04).

(b. 2.)

- *Sue*: Will you stop?

- *Bex*: Yeah, yeah, I told you.

- *Sue*: When?

- *Bex*: I need the buzz (00:41:55-00:42:06).

(c. 1.)

- *Bex*: What you talking about? He is safe.

- *Sue*: Oh, yeah, yeah.

- Most folks leave Stanley knives lying around the house, don't they?

- I've had enough of your big boys' games, Bex.

(...)

- I want to live with a grown-up, Bex, not a thirty-year-old hooligan (00:50:08-00:51:31).

As shown in the excerpt above, for Bex, family always seems like an afterthought as he constantly places his violent needs ahead of his wife and child. This is particularly highlighted when his child injures himself with Bex's knife and has to be taken to the hospital due to him being busy threatening a rival firm leader over the phone. His neglect of his family due to his participation in hooligan activities leads Bex to frequently fight with his wife, who constantly pressures him into giving up the hooligan life and settling down and spending time with his family. Notably, Sue calls Bex's hooliganism a "big boy game" which can be interpreted in neo-liberal terms as a waste of time. Therefore, anything that Bex is involved in that does not directly improve his (and his family's) social standing is simply construed as a game, and the very act of growing up is closely related to overcoming the desire for participating in such activities. Additionally, when discussing Bex's relationship with Sue, it is important to note his use of sex as a method of ownership. Following one of many fights that the pair have during the film, Bex forces himself upon Sue in an attempt to assert his ownership and dominance over her, but simply ends up being laughed at by Sue (00:36:55). As we can see from the examples shown above, the desire for ownership, typical of the neo-liberal time in which Bex lives in, is not restricted to material matters but spills over into his relationships and makes him commit detestable acts.

Besides the pursuit of meaning mentioned earlier, the hooligans in the firm desire to belong to something which would serve as an escape from their ordinary lives. This desire for belonging is most noticeable in the behavior of the younger members of the firm. The young hooligans-to-be are

willing to do anything to prove themselves worthy of being firm members and are even willing to take physical punishment to prove their dedication. Through belonging to a group of like-minded individuals, the young firm members can distract themselves from the bleak world that they live in. This makes them particularly susceptible to a man like Bex, who is naturally charismatic and intimidating and is able to impose his own views on the easily influenced young firm members. By belonging to a "reputable" firm, they can value themselves as important and respected in the local community, even though it is revealed not to be the case, after Sue reveals that the neighbors perceive Bex and people like him as a joke. The excerpt discussed is inserted below.

(c. 2.)

- *Sue*: You're a fucking joke.

- *Bex*: I don't see anyone laughing at me.

- *Sue*: No, no, you don't.

- No, they won't laugh at you. Well, not to your face, anyway.

- But they laugh at me, darling, for putting up with you (00:50:49-00:50:57).

Going back to the aforementioned TV interview, the sociologist touches upon the psychological motivations behind the decision to become a hooligan. He states that the hooligans are looking to gain meaning and reputation which would add value to their lives. However, Bex and his hooligan friends immediately dismiss and mock the sociologist, disagreeing with his reasoning and arguing that there is no deeper meaning to their actions than simply the attraction of “hitting people”.

(a. 2)

(...)

- *Interviewee*: Basically, I see it as a kind of search for meaning. An attempt to validate their lives, give it significance.

- Why don't he just tell them we like hitting people? (00:15:59-00:16:07)

According to Aage Radmann, a common question regarding hooligans is whether they are genuinely interested in football or rather use it as an excuse for violent acts. Radmann, who interviewed nine hooligans from Sweden, points out that eight of them insisted that football and the allegiance to a club was the most important value of a hooligan while one man, Harald, stated the opposite as he believed that football was less important than the violent clashes with other hooligans. Furthermore, he states that the club that he fights for is unimportant. Unlike the other supporters that Radmann mentions, Harald is the only one that openly calls himself a hooligan (9-10). The characters in the first two analyzed films echo Harald's description, as football is not shown at all and the focus is completely on the firm clashes. While *Green Street Hooligans* is slightly different as there are some football clips inserted into the plot, the events on the football grounds are a far second to the main themes and are more of a catalyst for their activities rather than a genuine interest to the hooligans as I will show later.

Territoriality is another key theme in the hooligan opus as the entire hooligan firm model is based on belonging to a certain territory and challenging the territories of the rival firms. It is no different in the film as the hooligans try to assert their dominance over their territory, which is generally hallmarked by a pub that represents a gathering hub for a hooligan firm. This idea of pubs as gathering hubs is one that will also echo in the two films that we are yet to analyze. Hooligans use these pubs to prepare for upcoming clashes with other firms but also attack the pubs of rival firms, as seen in all three of the films in question.

Faux masculinity represents a theme that underlines the film from the start until the end and is a major driving force behind the violent displays shown in the film. Throughout the film, various characters attempt to reinforce their masculinity through displays of violence and verbal acts. Several examples of this can be extrapolated, for example, Bex's right-hand man Trigg, who can be considered a sort of personification of faux masculinity, constantly raves about what he learned in the army and how you need to get revenge as soon as possible when someone wrongs you.

(d. 1.)

- *Trigg*: That is well out of order. You don't let people treat you like shit, I learned that in the Army. You sort it out there and then, otherwise they'll shit on you every other minute of the day (00:03:39-00:03:45).

In one scene in the film, Trigg comes to Bex's home purely to reinstate his desire for revenge on Yeti after he damaged Bex's car (00:06:08-00:06:30). However, the most notable

example of faux masculinity shown in the film is during Bex's visit to his father Bill. During the visit, Bex takes out a bag full of blunt weapons to be used for an upcoming clash and his father immediately comments disapprovingly, stating that he would have finished it earlier, and without weapons, thereby asserting his "superior" masculinity.

(d. 2.)

- *Bill*: In my day we would have rushed up the Old Kent Road and kicked the shite out of them.

All this shows is that none of you have got any bottle, if you ask me (00:54:07-00:54:15).

Just like Trigg, Bill has a need to assert his masculinity and remember his "glory days" when he was a hooligan even though he is not one anymore. We can deduce that Bex was heavily influenced by his father's hooliganism and that this played a large part in him becoming one, which represents a common theme in both *The Firm* and the other two films. However, what differentiates Bex from his father is the very time in which they live in. While his father is a product of the earlier post-war consensus period, Bex on the other hand is a true neo-liberal, as he is willing to do anything that he deems as necessary to accomplish his goals. What his father (and the rest of his generation) might deem as nonmasculine, such as the use of weapons in a fight, has simply become the norm in the world that Bex lives in, as winning is all that matters. Furthermore, it is possible to describe many other aspects of hooligan psychology as "faux", not just their exaggerated masculinity. A great example is the "pretend" initiation and hazing of young hooligan prospects who were made to believe that every member of the firm has to get a tattoo symbolizing their allegiance but later realize that nobody has the tattoos in question (00:18:40). It appears that the reputation and notoriety that the firms possess in the minds of young prospect hooligans far eclipses their actual reality.

The Firm, Bex and the Boys Look Vicious, (00:55:52)

An interesting concept in T*he Firm* is that, unlike the other two films, it does not attempt to make the character in focus more likable or relatable, but rather the viewer is shown a careless, violent lead character in Bex, among other similarly violent characters. Furthermore, the director never attempts to make it so as he aims to present a critical image of a hooligan who cares about nothing else other than fighting and inflicting damage on others. In the other two films, the characters in question have at least a semblance of likeability and relatability. Instead, the viewer is given an image of what a real-life hooligan would appear like. Throughout the film, Bex is depicted as a character that will not settle down until he dies, constantly fighting pointless fights. This leads to his inevitable death, but also to an ending which is perhaps the most important criticism of hooliganism that is embedded within the film. As the rest of his firm members are interviewed, now united with the other firms that his firm clashed with, even the Buccaneers who caused his death, they point out that they are not discouraged even by Bex's death. The young hooligans are seemingly undisturbed and perhaps desire to be remembered in the way Bex is, even willing to die in order to become local heroes and legends (01:03:55-01:06:45).

(d. 3.)

- *Dominic*: Bexy lives for all of us.

- He's not dead, you can't say he's dead.

- We're carrying him, how can he be dead?

- Because it's about belonging.

- It's about belonging, it's about belonging.

- And we all feel like we belong, we belong because of him. You can't say he's dead (01:05:06-01:05:23).

It's about belonging, a young hooligan points out, vowing to remember him and to go to Europe and fight the Europeans in his honor. Bex's death seems to have merely rejuvenated the hooligan passion in the young firm members, rather than pushing them away from an activity that could cost them their lives. After his death, Bex becomes a sort of martyr for young hooligans to rally around and commit hooligan acts in his honor. Real-life hooligans share the same desire for belonging and according to Radmann, who interviewed several hooligan members, they do not ally themselves with mainstream society with regards to their self-identity. They point to friendship and community that they find in their firms, rather than mainstream society, as the reasons behind joining a hooligan firm. Furthermore, the interviewed hooligans all describe a sense of identity attained through belonging and community. Finally, Radmann highlights the rivalry with similar-minded firms as an important motivator for hooligans that he had interviewed and adds that the existence of opponents is “the glue that keeps the group together most effectively.” The physical closeness in supporter communities, particularly closeness and togetherness through violence, creates a powerful sense of belonging between fellow hooligans (Radmann, 9).

II. The Football Factory: Cool Britannia Is No-Buzz Britannia

Despite the title, *The Football Factory* is a film that, just like its predecessor, has almost nothing to do with football. Although quite distanced from the stark grittiness of its predecessor, the film represents a comical spin on the hooligan theme that still carries most of the underlying themes that marked *The Firm*. Now in the spotlight is the young hooligan Tommy who, although not nearly as aggressive and obsessed as Bex, is still an extremely violent hooligan who lives for the aforementioned "buzz", just like Bex. His hedonistic escapades take up a considerable section of the film's running time and form a backdrop to his hooligan activities and the two eventually intertwine leading to an unsurprisingly violent finale. Another key thematic element is Tommy's narration through which he retells the events that led to him ending up in a hospital. Throughout the film, Tommy has premonitions and is tormented by nightmares of somebody's death and his grave injuries following a hooligan fight. Furthermore, he is also constantly plagued by signs that he should quit his violent hobby and his psychological battle with being a hooligan represents a major theme in the film. The difference in atmosphere is not purely based on the visuals but also on the audio experience. While *The Firm* almost entirely avoided the use of music, acting as a sort of documentary or social critique rather than an action movie, *The Football Factory* frequently uses uptempo songs to enhance the effect of the hooligan clashes and creates a different atmosphere that is at times comical and action-packed and at other times gloomy and distressing. It is also important to note the focus that *The Football Factory* places on the media image of hooliganism and the way in which hooliganism is portrayed by mainstream society. For example, the introductory scene consists of media reports and imagery of hooligan brawls, underlined by the sound of news reports talking about the consequences and injuries caused by real-life violence. From the very start, the viewer is presented with examples of the demonization through which hooliganism is portrayed by the media. On the other hand, we have the narrator Tommy who represents the other side of the story as a character who's intention is to in a way "explain" the notion of hooliganism to the audience. Throughout the film, Tommy talks about the motivations and fears of a hooligan firm member and tries to offer the perspective of a hooligan who has been involved in such acts and has seen their consequences. The film, therefore, presents two perspectives, the director's, as well as Tommy's and helps paint a clearer picture than the typical media one. The media demonization of the very topic of hooliganism mentioned earlier does not only pertain to real-life hooliganism but is extended to fictional works and portrayals of the topic as well. Some would even claim that such portrayals glamorize the brawling to the point of possibly directly causing copy-cat hooliganism (in Poulton, 2006, 157).

However, despite the attempts by the director to add a dimension of reality to the films through the use of real-life media reports, films like *The Football Factory* were looked at with disdain by researchers on hooliganism.

Nevertheless, going back to the characters shown in the film, the main characters are members of Chelsea's hooligan firm and the story follows their clashes with rival firms, most notably the Millwall firm, finally culminating in one final bout that changes the lives of many of the hooligans involved.

Just like in *The Firm*, the goal of the analysis is to draw parallels between real-life hooliganism and hooliganism as represented through films. But before any major sociological or psychological analysis, it is important to again provide political context and discuss the differences between the political situation in *The Firm* and the one in *The Football Factory* as they represent examples of two different political "eras" which affect the characters in the two films differently.

a) Socio-political Context

In the chapter discussing *The Firm*, the analysis began with an introduction to the political system introduced by Margaret Thatcher and this chapter will be no different, as the politics had a significant impact on all aspects of life, particularly hooligan life. The shift period between Thatcherism and the, at the time, new system called Blairism (after Tony Blair) was very long and brought upon a time of uncertainty, following one of the longest economical depressions in Britain since the Great Depression (Glasby, 2019). The characters in *The Football Factory* reflect this shift, as they are in many ways notably different to the ones in *The Firm*, particularly regarding their views on topics such as male masculinity (as well as homosexuality), fascism and so forth. But before we begin with the discussion of the sociological and psychological differences between the characters in the two films, it is important to note the characteristics of Tony Blair's policy and quickly compare it to Thatcher's system. Blairism, also called New Labour, built upon some of the ideas central to Thatcher's policy, and can, in many ways, be considered a continuation of her policy. However, Blair adapted Thatcher's policy by somewhat curbing the impact of the free market on the disadvantaged (Kitson and Wilkinson, 2007, 805). Now, it is important to note that the goal of New Labour was never to reduce inequality, but rather, help the growth of the free market, which meant that the rich were getting richer while tax-changes and a national minimum wage were intended to cushion the incomes of the working poor (813).

Possibly the biggest change relating to the political context and the economic situation is the masculinity crisis shown in *The Football Factory*. Most of the characters in the film are shown to be dealing with their own sort of masculinity crisis. For example, Billy is shown to be unhinged and unreliable, constantly seeking to prove his masculinity through fighting. His constant violent exploits, however, have the exact opposite effect and leave him further contemplating his masculinity when he is deemed a "spent force" by the leader of the firm, Harris, who is tired of dealing with his temper and needless aggression. On the other hand, former hooligan Ad also owns a flower shop like Billy, but is now disillusioned with hooliganism and is, from what we can gather from his short appearance, far less doubtful about himself. Ad therefore represents the exception, as a man who is not dissatisfied with his life and does not doubt his masculinity, nor does he need to prove it through hooliganism. He lectures Tommy on this very issue, arguing that it is time for Tommy to "grow up" (*The Football Factory* 00:41:12). It would be difficult to imagine a hooligan from *The Firm*, like Bex, owning or even working in a flower shop, considering the context and time that they lived in. The people taking part in hooliganism in the film are generally shown to be struggling with the realization on how life works under New Labour. Nevertheless, we will go into more detail on the issues of the masculine "role" and domestic boredom under New Labour later on in the paper.

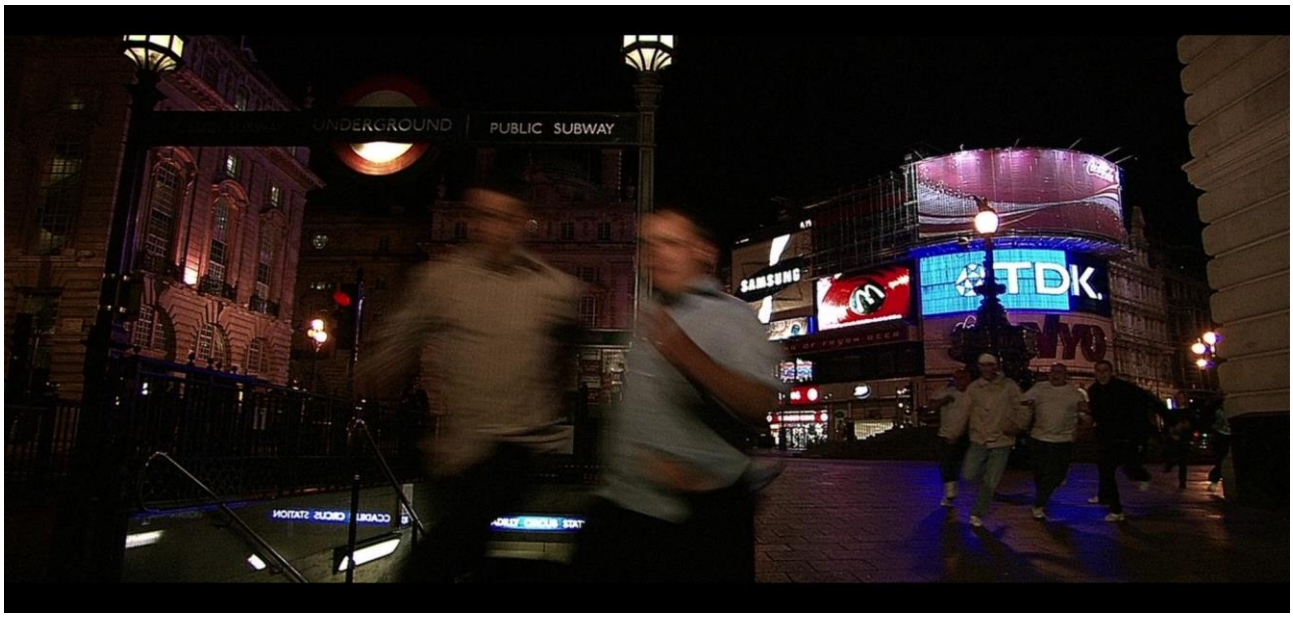
It is also important to mention the concept of Cool Britannia, which arose during New Labour. Cool Britannia was implemented by New Labour politicians in the hopes of rebranding Britain to be "new, young and creative", just like Old Labour was rebranded into New Labour. The rebranding would, however, turn out to be short-lived, due to various reasons, such as the hostile reaction of the media and the exceedingly narrow scope, among other issues (Werther, 3-4). Nevertheless, it had a considerable impact on this film as we will see later on.

Blair's effect on the societal position of homosexuality through policy change should also be noted. During her mandate as Prime Minister, Thatcher's government strongly opposed the promotion of homosexuality through Section 28, which strongly prohibited the promotion of homosexuality in Britain as well as a prohibition on "teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship" (Kollman and Waites, 2011, 10).

By contrast, Blair introduced the concept of Civil Partnerships, among other legislation in a bid to improve the position of the LGBT population. Through the legislation, in the period of ten years, Britain has gone from "partially criminalizing homosexuality" to allowing couples to adopt children as well as. banning workplace discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. Blair's legislation represented a step forward towards full equality (15) and his dedication to help the position of the LGBT population turned him into a gay rights icon (The Guardian, 2014). Given the

masculinity crises shown, it is not difficult to imagine the dislike that the characters in the film might have for someone like Tony Blair as well as his policy. Criticism of Blair's policy is inserted directly into the film on numerous occasions, through the form of a racist taxi driver commenting on the social situation, condemning Blair for the increased immigration during his tenure and expanding his criticism to any issue he can think of.

Now, while I have described the soundtrack simply as uptempo in the introduction to *The Football Factory*, this description does not fully do it, as the soundtrack offers additional clues on the film's origin. Rehling incorporates Luckett's ideas on spectatorial desire, stating that film seemingly builds upon the project of Cool Britannia, and desires to portray British national identity but also veers off the beaten path, by including topics which were likely seen as taboo (notably in regards to violence, sex and style). Love portrays this idea through the use of British bands for the soundtrack (notably Miss Lucifer and Swastika Eyes by Primal Scream), but also using the London setting and including famous British (or London) landmarks as a backdrop (172).



The Football Factory, Tommy and Rod Run Against the Backdrop of London, (00:28:17)

Therefore, we can consider *The Football Factory* Nick Love's attempt to latch onto the glory of earlier films, as they satisfied the contemporary spectator demands to see the imagery and ideas characteristic of Britain shown on the big screen while also not evading topic generally not associated to traditional British imagery. Love's incorporation of British symbols into the film is indicative of Cool Britannia's method of culture branding. However, the frequent focus on London, which was seen as distant to domestic and internal audience in Britain, much like in the example above, was deemed as too narrow by the public and felt unrelated to the lives which they live and contributed to the project's downfall (Werther, 2001, 3-4).

b) Sex, Drugs &...*Occasionally Kicking Fuck Out of Someone*

Although it may appear different at first glance, the clothing of the hooligans in *The Football Factory* is more in line with the propositions made by the Leicester School regarding the working-class' dominance in hooligan activity compared to the clothing worn by the hooligans in *The Firm*. Rather than wearing suits like Bex and his rival Yeti, most of the hooligans are dressed in a style that is best described as fitting with the Casual subculture. The Casual subculture is characterized by a switch from typical working-class clothing to designer clothing, which occurred in the 1980s in Britain, primarily in an attempt to avoid the attention of the police. This is clearly visible in the film as characters like Tommy wear brands such as Ralph Lauren and Fred Perry. Even younger members like Zeberdee wear Stone Island jackets and other similarly expensive brands to obfuscate their hooligan tendencies. The key idea behind the switch is that typical working-class clothing is replaced with branded clothing in order to appear less suspicious to the police.

Little is shown regarding the residences of the firm members, except for Billy who lives in a semi-detached house that is not particularly indicative of social status. However, the employment situation of the characters in the film is quite diverse, perhaps signifying that the sociological structure of hooliganism was not quite as uniform as the Leicester School portrays it. For example, both Billy and Rod are business owners with Billy owning the flower shop in which Tommy works and Rod owning an AC repair company. On the other hand, Zeberdee and his friend Raff resort to theft in order to gain money, which also adds to the complexity of the sociological structure presented in the film as both the lower social strata (like Zeberdee) and the higher strata (like Billy) engage in hooliganism and neither group is "left out".

According to Giulianotti, 'for anyone who really meets with the hooligan groups themselves, what is most striking is the ordinariness of it all". He then continues by stating, "A first glance at their clothes, girlfriends, parents, homes, cars, jobs, wider environment and leisure interests, testifies comprehensively to the mundane, even banal lifestyles of those who are well incorporated into mainstream UK society (though perhaps not to the polite endogeny of academic conferences and dinner parties)" (in Bairner 588). When we compare the observations above with Giulianotti's claims of "hooligan ordinariness", it is perhaps too difficult to apply the Leicester School's theory to hooliganism as imposingly as they did.

In the next part we will focus more on the psychological observations and dialogue which can give us an insight into hooliganism.

> Violence is like an addiction. When you're a hundred men against each other, just waiting for someone to cross the line, it's this amazing adrenaline rush, nothing compares to it. I've experimented with drugs and that, but I'm telling you, violence is the best drug. - Mattias (Radmann, 10)

A repeating psychological motivation for the hooligans in all three films is the chase and desire of attaining of the "buzz", and *The Football Factory* is no different in this regard. Tommy, much like Bex, cannot sit at home and live a typical suburban life and has a thirst for excitement that can only be quenched through violence, vandalism and similar hooligan acts. His thirst for excitement through violence reverberates several times in the film, and even when taking into account the significant consequences of hooliganism, the need to satisfy the desire for adrenaline prevails. His best friend Rod perhaps described it best during a dinner with the parents of his girlfriend Tamara, who wants him to miss a fight with the rival Millwall firm and meet her parents.

(a. 1.)

- *Rod*: Anyway, most of the time I just sit around the office, waiting for the weekend.

- Don't get me wrong. I love the money the job pays.

- But my real passion lies in kicking people's fucking heads in at football.

- See, I've got to channel it somewhere, and as you can tell by my bulging stomach, I don't participate in too many sporting activities.

- And I don't do drugs. Well, that's not entirely true, but not a lot.

- So, I need my release, and a good fuckin' fight seems the best way. Wouldn't you agree?

- Maybe not. least I wouldn't be walking around like you - fuckin' horrible cunts with sticks up your arses, trying to pretend your little suburban nightmare's all right.

- Then again, it just depends which way you look at it (*The Football Factory* 01:14:10-01:14:50).

Rod owns an AC repair company and leads a pleasant life, but is not content merely spending time at home, like most people his age, and he needs the adrenaline of hooliganism. As Rod puts it, his real passion is “kicking people’s fucking heads in at football”. He considers it his “release”, and that while some people get their release through sports or drugs, his release is violence. Furthermore, he is disillusioned by people that live in their “little suburban nightmares” who are content in wasting their lives in boredom, leading lives that will never get anything close to the excitement that he gets during a hooligan fight. This also represents a great example of the masculine crisis’ presence.

Tommy’s psychological battle with being a hooligan is constantly present and forms a significant part of the film's plotline. Several times in the film, Tommy questions the value of being a hooligan and going through physical pain, and seeing his friends badly injured or jailed. The film begins retrospectively, as badly injured Tommy recollects on the events that led to him ending up in the hospital. During the first scene in the film, which begins with a monologue, Tommy mentions the excitement he gets from fighting and that he could anticipate ending up in the position that he is in, but that he continued with his actions. Furthermore, he describes himself as a "bored male" who "lives for the weekend" implying that match day, in addition to his vices and the fighting are the only things that he lives for. When hooliganism is described in the manner that Tommy does in the scene cited below, it is not difficult to understand his difficulty with abandoning it.

(a. 2.)

- *Tommy*: Getting beaten up by football hooligans is like having VD: the fuckin' pain goes on forever.

- But that's what makes it so exciting.

- So this is me, Tommy Johnson three weeks from now, nearly dead.

- And do you know what the funniest thing is? I could see it coming.

- Anyway, it's almost over now and all that matters is this: was it worth it?

- There's nothing different about me. I'm just another bored male approaching 30, in a dead-end job who lives for the weekend.

- Casual sex, watered-down lager, heavily cut drugs.

- And occasionally kicking fuck out of someone (00:02:11-00:03:01).

Following his father's recollection of the events he partook in during WWII, Tommy ties his desire to fight to his nationality, or as he calls it "race", declaring that fighting is what Islanders (people who live on the British Isles) do best. However, he also mentions the buzz as his main motivator for fighting and sees nothing wrong with this, as fighting is something he loves doing.

(a. 3.)

- *Tommy*: We're an island race. It's what we do best.

- It's not about colour or race, it's just the buzz of being in the front line.

- Truth is, I just love to fight.

- There's nothing wrong with me… (00:09:25-36).

A scene thematically unique to *The Football Factory* is the inclusion of a direct critique of hooliganism by a non-participant walking into a clash between two firms in the excerpt below. During the fight between the Chelsea and Tottenham firms, a woman passerby shows her disdain for hooliganism by calling the hooligans involved "animals who give their country a bad name". The woman is likely referring to the country's damaged reputation following the Heysel tragedy and others following it that had the result of getting England clubs banned from international competitions and the country's reputation tarnished by violent individuals. Her outburst is one of the few non-hooligan perspectives inserted into the three analyzed films. In the very same excerpt, Tommy delves into one of his monologues and shares his disappointment with how life would be without hooliganism, once again reverberating his view on the boredom and staleness of a typical non-hooligan life. Tommy comments on the “island race”, stating that fighting wars is what they do best. We can gather that Tommy sees hooliganism as an alternative to the wars that prior generations took part in and through which they showed their heroism. Therefore, Tommy and the other hooligans are seemingly unsatisfied by the lack of opportunities to showcase their heroism and are stuck with living their days out working unsatisfying jobs, waiting for the weekend to test their mettle against like-minded individuals. This idea of hooliganism as a way of portraying heroism is, however, quite difficult to defend, given the context shown in the film. There are several reasons for this like, for example, when we compare Bill’s war stories on battles he took part in and Billy’s retellings of his own “heroic” battles against rival hooligans. Billy’s stories, much like Bill’s, serve to reinforce his masculinity among the listeners, however, they pale in comparison as they depict events more cowardly than heroic. We can conclude that Tommy’s grandfather serves

as a sort of antithesis to the racist Billy, as he actively fought against the people who shared his ideals during World War II.

Nevertheless, the inclusion of war imagery and comparisons implemented by Love does not stop there. On one occasion, Tommy uses a false name (much like the false names which Bill used in the war) to evade rival firm members, but the end goal is more cowardly than heroic in the case of Tommy (00:58:00). The general conclusion, however, is that the hooligans shown in the film believe that the only way that they can show their masculinity is through fighting and that the avoidance of such action is unmanly.

The excerpt regarding the woman's criticism implemented into the film is shown below.

(a. 4.)

- *Woman*: You're fuckin' animals!

- You give this fuckin' country a bad fuckin' name!

- You ain't no football supporters!

- You're fuckin' muggy little cunts!

- *Tommy*: What else are you gonna do on a Saturday?

- Sit in your fuckin' armchair wankin' off to Pop Idols?

- Then try and avoid your wife's gaze as you struggle to come to terms with your sexless marriage?

- Then go and spunk your wages on kebabs fruit machines and brasses?

- Fuck that for a laugh!

- I know what I'd rather do. (00:07:18-00:07:52)

The final excerpt from the film yet to be described is taken from the film's ending and deals directly with the consequences of hooliganism. Rehling comments on a part of the excerpt shown here ("What else are you gonna do on a Saturday?"), which was also used as a promotion slogan for the film. She states that the question, through the use of second person singular which suggests a connection with the vision of boredom and emasculation due to domesticity, comments on males who's marriage is tied to a loss of masculinity and their consumerism tied to "passivity and emasculation" (169). Tommy's statement is quite fitting to the general assumptions on masculinity

presented in the film through the other characters as well.

(a. 5.)

- *Tommy*: Was it worth it?

- Kicked half to death, florists, cabbies, nightmares and visions.

- One of the old soldiers gone forever.

- Bright gone for a seven, and bollocks so ruptured that the only thing I'll be pulling for months is a chain.

- After all that you really do have to ask yourself if it was a worth it.

- Course it fuckin' was! (01:24:17-01:24:56)

At the very end of the film, Tommy is clear that even after everything he has gone through as a hooligan, even losing friends and taking physical harm was worth the excitement and the buzz that fighting gives him, further pushing the point he made earlier that hooliganism represents one of the only things he lives for. He is unwilling to stop his hooligan acts and continues to be involved throughout the firm. Rehling points out that the lack of display and lack of focus on the cost of violence shown above could have served as the catalyst which sparked criticism of *The Football Factory as*, according to some, glorifying violence (166).

Much like in *The Firm*, territoriality is an ever-present theme in *The Football Factory*. The very first scene in the film involves an attack by the Chelsea supporters on a pub that is frequented by a Tottenham firm. However, the territoriality is not purely limited to pubs but, more notably, towns and city neighborhoods.

(b. 1.)

- *Tommy*: No-one loved Chelsea more than me and Rod.

- We grew up on football terraces together with my old man. He knew the score.

- The first bit of advice he give me was

- You know what to do if someone tries to clump you?

- Kick him in the fuckin' bollocks (00:08:49-00:09:02).

An interesting concept in hooligan films is the familial connections between hooligans and the influence of older hooligans on younger ones. Even though there are no scenes explicitly involving Tommy's father, he is still mentioned as someone that had a large influence on both Tommy and Rod. From the passage above, it can be deduced that Tommy's dad was likely a hooligan himself and that he instilled the desire for violent retribution in Tommy and influenced him to become a hooligan himself. Having grown up exposed to hooliganism and faux masculinity, it is no surprise that both Tommy and Rod became hooligans themselves. On the other hand, his grandfather Bill, a proud veteran of WWII, represents the opposite and throughout the film tries to dissuade Tommy from his dangerous hobby. Perhaps the most notable example is during the scene at Alfred's funeral when Bill warns Tommy that "next time you visit the boneyard, it could be in a box" (00:43:36-39).

III. Green Street Hooligans: Stand Your Ground but Know When to Leave Off

Directed by martial artist Lexi Alexander it is perhaps no surprise that *Green Street Hooligans* is the most action-packed film of the three. What makes this film unique is the premise, a foreigner with no prior contact to football becoming part of one of the most notorious firms in England. In the spotlight is Matt Buckner, a Harvard journalism student who gets involved with a West Ham firm named Green Street Elite, which is based on the real-life Inter City Firm, much like Bex's ICC in *The Firm*. Inspired by its predecessors, *Green Street* (short for *Green Street Hooligans*) explores many of the same ideas that *The Firm* and *The Football Factory* did but also touches upon themes that were not discussed earlier, and one of the more critical ones is the hooligan relationship with outsiders. Regarding the visual and audio style, *Green Street Hooligans* has more in common with *The Football Factory* compared to *The Firm* as, once again, the action takes the forefront over social critique and the style is more in line with an action flick rather than a documentary. Both *Green Street Hooligans*, as well as the previously analyzed *The Football Factory* were frequently criticized for glorifying violence and glorifying the hooligan lifestyle (Rehling, 166). Poulton argues that while the authorities and some media are quick to group hooligan films with real-life hooliganism, citing an explanation written by the Paul Kelso of the Guardian in which he shared a critique made by the authorities on the decision to release *The Football Factory* and *Green Street Hooligans* so close to the FA Cup Final, she believes that the films are not as hardcore as some violent films readily available to the general public (Poulton, 157). Furthermore, Giulianotti argues that the violence shown on film is viewed as "impure replicas of genuine violence", going even further by comparing the films to how soft-core sex is seen when compared to hard-core pornography (in Poulton, 157). However, *Green Street Hooligans* is somewhat different in that it offers a moral perspective different to the one generally presented in hooligan films. Matt represents the moral "knight in shining armor" who stands out, despite the fact that other characters in the film seemingly hold honor in high regard, as in, for example, the diner scene, where Bovver stops Tommy from hurting a couple (*Green Street Hooligans* 00:48:32). Nevertheless, Matt is different simply due to his ability to stop and hold back, not causing needless pain and suffering to Jeremy when he enacts his revenge (01:42:07). The scenes mentioned help the film stray away from the characterization of a film glorifying hooliganism, as well as the point to the price of violence, particularly during the final clash. The soundtrack choice during the final fight can also be considered as a counterargument, as Alexander choice to use One Blood by Terence Jay speaks volumes about the needlessness and pointlessness of fighting between men who are, by all regards, quite similar (01:31:17).

Continuing with the sociological and psychological analysis, just like in the two films that were discussed earlier, the analysis of *Green Street Hooligans* will deal with both the sociological and psychological reasoning behind the hooliganism shown on film.

a) *It's knowing that you have your friend's back*: Violence, Courage, Chivalry and Honor

As the sociological analysis is somewhat obstructed by the very limited dialogue discussing the various topics of sociology in *Green Street Hooligans*, many of the most valuable clues about the social structure within the film have to be extrapolated purely through visual (and other) observations and these can, for obvious reasons, be unreliable. However, there is some dialogue in the film that can help make deductions regarding the sociological structure that is present in the film. Going back to the visual observations, the single most unique observation regarding the main character in the film is the fact that Matt is a Harvard student who comes from a well standing, if dysfunctional, family. His father is a respected journalist, who during the process of Matt's expulsion is working in Kabul. Matt, or his family, clearly do not represent typical working-class members. However, the dysfunctionality is not limited simply to Matt's family, but is common in the families of most of the major characters in the film. Firstly, Pete's brother Steve, the former leader of the GSE, left the life of hooliganism after witnessing the tragic death of Tommy Hatcher's child. After the event, it is clear that Steve is on the fence and still feels the passion when he is around his brother but has made a vow to his wife Shannon to leave the life behind. The tragic event ties directly into the story of Tommy, the antagonist who is guided by the need for revenge against Steve, blaming him for his son's death, even though he is arguably as much at fault as them for allowing his child to be involved in his hooligan activities. Tommy was never able to overcome the guilt and trauma and it guides his need for revenge thereby causing the dysfunctionality, with his current involvement in hooliganism representing a constant reminder of his mistake. Steve and Pete's relationship is also shown to be dysfunctional, particularly during their physical confrontation after Matt is hurt (00:37:00). Steve, having seen tragedy during his hooligan days, is afraid of it occurring to his brother.

Pete, the top boy (or leader) of the GSE firm is a teacher of history and physical education in a primary school and Pete's brother Steve, nicknamed the Major, is a successful businessman married to Matt's sister Shannon, and former firm leader who is regarded as a legend by the GSE hooligans. It should also be noted that Steve owns a luxurious home in downtown London. Concerning the rest of the firm members, perhaps the hooligan with the most unique profession is

Dave, who is a commercial airline pilot. Interestingly, on one occasion, Dave gets involved in a hooligan brawl wearing his pilot uniform (00:55:00). Most of the hooligans in the film, however, don casual designer fashion, with Pete often wearing Stone Island coats and others wearing designer clothing such as Ralph Lauren and Burberry sweaters. The hooligans mentioned after Matt also generally do not fit the typical Leicester School description of who a hooligan is and what a hooligan does for a living when assessing their occupations and possessions.

Perhaps the most fitting statement on the sociological structure of hooligans was made by Radmann who discussed real-life Swedish hooligans but his belief is clearly applicable to British hooligans, as well as the hooligan characters in *Green Street Hooligans*.

> It is difficult to fully establish who the Swedish hooligans are and what background they have as the answers have varied greatly. My interviews with both active and previous 'hooligans' demonstrate the difficulty of defining specific criteria for the 'typical hooligan'. He can be between the ages of 15 and 45, unemployed, a civil servant or entrepreneur, have small or teenage children or be single. Clearly, it is difficult to create a 'hooligan template' to explain who the 'hooligan' really is (Radmann, 559).

Taking into account the diversity of professions presented in *Green Street Hooligans*, we can hardly confine and describe their misdeeds and violent displays as the typical actions of the working-class.

Matt is a unique case with regards to the hooligans already mentioned in the paper. He is a foreigner, someone that had little to no contact with football supporters or their more extreme variants. During an early altercation with Pete, Matt tells him that he has never even been in a physical confrontation before he met him (00:15:55). Therefore having someone with no prior contact with hooliganism or even football become an important member of a hooligan firm is a unique twist to a typical hooligan film. This twist also develops a different psychological perspective to the one shown in the two films discussed earlier, as Matt discusses the psychological changes following his choice to become a hooligan, remarking:

> (a. 1.)
>
> - *Matt*: You know the best part?
>
> - It isn't knowing that your friends have your back.

- It's knowing that you have your friend's back.

- I'd never lived closer to danger.

- But I'd never felt safer.

- I'd never felt more confident and people could spot it from a mile away.

- And as for this, the violence. I gotta be honest. It grew on me.

- Once you've taken a few punches and realize you're not made of glass you don't feel alive unless you're pushing yourself as far as you can go (00:56:57-00:57:44).

Matt, who arrived in England never having been in a fight before, is now accustomed to violence and fighting and it clearly excites him, having found confidence in trading blows with rival hooligans. He, just like the hooligans in *The Firm* becomes addicted to the pursuit of "the buzz".

The very first scene in the film brings up the important and commonly mentioned topic of territoriality in hooliganism. As the GSE and Tottenham firm run one into another on West Ham territory, insults are exchanged and Pete stakes the GSE's claim on their territory and tells the Tottenham hooligans that they need to leave.

(b. 1.)

- *Pete*: Mate, Tottenham's due north.

- Are you lost? Or just fucking stupid? (00:01:01-00:01:06)

As we can extrapolate from the excerpt above, hooligans typically claim territory around their team's stadium but also the neighborhoods that they are majority supporters in. For example, Tottenham Hotspur F.C. supporters are generally tied to the Tottenham town in London, while West Ham United F.C. supporters generally come from the London borough of New Ham. Border transgressions by firms into neighborhoods that "belong" to other firms, like shown in the scene above, are not tolerated by hooligans and often end in brawls.

From Matt's very first meeting with the Green Street Elite, he learns that outsiders are not welcome as Bovver is unwilling to shake his hand and greet him, even though he is "practically family". His dislike for Matt escalates even further as he approaches him in the bathroom and makes his discontent known. The excerpt in question is shown below.

(b. 2.)

- *Bovver*: Friend of the family, eh?

- Pete might be showing you a bit of courtesy, you being Shannon's brother.

- But get it straight.

- We don't like outsiders (00:23:11-00:23:23).

The territorial ideology shown above is not dissimilar to the ideology shared by real-life hooligans in interviews. Below is an excerpt from an interview that Spaaij conducted with a former West Ham hooligan.

> I see it as very territorial. The East End has always had, I mean, was always seen as an area of London that is deprived. The people are very proud generally. And they don't like people coming in. And what we wanted to do as a group, we wanted to defend our territory in the East End of London, which was West Ham, but we also wanted to go out to other parts of London and up and down the country to say 'we are the hardest, we are the best and we can take on anybody if we want to'. (Spaaij, 132)

Real-life hooligans, as evidenced above, are guided by the same desires that the hooligans in the film are and show the same disdain with outsiders entering their territory, which ignited the brawl in the film scene discussed earlier. This particular hooligan conducted these activities on London's East End, which is notorious for such acts and is seen as quite separate from the rest of London. This work will separately address the aforementioned hooligan notoriety of London's East End later on in the paper. However, the interviewee also touches upon another topic frequently tied to hooligan firms, which is reputation and its meaning to hooligans and this will be covered in detail in the paragraph below.

From the initial meeting in the pub with the rest of the GSE firm, it is made clear to Matt that the territoriality of hooligan firms is not simply focused on preventing access to other firms but also to all foreign individuals like Matt. Bovver, serving as Pete's right-hand man is the most vocal hooligan regarding this defense mechanism against outsiders as he takes an immediate dislike to Matt, refusing to even greet him during their initial meeting. While the rest of the Green Street Elite are not quite as territorial as Bovver, there is still a widespread disdain for outsiders, particularly journalists who might try to infiltrate their ranks. The hooligan disgust with journalists is discussed

several times in the film and is a major topic of conflict within the firm's ranks. However, the dislike for journalists might appear hypocritical as reputation is frequently cited as the most important aspect of a hooligan firm. For example, Pete spares no insults when asked by Matt to clarify his position on journalists:

(c. 1.)

- *Pete*: Only thing regarded worse than a Yank around here are coppers and journalists.

- *Matt*: What do you got against journalists?

- *Pete*: How long you got?

- They're lying fucking scum who'll write anything just to fill papers (00:17:11-00:17:22).

However, despite his disdain for journalists, he also frequently states that the reputation of the firm is the most important and distinguishable part of a firm's "portfolio" and that the more known and feared the firm is, the better they are. It is made clear that Pete wants to rebuild the reputation that the GSE had before his brother Steve's departure. Regarding the hooligan's ingrained dislike for journalists, Hall points to the ability of media to, as he put it "situate resistance within the dominant framework of meanings", and that the members of such perceived resistance movements (such as subcultures) are classified or returned through media representation to the position that is deemed fitting for them. It is through this process of incorporating and commodifying subcultural meanings that subcultures are deemed as the "folk devil", "Enemy" or "Other" by the mainstream (in Hebdige, 94). Therefore, it is natural to expect the sort of reaction to the media exhibited by Bovver, who has almost certainly been deemed an "animal" or described in a similar manner for his hooligan acts before. An important plot detail is one regarding Matt's journal, containing colorful descriptions of the events and characters which he encountered during his period as a firm member (01:07:37). After Bovver discovers Matt's writings, his feelings towards journalists escalate even further, in the end leading to his betrayal. What Bovver did not consider at the time, quickly classifying Matt as an insider and traitor disillusioned by his prior media experiences, is that Matt's perspective could in the end benefit hooligans, especially when compared to how outside media portrays them. Matt could explore the nuances of hooliganism and present a more realistic and in depth image than the one typically portrayed by journalists.

When discussing the relationship between Bovver and Matt, jealousy could also represent a contributing factor to the dislike Bovver shows towards Matt. On one occasion Bovver calls out Pete and Matt, asking if they are a "couple of gay boys", and when we analyze the scene, taking context into consideration, it can be deduced that Bovver fears losing his best friend to Matt. Pete retaliates, stating that Bovver is "dangerously close to crossing the line with him" as references to homosexuality and the perceived eroding of traditional masculinity is not to be implied with regards to hooligans (00:38:29-00:38:52). The scene above can also be looked at from the perspective of homoeroticism, where, as Rehling put it, homophobia, like in the example shown above, is used as a way of rerouting homoerotic desire. By doing this, libidinal bonds are strengthened between the firm members. Additionally, Freud asserted to the possibility of these ties taking the form of identification, where the members strongly identify with the leader, and this can also become a source of jealousy (in Rehling, 170).

(c. 2.)

- *Pete*: See, we might be into fighting and all that … but it's really about reputation.

- Humiliating another mob in a row… or doing something that the other firms get to hear or talk about.

- Like a Yank in his first fight, battering one of Birmingham's main lads (00:36:07-00:36:22).

His older brother, Steve, nicknamed the Major who is a legendary leader of the GSE during their "golden era", also used to share his brother's views about reputation before he left, mentioning that reputation was all he cared about when he was a hooligan, with reputation representing a typical hooligan trope.

(c. 3.)

- *Steve*: I was a crazy bastard back then.

- All I fucking cared about.....was my reputation amongst the firms of England (01:08:50-01:08:57).

(c. 4.)

- *Matt*: We could have died that day in Manchester.

- Everybody knew it. But we didn't.

- Ike said later that the story traveled across England faster than the death of Lady Di.

- The GSE were finally back.

- Suddenly I was part of the firm with the best rep in London.

- People around town had heard of me.

- They would hear my accent and say, "So you're the Yank" (00:56:22-00:56:47).

In the sequence above, Matt talks about the reputation that the GSE gained from the clash with the Manchester United hooligans in Manchester. Once again, the hooligans appear hypocritical when reputation is discussed because their reputation depends on the media spreading the stories of their fights and creating their "legend". Matt being a foreigner, particularly an American, even further reinforces the hooligan's legend among the people around town as it is seemingly quite unusual for a foreigner to take part in hooligan brawls.

Faux masculinity is ever-present in *Green Street Hooligans*, just like in other hooligan films, and is a staple of the hooligan mentality. The most notable example is perhaps before a clash between the GSE (abbreviation for Green Street Elite) and Birmingham City F.C.'s hooligan Zulu firm. As Pete, Matt and the rest of the hooligans chase a Zulu hooligan, they run into a group of 20 others waiting for them. Even when severely outnumbered Pete tells Matt, who is panicking and wants to flee, that they do not run. Pete and the other hooligans are willing to get seriously hurt and will not run as it would damage their ideal image of masculinity as men should never run in face of danger. The excerpt just summarized is below.

(d. 1.)

- *Pete*: You don't run.

- Not when you're with us.

- You stand your ground and fight (00:31:17-00:31:21).

Additionally, the look of excitement (or the "buzz") on Matt's face following the clash is also frequently associated with faux masculinity, as fighting is supposed to be exciting to men according to masculine tradition. Even though Matt was punched several times during the fight and

is visibly hurt, he is still elated and excited by the violence that he took part in. The praise he receives from his fellow hooligans only serves to boost his ego and legitimize the act he just took part in.

Green Street Hooligans, Matt Feeling the "Buzz" Following a Hooligan Fight, (00:32:40)

The final topic which also warrants discussion is revenge. Although it featured in the films analyzed prior *to Green Street Hooligans,* the desire for revenge is a particularly important factor that guides both the protagonists, as well as the antagonists in this film. Matt is on one occasion told by Pete to visualize "someone he hates" prior to a fight, with Matt visualizing Jeremy Van Holden, who directly caused his expulsion out of Harvard (00:31:22-25). Soon after, Matt learns that Tommy Hatcher's life was changed forever when his child was killed during a hooligan skirmish against the GSE led by Steve. This has changed the Millwall firm leader and after this tragic event, as Pete put it, Tommy has "lost the plot" (00:35:27-34). Finally, Bovver's betrayal of Pete and the GSE is also fueled by revenge as he wants to kick Matt out of the firm (01:12:29-49). Nearly all these events led to tragedy and were guided by the desire for revenge, therefore, revenge can be seen as perhaps the most powerful motivator for hooligans in this film.

However, Matt is different to the other characters seeking revenge and ironically serves as a sort of moral example, as he is able to hold back unlike Tommy, who is unable to do so and ends up killing a man, enraged by his desire to avenge his son (01:37:08). Matt's ability to stop can be tied to the director of the film, Lexi, who is a martial artist, as mercy is generally held in the position of utmost importance and serves as one of the key tenets for martial artists.

IV. Hooligan Peculiarities

In this chapter of the paper, we will take a look at certain interesting topics that permeate the films and that will help explain the inner workings of hooligans and their activities. We will begin with an overview of what makes London's East End, which serves as a setting for all three of the films in question, such a fertile ground for hooligan activity and will later continue by analyzing the peculiar hooligan idea of organizing fights outside of football grounds, simply for the love of fighting.

a) London's East End and West Ham United F.C.

> The East End of London has a deep-seated image of deviance, deprivation and violence. Within this historical context, it is perhaps unsurprising that the contemporary hooligan formation at West Ham United holds such a widespread reputation for toughness and determination, both nationally and internationally (Spaaij, 122).

It is no surprise that London is most often the location of choice for hooligan films when we consider the vast size that the city has and the number of firms located in a single area. However, the peculiar thing is the focus placed by the directors of hooligan firms on the East End of London and, more specifically West Ham United FC, as the most film-worthy representatives of hooligan culture.

As one former hooligan stated in his memoir - "West Ham must be the most televised mob in history. [...] They had it all. The numbers, the names, the bottle and the organization. Especially the organization'" (in Spaaij, 122). His statement certainly rings true as both of the fictional firms analyzed in the paper that are *The Firm* and *The Football Factory* take their inspiration from the ICF, a West Ham firm that had its golden ages during the prior century but is still relevant in hooligan discussions as well as in the media.

Spaaij found several factors that led to the flourishing of hooliganism in the East End.

Firstly, it is difficult to separate the rise in hooliganism from the historical and cultural position that the East End occupied in London. West Ham United was created in 1895 and was initially named the Thames Ironworks Football Club after the Thames Ironworks and Shipbuilding Company Limited which employed a considerable working-class workforce in the East End. The

club maintained its close ties with the local community and came to be publicly viewed as a community club for East London (Spaaij, 122-25). However, according to Spaaij, the 19th century East End would be marked by poverty and disease thereby creating a chasm between the prospering City of London and the East End. An image of the East End as "the embodiment of evil" was created. The East End was however accompanied by a sense of togetherness through poverty and outsiders, even police were treated with suspicion by the working-class population. Crime was also crucial in the formation of East End culture and Spaaij points to the rise of criminals like the Kray brothers as a key driving factor behind the enhanced sense of masculinity in East End youth, as well as the desire to violently respond to threats much like the Kray brothers did. Violence is not merely glorified, it is also so closely tied to masculinity that 'aggression becomes central to the boy's notion of manhood' (in Spaaij, 125-26). This created an environment where masculinity and the ability to look after oneself become key for young men growing up in the East End. However, post-WWII immigration considerably changed the demographics and the borders separating East End from the rest of London would become somewhat blurred. The social changes created an atmosphere where the traditional values that the East End harbored were being eroded and this paved the way for subcultures like the skinheads to attempt to reassert these values through hooliganism, among other ways. With the football ground representing one of the most prominent gathering grounds for young East End males (and the Skinheads among them), football takes the spotlight as an opportunity for masculine and territorial displays, through which the youth could repel the outsiders (i. e. other hooligan firms), who threatened their way of life (131). However, Pisurek refers to sociologists such as Ian Taylor who points to the growing influence of the bourgeoisie on football which was seen as a traditionally working-class pastime, and the emergence of hooliganism as a sort of resistance by the fans who started to perceive the game as no longer their own.

> In the inter-war years, the illusion persisted that power … was distributed between management, directors, players and the subculture, all of whom were seen as standing in some kind of unambiguous relationship to the working class of the area as a whole… (in Pisurek, 2018, 174)

Violence at football matches can be explained, according to Taylor, simply as an attempt for alienated fans to regain control over their game as it was being commodified and placed out of the reach of the working-class people, who made up the vast majority of the fans (174).

In the 1970s, West Ham hooligans would unite into the renowned ICF (Inter City Firm),

named for their use of the more expensive InterCity trains, which were not typically used by fans as fans typically traveled via special football trains. This allowed the hooligans to evade police patrols and travel to rival territory undetected (Spaaij 133). An example of their transport methods is shown in a scene in the *Green Street Hooligans*, where Pete and the rest of the Green Street Elite travel to a match in Manchester via an InterCity express train (*Green Street Hooligans* 00:51:35).

Additionally, Spaaij mentions the use of younger fans (nicknamed the "Under Fives") by the ICF as scouts to gather information on police patrols and rival firm locations both at home as well as when visiting. *The Football Factory* shows an example of this before the final hooligan confrontation when a young boy is used by the Chelsea firm to communicate whether he sees police patrols or rival firm member groups. Millwall fans are not above the use of young boys as scouts either, as a young fan is used to spot the approaching Chelsea firm members and warn the rival hooligans of their arrival (01:16:40 – 01:19:03).

However, going back to the sociological situation in the East End, it is clear why certain researchers showed a willingness to focus their hooligan theory on the working-class, taking into account the prosperity of hooliganism (along with the popularity of East End hooligan firms) as well as the working-class background of the area.

b) Organized fighting

> We wanted to get away from riots and rioters. We wanted direct confrontation – we want to fight our equals – we wanted to fight the best guys from Djurgården and that was tricky to organise – when the mobile phone came along, firm culture started growing rapidly – former hooligan Johan (in Radmann, 556).

The concept of hooligans organizing fights against their rivals is central to the ideology of showing masculinity through violence. While the idea of fighting for the sake of fighting, outside the football ground, might appear strange to non-hooligans, it is often the method of choice for hooligans as they can confront their rivals in a fair fight (as farfetched the idea of a fair hooligan fight might seem). By organizing a fight, both sides can pick their "best boys", which is a nickname for the best hand-to-hand fighters in the firm. As shown in the insert above, hooligans wanted to arrange fights with the best to prove themselves and gain reputation. The filmic representations analyzed above did not shy away from incorporating these events into the films, and the characters often reference organizing a fight when they "need to settle a debt" or prove their superiority over

their rivals. For example, after his brother Steve is stabbed by Millwall hooligans and ends up critically injured in a hospital, Pete tells Dave to arrange a "straightener" (i.e. an organized fight) in order to avenge him (01:24:47). In the films, the firm leaders did not only arrange fights over the phone but also contacted other leaders to exchange threats. There are numerous examples of this in the films, as Bex calls his rival Yeti even in the presence of his child, which leads to his child injuring himself with his knife while Bex is busy exchanging threats (*The Firm* 00:38:52 – 00:40:12).

Radmann found that hooligans emphasized the organized side of the story, as well as the fighting purely against other hooligans. In the excerpt from an interview, a hooligan disagrees with fighting against non-hooligans (including police officers) and damaging property as he sees such behavior as not befitting to an alpha-male.

> It’s hard for grown men, alpha-males, to justify running around and beating innocent people, or throwing rocks at a bus or knocking over a police officer. I just think that’s lame (Radmann, 558).

As shown in the examples above, organized fights between hooligan firms are a staple of hooligan culture and this carries over into film where the most important brawls are typically organized between the leaders and consist of the best fighters in both firms and are rarely spontaneous events. These brawls often carry serious consequences and have led to the death of a main character in both *The Firm* and *Green Street Hooligans*.

Conclusion

This study had the goal of analyzing the sociological and psychological factors shown in the films which influenced the characters' decision to participate in hooliganism, with the sociological part being analyzed through the prism of the Leicester School of Football Hooliganism and their propositions regarding sociology in the films in question. And while the films offered more from the psychological perspective than the sociological one, mainly due to the plenitude of character dialogue discussing the topic, through observation it was possible to conclude that the sociological structure of hooligan firms in the films is not as uniform as the Leicester School proposed. When discussing the psychological factors and motivations exhibited by the hooligans in the film, they seemingly partake in hooliganism for a variety of reasons but some reasons are more prominent than others. The pursuit of adrenaline (or "the buzz") seems central to the hooligan's psychology and nearly all of the hooligans shown on-screen are guided by it. Additionally, in certain films, other psychological factors take the stage, for example, the desire for revenge, which plays a key role that drives characters to fight and even murder their rivals. The contrasting styles of the films also need to be taken into account. While the gloomy, documentary-like *The Firm* presents us with a harsh outlook on hooligan life and the consequences that come with living it, *The Football Factory* and *Green Street Hooligans* take a different path with their sharp focus on electrifying action scenes and some argue glorification of hooliganism and the violence accompanying it. While the films can certainly be criticized as glorifying violence due to the violence on screen as well as the potentially harmful messages transmitted from the hooligans, this point of view might be considered excessively harsh considering the films of a similar type (but not containing hooliganism) that receive no such criticism. Nevertheless, all three films that were analyzed offered some perspective on the sociological or psychological circumstances under which hooliganism occurs and along with real-life hooligan accounts helped us better understand why the hooligans do what they do.

It is also important to mention that the analysis also covered common hooligan topics, such as masculinity and territoriality and so forth, and discussed them in relation to how they appeared in the films. Finally, the propositions made by the Leicester School seem unfitting to the sociological situation on display in the three films as they display a variety of occupations and social classes engaging in hooliganism together. However, regarding the psychological factors which drive hooligans to commit such acts, they are often quite similar and uniform, as most of the hooligans shown on screen unsatisfied by their lives and believe that they need a way to assert their masculinity through violence.

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