

The Changing Nature of Spectator Behaviour

Executive Summary

1. This paper looks at data, statistical evidence, and academic publications to test the hypothesis that spectator behaviour at football matches has been changing in recent years. Any such change has the potential to directly affect the safe management of supporters at sports grounds.
2. To test this hypothesis, a two-stage process was developed. Firstly, it was necessary to collate any existing data sources to analyse the evidence relating to potential change. While this process was useful in identifying overall trends in spectator behaviour, the majority of data sets were of limited use for such a project. As such, a conscious effort was made to move away from analysing statistical evidence and towards other sources of information.
3. The second phase involved conducting a literature review of academic work relating as broadly as possible to spectator behaviour, spectator safety, and the management of spectators at football matches, both in the UK and wider Europe. As this second phase developed, contact was made with several academics to discuss their work in greater detail. This led to the proposal for a more structured engagement with academia, and an inaugural meeting with an informal 'academic advisory panel' took place prior to the publication of this document.
4. Moving forward, the SGSA plans to facilitate a continued, structured engagement with academia, with the 'academic advisory panel' open to any academic or researcher working in areas of mutual interest and common concern. By continuing the conversation with a growing network of stakeholders, the SGSA is seeking to be proactive in encouraging an evidence-based approach to the issues surrounding spectator behaviour, and more broadly, safety at sports grounds.
5. Spectator behaviour is a complex and multi-faceted issue that by its very nature requires an interdisciplinary approach. Ultimately, the limited time available in the course of this project to conduct this research and engage with academics, coupled with the fragmented nature of the existing data and statistical evidence, means that it has not been possible to reach definitive conclusions on the general hypothesis.

Introduction

6. This publication arose as part of the work undertaken by Aidan Collins, a PhD student in the Department of History at the University of York, while on a 3-month internship with the SGSA. This work placement was fully funded by the Research Council United Kingdom (RCUK) and was conducted between June and September 2019.



6. A primary part of the remit of this internship was to research the changing behaviour of spectators at football matches. The general hypothesis presented by the SGSA, was that there have been recent changes in spectator behaviour which are presenting new challenges for those responsible for managing spectator safety in sports grounds. It was suggested that this can most notably be seen at grounds in the top tiers of professional football across the UK. However, it was also proposed that this presupposition seems to be based largely on anecdote and speculation. As such, it was necessary to identify and analyse various avenues of data and evidence in order to test this theory.
7. Broadly speaking, the research conducted involved a two-stage approach. Firstly, it was necessary to gather and analyse any existing data and statistical evidence that has been collated by stakeholders working within this area. The first section below outlines this process by establishing the various sources of data and concluding on their usefulness to this project. The second phase involved conducting a literature review of published academic work relating to spectator behaviour and spectator safety. The themes which emerged from this review are explored in the second section.
8. As the literature review developed, it became possible to contact several academics, which led to the proposal for more structured engagement with academia. The final section briefly explains the outcomes of this inaugural meeting between the SGSA and an informal 'academic advisory panel', before suggesting some next steps relating to this project moving forward.

Existing Data and Statistical Evidence

9. In order to test the initial hypothesis, it was necessary to try and collate any existing data and evidence in an attempt to identify consistent trends. The SGSA has a limited number of internal data sets, most notably spectator injury data;¹ other data relating to spectator behaviour has been compiled from five sources, and it is necessary to first discuss these sources in isolation before concluding on their overall usefulness.

Data Source 1: The United Kingdom Football Policing Unit (UKFPU)'s 'Analysis of Football Events with Reported Incidents of Related Violence and Disorder' – Annual Reports

10. The UKFPU works with police and partner agencies to reduce incidents of football related anti-social behaviour, violence, and disorder involving UK supporters. The report seeks to provide an overview of these incidents, identifying 'emerging trends that are areas of concern'. The latest report for the 2017/2018 season has been circulated amongst selected stakeholders and includes all 116 clubs competing in the top five divisions of English football.
11. While the current (17/18) report is confidential and not for public publication, the report for the 2019/2020 season will be published as a co-authored document with the Home

¹ SGSA and the Premier League have funded research by Imperial College over the past nine months to identify ways of improving the quality of football spectator injury data.



Office. As such, it is not possible to reveal specific statistics and data within this work. However, it is possible to demonstrate overall trends, as the number of reported 'incidents' has continued to rise, season upon season.² Particular areas of concern can be seen in the growing number of pyrotechnics being used, weapons being used, and reports of hate crime and drug use increasing. Decreases from the previous season can be seen in areas such as organised and pre-planned incidents, attacks on police, and attacks on stadia staff.

12. The UKFPU is well aware of the issues surrounding the use of data relating to football-related incidents occurring at designated fixtures, as the quality of data is only as reliable as the information provided to them. Ultimately, the UKFPU is working with a broader range of stakeholders — including the FA and Kick It Out — to increase the quality of the data they utilise in order to make the report suitable for publication in September 2020.

Data Source 2: Home Office Statistics on Football-related Arrests and Banning Orders

13. Previously, the 'Football-related arrests and banning orders statistics, England and Wales' publications were prepared and published by Home Office policy officials. In 2015, responsibility of the publication process, including the preparation of the final accompanying data tables, was transferred to Home Office statisticians.³

14. There has been a steady decrease in the number of 'football-related arrests' and banning orders over the past seven seasons. Over the course of the 2017/2018 season, the three most common offence types were:

- Public disorder (36%);
- Violent disorder (20%); and
- Pitch incursion (12%).

15. Public disorder and violent disorder have ranked within the top three offence types in each of the last eight seasons, but this is the first time that pitch incursion has appeared within the top three. Conversely, arrests for alcohol offences has now dropped out of the top three following a 38% fall (from 266 to 164) in the latest season compared with the 2016/2017 season.⁴ However, it is problematic to compare season to season, as the start and end dates differ year-to-year. This also means that there may have been some double-counting in previous seasons.

² An overview of this data, but not the core data itself, was provided to The Times and summarised in an online article, Tom Ball, 'Rise of Football Hooliganism Sees Return to 1980s Violence', *The Times Online*, August 20, Stable URL: <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/rise-of-football-hooliganism-sees-return-to-1980s-violence-bdk6xvcrt> accessed 11/9/2019.

³ Statistics for Football-related arrests and Banning Order statistics dating back to 1999 can be found on the Home Office website, stable URL: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/football-banning-orders> accessed 12/9/2019.

⁴ 'Football-Related Arrests and Banning Orders, England and Wales: Season 2017 to 2018', stable URL: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/football-related-arrests-and-banning-orders-england-and-wales-season-2017-to-2018> accessed 12/9/2019



16. One key area of difficulty is in the interpretation of 'Football-related arrests', which are defined as those to which Schedule 1 of the Football Spectators Act 1989 (as amended) applies. This includes: 'football-specific offences (such as pitch incursion and throwing missiles inside a stadium) and a range of generic criminal offences committed in connection with a football match (at any place within a period of 24 hours either side of a regulated fixture)'.⁵ This statutory definition makes it difficult for the police and the wider legal profession to clearly identify and assign disorder to football related offences.
17. Perhaps the greatest difficulty can be seen in arrests made by the British Transport Police (BTP). In the latest report, football-related arrests made by BTP are not included in the data relating to the following criteria:
- Arrests by club;
 - Arrests by league;
 - Offence type;
 - Football competition; and
 - Location.
18. This is because it is 'not always possible to identify which team the individual supports or which fixture they are travelling to or from'.⁶ Again, such issues make it difficult to analyse the data according to specified criteria, and from season to season.

Data Source 3: The Council of Europe Standing Committee on Violence, Disorder and Other Prohibited Activity

19. This report is the product of a joint project, entitled 'Promoting and Strengthening the Council of Europe Standards on Safety, Security and Service at Football Matches and Other Sports Events (ProS4+)'. This was co-funded by the European Commission and the Council of Europe and implemented by the Council of Europe.⁷
20. A pilot project was undertaken in 2015 before becoming an annual/season report from 2016. The latest report was published relating to 2017. A questionnaire was provided to 48 countries and 33 replied; responses mainly related to top-tier professional football matches, involving some 147 million spectators. The aim of this report was to provide a sound factual basis for undertaking annual quantitative and qualitative analysis of current trends, identifying emergent challenges, and determining work priorities.⁸

⁵ Football Spectators Act (1989), c.37; This is explained in greater detail in the CPS guidance on 'Football Related Offences and Football Banning Orders', stable URL: <https://www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/football-related-offences-and-football-banning-orders>, accessed 12/09/2019.

⁶ 'Football-Related Arrests and Banning Orders, 2017 to 2018', p.8.

⁷ Council of Europe European Union, stable URL: <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/security-safety-sport/pros4-> accessed 12/9/2019.

⁸ Council of Europe and European Union (ProS4+), 'Promoting and Strengthening the Council of Europe Standards to Safety, Security and Services at Football Matches and Other Sport Events', (12 April 2019), p.5.



21. From the previous year, the 2017 report identifies a decrease in the overall number of incidents, as well as a decrease in the number of stadium personnel (police + stewards + private security) being employed per match. The report also identifies an increase in drugs use, alcohol use, racism and violence occurring at stadia. Finally, the report concludes that pyrotechnics are the 'most important challenge to member states' as they account for over half of all incidents reported.
22. One key issue with this report is that there appears to be large variations in the way individual nations complete the questionnaire. For example, the average incident per match ratio ranges from 6.06 to 0.04. The report claims that the average of 0.50 incidents per match at European level — which is similar to UEFA statistics — confirms that 'this statistical exercise is quite accurate and in line with football policing status quo at European level'. For comparative purposes, the UK reported 0.37 incidents per match.
23. It seems likely that several countries have adjusted the criteria for which they mark an incident in 2017 compared with previous years, in order to be more consistent and accurate with their input. For example, one country reported 2,851 incidents in the previous year and only 245 in the current report. Similarly, another one reported 486 'very serious' incidents in the current report, and zero the previous year.⁹
24. Ultimately, the criteria applied in determining both the frequency and severity of incidents varies from country to country in terms of reference and national perception. Whilst some countries adopt a very strict policy and report all the minor offences as incidents — resulting in a high number of incidents — other countries consider only the high-profile incidents/disorder and select them very carefully before reporting. For example, some countries may count one pyrotechnic used at one football match as one incident, while at the same time, another country may count ten pyrotechnics used in one match as one incident.
25. In concluding, the report does acknowledge that this is 'a very sensitive question that needs careful handling in interpreting the data, due to the variation in the national legal frameworks and methodologies in recording of incidents which has an impact of the final results'.¹⁰

Data Source 4: Kick It Out (KIO), 'Annual Reports of Discrimination'

26. Recently released statistics from KIO show that there has been an increase in the number of reported incidents of discrimination for the seventh consecutive year. Reports rose from 319 in the previous year to 422 in 2018/2019, a 32% increase.
27. The overall figures, which include social media incidents, increased from 520 to 581, representing a 12% rise from the previous season. As KIO conclude, although an increase in reports 'could highlight a more confident approach to reporting incidents, the leap in reports could also identify that discrimination across the game is still an issue

⁹ Ibid., pp.11-22.

¹⁰ Ibid., p.13.



which needs ongoing and constant education and the application of appropriate sanctions'.¹¹

28. Ultimately, while the increase in reported incidents may be due to the improvement and confidence in the reporting methods, the ongoing and high-profile nature of discrimination at all levels of football speaks to the nature of spectator behaviour.

Data Source 5: Media Publications

29. Unsurprisingly, there is a fair amount of media interest and coverage of the published data relating to spectator behaviour. Print, broadcast, and online media tend to give broad overviews of other stakeholders' statistics, without interrogating the data sets in any meaningful way. The scope of this paper has precluded a detailed analysis of every media article relating to this topic. However, what is clear, is that there remains a keen interest in several aspects of spectator behaviour, and media outlets continue to dedicate considerable time to this issue.

Concluding Remarks

30. Broadly speaking, the most useful aspect of collating and analysing the five data sources, is to identify overall trends in spectator behaviour. Some examples are as follows:

- The ongoing use of pyrotechnics across Europe;
- A decrease in the number of stadium personnel being deployed at stadia;
- An increase in reports of hate crimes, especially racism;
- An increase in reports of drug use; and
- A steady decline in the use of banning orders being implemented throughout the UK.

31. However, most of these overall trends would have been familiar to the SGSA, as well as other stakeholders working within the fields of spectator behaviour and spectator safety.

32. Additionally, a number of problems arise when attempting to analyse the data in any meaningful way, many of which are well known to those involved in creating and analysing the evidence.

- Firstly, it is difficult to assess changes over time, as the data is not comparable from one source to the next, or even year on year within the same source;
- Secondly, statistics in isolation are often obscure, as they can be utilised or interpreted in a number of ways. As such, it is often necessary to contextualise the evidence by providing some form of commentary within a given report. This can often be open to challenge from individuals or groups with competing interests or objectives;
- Thirdly, the definitions of key terms can be vague and undefined, leading to inconsistencies in reporting, which can create clear anomalies in data sets. This is

¹¹ Kick It Out, 'Reporting Statistics', Stable URL: <https://www.kickitout.org/pages/fags/category/reporting-statistics> accessed 12/9/2019.



particularly the case when similar terms are used in different countries with different cultures; and

- Fourthly, while this is improving throughout the world of spectator safety and behaviour, there is still a lack of communication between stakeholders. This means that it continues to be difficult to access all forms of data, which leads to a distinct lack of transparency when comparing and analysing evidence.

33. In order to conclude effectively on this issue, it is necessary for data to be readily accessible and shared amongst stakeholders, so that it is possible to know the extent of the issues currently facing football in the UK.

Literature Review

34. Broadly speaking, it is academics from the humanities and social sciences, such as psychology, sociology, and the law, who conduct research in the area of spectator behaviour. While there was a great amount of interest in and funding for research on 'football hooliganism' throughout the 1980s and 1990s, current research has evolved.¹² As such, it is worth briefly outlining some areas of research that have helped inform this work, before moving on to the final section which discusses issues of common concern between the SGSA and academia.

35. Psychologists tend to focus on the behaviour of large groups, often making a distinction between 'physical' crowds, where a group of individuals are simply in the same place at the same time — i.e. a train station — and 'psychological' crowds, whereby individuals perceive themselves to be part of the same social group.¹³ An example of the latter group can be seen in home or away supporters walking towards a stadium. In common discourse, there seems to be a sense of moral panic over the actions of individuals within crowds, as it is perceived they act irrationally when grouped together. However, the concept of mass panic has been largely rejected by academic research, as there is little evidence it ever occurs.¹⁴ As such, there needs to be a reconsideration of the popular view of crowds as negative.

36. One issue with this type of research is that it tends to focus more broadly on the ways in which these crowds react in emergencies, such as an evacuation procedure during a

¹² Some have even argued that this became an over-researched topic, Steve Frosdick and Peter Marsh, *Football Hooliganism* (Cullompton: Willan, 2005).

¹³ See Anne Templeton, John Drury and Andrew Philippides, 'Walking Together: Behavioural Signatures of Psychological Crowds', *Royal Society Open Science*, vol.5 no.7, (2018), published online: <https://royalsocietypublishing.org/doi/10.1098/rsos.180172> accessed 12/9/2019.

¹⁴ For example, see Chris Cocking and John Drury, 'Talking About Hillsborough: "Panic" as Discourse in Survivors' Accounts of the 1989 Football Stadium Disaster', *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, (2014), vol.24 no.2, pp.86-99; B. E. Aguirre, M. R. Torres, K. B. Gill, H. L. Hotchkiss, 'Normative Collective Behaviour in the Station Building Fire', *Social Science Quarterly*, vol.92, no.1, (2011), pp.100-118; B. Jacob, A. Mawson, M. Payton, J. Guignard, 'Disaster Mythology and Fact: Hurricane Katrina and Social Attachment', *Public Health Reports*, vol.123, no.5, (2008), pp.555-566.



terrorist attack.¹⁵ However, in relation to football, one aspect of this analysis which intersects with spectator behaviour can be seen in relation to football hooliganism.

Football hooliganism

37. During the 1980s and 1990s, the press and popular discourse put forward the notion that a lack of violence at football matches, simply meant there was a lack of hooligans present at these events. Hooliganism was seen as an ‘English disease’, and there was a clear distinction made between the ‘mindless’ and ‘irrational’ football hooligan, and the rest of the population who constituted ‘normal’ fans.¹⁶ Initial debates of criminal responsibility surrounding the emergence of crowd psychology led to two classical theoretical perspectives on crowd behaviour, simply described as follows: 1) individual autonomy decreases when in a group, meaning violent behaviour becomes normalised, 2) football hooligan groups are comprised of individuals with similar norms and values, i.e. have a propensity towards violence.¹⁷

38. As research developed, several scholars critiqued, and subsequently built upon, these original ideas.¹⁸ However, it became clear that nearly all theories relating to football hooliganism were of limited practical use, as they could not predict when a riot would happen, who would become involved, and against whom. Ultimately, it was unclear why violence in the context of football became a group behaviour, or why in certain circumstances, violence failed to materialise. It was equally unclear why those who had no violent past became involved in disorder, and why those with a known violent past did not become involved in disorder at every single football match.¹⁹

¹⁵ See John Drury and Chris Cocking, ‘The Mass Psychology of Disasters and Emergency Evacuations: A Research Report and Implications for Practice’ (2007), stable URL:

[http://www.sussex.ac.uk/affiliates/panic/Disasters%20and%20emergency%20evacuations%20\(2007\).pdf](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/affiliates/panic/Disasters%20and%20emergency%20evacuations%20(2007).pdf)
accessed 12/9/2019.

¹⁶ Clifford Stott, Paul Hutchison, John Drury, ‘“Hooligans” Abroad? Inter-Group Dynamics, Social Identity and Participation in Collective “Disorder” at the 1998 World Cup Finals’, *British Journal Of Social Psychology*, vol.40, (2001), pp.359-384; Joel Rookwood and Geoff Pearson, ‘The Hoolifan: Positive Fan Attitudes to Football “Hooliganism”’, *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, vol.47 no.2, (2012), pp.149-164.

¹⁷ For the ‘group mind’ theory see Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (London: Ernest Benn, 1895, trans. 1947); for the ‘individualistic’ account, see Floyd Henry Allport, *Social Psychology* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1924); see also S. D. Reicher, ‘Crowd Behaviour as Social Action’, in J. C. Turner, M. A. Hogg, P. J. Oakes, S. D. Reicher, & M. S. Wetherell, eds., *Rediscovering the Social Group: A Self-Categorization Theory*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), pp. 171– 202; J. S. McClelland, *The Crowd and the Mob: From Plato to Canetti*, (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989).

¹⁸ For example, see E. Dunning, P. Murphy, I. Waddington, ‘Anthropological Versus Sociological Approaches to the Study of Soccer Hooliganism: Some Critical Notes’, *Sociological Review*, vol.39 no.3, (1991), pp. 459– 478; E. Dunning, ‘The Social Roots of Football Hooliganism: A reply to the Critics of “The Leicester School”’, in N. Bonney, R. Giulianotti, & M. Hepworth, eds., *Football, Violence and Social Identity* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp.123-152; E. Dunning, P. Murphy, J. Williams, ‘Soccer Crowd Disorder and the Press: Processes of Amplification and Deamplification in Historical Perspective’, *Theory Culture and Society*, vol.5, (1988), pp.645– 673; J. H. Kerr, *Understanding Soccer Hooliganism*, (Buckingham, PA: Open University Press, 1994).

¹⁹ Stott, Hutchison, Drury, ‘“Hooligans” Abroad?’, pp.2-5.



39. While the questions relating to football hooliganism were clearly established, the answers were not straightforward.²⁰ For example, the idea that increases in banning orders led to a decrease in violence is overly simplistic and outdated.²¹
40. Certain studies have shown that the traditional dichotomy between the 'mindless' football hooligan and the 'normal' fan is too simplistic. Often, fans don't separate themselves as the 'normal' law-abiding fan, and the 'mindless' hooligan, as often people see a legitimate time and place for violence, such as against overly aggressive police, or in self-defence. There can be a degree of fluidity between being a fan and a hooligan, depending on the context.²² Furthermore, much of what some consider inappropriate behaviour can be seen as a reaction to a perceived overburdensome authority.²³ What current research demonstrates, is that groups of football supporters are not homogenous, and the situation and context of each event must be taken into account when discussing football violence and disorder.
41. A more complex picture of violence at football stadia has emerged, highlighting the effect of exterior factors, such as the actions of the police. Traditionally, the police have viewed football as a public order problem, rather than a public safety issue, prioritising crowd control over crowd safety. It is interesting to note that reported deaths from football hooliganism are extremely rare, whereas reported deaths from procedures designed to prevent crowd disorder are far more common.²⁴
42. Ultimately, it was studies of violence and racism during the 1980s and 1990s which established an analytical template for football studies.²⁵

Racism and other forms of Discrimination

43. Overt racism in the form of chanting on terraces has dramatically declined. However, racism and discrimination are never static and are constantly evolving. As such, it is a complex and multifaceted issue, and there is an assumption that forms of discrimination have moved to online forums, such as social media, which hold the potential for new, covert forms of racism.²⁶ Yet, certain studies have demonstrated that particular types of

²⁰ See Matt Hopkins and James Treadwell eds., *Football Hooliganism, Fan Behaviour and Crime* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

²¹ Clifford Stott, Otto Adang, Andrew Livingstone, Martina Schreiber, 'Variability in the Collective Behaviour of England Fans at Euro 2004: "Hooliganism", Public Order Policing and Social Change', *European Journal of Social Psychology*, vol.37 no.1, (2007), pp.75-100.

²² Stott, Hutchison, Drury, "'Hooligans" Abroad?'; Rookwood and Pearson, 'The Hoolifan'.

²³ Tim Hill, Robin Canniford, Peter Millward, 'Against Modern Football: Mobilising Protest Movements in Social Media', *Sociology*, vol.52 no.4, (2018), pp.688-708; Katharine Jones, 'Female fandom: Identity, Sexism, and Men's Professional Football in England'. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, vol.25, (2008), pp.516-53.

²⁴ Rookwood and Pearson, 'The Hoolifan', p.150.

²⁵ Ellis Cashmore and Kevin Dixon 'Introduction' in Ellis Cashmore and Kevin Dixon eds., *Studying Football* (London: Routledge, 2016)

²⁶ Jamie Cleland, 'Racism, Football Fans, and Online Message Boards: How Social Media Has Added a New Dimension to Racist Discourse in English Football', *Journal of Sport & Social Issues*, vol.38 no.5, (2014), pp.415-431; Peter Millward, 'The Rebirth of the Football Fanzine: Using E-Zines as a Data Source', *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, vol.32, (2008), pp.299-310.



abuse — i.e. homophobia — have dramatically decreased on these mediums as it is often self-policed by participants.²⁷ Furthermore, certain anti-racist campaigns can be seen by some as negatively, and unfairly, labelling them as racist.²⁸ One particular example can be seen in the complexities surrounding Tottenham Hotspur fans self-appropriating the word 'yid' as a means to deflect anti-Semitic abuse.²⁹ Indeed, at the time of writing, Tottenham Hotspur Football Club is in the process of consulting with their supporters over their perceptions and intentions of the use of the word.³⁰

44. There are differing levels of abuse that reflect changes in wider society. For example, upon retirement, Thomas Hitzlsperger — who had a successful career in the Premier League, The Bundesliga, and Serie A — came out as gay. Hitzlsperger suggested that he could not come out during his career because of the media, rather than a fear of backlash from supporters or his fellow teammates.³¹ In contrast, in 2010, the Croatian national team manager claimed that there were no gay footballers in Croatia, as only 'healthy people' played football.³²
45. While current research demonstrates a far more accepting narrative, and a rejection of homophobia both online and at stadia, Brighton and Hove Albion and the Gay supporters network compiled a dossier in 2013 where they suggested they had received homophobic abuse in over 50% of home matches.³³ Ultimately, sport demonstrates and reflects the complexities of racist and homophobic rhetoric and actions within wider society, and while reports of discrimination in football are increasing, so too are reports of discrimination in wider society.³⁴

Use of alcohol and drugs

46. While there is a long-established correlation between alcohol consumption and violence and disorder, academics continue to debate whether alcohol in and of itself influences

²⁷ Jamie Cleland, Rory Magrath, T. Kian, 'The Internet as a Site of Decreasing Cultural Homophobia in Association Football: An Online Response by Fans to the Coming Out of Thomas Hitzlsperger', *Men and Masculinities*, vol.21 no.1, (2017), pp.91-111.

²⁸ Jamie Cleland and Ellis Cashmore, 'Football Fans' Views of Racism in British Football', *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, vol.51 no.1, (2016), pp.27-43.

²⁹ See Emma Poulton, 'Towards Understanding: Antisemitism and the Contested Uses and Meanings of "Yid" in English Football', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol.39 no.11, (2016), pp.1981-2001; Emma Poulton and Oliver Durell, 'Uses and Meanings of "Yid" in English Football Fandom: A Case Study of Tottenham Hotspur Football Club', *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, vol.51 no.6, (2016), pp.715-734; Martin Cloake and Alan Fisher, 'Spurs and the Jews: The How, the Why and the When', (6 October 2016), *The Jewish Chronicle*, stable URL: <https://www.thejc.com/lifestyle/features/how-tottenham-became-the-jewish-football-team-1.53784> accessed 12/9/2019.

³⁰ The survey closed on 18 August 2019, see 'Spurs Finally Launches Consultation With Fans on use of "Y-Word"', *The Jewish News*, (7 August 2019), stable URL: <https://jewishnews.timesofisrael.com/spurs-finally-launches-consultation-with-fans-on-use-of-y-word/> accessed 12/9/2019.

³¹ Cleland, Magrath, Kian, 'The Internet as a Site of Decreasing Cultural Homophobia in Association Football', p.95; the original German article in *Zeit Online* (8 January 2014), can be found at <https://www.zeit.de/sport/2014-01/thomas-hitzlsperger-homosexualitaet-fussball> accessed 12/9/2019

³² *Ibid.*, p.101.

³³ *Ibid.*, p.106.

³⁴ See Ben Carrington, 'Introduction: Sport Matters', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol.35 no.6, (2012), pp.961-970.



individuals to become violent.³⁵ In regard to football, much of the current research suggests that restrictions on alcohol sales may be counter-productive, as the majority of fans will overcome legal and practical restrictions to drink in any way possible. For example, if fans cannot drink inside the stadium, then they may simply drink more before kick-off, as it is extremely rare to get refused entry to a football stadium for being intoxicated. This can also lead to large numbers of supporters turning up to the match late, or just before kick-off, leading to an increased risk of crushing or injury. Similarly, restricting alcohol consumption in view of the pitch may lead to the concourse area becoming overcrowded and increase the risk of gangways being blocked.³⁶

47. Furthermore, early kick-offs themselves can also be counter-productive. If this is done for a local derby, then the evidence suggests that disorder will decrease in and around the stadium but is more likely to increase after the game in the local community, as supporters continue to drink after the game.³⁷

48. It is reported that the use of cocaine at football stadia has been increasing.³⁸ At present, the evidence for this is quite thin, but ongoing research is being undertaken in an attempt to quantify this change, which at present is based upon observation by stakeholders at stadia.³⁹

The Media

49. Since the early 1990s, the media has dramatically influenced the way in which sporting events are structured and funded, meaning that football is now heavily influenced by the media.⁴⁰

50. There appears to be no causal relationship between changing and more elaborate goal celebrations, and fan behaviour. However, as the media has attempted to 'spectacularise' sport, it is now seen as advantageous for sporting events to be extravagant, flamboyant, a spectacle, and as such, widely celebratory. When attempting to establish why governing bodies have tolerated such a change — for example cricketers and tennis players celebrating wildly and showing apparent 'disrespect' to

³⁵ Geoff Pearson and Arianna Sale, "'On the Lash' – Revisiting the Effectiveness of Alcohol Controls at Football Matches', *Policing and Society*, vol.21 no.2, (2011), pp.150-166; M. Lipsey et al., 'Is there a Causal Relationship Between Alcohol Use and Violence? A synthesis of Evidence', in M. Galanter ed., *Recent Developments in Alcoholism: Volume 13, Alcohol and Violence* (New York: Kluwer, 1997), pp.245-282.

³⁶ Pearson and Sale, "' On the Lash", pp.155-158.

³⁷ Ibid., pp.162-163.

³⁸ For the function of cocaine use in relation to football violence, see Tammy C. Ayres and James Treadwell, 'Bars, Drugs and Football Thugs: Alcohol, Cocaine Use and Violence in the Night Time Economy Among English Football Firms', *Criminology & Criminal Justice*, vol.12 no.1, (2012), pp.83-100.

³⁹ Martha Newson is conducting comparative research into the use of cocaine by supporters in the UK, the USA, and Brazil.

⁴⁰ Tom Webb, 'Referees and the media: A difficult relationship but an unavoidable necessity', *Soccer & Society*, vol.19, no.2 (2018), pp. 205-221.



umpires, judges, or the opposition — it is suggested that this may, in part, reflect that these sports are in competition with one another for viewing figures and increased revenue.⁴¹

51. This mediated relationship — literally the media determining what supporters at home and at live events see on screen — *does* have a direct impact on spectator behaviour. Perhaps the most obvious example of this can be seen in American sports with the invention of the ‘kiss camera’.⁴² As Ellis Cashmore and Kevin Dixon have succinctly explained, ‘the media would survive without football, but it would not be well nourished’.⁴³ In many respects, the media, both print but particularly broadcast, governs sport and mediates the relationship between live action and spectator experience and behaviour.

Issues of Gender in Sport

52. With the increase in ticket prices and the design of new stadia, football clubs have overtly attempted to change the dynamic of their supporters to a more affluent, civilised, consumer. Such commercialisation has undoubtedly seen a change in the demographic make-up of fans which cuts across gender and social class identities.⁴⁴
53. One particular change can be seen in the ‘feminization’ of sports fandom, as a growing number of women continue to attend sporting events as spectators. Such a ‘feminization’ began in the 1990s, due to a combination of certain changes in women’s lives, including greater expendable income and increased leisure time. These trends occurred alongside the structural, commercial, and cultural changes in sport, which led to an increase in female supporters at football. In the 2008/2009 Premier League season, women accounted for 19% of spectators, which had grown to 26% by the 2014/2015 season.⁴⁵
54. There is a widespread perception that the increase in the number of women attending matches leads to a more civilised crowd dynamic. There have been several campaigns to try to increase the number of women attending football, which have been built upon these assumptions.⁴⁶ However, these campaigns, alongside the media, have marginalised the role of women as genuine supporters. Traditional female fans are eroticised, depicted as sobbing, screaming and fainting; in contrast, the masculine image of a supporter can be seen in the drunken, destructive male, who is defined by victory or defeat at the event. As such, women have been associated with the gentrification and

⁴¹ Tom Webb, Mike Rayner and Richard Thelwell, ‘An examination of match official’s perceptions of support and abuse in rugby union and cricket in England’, *Managing Sport and Leisure*, vol. 24, no. 1-3 (2019), pp. 155-172.

⁴² This paragraph has largely been drawn from an in-depth conversation with Professor Ellis Cashmore, Ashton University. However, a good introduction to the relationship between the media and football can be found in Ellis Cashmore and Kevin Dixon, eds., *Studying Football* (London: Routledge, 2016), esp. pp.113-133; for a discussion of the effects of aggressive sport on spectator hostility, see Robert L. Arms, Gordon W. Russel, Mark L. Sandilands, ‘Effects on the Hostility of Spectators of Viewing Aggressive Sports’, *Social Psychology Quarterly* vol.42, no.3 (1979), pp. 275-279.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p.2.

⁴⁴ Cleland and Cashmore, ‘Football Fans’ Views of Racism in British Football’, pp.31-33.

⁴⁵ Stacey Pope, *The Feminization of Sports Fandom: A Sociological Study* (London: Routledge, 2017), pp.1-13.

⁴⁶ For example, the EFL’s ‘Fans of the Future Campaign’, see C. Dunn, *Female Football Fans: Community, Identity and Sexism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2014), p.101.



class changes of the sport and continue to face discrimination.⁴⁷ For example, in 2018, the Lazio ‘ultras’ — die-hard fans — handed out leaflets at home matches, suggesting women were not welcome on the first nine rows as they were equivalent to the trenches in warfare.⁴⁸ In this manner, women are forced to negotiate between being a woman and a fan, competing against the traditional view of an ‘authentic’ male fan. Current research investigates the manner in which these viewpoints have changed.⁴⁹

55. It is important to note that in contrast to the extremely high-profile anti-racism and anti-homophobia campaigns, there has been a distinct lack of high-profile anti-sexism campaigns. There is still an acceptance amongst most female fans that it is inevitable that they will encounter sexism at football. Katharine Jones has suggested that there are three main strategies used by female fans to respond to abusive masculine fan behaviour while negotiating their own gender identities:

- Reject discrimination as ‘disgusting’ and inappropriate;
- Downplay discrimination as simply ‘banter’; and
- Embrace gender stereotypes as an important part of fan and football culture.⁵⁰

56. Traditionally, the media has used a variety of techniques to devalue female sporting achievements, by focusing on their private lives and trivialising or sexualising their performance. However, in the past few years, a far more positive image of female athletes has appeared and the improved media coverage of women’s sport in general may lead to a more positive attitude amongst traditional, male fans.⁵¹

Next Steps

57. The initial conclusions drawn from the first two chapters were presented to the SGSA Board in August 2019. This led to a proposal to establish a more structured engagement with academia, an idea that shared support and was well received by all parties.

58. An inaugural meeting with SGSA staff and seven academics working in various fields relating to spectator behaviour took place at the SGSA’s offices on 5 September 2019.⁵² From this meeting, several key issues were discussed, in particular:

- It was established that similar difficulties relating to a lack in both the quantity and quality of available data were present within academic research. There are areas

⁴⁷ Pope, *The Feminization of Sports Fandom*, pp.4-6.

⁴⁸ ‘Lazio Fans Tell Women to Stay Away From Stadium’s “Sacred Space”’, *The Guardian Online* (20 August 2018), stable URL: <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2018/aug/20/lazio-fans-tell-women-to-stay-away-from-stadiums-sacred-space> accessed 12/9/2019.

⁴⁹ Kate Perry and Stacey Pope, ‘A New Age for Media Coverage of Women’s Sport? An Analysis of English Media Coverage of the 2015 FIFA Women’s World Cup’, *Sociology*, vol.53 no.3, (2019), pp.486–502.

⁵⁰ Katharine Jones, ‘Female fandom: Identity, Sexism, and Men’s Professional Football in England’. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, vol.25, (2008), pp. 516–53.

⁵¹ Perry and Pope, ‘A New Age for Media Coverage of Women’s Sport?’, pp.486–502.

⁵² Academic attendees: Dr Chris Cocking, The University of Brighton; Dr Mark Doidge, The University of Brighton; Dr Peter Millward, Liverpool John Moores University; Dr Martha Newson, The University of Oxford; Dr Stacey Pope, Durham University; Professor Clifford Stott, Keele University; Dr Tom Webb, The University of Portsmouth.



where there are gaps in the evidence, as well as ongoing live issues, which need to be addressed, such as in the use of drugs at stadia.

- In attempting to overcome these identified gaps, research has tended to be fragmented, focusing on one club, one specific issue, or only involving one stakeholder.
- While it is necessary to separate and analyse specific issues relating to spectator behaviour, especially as largely defined groups such as 'supporters', 'women', 'lads' are not homogenous, this has not been done in any coherent manner and with strategic oversight.
- Academic research in these areas suffers from several issues, such as a lack of funding, publications being marginalised to specific and niche journals, and a lack of transparency.

59. The lack of transparency is perhaps the most pressing issue, as there needs to be greater accessibility and availability to research occurring both within and outside academia. This is necessary in order to establish a robust and reliable evidence base to understand the complex issues confronting spectator behaviour and safety, and to help inform key decision makers both at national and local level.

60. In terms of next steps, the SGSA plans to facilitate a continued, structured engagement with academia by establishing an informal 'academic advisory panel'. The membership to this group is not exclusive to those present at the inaugural meeting on 5 September. Rather, the panel will be open to any academic or researcher working in areas of mutual interest and common concern.

61. This research has highlighted complicated issues, with spectator behaviour changing, as the behaviour of wider society changes. Ultimately, any such changes in sport reflect changes in wider society, and it is becoming understood that supporters will behave differently depending on the context.

62. By continuing the conversation with a growing network of stakeholders in the way proposed above, the SGSA is seeking to be proactive in encouraging an evidence-based approach to the issues surrounding spectator behaviour, and more broadly, safety at sports grounds.

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