Enabling an Evidence Based Approach to Policing Football in the UK.

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Abstract

Across the last ten years the policing of demonstrations in the UK has witnessed substantive change in terms of both statutory guidance and operational practices. With this study we highlight how the policing of football crowds in the UK has, to date, yet to undergo similar change, despite being covered by the same statutory guidance. On the basis of largely qualitative data and analysis generated through a quasi-ethnographic approach we explore the dynamics of police football crowd interactions. We identify how current approaches can fail to adequately understand the nature of risk and lead to a disproportionate deployment of resources both of which have the potential to increase rather than reduce the risk of disorder. We propose that forces develop and test innovative approaches to football policing that are engrained in existing public order guidance, but which move away from a reliance upon fixed categories of risk, focus more on the positive human rights of supporters, and prioritise the tactical deployment of bespoke resources to improve dialogue with fans.

Introduction

Across the last decade the policing of demonstrations in the UK has been affected by substantive change relating to statutory guidance and operational practices. The catalyst for these changes was the death of a member of the public as a result of police use of force during a demonstration in central London, which led to the subsequent publication of '*Adapting to Protest*' (ATP), a national review of Public Order and Public Safety policing (POPS) by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (ATP; HMIC, 2009). Notwithstanding these reforms, with this study we highlight how the policing of football crowds in the UK has, to date, yet to undergo similar change, despite being covered by the same statutory guidance. On the basis of the data and analysis enabled through a Participant Action Research (PAR) framework, we explore the dynamics of interactions between the police and football crowds and make recommendations for reforms relating to risk assessment, strategy, human rights and police communication.

UK POPS Statutory Guidance

A key element of ATP was its conclusion that decisions made by senior commanders during the policing of a protest surrounding the G20 summit in London in 2009 were flawed. This was because commanders paid inadequate attention to the rights of individuals guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), and the Human Rights Act 1998 in their interpretation and use of the Public Order Act (1986) as the legal justification to corral and then subsequently disperse otherwise peaceful protestors (Stott & Gorringe, 2013). The report found it was a result of one such dispersal that Ian Tomlinson, a newspaper seller on his way home, was killed.

ATP was also significant because it asserted that the *Elaborated Social Identity Model of crowd behaviour* (ESIM) should serve as the conceptual basis for crowd policing in the UK (see Stott & Gorringe, 2013; Reicher et al, 2004, 2007). ESIM is important for policing because it proposes that collective action in a crowd is both enabled and constrained by a shared social identity. Furthermore, the form (i.e. who will or won't become involved in collective action) and normative content of these identities (i.e. what those involved will or won't do) is dynamic and contextually defined, so can be shaped and reshaped through intergroup interactions that occur during crowd events (Reicher, 1996; Stott & Drury, 2000; Stott & Reicher, 1998a).

The bulk of existing research has focused on the role that policing plays in shaping the dynamics of these interactions[1]. This body of work has shown that perceptions of police illegitimacy can develop where police use of force is seen as disproportionate and indiscriminate. This unites crowd participants psychologically, both empowering them and legitimising conflict toward the police (e.g. Drury & Reicher, 2000; Reicher, 1996; Stott & Drury, 2000, Stott & Reicher, 1998; Stott, Drury & Reicher, 2017). Research has also highlighted how collective conflict is less likely where policing is effective in the management of these interactional social psychological dynamics, primarily through the strategic facilitation of peaceful assembly and effectiveness at engaging with crowd participants through dialogue based tactical interventions (Gorringe & Rosie, 2013; Reicher et al, 2004, 2007; Stott et al, 2007, 2008, 2011, 2018; Waddington, 2013).

On the basis of underpinning research, ATP therefore drew three clear conclusions for policing. These were that: "*the most effective means of maintaining peaceful and consensual relations between the police and a dynamic crowd is through: a) a strategic approach to policing protest which is centred upon the facilitation of peaceful behaviour within a crowd; b) a tactical response which increases police capability for dialogue and communication with crowd members; and c) a graded, differentiated and information led approach to police use of force*" (ATP, p.89)

Following its publication, ATP was considered by a specifically constituted ACPO[2] sub-committee and the majority of its recommendations translated into their manual of POPS statutory guidance (ACPO, 2010), now referred to as *Authorised Professional Practice* (APP; College of Policing, 2013). The guidance enabled significant reforms to protest policing across the UK. These changes developed relatively rapidly, particularly with regard to increased strategic salience for rights under the ECHR[3] and being based directly upon four principles of crowd management laid out in Reicher et al (2004). In parallel, police in the UK began developing greater capacity for communication through the use of Police Liaison Officers (PLOs; Gorringe, Stott & Rosie, 2012; Stott, Scothern & Gorringe, 2013; Waddington, 2012).

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[1] However, it is important to note that ESIM is not merely about the role of the police. Interactions between opposing groups during football crowd events also play a role in identity change and conflict (see Stott, Hutchison & Drury, 2001).

[2] The Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) was a private company; funded by the Home Office, police forces and by its own activity. Under this structure POPS guidance fell under the Uniform Operations Portfolio headed in 2010 by South Yorkshire Chief Constable Meredydd Hughes.

[3] The Human Rights Act 1998 s.6(1) makes it unlawful for a public authority (such as the police) to act in a way which is incompatible with a convention right.

Despite these widespread, sometimes contentious (Gilmore, Jackson & Monk, 2017), changes to the policing of protests in the UK, existing studies suggest that football policing has yet to experience corresponding reform. Where modification has taken place it has been localised, piecemeal, and difficult to sustain (Hoggett & Stott, 2010 a, b; Stott, Hoggett & Pearson, 2011; Stott, Livingstone & Hoggett, 2008; Stott, West & Radburn, 2016; Hoggett & West, 2018). Moreover, while the ambition of the College of Policing is to underpin its guidance with empirical research, evidence on the contemporary policing of football crowds in the UK is currently limited (O'Neill, 2005; Pearson, 2012; Stott, Pearson & Hoggett, 2011).

Policing football.

The approach to policing the crowds attending fixtures of Football Leagues of the UK relies heavily upon network of 'spotters' who provide surveillance and intelligence-gathering on football fans across every season. In the planning phases of football policing operations this intelligence is used by the host force to estimate the threat posed by fans. These intelligence assessments invariantly revolve around the anticipated presence of those fans the police categorise as 'risk'. The definition of a 'risk' fan provided by police guidance is "a person, known or not, who can be regarded as posing a possible risk to public order or antisocial behaviour (sic), whether planned or spontaneous, at or in connection with a football event" (College of Policing, 2013; Section 1.21). In other words, the category 'risk' is highly flexible in that, by definition, it can be imposed on anyone, at any stage, who in any way, is judged by the police to pose even a potential threat to 'public order'. These intelligence assessments then underpin a categorisation system for the fixture[4] that flows into a mobilisation plan which in turn, if judged necessary, draws resources into the surrounding policing operation. It is an approach supported by a wide array of organisational policies and legal tools including Football Banning Orders (FBOs) enabled under s.14A and B of the Football Spectators Act 1989 (Hopkins & Hamilton-Smith, 2014; James and Pearson, 2007; James and Pearson, 2018; Pearson 2002).

Football policing in the UK currently requires a high level of resourcing which incurs significant annual cost. While the UK Parliament's Home Affairs Select Committee concluded that it is impossible to calculate exact expenditures nationally, it is reasonable to assume these are in excess of at least £25 million (House of Commons, 2009; Stott, Hoggett & Livingstone, 2008). As an example, in the 2016/17 season the Metropolitan Police Service alone was estimated by the BBC to have spent in the region of £6.7 million, of which only 5.1% was met by the football clubs

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[4] There are six official levels ranging from Police Free to Category C – Increased risk.

(BBC, 2017)[5]. Indeed, in 2018 the National Police Chief Council insisted expenditures were unsustainable and threatened that away fans may have to be banned from attending fixtures if football clubs did not increase the amount they currently contribute toward policing (Roberts, 2018). Yet across the 2013/14 season five clubs under the jurisdiction of West Midlands Police contributed over £1.15 million toward policing costs[6].

Despite the levels of resource invested in the policing of football events, incidents of disorder or violence continue to occur sporadically at all levels of the game. Further, the police are also under pressure from the UK's largest fan organisation, the Football Supporters Federation, which has an ongoing campaign called '*Watching Football is Not a Crime'*, designed to **"**monitor the police in their dealings with football fans and work with them to ensure that all fans are treated fairly and within the law."[7]

The current study

In a context where there are widespread accusations of police illegitimacy, and police forces are facing very serious financial challenges, it becomes increasingly important to look systematically at the nature of football policing to understand what could be done to improve effectiveness and efficacy. The current study therefore has two primary objectives. The first is to provide a systematic evidence-based assessment of current approaches to the policing of football being adopted by four major police forces across the UK. Although our study utilises a relatively small sample of the 44 police forces in Great Britain, we are confident that many of the practices and developments we have seen are representative of much of what is happening nationally. Second, the research takes place within a project that utilises a *Participatory Action Research* (PAR) framework. The approach is designed not just to gather data and produce analysis but to simultaneously offer a process through which it becomes possible to unlock organisational reforms that the research suggests may be needed. The paper reports on a qualitative and quasi-ethnographic methodology to highlight several emerging themes and problematics, as well as identifying good practice. It concludes by inviting consideration of outline reforms to football policing that may help alleviate some of the highlighted and ongoing problems. Thus, the paper is not intended to identify specific solutions,

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[5] The legal framework for police cost recovery in this domain is reliant on Section 25 of the Police Act 1996. The Act stipulates that upon request the police can provide Special Police Services to football club's when invited to do so, which in practice is usually restricted to those officers on the stadium's operational footprint (see *West Yorkshire Police Authority v Reading Festival Ltd* [2006] 1 WLR 2005 and *Leeds United Football Club v Chief Constable of West Yorkshire Police* [2012] EWHC 2113).
[6] https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/football_policing_2.
[7] http://www.fsf.org.uk/campaigns/watching-football-is-not-a-crime/

but to invite exploration of a research process through which evidence-based reflection can take place and through which innovative approaches to policing football events could be developed.

Methodology.

PAR has a long-standing tradition, based on the seminal 'Action Research' work of Kurt Lewin (1946). Our central aim was to provide a knowledge co-production platform seeking to assess and enhance operational police practice through engaging police officers and other stakeholders directly within the research process (Crawford, 2017; Meyer, 2000) with the primary goal influencing practice (Elliot, 1991; McNiff & Whitehead, 2005; Winter & Munn-Giddings, 2001). Thus, we adopt Koshy et al's (2010) definition of PAR as an approach employed by practitioners for improving practice as part of the process of change. It is important to note that this paper reports on the first data gathering phase of the PAR process. Thus, the focus is on setting out the research evidence necessary to suggest change may be needed and point toward the nature of the changes required[8]. The primary method employed to gather data to inform this knowledge co-production phase of the PAR framework was a qualitative one bordering on the ethnographic, which combined observation and interview techniques. Ethnographic and quasi-ethnographic methods are well-tested in the context of both football crowd behaviour (for an overview see Pearson, 2012) and policing (Rowe, Turner and Pearson, 2016).

Our observations were carried out by small teams composed of academic researchers, police officers from visiting forces with experience in POPS policing, and other stakeholders (e.g. football supporters, club safety officers). Officers were selected by their own force and attended a pre-fieldwork workshop that provided training in background theory and observational methodology.[9] Different teams of between six and eight observers were then recruited to carry out observations of five football fixtures and one football-related protest. For each observation at least two of the authors were present. These observations have been anonymised for ethical reasons and will be referred to in Table One.

Title	Context
Observation F1	Premier League fixture involving a visiting team with a historical reputation for engagement in crowd disorder
Observation F2	A Championship same-city derby.

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[8] It is the authors' ambition that these evidence-based reforms may then be adopted by police forces enabling the next stage of the PAR research to be undertaken whereby the methodology is used to evaluate their impact.
[9] Funds for the training and initial round of observations were secured from the N8 Policing Research Partnership.

Observation F3	A Championship derby between two teams in rival cities.
Observation F4	A Scottish Premier League same-city derby
Observation F5	A Scottish Premier League same-city derby
Observation P1	A protest event attended predominantly by football supporters affiliated with a variety of teams.

Table one: Anonymised details of observed fixtures.

Observational data was recorded in fieldnote format by each researcher, who then contributed to a collective verbal debrief at the end of each observation. These debriefs were recorded and then used to underpin a preliminary analysis of each event by the authors. Following all observations, the authors then wrote detailed accounts of each event to identify and draw out a series of themes that were common and relevant to the objectives of the study as a whole. These were supplemented by additional data such as intelligence reports, data on police resources used, and number/nature of arrests. Elements of each observation are described below to illustrate each of the themes judged to be most relevant to the primary research aims set out above.

Fieldwork and Analysis

Intelligence led policing?

Observation F1 involved a fixture between two clubs who were playing each other for the first time in nearly 20 years. The host police were therefore unusually dependent on intelligence provided by the visiting force to shape the threat and risk assessment. Around six weeks prior to the fixture the host force received two low-graded intelligence feeds from the visiting force indicating that the match was being targeted by the visiting club's historically-significant 'hooligan' group, in order to celebrate an anniversary of their formation. As a consequence, upwards of 150 "*risk*" supporters and associated "*hangers on*" might attend, albeit with the primary intention of celebrating rather than initiating confrontations. As a result, it was concluded by the host force in their intelligence assessment document that these fans posed a serious threat because "*if confronted they will actively engage*" in confrontation. This report fed directly into operational planning, the host police categorised the fixture as C (i.e. high risk) and initiated the routine planning processes necessary for them to mobilise 193 police officers into the POPS operation, primarily in the form of public order trained Police Support Units (PSUs), spotters, mounted and EGTs[10], but also a small Police Liaison Team (PLT) tasked with engaging in dialogue with the fans. However, around

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[10] Evidence Gathering Teams are officers deployed specifically to gather video footage that could be used to identify and prosecute crimes committed during crowd events.

two weeks prior to the fixture, the visiting force provided a third, now much firmer, intelligence feed that the fixture was not going to be a focus for the group's celebration. Despite its significance, this revised intelligence did not influence any recategorization of the fixture nor the levels of resource deployed into it.

During the pre-match briefing, the Silver commander focused on the initial intelligence to provide a picture of considerable underlying threat, including the assertion that an unspecified number of risk fans from both the home and visiting club would be present and had been communicating with one another (implying a form of conspiracy). The briefing then moved on to the tactical plan designed to meet this potential threat, which revolved around public engagement and information-gathering. Officers were explicitly and clearly instructed to prioritise proactive verbal engagement with fans. It was explained that on the one hand, this was to build trust, provide reassurance and encourage self-policing, and on the other it was to enable the police to identify which individuals and groups posed a threat, their capability and intentions, and to determine the immediacy of any threat they posed (this is commonly referred to as the ICII). The role of officers was to feed these ICII assessments, delivering a form of contemporary intelligence or dynamic risk assessment, to their public order commanders to assist their decisions about how to deploy in relationship to any identified threat. Officers were also instructed that they must proactively intervene with low level offenders and interact with them to set limits with regard to unacceptable conduct. Finally they were told that the use of Section 35 ABCPA 2014 dispersal powers was an option available to them.

Throughout this event, our observation team could find no evidence of any of the approximately two and half thousand away fans that were seeking to provoke confrontations. This included data from an observer who travelled on the specific train that was judged by police to be potentially containing away 'risk' fans. In the host town, our observers noted a highly-visible police presence, including filming by an Evidence Gathering Team (EGT), but little if any proactive verbal engagement from officers toward fans arriving by train. The majority of away fans gathered in and around two pubs in the town centre designated by police for hosting them. The handful of PLTs mingled within the crowd and we observed several fans smiling and engaging in friendly conversation with these officers. In contrast, PSU colleagues stood some distance away and levels of interaction between these officers and fans were much lower and often completely absent. At around this time, a group of 30-40 home fans in a nearby pub were categorised as 'risk' by spotters. Our observations noted no verbal engagement with these fans, despite the presence of PSU

officers and a spotter nearby. Half an hour before kick-off, several of these fans left the bar and walked past one of the away pubs and an altercation developed, resulting in PSU officers feeling justified to draw batons. Immediately following this altercation, a group of some 19 home fans were contained and forced to leave the town centre using Section 35 dispersal powers.

The first of the central themes emerging from our analysis is the therefore the problematic relationship between football intelligence and operational planning. This theme was evident in all our observations but was most clearly characterised in F1. Despite receiving intelligence that significant numbers of away 'risk' fans would *not* attend this fixture, the host force continued to plan around earlier weaker assessments that they might. This led the host force to construct an initial analysis of threat and risk that flowed directly into the mobilisation plan. Yet, when more confident intelligence was subsequently received suggesting that the resources may not be needed, there was little attempt to critique the earlier assessment and no disruption of the initial mobilisation. This demonstrates a lack of intelligence analysis, management, and oversight which are essential to successful intelligence utilisation (Walsh, 2007). Moreover, F1 suggests it would be inaccurate to assume that football policing operations are always 'intelligence led' and that instead other factors (e.g. risk aversion, organisational planning, command accountability) may be driving resources into football POPS operations, sometimes unnecessarily.

The financial, operational, legal, and reputational costs of football policing.
Our data suggests the lack of precision in intelligence is also an issue because of the considerable financial and operational impact of the mobilisation. For example, the cost of the operation in Observation F1 was £53,503, of which £34,240 was met by the police force. While this cost may not appear excessive it is important to bear in mind that this was just one match and across the season; the cost at that stadium alone for the season was over half a million pounds of which just over £200,000 were non-recoverable costs borne by the police.

Furthermore, the costs to the wider public of these operations are not merely financial. We analysed the shift patterns of 138 officers drawn from across the districts of the host force. Of these, 90 were working on their normal duty time but 48 had rest days cancelled. The heavy rostering of staff from other duties will have impacted negatively on the capacity of these officers to fulfil their normal roles, and also meant that an additional three sergeants and nine constables had their rest days cancelled to enable the Districts to cover their duty resourcing precepts on that

day. In other words, the data suggests that this POPS operation resulted in serious deficits in the force's operational capacity elsewhere.

As noted above, across all observations we recorded a notable contrast between the instructions set out in the briefing and the actions of many officers on the ground. Specifically, there was very little observed proactive verbal engagement between PSU officers and fans, despite the instruction from senior commanders that this was required. While the interactions we observed were generally friendly and accommodating, they were almost entirely initiated by away fans (e.g. asking directions) rather than by police. This was an issue not just in itself but also because the lack of interaction also appeared to undermine police capacity. For example, when confrontation between fans developed during F1 it appears to have resulted from interactions with a group of home 'risk' fans with whom there had been little if any prior engagement to determine their intentions or to seek to negotiate with them regarding their movement. As such, a pattern of interaction developed that escalated into an incident of disorder and the use of a Section 35 direction. Subsequently, one of the dispersed fans issued a formal complaint on the basis he had not been involved in, nor was he intent on, disorder. Following this, the local newspaper ran a headline article questioning the legitimacy of the police action and highlighting "*serious concerns*" about the club's decision to also ban these fans from the stadium. Regardless of its perceived justification, the use of the Section 35 not only raised potential costs in terms of litigation but also caused negative reputational damage to the host force. This reputational damage was further reinforced when the same local newspaper ran a subsequent article some months later critiquing the cost of policing the club across the season.

The corralling and dispersal of this group also raises questions with regard to the human rights of the supporters. While the current legal position is that the corralling of individuals is *not* classified as a depravation of liberty for the purposes of Art.5 ECHR,[11] the potential liability for police forces due to restrictions on Freedom of Expression (Art.10) and Freedom of Assembly and Association (Art. 11) in a football context has yet to be tested. This is an area that police forces need to be aware of given the successful action brought in the protest case of *Laporte v Chief Constable of Gloucestershire Constabulary*,[12] and the acknowledgement of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) in *Friend v UK*[13] that these rights extend beyond the protest sphere and into socio-cultural contexts that would almost certainly include football (James and Pearson, 2015). Restrictions on

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[11] Unless this decision is made arbitrarily (*Austin and others v UK* (2012) 55 E.H.R.R. 14).
[12] *R (Laporte) v Chief Constable of Gloucestershire Constabulary* [2007] 2 All E.R. 529.
[13] *Friend v United Kingdom* (2010) 50 E.H.R.R. SE6, at para 50.

assembly and expression should only be made where they are proportionate and necessary, and yet discussions of Arts.10 and 11 were absent from all bar one of the pre-match briefings (and accompanying documentation) that were observed.

The interactional dynamics of risk: facilitation, infrastructure and dialogue.

Across all of our observations, we identified a disparity between intelligence, operational planning, and deployment, as well as a failure to actualise proactive verbal engagement from PSU officers. However, where proactive verbal interactions did take place we found strong evidence they had positive implication for the overall success of that policing operation in terms of achieving its strategic goals. The best example of the power of positive interaction is captured during Observation F2, at a local derby with a longstanding history of conflict between the fan groups. At the reverse fixture earlier in the season there had been significant disorder that had attracted national media coverage and although the host police lacked any firm intelligence that the 'risk groups' affiliated to the clubs were planning confrontations, F2 was classified as posing the highest level of risk (Category C-IR). Given the classification, the host police needed to impose a force-wide cancellation of rest days in order mobilise in excess of 500 officers to respond to the anticipated threat. These were resources primarily oriented toward use of force and included Level 2-trained PSUs, the Level 1-trained Operational Support Unit, as well as spotters, EGT, mounted and other resources (but did not utilise PLTs).

This operation was built around a strategy of segregating the opposing fans, through imposing strict control on the direction of travel by away fans to the stadium and the free movement of home fans around the stadium. This approach was aided by the surrounding infrastructure; the away turnstiles were located just a short walk from a nearby railway station, meaning it was possible for the police to designate and then enforce a route from that station along which the away fans could arrive and egress. Consequently, two 'football special' trains were scheduled to run directly from the main city centre interchange to the 'away' station without stopping. Thus, away fans taking these trains would be prevented from accessing areas around the stadium used by home fans. Tactically the application of PSU resources focused primarily upon creating and enforcing a series of both static and dynamic cordons in and across the several road junctions to and from the away station and in the roadway leading to the away turnstiles, as these are immediately adjacent to a series of entry points for home fans. They also involved closing a number of main roads and usual access ways to home supporters for a considerable period before and after the match.

In the planning stages, police consultation took place with fan organisations through an existing channel of communication to the fan groups enabled through a *Football Independent Advisory Group* (FIAG). The FIAG was intended to legitimise, communicate, and gain compliance with the strategic and tactical plan. However, the host force acknowledged that the success of the strategy would ultimately revolve around the compliance of the away 'risk' fans and their willingness to travel to the station on the football specials and therefore remain within the segregated area. They admitted that any lack of compliance in this regard would create serious problems, and that their heavy resourcing of this operation was in effect a contingency to control this 'risk' group through coercive means should that situation materialise (e.g. containment, escort, etc). Given the perceived risks of disorder, a decision was also taken to schedule an early kick-off and prevent the sale of alcohol to away fans within the stadium. During the pre-event briefing it was acknowledged that the intelligence picture around this operation was built on eight intelligence feeds that were very weak, in some cases, described by a senior commander as "*fanciful*" and that as such the police were essentially operating "*in the dark*" about what was likely to happen with regard to the risk groups affiliated to either club. Once again, there was a strong emphasis in the pre-event briefings on officers engaging in high levels of proactive and positive verbal engagement with fans.

Two hours before kick-off, around 200 away fans began to gather at a bar near the main city centre station, from where the football specials were due to depart. This group was categorised and subsequently referred to as the away "*risk group*" by police. Our observers, proximate to and then inside this crowd, judged that while it was predominantly male and contained a number of self-identifying 'hooligan' and 'former hooligan' fans, it consisted predominantly of a mix of what could be described as carnival fans (Pearson, 2012) in their 20s, 30s, and 40s demonstrating little if any intention toward confrontation. In this crowd were also a handful of women and children. Around 15 meters outside the gathering crowd, were four pairs of police spotters, with several vans of PSU officers were stationed nearby. One of the spotters informed the research team that he had previously attempted to engage with the fans but had found them unwilling to speak and subsequently withdrawn to a distance.

The first 'football special' left the station and was practically empty, possibly because with pubs near the stadium not accepting away fans and no alcohol for sale in the stadium, there was little incentive for the fans to leave.[14] The second train was due to depart half an hour before kick-off

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[14] The relationship between football fans and the social consumption of alcohol is well established (Pearson and Sale 2009; Stott, Hoggett and Pearson 2012; Pearson 2012)

but fifteen minutes before its departure, the entire group spontaneously moved off, chanting. The relative suddenness and cohesion of their departure meant that the spotters and PSU officers were relatively unprepared and had to react quickly to respond to the situation. Rather than heading towards the platform from which the 'football special' was due to leave, the group headed initially toward a different platform from which a normal scheduled train to the stadium was preparing to depart. The police in the station interpreted this as a lack of compliance and signalling a potential intent to access the home areas. With only six officers available in the immediate vicinity, it was acknowledged to our team that they were powerless to use force to prevent the fans accessing the other platform and took the decision not to attempt this. At this point, one of the spotters engaged verbally with the group and, because of his knowledge of, and relationship with, prominent individuals within it, managed to influence those leading the group that they should continue to the other platform where their special train would soon be available. The group complied, and a potentially difficult and confrontational situation was averted. There was no suggestion from subsequent observations with this group on the train that fans were disappointed by how events had played out or were even aware their movement to the scheduled service platform was transgressive. It is quite possible that despite the attempts of the FIAG, many were not aware of what was expected of them.

Despite this apparently successful dialogue-based intervention, observation F2 also characterised other issues common to all our observations. Namely the interactional rather than merely dispositional nature of 'risk'. For example, on arrival at the away station the configuration of its exit meant that the large crowd of away fans filtered out in relatively small groups who appeared to have different profiles, dispositions, and demeanours. The police created 'hard' segregation lines consisting of nose-to-tail police vans and PSU officers in tight formation to ensure the fans followed the sterile route to the away turnstiles. While a few PSU officers verbally engaged with fans, usually instructing them where to go, the majority merely stood observing fans walking past. It appeared that in many cases, PSU constables preferred to leave it to their Inspector or Sergeant to engage verbally with the fans.

At the road junction adjacent to the stadium, a line of club stewards blocked the route in an attempt to impose a ticket check. This led the previously dispersed crowd of away fans regrouped into a unified and empowered crowd (Drury, & Reicher, 1999; Drury, Cocking, Beale, Hanson, & Rapley, 2005; Drury, Evripidou, Van Zomeren, 2015). When this happened, the cordon was released, but it was at a point where there was a line of sight to home fans across the police cordon, which led

to gesticulating and verbal abuse between the two fan groups that may have been less intense or easier to manage the groups remained in smaller less empowered groups. Moreover, PSU officers rarely intervened to prevent these increasingly hostile verbal interchanges. Indeed, on several occasions we observed PSU officers standing stationary directly in front of fans who were aggressively gesticulating and shouting at each other across the segregation, making no attempt to interact with them unless fans tried to breach the line. The relatively late scheduling of the train, the fact that many more fans chose the latter special, and the delays at the cordon and during crowding at the turnstiles, meant that many fans missed kick-off despite following the requests and directions of the police. Indeed, their compliance at the main station directly resulted in them taking a later train than they had intended.

Observation F2 therefore highlighted a set of inter-related themes common to our observations. Although the facilitation of legitimate behaviour was a stated objective of the force, this was not couched in terms of positive rights to expression and assembly, and in reality the host force had very clear intentions in terms of what home and away fans would and would not be permitted to do. These imposed (or were intended to impose) significant restrictions on where they were allowed to go, although in this observation we viewed these to be Human Rights compliant. In order to achieve their intentions, the home force were enabled by transport and stadium infrastructure, but the operation required the force to mobilise hundreds of officers who, as with all our observations, demonstrated relatively low levels of verbal engagement with fans despite being clearly instructed to do so. It was also an operation that drew upon extensive pre-event dialogue with fan organisations, and ultimately it was a spontaneous dialogue-based intervention that was pivotal to it achieving its aims.[15] In other words, despite the heavy investment in PSU resources, its 'success' was enabled, in large part, through dialogue-based intervention. Additionally, there was a marked contrast between the police categorisation of the risk group and our observations regarding their underlying heterogeneous composition and relatively peaceful demeanour. Indeed, the tensions that did emerge during our observations were largely due to specific interactions that took place in a context of poor police proactivity and low levels of proactive dialogue-based engagement, largely by PSU constables. In other words, 'risk' was as much an outcome of situationally embedded patterns of interaction as it was about the disposition of the fans.

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[15] While we judge that the dialogue at the station was pivotal three of our observers travelled on the train and could find no evidence that the 'risk group' were aware of the FIAG's consultation nor that they were meant to travel on the 'special' rather than the scheduled services.

Over-resourcing and staff disenfranchisement.

As already discussed, our observations demonstrate that the intelligence that football operations are working to can at times be very weak and that as a result, the high-risk categorisation and the heavy level of resourcing flowing into these operations bore little relationship to the low levels of risk that were observed. The observations suggest this disparity may be leading to a sense of disenfranchisement among police staff. This was particularly evident during Observation F3, that followed a very similar facilitation and segregation approach to that of F2. This host force had a long-standing strategic commitment to facilitation, communication, and the embedding of a research- and theory-led 'community policing' approach to football. In contrast to our other observations, Articles 10 and 11 ECHR were reflected in the operational strategy. At Gold and Silver level there was an expressed commitment to driving further change by de-escalating tensions and withdrawing resources, an approach the command team had sought to embed across the last few years. For example, the corresponding fixture in 2016 had utilised upwards of 1,200 police officers; 2017 had seen reductions to approximately 900 with an increased focus on engagement and communication as well as a move away from the use of CBRN barriers and Code One uniforms. Nonetheless this operation still required a force-wide cancellation of rest days and utilised 16 PSUs (400 officers), 18 Bronze commanders as well as mounted, traffic and dogs.

Despite the awareness of Articles 10 and 11 ECHR, a key objective on the part of the police was to prevent the away fans from walking as a group to the stadium through the city centre, as it was believed this would have been difficult to control and seen as a provocation by home fans. The idea that the assembly should be facilitated within "sight and sound" of the target (in the case the home supporters) is set out in the Venice Commission Guidelines on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly.[16] Articles 10-11 are not absolute and can be lawfully restricted if that restriction is lawful, proportionate, and necessary. However, it was not clear to what extent, if at all, that the HR considerations had fed into the strategic plan for the policing operation. In order to prevent any "provocation", a licenced venue had been secured in the city centre for the away fans pre-match and 'football special' trains from the centre to a station in closer proximity to the stadium had been organised. The fans would then walk to the stadium via a segregated roadway with only minimal points of contact with areas containing home fans. The operation's Silver commander had held several pre-event meetings with away fan organisations and the return on this investment in the planning phase appeared to have been to secure a good level of compliance from visiting fans, who gathered in the allocated city centre venue.

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[16] (2nd Ed. 2010, https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD(2010)020-e)

Nonetheless, we observed a very high police profile given the low levels of threat and risk that materialised on the day. It was evident to our observers that many of the early police deployments were therefore adding little to the operation and that some PSU officers saw limited value or purpose in their deployments, a concern perhaps amplified by the fact it was extremely cold. For example, while the kick off for this fixture was 3.00pm, operational deployment began at around 12.00pm. Several of the deployments we observed at this time were of officers standing in otherwise empty roadways through an industrial estate along which the away fans were to walk some two-hours later. During the operation, the observation team interviewed a PSU officer who expressed powerful concerns about the fact that his rest days had been cancelled across two consecutive weekends, articulating how his normal working arrangements were already highly pressured and under-resourced in stark contrast to the heavy level of resource he saw being flooded into this operation. He expressed concern about both the negative knock-on impact this would have upon 'everyday' policing and how his loss of rest days had a damaging effect on his family life. It is not difficult to see how officers of this mindset and cynicism may be less than enthusiastic to 'buy-in' to easily the avoidable tactic of positive verbal engagement with fans.

Dialogue Policing and the management of football risk fans.

As we have stressed within all the operations observed, there was always an expressed objective of securing high levels of interaction between PSU officers and fans. In contrast, our observations suggest that the level of interaction achieved was relatively low. Moreover, despite the focus on verbal engagement, PLTs were deployed in only two of the football operations we observed. The general rationale for this lack of inclusion provided to us by the senior commanders was that PLTs added little if any operational value in football, particularly as this related to engagement with risk fans. The engagement with risk fans was invariably described as a responsibility for spotters[17] and it was frequently stated that PSU officers should already possess ample skills to engage with the public. Our observation raised several issues relevant to such assertions. First, there were only ever a few spotters present at any of the fixtures and their role was primarily focused on identification and categorisation of risk fans rather than interaction with them. Additionally, instead of staying with an identified risk group they would often be tasked to continue with a surveillance role elsewhere. PSU officers, in contrast, would rarely go inside the pubs and as such very little interaction between them and fans would take place. Second, where PLTs were operational, the

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[17] Although previous research has noted that spotting teams are not always good at positively engaging with supporters (Pearson, 2012: 116-117).

latter were observed to add capability and complement, rather than undermine or replace, the role of spotters. For example, observation P1 involved the policing of a demonstration by two far-right organisations and a counter-protest. This demonstration drew together, and was organised by, several individuals influential within otherwise antagonistic football 'risk' groups but in a protest context the policing operation utilised negotiators, spotters and PLTs as primary tactics.

The policing operation for Observation P1 mobilised over 500 police officers, requiring the host force to again impose a cancellation of rest days and secure mutual aid from other forces. Once again specific intelligence was largely absent, so senior commanders had only speculative ideas about numbers attending or routes or assembly points for the different factions. There was a strong and explicit emphasis upon facilitation of expression, assembly, and access to public houses, and officers were instructed to engage in high levels of friendly verbal communication with protestors (a significant number of whom were expected to be known to the police and were categorised as risk in the context of football matches). In contrast to football, for this event, the host force deployed its police negotiators, who had a longstanding involvement in the policing of right-wing protests. The negotiators were used to establish links and hold several pre-event planning meetings with individuals from these local football risk groups, who were playing a key role in organising the protest. The host force also utilised a contingent of football spotters and over 50 PLTs, supplemented by spotting teams and PLTs from a visiting force who had either been liaising with the national organisers or were from police forces who held jurisdiction in areas from which football risk groups expected to attend originated. It was a key strategic goal for this operation to retain spotters and PLTs as the primary tactic and to use PSUs merely as a contingency if and when required.

As the event materialised it was evident early on that the intelligence picture the police were working to was not entirely accurate, but around five to six thousand protestors eventually gathered in three sperate pre-arranged locations. Throughout the event, the negotiators, PLTs, and spotters were moving through the crowds engaging in verbal interaction with protestors. PSU staff were kept primarily as a contingency. Our observations and interviews with PLTs indicated that reactions toward them from protestors were generally very positive. At one point, one of the protests moved off on a pre-arranged march through the city centre, but unexpectedly headed along an unanticipated route toward a counter-protest. As a consequence, the two opposing factions came into direct contact, but a combination of PLT and PSU officers managed to stand

between the two demonstrations and the marchers moved along toward their rally site with no collective violence developing, despite the high levels of evident hostility.

Throughout the protest, the force negotiators were liaising with their various pre-event contacts to manage emerging tensions and, as the negotiators put it, "*iron out the creases*". For example, due to the perceived threat of disorder, the local licensees took a collective decision the preceding evening to close almost all the city centre pubs during the day of the protest. As result, one of the faction organisers who had arranged to use a specific pub had their plans disrupted and began to attribute the closures as a violation of their prior agreements with police. Consequently, antagonisms toward police started to develop. The force negotiator took the faction organiser to the licensee who clarified that the police had not forced the closures. The emerging tensions subsequently dissipated, and the police were able to retain their communications and sense of legitimacy with and among the protest faction. Moreover, when a second march of some 2,500 protestors moved through the city, comprised of several factions of football risk fans, it was managed almost entirely by a handful of PLTs. It was evident that the negotiators delivered a form of specialist engagement, established over multiple meetings with known 'risk' fans built over time in the planning phases which helped de-escalate dynamic emergent tension. This 'specialist' engagement capability was enhanced by engagement from spotters who were also clearly familiar with many of the 'risk' fans present on the protest.

Discussion

Financial, reputational and operational costs.

Our observations confirm the tremendous financial and organisational burdens associated with policing football-related 'public order'. Across our six observations alone we estimate to have observed well in excess of £2 million worth of expenditure and witnessed the deployment of over 2,000 police officers. It is also evident that there is some inconsistency with police guidance, particularly with regard to police duties to facilitate and protect Art.10 and 11 ECHR rights. The high levels of police deployment witnessed in our study arguably also have serious 'hidden costs' in terms of impact upon force capacity for everyday policing, as well as upon staff morale.

It has long been understood that policing large-scale public order operations carries with it the capacity for individual commanders to suffer serious negative consequences for their standing and reputation should disorder develop 'on their watch' (Cronin & Reicher, 2006; Waddington, 1994). In this sense, there is very little, if any, benefit in individual commanders rejecting resources from

a football operation once they have secured a justification to make them available, because these resources provide a capacity to respond 'just in case' things go wrong. Moreover, once it is anticipated that an operation requires human resources, the complexity of the mobilisation creates a momentum that is not easily disrupted. The organisational intricacy of changing shift patterns, cancelling rest days, ensuring availability of vehicles, and so on, means that disturbing the planning process has consequences for staff across the organisation. Any interference could expose a commander to reputational damage, particularly if things did go wrong and they had rejected resources in the planning phase (Waddington, 1994). Our analysis suggests these organisational and accountability factors are driving resources into football operations unnecessarily and therefore cannot be ignored.

Nevertheless, it was also evident that the heavy use of resourcing in this context itself carries with it negative reputational risks of 'overspending', as was the case for one of the police forces in our sample. We would argue, that in a context of relatively weak intelligence, disproportionality also has the capacity to result in litigation (e.g. for breaches of Human Rights or unlawful use of police powers such as s.35 ABCPA 2014) which could not only exacerbate cost implications of football events for a host force but also bring about further reputational harms. Thus, while high levels of resourcing are inherently problematic this study exposes at least three ways in which policing could be made more efficient and effective.

Intelligence v information: understanding 'risk' culture
A key feature in our analysis were the relationships between intelligence, risk categorisation, and operational planning. It was evident across all our observations that the intelligence picture is often very weak and bore little relationship to the behaviours that emerged. In addition, we noted very little critical analysis of this intelligence. Often in contrast to pre-event police expectations, we found little evidence of any major underlying threat that was brought about by 'risk' groups travelling to these events who were conspiring to precipitate disorder. The tensions and conflict we did observe were largely the result of patterns of intergroup interaction that were mostly unexpected and developed during the event itself. It was also evident that it was the capacity of the policing operation to proactively manage these interactions, primarily through facilitation and a graded tactical approach based upon communication, that was a primary correlate of operational success (see also Stott, Livingstone & Hoggett, 2008; Hoggett & Stott, 2010; Stott, Hoggett & Pearson, 2012; Stott, West & Radburn, 2016; Hoggett & West, 2018).

Where the intelligence changed (which was rarely on a matchday itself), commanders tended to believe that which indicated the highest risk, even if this intelligence was of poor quality. Perhaps, given the complexity of operational mobilisation, host forces get 'locked in' to the recruitment of human resources, with senior commanders keen to embrace weak intelligence and sometimes unwilling to disrupt that process even when contradictory information is received. Our analysis also demonstrated that intelligence is focused primarily upon categorising 'risk' fans. While such an approach is in line with APP guidance and self-evidently important, our analysis also suggests such a narrow conceptualisation is also problematic. Pre-event intelligence on whether or not a specific group of fans posing a risk was frequently static in nature and failed to recognise the fluidity of fan subcultures (Pearson 2012) and the context-specific, dynamic and interactional nature of 'risk' as it subsequently materialised.

In other words, police concepts of *intelligence* often revolved merely around imposing the category 'risk' fans, who in turn would be seen as 'the problem' because it was assumed they were predisposed toward conflict. Such risk assessments provided little if any *information* beyond this in terms of heterogeneity of composition or variability of intent. In this sense it was evident that the police forces in our sample were forced to work with a relatively limited and under-developed understanding of the identities, culture, and likely behaviour of the fan groups they were managing. In turn this undermined the quality of the information they could utilise to predict the level and dynamic nature of threats that were subsequently posed and therefore how to best deploy proportionately to them. A second drawback of this limited categorisation approach appeared to be that some police forces could miss opportunities for more meaningful and productive engagement with fans they categorised as 'risk' (Hoggett & Stott, 2011).

Enabling dialogue and managing the dynamics of risk
In addition to the issues highlighted above, our analysis suggests the problems of dynamically reassessing and responding to 'risk' are evident during operations and exacerbated by relatively low levels of proactive verbal engagement from PSU and other police staff. A consistent message from our study was the failure of many PSU officers to meaningfully engage with fans, even though they were invariantly briefed to do so. Although some officers were genuinely excellent and proactive, this was not the case for the majority and too often constables were happy to leave interaction to their Sergeant or PSU Inspector (who in large deployments would invariably be stood nearby) even in circumstances where there was a clear and obvious value in proactive intervention. Our analysis suggests that these poor levels of proactive verbal engagement

undermined the capacity of policing operations to undertake and deliver any form of meaningful ICII assessment. As such, policing operations did not, and were often not in a position to, critically assess the intelligence against data or evidence being generated by police officers on the ground through proactive engagement, or to add to a dynamic intelligence-base. Our study also suggests that potentially serious risks were avoided and better managed where effective proactive communication-based engagement was possible and had taken place (see also Stott, West & Radburn, 2016; Hoggett & West, 2018). Following the recent decision by the European Court of Human Rights in *S., V. and A. v. Denmark*, there is also now a legal reason for prioritising a dialogue-based approach to football policing. In this case, the Grand Chamber noted, *inter alia*, that genuine but failed attempts at dialogue can evidence the requirement that a least restrictive alternative to subsequent coercive tactics (including preventative detention) were not available, therefore making the latter tactics, proportionate, necessary, and human rights-compliant.[18]

In our observations, dialogue-based interventions were facilitated to a certain extent by FIAGs, but it was evident such formal structures do not always engage the fans categorised as 'risk', and that communication also needed to be delivered on the ground by spotters or PLTs. As we observed it, communication was valuable simply in terms of providing information *to* fans of which they were otherwise unaware (e.g. guiding them along the correct routes or transport). In this regard, our observations noted excellent examples of dialogue from both PLTs (when deployed) and also from spotters. However, we also noted that current levels of PLT deployment in football are insufficient for this aim, despite the fact that PLTs and spotters were utilised to good effect as the primary tactic when policing the very same 'risk' groups when they were engaging in protest. Equally, during our observations spotters were usually too few in number, dynamic, reactive, focused upon categorisation, and thinly spread to assist consistently when it comes to the demanding challenges of dialogue with risk groups or engagement with the wider match-going crowd.

Recommendations

Despite the progress that has been made nationally in football policing, and the relative successes in terms of prevention of disorder by British football policing operations, inter-linked issues were evident across the observed fixtures which raise several issues for UK forces wishing to innovate and develop their match-day operations. There is a particular challenge in understanding how to reduce the extremely high level of resourcing being utilised by police in this context. We hope our

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[18] Grand Chamber decision 22 October 2018 (Applications nos. 35553/12, 36678/12 and 36711/12), especially paras 161-165.

evidence stimulates thinking about how this can be achieved. To facilitate such considerations, in this final section we make three preliminary evidence-based recommendations relating directly to police practice.

First, there needs to be a comprehensive advance in risk analysis and its relationship to operational planning and deployment. This requires a move away from risk assessments based merely upon the relatively blunt and fixed categorisation of 'risk' fans (College of Policing, 2018) toward a fuller and more comprehensive theoretically-led understanding of both the interactional crowd dynamics (e.g. intergroup dynamics between fans and with police) and the organisational factors (e.g. accountability, risk aversion, intelligence and operational planning) of risk management (see also Stott, West & Radburn, 2016). Such change would facilitate a fuller understanding of threat and risk, and promote more effective ways of managing these dynamics (both externally and internally) with greater effectiveness and efficiency (Reicher et al, 2004, 2007).

Secondly, at a strategic level there needs to be more focus on human rights under Articles 10 and 11. An emphasis on these rights is a key feature of APP Guidance on POPS, which sets out a series of core principles that revolve around presumptions of peaceful assembly and the positive and negative police duties therein. Following the extension of these rights in 2010 to social and cultural gatherings by *Friend v UK*,[19] the foregrounding of Arts 10 and 11 should be a key feature of statements of strategic intent for football match events. This should also help provide clearer rationales for facilitation and communication among police staff.

Thirdly, at a tactical level resources need to be made available to achieve a fuller graded tactical approach (College of Policing, 2013; 89). One way to achieve this, as argued elsewhere (Stott, 2016; Stott, West & Radburn, 2016; Hoggett & West, 2018), may be through the increased deployment of PLTs or other bespoke resources developed for the specific purpose of fan engagement. However, in addition, there should be an increased emphasis given to 'specialist engagement' beyond these units. For example, spotters could be encouraged to focus on dialogue rather than merely 'evidence-gathering' and securing FBOs;[20] evidence suggests there is wide variation in terms of the extent to which spotters undertake this role (Stott, Hoggett & Livingstone, 2008; Pearson 2012: 116-117). Further, prioritising the deployment of constables with the best interactional skills

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[19] (2010) 50 EHRR SE 6 at para 50. See also James and Pearson, 2015).
[20] It is worth noting that several researchers argue there are serious questions regarding both the legitimacy and the effectiveness of FBOs (Pearson, 2002; Stott & Pearson, 2007; Hopkins & Hamilton-Smith, 2014; James and Pearson, 2007, 2018).

(e.g. neighbourhood rather than response or territorial support) could also have a beneficial effect (Doughty, 2015), as could looking to decrease the number of constables that are policing matches reluctantly following the cancellation of rest-days.

Our recommendations are at this stage necessarily general and non-specific. The intention is to ask participating forces to consider them, apply their expertise to understand their potential value and how best to innovate to achieve these general aims. Our goal was to build upon existing ethnographic studies of football policing (e.g. O'Neill, 2005; Pearson, 2012; Stott and Pearson, 2007; Stott et al, 2011) by highlighting the value of a PAR framework in developing a credible qualitatively-oriented methodology for informing policy and practice where knowledge is co-produced by academics and practitioners (Crawford, 2017). This is because whatever innovations are made on the basis of research, they also need to be subjected to academic and ideally peer-review by academics and policing colleagues from other forces in order to assess their effectiveness. Only through police/academic partnerships, partnership knowledge co-production, and an ability to be critically reflective upon practice, can the policing of football be driven forward, and recommendations be placed before the Home Office and College of Policing to help advance an evidence-based approach to APP in this area.

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