

Richard Giulianotti, Norman Bonney and Mike Hepworth, eds., *Football, Violence and Social Identity*. **Routledge, London, 1994. pp. ix + 268.**

With the finals of the European Championship about to be played in England, the home of football hooliganism, it seems an appropriate time to reflect on the state of play within academic research on a phenomenon which continues to attract scholarly attention. I do this with reference to the above anthology prepared by a team of academics from the Department of Sociology at Aberdeen University.

Only a few years back, John Williams commented that academic debates about football hooliganism are 'as lively . . . as the dust-ups between rival firms'. There is certainly evidence of this in contributions to this book and in subsequent reviews of the book. The stated aims of the editors are to provide a collection of papers which are cross-cultural and interdisciplinary in theme and 'appreciably fresh' in approach to subject matter. I believe these aims are achieved. The offerings are decidedly cross-cultural focussing on fandom in Italy, Holland and Argentina, as well as the more familiar settings of Scotland and England. Interdisciplinary approaches are also evident with sociologists, psychologists, and policy analysts being most apparent. The promise of freshness is fulfilled by a number of papers. This is mainly achieved by an emphasis on ethnography. Of note here are Dal Lago and De Biasi's paper on Italian ultra fans which indicates that region rather than class is the most important factor in hooligan group affiliation; Finn's paper on contemporary support trends in Scotland uses Turner's notion of liminality to provide a fascinating contrast between hooligan and non-hooligan fans. These fans are at once dissimilar and similar. While celebrating oppositional modes of parochial support, they enjoy their football spectating as a 'peak experience'. Archetti and Romero combine ethnographic and historical research in their presentation of chronologically arranged case studies of football violence in Argentina. Most importantly, their paper contextualises this violence within a society characterised by the political violence enacted by paramilitaristic regimes. Giulianotti's paper on an episode of legalistic persecution of hooligan supporters in Scotland provides a clear indication of the determination of social authority in that country to deliver a 'hooligan free' football environment. A further paper by Armstrong and Hobbs on the panoptical surveillance of fans should arouse concerns for those with even only a tad of civil libertarian spirit, while Giulianotti's early chapter provides a skilful summary of academic debates by periodising them within 'historical developments in football culture'.

Some of the contributors note the insensitivity of debate which has emerged in football research. This theme is taken up in Eric Dunning's chapter which represents another attempt to defend his branch of the Leicester 'School' which continues to reel from attacks initially launched in the special issue of the *Sociological Review* on football hooliganism in 1991 (vol. 39, no. 3). To some extent, Dunning is able to make convincing

counter claims against his critics particularly with regard to the relevance of figurational sociology. However, I agree with reviewer Dave Robins's point (in *Sociological Review*, vol. 43, no. 1, pp. 213-6) that while Dunning is persuasive on Elias's theory of civilising process, he is less than 'authoritative [on] contemporary youth culture'. This gives insight into the major limitations of the overall contribution of Dunning and his Leicester associates. While Dunning's work might be extremely helpful in understanding the phenomenon of football hooliganism in a broad socio-historical context, it has not really addressed the issue of identity construction in relation to those individuals who either collectively identify with a specified group of others as football hooligans, or who engage in collective social practices which have been defined as football hooliganism.

The title of the book by Giulianotti and associates suggests an endeavour to overcome the shortfall. While announcing the book as another work on football violence, this is done in explicit connection with social identity. In an earlier critical review of the book Bert Moorehouse suggests (in *Sociology*, vol. 29, no. 1, pp. 171-2) that the concern with social identity remains purely titular. However, while a discussion of social identity is not systematically set out in the book, it is clearly a central theme in a number of papers. I would disagree with Moorehouse's further claim that, to the extent that social identity is considered by authors, it is treated unproblematically. On the contrary, my reading of the above-mentioned papers is that the social identity of those under discussion is highly problematic. To establish this to Moorehouse's satisfaction the authors perhaps need more space than can be given in a volume of this kind. This is not, though, a criticism of the editors but, rather, an appeal to readers to consider the constraints of format when assessing the merits of contributions.

Moorehouse's concerns about social identity are seemingly based on what he regards as an insubstantial ethnographic endeavour—this despite the claims for the importance of ethnography by particular authors. Again, I am surprised by the criticism. While the ethnographic projects of authors could have been more fully discussed, I would once more put this down to the constraint of space rather than a lack of academic rigour. I find Moorehouse's related suggestion about the ethnographic evidence which is offered in the book amounting to little more than what 'Mad Mick told me in a pub' as amounting to insult. To

demand 'evidence' of veracity from the so-called 'Mad Micks' of hooligan groupings is entirely out of step with contemporary ethnographic procedure. Also, the uncertainty of getting to the truth does not invalidate what a 'Mad Mick' might have to say, or—and this is a point lost in Moorehouse's criticism—what his embellishments of events might say about his social identity.

In his review of *Football Violence and Social Identity*, Dave Robins makes the overall criticism that the book helps to maintain academic work on football as a last refuge for white male collusive discourse'. Similarly, football research is blamed for remaining silent on the 'rights of women, gays and people of colour'—those social groupings adversely affected by the various bigotries of football hooligans. While it is to be hoped that future research will take up these themes, it needs to be noted on behalf of the authors so criticised, and scholars of football more generally, that women, male homosexuals and people of particular ethnic backgrounds have been excluded from various sub-cultures of football support. As such, there has often been not much to report beyond their exclusion. Furthermore, that members of these excluded groupings have (quite understandably) chosen not to research or have been unable to get close enough to the subject to be able to do research, does not mean that research on those who have been called football hooligans should be abandoned, or that those academics undertaking such research can be reasonably accused of engaging in a collusive discourse.

A greater concentration on the exclusionary and vilifying practices of hooligan supporters is only likely to come through the more detailed ethnographic work which a number of authors in the book under review would advocate. The move toward studying the social identity of hooligan supporters should be revealing of all aspects of that identity, thus explicating certain practices in terms of sexism, homophobia and ethnocentrism. Perhaps Dave Robins's forecast that *Football, Violence and Social Identity* will 'be the final book on fan violence' is to be welcomed. However, this is to welcome an end to books focussing on the 'social problem' of football hooliganism, not an end to books on football supporting sub-cultures and questions of identity. There is much work to be done in this area and this will continue to be so as long as football support remains an important form of expression for groupings of youth who, themselves, experience forms of social marginalisation. The

contribution by Richard Giulianotti and his associates appears to recognise this—may they continue to be productive.

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