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Policing football crowds in England and Wales: a model of 'good practice'?

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There have been important developments in psychological theory of crowd dynamics (Reicher 2001). When this body of knowledge has been combined with operational policing it has been associated with conflict reduction in the context of high risk football matches with an international dimension (e.g., Stott *et al.* 2007). This paper extends this body of work by reporting upon a longitudinal observational study of policing within the environment of domestic football in England and Wales. This paper focuses upon the potential impact policing has upon crowd dynamics and 'disorder'. On the basis of the analysis recommendations are developed with regard to understandings of 'risk' to public order, strategy and tactics, operational structure, role and function of officers and multi-agency cooperation. This paper concludes by exploring the relevance of psychological theory for models of good practice, policy making and training in the arena of the policing of domestic football in England and Wales.

Keywords: public order policing; police operational structures; responses to hooliganism; social identity; intergroup and crowd dynamics

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Introduction

Psychological theories of crowd behaviour

The most prominent early theoretical approach to understanding the behaviour and psychology of crowds was that of Gustav LeBon (1895), who suggested that being part of a crowd makes individuals lose their conscious personality and adopt a shared, primitive 'group mind' or 'racial unconscious'. He proposed that this group mind makes crowds irrational, open to 'contagion', and their behaviour antisocial, destructive and violent. While other 'classical' theoretical perspectives on the crowd differ in their detail (e.g., Allport 1924), they nevertheless share (and ultimately feed into) the notion of the crowd as inherently irrational, volatile and dangerous because of the way that it supposedly subverts 'normal' individuals' identity processes.

Identity in the crowd

Over recent decades an alternative theoretical model of crowd psychology and behaviour has challenged the 'classical' approach. This new model, commonly referred to as the social identity approach (see Reicher 2001), has its basis in the proposition that part of our self-concept derives from our membership of particular

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social categories (e.g., a policeman or woman, an England football fan). Consequently, as well as having a *personal* identity (i.e., our identity as a unique individual), people therefore also have a range of *social* identities. Acting as a member of a group therefore doesn't entail a *loss* of identity so much as a *shift* in the focus of our self-definition away from unique individual attributes to the more shared, group-based defining attributes (e.g., a group of men acting in terms of masculine norms on a night out). Thus, acting in terms of a social identity also means that there will be an increased tendency to adhere to the norms, values and ideology shared among members of that group. Moreover, our shared identity gives us some indication of whether we are able to act in particular ways by indicating whether others in the group are likely to support particular actions (e.g., intervention to calm or escalate an argument). Salient social identities therefore orientate people towards meaningful forms of collective behaviour in any given context, both in terms of what behaviour is seen by them as *appropriate* or *legitimate* and what behaviour they feel is *possible*. Like any other group context, then, being part of a crowd does not subvert identity. Instead, crowds are circumstances in which crowd members' social identity – a sense of shared identity with other crowd members – comes to the fore.

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Crowds as intergroup phenomena

Following the early work of Reicher (1984, 1987), the social identity approach moved forward through the development of the elaborated social identity model (ESIM) of crowd behaviour (Reicher 1996a, b, Stott and Reicher 1998a, Drury and Reicher 2000, Reicher 2001). This development highlighted the importance of intergroup dynamics in shaping and reshaping a crowd's social identity and collective behaviour over time, particularly in terms of the *emergence* and escalation of a 'riot' (Reicher 1996a). Several ESIM studies of crowd events highlighted the importance of police tactics in shaping crowd dynamics. These included studies of students 'rioting' during a protest against the removal of grants (Reicher 1996b), demonstrators rioting during a protest against the implementation of a tax (Stott and Drury 2000), a series of protests around the extension of the M11 motorway in London (Drury and Reicher 2000) and rioting among football fans attending the first round of the 1990 World Cup Finals in Sardinia (Stott and Reicher 1998b).

A dynamic that was evident in each of these studies was that where police used tactics of coercive force (e.g., baton charges) against those in the crowd who saw themselves or others around them as posing very little, if any, threat to public order, there would be corresponding increases in the number of people in the crowd who perceived the police as an illegitimate force. Such experiences among crowd members would then lead to a change in the crowd's social identity (their shared sense of 'us' and 'them') along two critically important dimensions. On the one hand, increasing numbers of people within the crowd would see conflict against the police as acceptable or legitimate. On the other, it would create a redefined sense of unity in the crowd against the police. This sense of unity in opposition subsequently empowered those now seeking confrontation and thus enabled them to engage in conflict (Stott and Drury 2000). In other words, the development of widespread rioting was not simply a product of the presence of violent groups. Rather the psychology that made a riot possible *emerged* during the events themselves as the

outcome of particular patterns of group interactions, largely initiated by police tactical responses.

ESIM and football-related 'disorder': developing links between theory and practice

A central feature of the development of the ESIM has been its application to crowd dynamics in relation to football. For example, Stott and Reicher's (1998a) analysis of how conflict can escalate was central to the early development of the ESIM framework (Stott 1996). In turn, Stott *et al.* (2001) analysis of English and Scottish fan behaviour during the 1998 Football World Cup Finals showed that while perceptions of illegitimacy underlay conflict escalation, perceptions of legitimacy underlay absence of conflict. What these studies reveal is that the relationship between police activity and crowd behaviour is a complex one, particularly in terms of crowd participants' views of the legitimacy of their social relationships with the police. None the less they are critical because these perceptions in turn affect the crowd's internal dynamics, facilitating or undermining conflictual minorities' ability to influence others in the crowd. What these studies highlight therefore is the need to conceptualise 'risk' in relation to public order as a *process* arising from the operation of the group level dynamics that occur during crowd events (see also Stott and Adang 2003). In turn, the effectiveness of public order policing can be understood and analysed in terms of its ability to proactively manage these dynamics in a way that minimises the potential for large-scale incidents of disorder. However, fully realising the value of the ESIM required (1) systematic research on the policing perspectives and strategies that influence public order dynamics; and (2) the application of ESIM principles to develop specific guidelines for public order policing. In other words, the real test of ESIM is in its ability to provide a two-way link between theory and practice.

An important step towards generating such a link was taken in 2001, when the UK Home Office began to fund a programme of studies of the policing of English football fans travelling abroad. This research paid particular attention to developing a model of 'good practice' in public order policing, based on a theoretical analysis of the general social identity processes that mediate successful outcomes (Stott and Adang 2003). The research suggested that a 'friendly but firm' or 'low profile' (see Adang and Cuvelier 2001) form of policing was the most effective at minimising widespread 'hooliganism' among English fans travelling abroad. An important factor here was that the 'low profile' approach increased the range of tactical options open to the police prior to the deployment of coercive force. This 'tactical depth' allowed policing to move from the *reactive* controlling of public disorder to the *proactive* management and maintenance of public order.

A second important feature of low profile policing was the strategic facilitation of fans' lawful intentions and behaviours. This facilitation strategy combined with the early use of non-confrontational tactical options (such as interacting positively with fans) was in turn associated with shared perceptions among fans of the legitimacy of their relationship with the police. Indeed, there was evidence of fans actively marginalising hooligans and seeking to prevent disorder by 'self-policing' those fans acting in an antisocial fashion (Stott and Adang 2003, Adang and Stott 2004). In other words, low profile policing managed the identity dynamics among crowd

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members in such a way that policing was perceived as legitimate by fans, which in turn undermined the ability of 'hooligans' to create large-scale public disorder.

The model of good practice made its most significant policy and operational practice contribution to date when the Portuguese Public Security Police (Polícia de Segurança Pública or PSP) utilised it in the development of their 'use of force' strategy for the 2004 Football European Championships (Euro 2004). In line with the model, the PSP's public order strategy focused upon a four-stage graded intervention policy that was designed to facilitate fans' legitimate intentions and avoid unnecessary or indiscriminate use of coercive force. Initially, pairs of officers in ordinary police uniform, and plain clothes officers in groups, would integrate themselves into crowds of fans. Their role was to monitor for emergent risk and, if necessary, to provide a capability for rapid, low impact intervention. Tactically, this 'low profile' policing was highly proactive rather than *laissez-faire*, utilising non-confrontational tactical options at an early stage. This meant that when more forceful interventions were deemed necessary, they were information led, low impact, rapid and more accurately targeted. In this way, interventions were more likely to effectively differentiate between fans who were and fans who were not posing a public order risk (see Stott *et al.* 2007, forthcoming).

The widely recognised success of the PSP approach provided further support for the ESIM. The analysis of fan perceptions and collective behaviour demonstrated that subjectively legitimate policing could successfully minimise collective violence among English fans. In particular, this analysis suggested that widespread perceptions of the legitimacy of the police were punctuated by critical moments of 'self-policing' among groups of high risk fans that helped in the prevention of any major incidents of 'disorder' in match cities. In contrast, subjectively illegitimate policing in areas outside of the PSP's jurisdiction was associated with the generation and escalation of conflict among the same fan group.

This research programme has also begun subsequently to impact upon policy at a European level. For example, in 2005, the Police Cooperation Working Party of the Council of the European Union adopted policies based upon this research as addendums to the European Union Handbook on International Police Cooperation and Measures to Prevent and Control Violence and Disturbances in Connection with Football Matches with an International Dimension.[1]

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The current study

Despite the considerable contribution of ESIM to understanding crowd dynamics on the one hand and informing police strategy in relation to international football on the other, its value in other settings, such as domestic football within the UK, is not yet self-evident. Moreover, despite the extensive literature on policing public order (e.g., Northam 1989, Della Porta and Reiter 1998, Stott 2003, King and Waddington 2004, Reicher *et al.* 2004, De Lint 2005, Waddington 2007, Waddington and King 2005) there is little if any analysis concerning operational police practice in the context of domestic football in England and Wales (O'Neill 2005). This is despite the ongoing and intractable problems of 'hooliganism' and the fact that domestic football in England and Wales requires an annual police expenditure approaching 30 million pounds (in direct costs alone) with incidents recorded at over 15% of football matches in England and Wales during the 2004–2005 season. Indeed expenditure is

so large in this context that one major metropolitan force estimates that it spends in the region of 75% of its total public order expenditure on policing football.

While many features are common to football contexts there are crucial differences between national and international fixtures. Chief among these is the potential in domestic contexts for long-term dynamics between particular sets of fans and police to develop and become entrenched. While the dynamics between fans and police during international tournaments can clearly develop and change over time, in most cases these dynamics effectively cease when the tournament finishes and then begin afresh with a different nation's police force(s). In contrast, there is much greater scope for particular dynamics to become embedded in fan–police relations in the domestic context, because the same fan groups and police will encounter one another on many occasions across a season, and from one season to the next.

The potential for long-term embeddedness also applies to dynamics within and between particular fan groups, with different clubs, factions and hierarchies having a much greater opportunity to develop than is usually the case for international fan groups. Finally, and as will become clear from the data and analysis we present below, the importance of understanding the particular long-term nature of domestic football dynamics can even extend to the physical environment in which interactions take place. Specifically, a key point will be to show that policing must not only take into account the surrounding physical environment *per se*, but also to appreciate fans' knowledge of it and – crucially – how fans' changing social identity can lead them to use it in particular ways (e.g., to confront or escape from police).

The domestic football context in England and Wales therefore presents a timely challenge for the ESIM approach to crowds and the extent to which it can inform and be informed by policing. This paper presents a first step towards meeting this challenge. Specifically, we present data from the first phase of a programme of research[2] invited by the then Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) Football Portfolio holder[3] following Euro 2004. In this paper, we report upon the initial findings from a longitudinal participant observational study of operational police practice within the environment of domestic football in England and Wales. Specifically, our analysis focuses on the potential of this operational practice to impact upon crowd psychology and dynamics. We overview this data and analysis by considering the importance of policing operational structure and forward command, the implications of policing tactics for inadvertently creating the dynamics of disorder, the role of football intelligence officers (FIOs) and issues relating to stadium design and infrastructure. In doing so, we seek to explore the ability of an ESIM-based analysis to contribute meaningfully to understandings of good practice, policy making and training in the arena of the policing of domestic football.

Method

The method is based upon that adopted for previous research of this type (e.g., Stott and Adang 2003, Stott *et al.* 2007). Correspondingly, the concentration was on establishing meaningful access to and becoming embedded within the operational context. This paper reports upon the early phase of a two-year observational study involving a programme of 19 semi-structured observations across the 2004–2005 season. Matches were identified that were categorised by the relevant force as medium to high risk although on occasion, for comparison purposes, a few matches

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classified as low risk were also targeted. Initial approaches requesting access were made to contact points in the relevant forces. In most cases this request was supported but on occasion access was not forthcoming.

Where the research was facilitated, working relationships were developed with officers involved within the operations. Shadowing operational Police commanders during operations was the norm. In order to capture the breadth of the operational context, observations took the form of shadowing spotters, Police Support Units, and commanders at various levels. On three occasions an experienced non-operational commander (or other officer) was provided who was specifically assigned to support the observations. For some operations pre-event planning meetings were attended, and pre- and post-event interviews conducted. It was generally possible to attend briefings, view the operational order and take an overview of the operation. Observations and interviews with various parties were conducted throughout each operation (e.g., police at all levels, club officials, fans, Football Licensing Authority, etc.). These were recorded as audio or written fieldnotes and were supplemented where relevant and practicable by photographs. Additionally, two public order training events were observed.

In total, data was gathered from operations concerning the following matches in the season 2004–2005 within which there were three major incidents of rioting: Aston Villa vs. Birmingham City; Blackburn vs. Cardiff City; Cardiff City vs. Sheffield United; England vs. Northern Ireland (Old Trafford, Manchester); Everton vs. Manchester United (Premier League & F.A. Cup); Leeds United vs. Leicester, Millwall & Cardiff City; Liverpool vs. Everton; Middlesbrough vs. Newcastle United; Plymouth Argyle vs. Cardiff City; Sheffield United vs. Cardiff City, Plymouth Argyle & Wolverhampton Wanders; Stoke City vs. Leeds United & Millwall; Tottenham Hotspur vs. Fulham; Wigan vs. West Ham; Wolverhampton Wanderers vs. Coventry City.[4]

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Analytical strategy

The analytical strategy draws upon techniques adopted by Stott and Adang (2003) and earlier studies of football crowds (e.g., Stott and Reicher 1998a, Stott *et al.* forthcoming). The aim in the present study is to provide an exploratory analysis based on fieldnotes containing observational and interview data from each event. From these a set of analysis notes were developed where operational procedures and outcomes were explored in detail and emergent themes were identified by the first author. The analysis notes from each event were then compared in order to draw out theoretically relevant issues that were common between events. These core themes form the structure for the analysis presented below. The theoretically relevant issues within each core theme are explored and illustrated through the use of concrete examples. The examples deliberately avoid any details of the specific operation and do not provide extracts from the available interview data. This strategy of data presentation has been used to (a) focus the reader's attention on the general principles the observation is used to exemplify; (b) preserve the anonymity of individual officers and command teams; and (c) save space in an already extensive article.

Analysis

Operational structure and the importance of tactical autonomy

Universally operational structures around football in England and Wales follow a theoretical model divided in terms of Gold, Silver and Bronze. This theoretical structure is widely known and its associated roles are clearly outlined elsewhere (e.g., ACPO Manuals of Guidance on Policing Football Events and Keeping the Peace) so it is not necessary to go into detail here. Suffice to say that the role of the Gold commander is in theory to co-ordinate the development and resourcing of strategy. The role of the Silver commander is to develop and co-ordinate the tactical plan in line with said strategy. It is acknowledged that there can be multiple Silver commanders if an operation spreads across a wide geographical area. It is usually Silver who is expected to be the Senior Operational Commander on the day of the event, brief the Senior command team and take an overview of the implementation of and changes to the tactical plan. In principle, the Bronze commanders are then charged with taking the primary responsibility in implementing the Silver's tactical plan in the form of appropriate tactical responses within their geographical or functional area of responsibility.

One of the practices that are common to all operational structures is the operational briefing. What appears most relevant within this process is the style and content, rather than the structure of the brief. Briefings associated with positive outcomes tend to encourage participation from all of the significant command components of the operation and allow the senior command team access to the latest sanitised intelligence. This style of briefing also provides an opportunity for the clarification of roles, responsibilities, channels of communication (e.g., correcting mobile telephone numbers) and changes to a dynamic tactical plan (in light of the latest intelligence). During these briefings time would be given over to a specific description of the behavioural profile that should be adopted by officers (e.g., friendly but firm). Also there tended to be an explicit reference to the majority of both home and away fans who were travelling to the match with lawful intent combined with an explicit requirement for officers to differentiate between hooligan and non-hooligan fans.

Another important feature of operational structure related to how it dealt with the tactical plan developed by Silver. In a context of effective outcomes, it was often apparent that the tactical plan would be 'released' by Silver subsequent to the briefing, such that the main tactical decisions were made at the level of Bronze command. Given their position of forward command it was often the Bronze commanders who were best positioned to make 'real time' threat assessments. In other words, Bronze commanders would be relatively free to adapt the tactical plan in light of developing events. Such tactical adaptations, where possible, facilitated more sensitive responses to rapidly developing interactions, such as the targeting of 'high risk' fans and the management of emerging conflicts. This form of 'tactical autonomy' was most evident at half-time briefings where the post-match tactical plans were either developed directly by, or had significant input from, experienced Bronze commanders, on occasion completely independently of Silver. In these circumstances, Silver would simply 'rubber stamp' the decision, revising it only if necessary and then ensuring that it was adequately and appropriately resourced.

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Bronze commanders tended to be differentiated from each other either in terms of a role-based or geographically based command structure (or sometimes a combination of both). Despite this often clear delineation of duties, there was sometimes a requirement for Bronze command to be relatively dynamic and flexible. For example, the most important times for a Bronze commander involved in controlling the area outside of the stadium are just prior to and just following the match itself. This was most challenging when large numbers of away risk fans arrived, the escort for whom would invariably be under the command of a different Bronze commander and command protocols would have to be rapidly renegotiated.

This complexity could be exacerbated by the fact that some larger operations have two Silver commanders with arbitrary boundaries to their areas of responsibility. In such circumstances, risk to public order can and does develop as an outcome of ambiguity in command protocols – risk that can subsequently be difficult to manage if numerous commanders are present at critical junctures. For example, in one such operation a large group of fans identified as posing high risk were contained and then escorted from the city centre by Police Support Units (PSUs)[5] and mounted officers. These were commanded by different Bronze commanders, who were in turn under the control of the city centre Silver. A short time earlier, large numbers of fans identified as posing little or no risk were bussed to, and arrived en masse, at the stadium. Tension emerged among these lower risk fans primarily because of poor through flow through the turnstiles and the subsequent use of mounted officers to control the queues.[6] At this time there were already three Bronze commanders present, all of whom were highly experienced and under the command of the stadium Silver. To complicate matters still further a Chief Superintendent performing a shadow role for stadium Silver was also present in this area, making observations as part of his training. As the tensions were being managed the escort from the city centre arrived. Thus, at a critically important juncture there were at least five Bronze commanders present, two of whom were technically under the control of a city Silver and three under the control of a stadium Silver, along with one shadow Silver present on the ground. There was clear potential for this situation to escalate and had it done so it was subsequently understood by the Bronze commanders that there would have been no obvious delineation of command responsibility for the large number of PSUs that were present.

There were also events during which there were formal requirements to channel all communications through Silver command and for Bronze commanders to agree the transfer of resources through Silver when they were no longer required. In one such case, a group of high risk away fans were being escorted along a roadway and were required to cross into an area controlled by another Bronze commander who was on a different radio channel. At the same time the escort was under threat from a large group of rival home high risk fans. In what was a rapidly developing and volatile situation, the relevant Bronze commanders were forced to ignore the protocols set by Silver command. Instead they rapidly negotiated their own command protocols using mobile phones and successfully moved the escort into the stadium. The Bronze commanders were explicit that had they not proactively developed their own dynamic command and communication protocols they would not have been able to provide such a coordinated and effective response. These dynamic protocols appear to be highly dependent upon good personal relations between commanders, levels of experience and informal deference among the

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command team to what is essentially a 'supra' Bronze who is able to step in and take overall control of decision making.

The importance of developing relevant competencies among Bronze commanders

On the one hand, many Bronzes rise through the PSU system. While this can mean that they have operational experience, it also means that that they can still identify strongly with the PSU culture. As such there can be occasions where a Bronze commander feels drawn by views among his PSUs to engage in forceful interventions which may actually be strategically counterproductive. On the other, some Bronze commanders have little in the way of operational experience or are of low rank. Thus, some Bronze (and indeed Silver) commanders find it difficult to engage in effective decision making in the operational context. In contrast, there can also be circumstances where too much autonomy (and rank authority) is afforded to Bronze commanders. In such circumstances they can begin to act as forward Silver commanders and simply override Silver's tactical plan in an uncoordinated fashion in ways that can be strategically counterproductive. For example, during a series of observations in one force area it was apparent that many of the problems in delivering Silver's strategic objectives related to controlling the aggressive interventions of a Tactical Aid Unit[7] under the command of a Bronze that was equal in rank to Silver.

Conversely, Bronze level tactical autonomy can be undermined by a Silver commander who seeks to retain control of the decisions concerning tactical deployment. Bronze commanders would be required under these circumstances to agree tactical decisions with Silver before they were implemented (even in cases where that decision was an explicit aspect of the tactical plan). For example, during one event Silver was briefing his PSUs and was interrupted by a phone call from Bronze commander already operating in the field. The Bronze wanted to check that it was appropriate to allow away fans to disperse from their coaches when this tactic was already an explicit aspect of the tactical plan. While this was not a major issue in and of itself, it nevertheless exemplifies how a Silver's 'hands on' approach can coincide with circumstances where (a) Bronze commanders do not feel confident enough to make basic tactical decisions; and (b) Silver can either become uncontactable or potentially overloaded with competing demands.

Where there was evidence of Silver being perceived as 'hands on', there was also evidence of a shortage of the competencies necessary for effective forward command among Bronze commanders. However, there was also evidence that facilitating Bronze level tactical autonomy tended to coincide with the effective development and display of such competencies. For example, during the early stages of one such event, concerns were expressed among the Bronze level command team about the competencies of a specific PSU inspector who was subsequently not selected for further football-related duties. In addition, in this environment the Public Order Tactical Advisors[8] (POTACs) tended to display a clearly defined sense of their own and the Bronze and Silver commander's roles. The POTACs had the confidence to question and critically evaluate the Bronze Commander and where necessary to assist that commander by (re)defining not only his available tactical options but also his strategic role. Therefore, within this operational context there was not only a capacity for tactical decision making but also a culture of 'reflexive monitoring',

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including critical evaluation and adaptation of the tactical plan in light of emerging circumstances. Moreover, this was occurring in a context where those implementing the tactical plan were constantly seeking to identify, select and develop individuals who displayed the necessary competencies, and to address deficiencies as and when they were identified. This was reinforced within some operational environments because only those identified as displaying the correct competencies were actually put forward for Bronze command training.

So, despite a relatively clear definition of role in the ACPO manuals there is evidence of widespread variation in and problems that emerge from the way in which different operations translate these theoretical roles into operational structure and practice. On most occasions within the football context, Gold command is merely a theoretical position while in others, Gold commanders have actually been present in the stadium, control room or on the streets. In other circumstances Silver has been located away from the stadium and a Bronze has been the *de facto* senior commander at the stadium acting in every respect as a designated Silver. There can be substantial difficulties that emerge because of political tensions within such structures, particularly where there are two designated Silvers with different views on how to run public order operations. There can be differential levels of support, ability and autonomy for and among Bronze commanders. Moreover, there can be considerable difficulties inherent in the ways in which the role and geographical designations of various Bronze commanders interact during an operation.

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Creating the dynamics of disorder through containment tactics

The most common tactical option observed involved identifying and locating both home and away 'risk' fans (or 'prominents') and containing and escorting them to and from the stadium when necessary. The tactic was always 'intelligence' led. The intelligence facilitated a process where police resources could be targeted at the early or 'proactive' containment of risk fans (i.e., prior to any outbreak of disorder). Moreover, any failure to contain these fans often led to them dispersing only to regroup later in order to initiate conflict in an area which is not directly under police control. Thus, such proactivity undermines what might subsequently become a problem of widespread and sporadic disorder. However, there are a number of apparent difficulties associated with this tactic.

On many occasions it was impossible to contain home prominents. Consequently, the tactic is used primarily to contain travelling away fans regardless of intelligence that home fans are the actual sources of risk. In addition, intelligence of the potential presence of prominents among groups of away fans travelling to a match can often be vague and inaccurate. These issues are significant because they are associated with situations where large numbers of ordinary fans are treated by the police as if they pose significant risk. When fans who are travelling with non-violent intentions subsequently become contained, some can become agitated because they see the actions of the police as disproportionate. This perception of police illegitimacy was evident in situations of conflict. For example, during one operation there was intelligence that away prominents were planning to arrive in the city by train. The tactical plan was to group all away fans arriving on a specific train into a nearby public house and then escort them to the stadium. As the operation progressed the intelligence suggested that the train carrying the risk fans had been delayed and was

unlikely to arrive before the match had kicked off. However, large numbers of away fans judged to be posing 'low risk' had already been grouped in the pub. The Bronze Commander made a decision to escort them to the stadium for their own safety. During the escort some officers became agitated by fans' 'banter' and, despite the fact they were actually deployed to protect them, became verbally and physically aggressive towards individual fans (e.g., forcefully pushing fans on the edge of the escort into the crowd and verbally berating fans). Fans in turn began to respond confrontationally towards the police and to generally resist police instruction. In total, this process culminated in at least three incidents of minor conflict with one fan being pulled from the cordon, pushed up against a wall and threatened with arrest. On the basis of subsequent interview data there is direct evidence that these conflicts were underpinned by perceptions of a disproportionate police response among fans who saw themselves as seeking only to engage in lawful behaviour.

Another problematic outcome of this tactic is that it can actively create large crowds. Grouping and then escorting fans together also has the effect of allowing fans to engage in boisterous behaviour (e.g., singing, shouting, chanting, and 'banter' such as ridiculing police and home fans). As such, the tactic coincides with the away fans expressing antagonism in a manner that may not have occurred had they remained unescorted. Such large groups of vocal opposition fans moving through areas close the stadium are often a 'spectacle' that attracts the attention of large numbers of home prominents. Moreover, home risk fans see a large away group as a demonstration that the away fans have arrived with negative intent (i.e., 'mobbed up'). In order to progress the escort through the location the police often attempt to prevent home fans from walking along pathways near to the stadium as the escort of away fans approaches. This in turn leads to a significant build up of home fans who become agitated both by their containment and the presence of the large group of away fans. Consequently, the tactic culminates in exactly the phenomena the police are seeking to avoid; large groups of rival fans seeking to confront each other and the police in the close vicinity of a busy stadium.

As already mentioned such containment tactics, particularly during fixtures designated as high risk, are levelled often only at those judged by the police as high risk away fans. For example, following one such event the Silver commander instructed a spotter to identify away risk fans as they left the stadium at the end of the fixture. The risk fans would then be placed on a bus, taken some distance directly to the station and given preferential access to a departing train (even at the expense of non-football passengers who had reserved seats). At the same time, it was anticipated that 'ordinary' fans would find their own way to get back to the city centre using standard forms of public transport. Following the match the situation developed rapidly and a Bronze commander initiated baton charges at a large crowd of home risk fans who were seeking to attack the away fans. The away fans remained compliant, and all those travelling by train were taken to the station by busses under police protection. Had the Bronze commander not adapted the tactical plan the 'lesser' risk away fans, who were simply seeking to attend the fixture unmolested, would have been left to run the gauntlet of getting to and from the stadium under their own steam, through large numbers of hostile home fans. Here the contingencies and rewards were very clear; being seen by the police as an away 'risk fan' can actually be advantageous in terms of engendering transport and protection from the host police.

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Significant problems can also develop for the police because there is nowhere available for them to house the often large numbers of away fans that they have contained. In one such situation, the relevant Bronze commander was forced to consider housing on busses a mixed group of away fans arriving at the main train station, which would then have to drive around the city's ring road for over an hour while the police waited for the stadium to open. However, as fans were being loaded onto the busses, the police managed to negotiate access to a public house in the city centre and the fans were bussed directly to it. Had this public house not been forthcoming the containment tactic could have had a considerably negative impact upon fans views of police proportionality and legitimacy. This is particularly important given the obvious advantages of containing large groups of away fans in public houses. Firstly, it enabled a relatively small number of PSUs to create cordons in the streets around the location (often symbolically using empty PSU carriers in highly visual locations) which prevented groups of home prominents from approaching the area and realising their sometimes obvious intention to attack the away fans. Secondly, it allowed the police and visiting spotters opportunities to enter the pubs and engage with fans in positive interpersonal interaction. Thirdly, it provided fans with an opportunity to eat and refresh themselves in the context of what is essentially a very long day. Under such circumstances it is also evident that fans showed no real desire to leave the pub other than to attend the match. Correspondingly, fans responded positively to such containment evidently perceiving it as an attempt by the police to be actively fair and proportionate.

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Tactical depth and the importance of non-confrontational tactical options

There is also evidence that positive outcomes can be generated by the early use of non-confrontational tactical options such as communication and positive interpersonal interaction. For example, during one operation a large number of away fans had gathered in a public house. A POTAC entered armed with a few simple questions about the visiting football team and walked around the pub using these questions to engage with groups of fans who all reacted positively to the officer. During these conversations the officer communicated to the fans the police intention to move them from the pub one hour before kick off. Here the POTAC showed a clear commitment to the use of positive interpersonal interaction and communication and saw it as a tactical option with a clearly defined rationale. Firstly, it was understood to allow for accurate assessment of the levels of risk posed by the fans. Secondly, it was seen as an opportunity to create a norm of police presence in the pub given the anticipated police entry to the pub prior to escorting the group (i.e., actively trying to avoid the emergence of an 'us' and 'them' situation). Thirdly, it was conceptualised as an opportunity to build positive relationships and channels of liaison with the fans that may (and indeed did) pay dividends later in the day.[9] During a second observation of the same operation this tactic allowed the Bronze commander, in light of his own risk assessment emerging from the VLP, to direct a group of known away 'hooligans' to an alternative venue. Thus, the communication tactic enabled a physical differentiation and more focused and robust targeting of the higher risk group.

Another example is provided by a category C event during which the relevant Bronze commander instructed his PSUs in hybrid uniform to patrol in pairs across a

relatively small (but densely crowded) geographical area, interacting positively with fans. There were at least three occasions where this tactic allowed these PSU officers to deal relatively quickly with minor incidents shortly after they had developed. Moreover, when this 'proactive' tactical option was less evident there were corresponding increases in the severity and scale of incidents. Indeed, there were occasions during other category C events in different force areas where PSUs stood in large groups waiting for events to develop, as they did so small groups of fans began to congregate in the area. After some 10 minutes these smaller groups began to chant in unison. It was evident that this was a means for the groups to identify themselves to each other and coalesce into a single much larger and more powerful crowd capable of confronting the police. At this point mounted officers and PSUs in full NATO gear were deployed with batons drawn to forcefully disperse the crowd and widespread rioting occurred. Earlier action (e.g., interpersonal interaction with the groups to require them to move on) by the PSUs may have prevented the smaller groups coalescing into the larger more powerful crowd capable of confronting the police.

There is evidence that containment was effective where the tactic coincided with a strategic concentration on facilitating fans' legitimate behaviours and the use of positive interpersonal interaction as a tactical option. For example, information received from the visiting FIO during one operation resulted in all fans arriving by train being questioning under Section 60 powers that were in place. Despite the high levels of risk perceived by the police, as fans left the terminal building they were met by a cordon of officers in 'hybrid' uniform (i.e., not wearing NATO helmets) who engaged with fans in a friendly manner, instructing them to move across the roadway. Subsequently, they were met by individual officers in standard uniform who questioned them in a friendly manner, took their picture and completed the necessary Section 60 paperwork. Fans were then instructed to enter an adjacent public house that served food and was, through previous negotiation with the police, prepared to house large numbers of away fans. Fans were allowed to remain in the pub for some time and later grouped outside where busses had been arranged to take the fans directly to the stadium. Despite the presence of key prominents, fans were compliant and there was no subsequent incident of disorder.

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Football intelligence and liaison

It was clear throughout operations that FIOs, football liaison officers (FLOs) and spotters play a critically important role. They engage in regular communications with forces around the country to gather intelligence about visiting supporters to their force area. In addition, they monitor and identify patterns of risk among their own supporter groups. They regularly travel to host force areas to co-ordinate cross-force collaborations, deliver the latest intelligence to the host commander on the day of the match, and in other ways attempt to positively influence the strategy and tactics of the host police force. At the same time they often work to build relationships with club and supporters. They obtain information concerning the travel arrangements of fans in relationship to a specific fixture, contact other forces and share this information. They will help in the organisation and planning stage of operations by being the point of contact for Commanders and deal extensively with logistics and resourcing. Despite a distinction drawn between the roles of the FIO, FLO and

spotters there is actually widespread variation in how each football operation approaches the relevant activities and the distribution of tasks among them.

Classifications of risk are developed as soon as possible after the fixture list appears and are based primarily upon the history of the fixture. Subsequently, the football intelligence system in each force area along with senior command and club agree the levels of risk posed by each specific fixture and negotiate the cost recovery issues. Consequently, once this classification of risk to public order has been made it sets the framework for the resources that will be allocated to the fixture in ways that can be very difficult to alter. This is made all the more complex by the fact that there can be greater logistical and political difficulty in upward reclassification. Consequently, where classifications are already agreed at B or C there was often a tendency to keep risk assessments at these levels even in the light of intelligence nearer the time that suggests that there needs to be a downward reclassification. This is partly because resources had already been agreed and would therefore be available and because higher levels of resources were seen as creating greater tactical flexibility and a 'comfort zone' for the relevant Commander.

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Nonetheless, 'over' resourcing an operation can lead to its own issues. For example, during one operation that followed a previous fixture involving widespread disorder, a very large number of PSUs were utilised. The pre-match events passed off generally without incident and no significant risk groups materialised. However, following the match approximately 20 prominents from a local club were identified by their FIO in a public house in an isolated area where there was no evidence that they were at that time seeking to engage in disorder (i.e., there was no other risk group in the vicinity and there had been no disturbance at the pub or involving these fans). Nonetheless two Tactical Aid Units arrived at the public house and very rapidly began to aggressively remove the fans from the pub and forced them to congregate outside in order to escort them to the train station. During this process a number of tensions emerged and one fan was arrested. Among other things, this example illustrates that over-resourcing an event can lead to tensions emerging because highly trained officers have prepared themselves physically and psychologically for their deployment role within an event that was judged as likely to become disorderly. Consequently, when they do have an opportunity to deploy, these resources can engage with fans posing little risk in ways that are associated with the emergence of tensions that had not previously been present.

In order for commanders to utilise intelligence effectively it is important that it is of good quality. The ability to judge the quality of intelligence is reflected in the existence of the intelligence grading scheme. It was apparent that despite this classification scheme, there were widespread tendencies towards the 'exaggeration' of risk. The assessment of the quality and accuracy of intelligence appears to be enhanced when intelligence is 'sanitised' by an 'intelligence cell' that operates independently from but with direct lines of communication to Silver command. Nonetheless, even with such cells in place there was widespread evidence of information being disseminated into the operational context without being properly validated.

This is important because intelligence is not just risk assessment as much as it is a requirement or a justification for commanders to respond. In other words, once intelligence has been received the commander becomes accountable for their actions and decisions in light of that information. In certain circumstances this can lead to

the unnecessary resourcing of a situation. For example, during a number of operations information was received that large numbers of category B fans were travelling to the match by train. PSUs would be deployed to the station but then few if any fans would subsequently arrive. Conversely, during one operation intelligence was received that a major incident had occurred where officers had been injured in a station of a neighbouring city, where fans travelling to the match were making a connection. This provided the necessary justification for the host operation to invoke a Section 60, move to full NATO protective equipment and to meet all away fans arriving by train in a forceful manner, escorting them a short distance across the road into a public house. However, on the basis of post-event reports it was apparent that in fact there had been only a minor altercation and no officers had actually been injured.

Some command teams have developed their own processes through which they can validate such intelligence. For example, on the evening prior to one match a Silver commander received intelligence that 150 prominents were travelling to the match on a specific train. Had these fans travelled it would have led to an upward reclassification of the fixture and the requirement for the commander to bring an extra PSU on duty (with its subsequent cost implications). However, this commander tasked an officer to check the specific train at the point at which the intelligence had suggested the fans would board the following morning. As it turned out the risk fans did not board the train and the commander was then able to avoid upgrading the fixture.

It was also apparent that intelligence officers sometimes experience 'pressures' to be seen to be doing their job. One of the major pressures expressed by FIOs in this respect is a perceived undermining of their ability to source high quality 'real time' intelligence because they are not able to officially handle covert sources directly. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that on most occasions the relevant source handlers did not work at weekends when, of course, the majority of matches were being played. This in turn led to situations where if a covert source was available they were required to leave a message on an answer phone which was checked periodically by a duty handler. This led to inevitable delays and put extra pressure on intelligence officers to provide this function even though they often have no direct access to the source. To compensate for these pressures some commanders explicitly allow it to be known that they are happy to be in a situation where FIOs have no intelligence, provided that this accurately reflects the low levels of risk. In contrast, there were a number of examples that tended to suggest that where FIOs were also spotters and trained source handlers, and a covert source was available, then their ability to provide valid intelligence at critical junctures within rapidly developing events was significantly improved. Such information was subsequently associated with the ability of the host operation to target and contain large groups of risk fans that might otherwise have precipitated serious disorder.

Intelligence gathering during operations is conducted primarily by 'spotting teams' (many of whom are also FIOs and FLOs). They were usually deployed in pairs, one spotter from the host force and one from the visiting force, with a driver if it was necessary to cover large distances. There were usually three teams: 'home'; 'away' and 'mobile'. On the day of the operation they usually functioned relatively autonomously, travelling around the operational context in order to locate and gather evidence on the activity and identity of risk fans. As previous examples have

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made clear, the information that spotting teams gather is fed into the operation, in order to assist commanders in their judgements relating to tactical deployment. However, on occasion, their autonomy means that spotting teams are stretched across wide geographical areas. As a consequence they were often not available for Bronze or PSU commanders as a resource, at times where it is necessary for groups of fans to be assessed.

In other circumstances spotting teams can be directed to specific locations by Silver command. This can lead to situations where they are unable to gather much in the way of relevant information. For example, during one event a spotting team was deployed to a local motorway service station where the fans present were judged by them to be posing little risk. In any case there was little apparent linkage between resourcing and intelligence as there had been little in the way of request to him for information from the host force and large numbers of PSUs were present sat waiting in their vans. At the same time the visiting spotters were concerned about groups of risk fans known by them to be gathering in the city centre. However, they were unable to deploy there to locate, identify and monitor these groups.

In contrast spotters can be placed in situations where the demands placed upon their role are potentially overwhelming. For example, at various matches Silver commanders instructed a single spotter to stand by an exit gate in order to identify his risk fans as they left the stadium and feed this identification to a Bronze commander in order to affect a cordon around them. However, it was always dark and as the risk supporters emerged they were mixed together with thousands of other fans (both home and away) in densely crowded environments making it impossible for both the spotter (to locate the risk fans) and the Bronze commanders (to achieve the containment objective). Moreover, events did occur (e.g., a small altercation) to which the spotters would react meaning that they were then no longer able to identify risk fans. Consequently, the risk fans would then evade the anticipated cordon and on occasion actually engage in disorder.

Football intelligence teams policing high risk groups are often faced with a great deal of hostility and polarisation. This leads to situations where they are unable to fulfil liaison and communication roles with these fans because it is likely that they would be attacked. As such there little else that they can achieve other than confirming the obvious presence of the large groups of risk fans and gather information in an attempt to secure future football banning orders (FBOs). However, over the extended period of time that spotters, FIOs and FLOs work with fans there are numerous occasions where they come into contact with risk groups at critical junctures. For example, at one event a number of visiting fans classified as category B were being removed from a public house by a PSU. The situation was becoming tense and fans were starting to resist the police. The host police in turn were becoming increasingly forceful. At this time the FIO responsible for the visiting fans who was acting as a spotter intervened and began to liaise with them. He negotiated their compliant departure from the pub. Importantly, his self-motivated tactical intervention was in line with a 'community policing' approach and associated with de-escalation in conflict. As they gathered outside in the escort the fans began to chant the name of the FIO and it was clear that from this that his intervention in their interests had significantly enhanced the risk fans' respect for him. Because of this type of 'community policing' activity substantial bonds of trust and mutual cooperation can develop between these fans and their spotters. There is

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evidence that such bonds provide substantial benefits operationally. For example, there were a number of circumstances where groups of category B fans have been prepared to communicate with spotters adopting the 'community policing' approach regarding their intentions, travel arrangements, the composition of their groups, their concerns and sometimes inadvertently actually provide the identification of fans the police are seeking. In other words, the 'community policing' approach adopted by some spotters, FIOs and FLOs appears, over time, to actually enhance their 'criminal intelligence' role.

There are at the same time significant problems associated with this 'community policing' approach. In particular, the close bonds of trust that develop between these officers (combined with an associated shift in tolerance levels) towards their contingent of category B fans has been interpreted by some host forces as 'going native' and therefore compromising their role as a police officer. This in turn led to a breakdown of trust between the host and visiting force, which in turn can have a negative impact on the ability of the host force to respond effectively and proportionately to actual levels of risk posed by the visiting fan group.

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Infrastructure and multi-agency responsibilities

During some operations it was evident that the number of resources and nature of tactical deployments were dramatically affected by the infrastructure within which the police were forced to operate. For example, during observations following a match at a particular stadium, large crowds of home fans developed near to an un-tarmaced car park because they had to queue to cross a narrow foot bridge. It was therefore a situation in which the need for the police to provide resources was increased for a number of reasons. Firstly, the only route for exiting away fans forced them to pass the large crowd of home fans that were gathered by the narrow bridge. Secondly, the un-tarmaced car park contained stones, making it easy for fans to collect and throw missiles should conflict develop. In addition, there was also potential for conflict on the other side of the bridge. The narrow, crowded walkway made it impossible for police to use the bridge to get their resources to the other side. It was therefore necessary to place resources on both sides of the bridge. Given that this process was occurring across many weeks, it has long-term cost implications for this force that could be dealt with through a redesign and redevelopment of the stadium infrastructure (e.g., tarmaced car park and widening the egress routes). This had already been identified as an issue to the relevant force but restrictions were placed on their ability to deal with the situation by other agencies (e.g., club and council).

It was also apparent that risk fans can utilise the poor infrastructure to undermine the effectiveness of PSUs. For example, at a series of matches at another stadium there was serious disorder involving home risk fans. During attempts to disperse these fans they ran into a car-park area adjacent to the stadium from where they attacked the police with missiles and attempted to confront away fans. Given the car park was full of cars and fences around it were low it was apparent that the risk fans knew that it would be easy for them to get access to the car park but difficult, if not impossible, for the PSUs to operate in a coordinated fashion. During this situation PSU officers chased after small number of fans and were left isolated from their PSUs in a highly volatile situation. The risk fans even baited officers to try

to get them to enter the car park. This example demonstrates how poor infrastructure around a stadium can increase the opportunities for risk fans to create and sustain disorder and at the same time undermine the effectiveness of traditional form of public order policing.

In other circumstances the coach parking or transport facilities for a club are not in the immediate vicinity of the stadium, sometimes despite the availability of wide access areas that can facilitate the arrival of coaches, often immediately adjacent to the away turnstiles. None the less, clubs have on occasion refused to allow coaches to park in these areas. In other circumstances the fans had to be escorted (either by bus or on foot) extremely large distances. Police were consequently forced to provide a traffic management plan and PSUs to create escorts and cordons in an attempt to keep the visiting and home fans apart. On at least three occasions this led to serious and widespread disorder. To reinforce this point, there are some newer stadiums in which specific areas of car park around the away turnstiles have been fenced off from areas occupied by home fans. As such, the away coaches are able to drive directly into the stadium and fans move from the car park to their seating without coming into direct physical contact with home fans. On a number of occasions, relatively high risk fixtures were consequently dealt with by small numbers of PSUs whose only (and relatively simple) job was to move fans away from the fencing.

In addition, there were circumstances where the visiting club travelled to the host event with their own stewards. There were numerous situations where these stewards were able to intervene in interactions between host club stewards, police and visiting fans in ways that undermined the potential for conflict.

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Discussion

This paper has three central objectives. Firstly, to report upon the initial findings from a longitudinal participant observational study of operational police practice within the environment of domestic football in England and Wales. Secondly, to provide an analysis of the potential impact of the general pattern of this operational practice upon crowd dynamics, psychology and conflict. Thirdly, to provide a basis for a meaningful contribution to policy and good practice in the arena of the policing of domestic football in England and Wales.

The social identity approach to crowd dynamics has highlighted the potential role that police preconceptions and expectations can have in shaping the intergroup dynamics of conflict (e.g., Stott 2003). Briefings that tend to focus on the history of risk as opposed to the actual risk posed by the supporters for the current fixture may affect both the way fans are viewed and dealt with tactically by these officers. If a perception is held that a certain group of fans pose a high level of risk and that perception is reinforced at the main brief through a focus on historical events rather than current intelligence this could increase the likelihood of officers reacting in disproportionate ways towards these supporters as a whole, in turn increasing the potential for widespread rioting (e.g., Stott and Drury 2000).

In this respect the analysis began with a focus upon the considerable variability in the nature of operational briefings. Important issues emerge from their *content* in creating the effective basis for operational tactics and deployment on match days. This form of briefing draws attention to the risk assessment for the operation at hand and explicitly defines expectations about the behaviours that police officers are

required to adopt in response to that intelligence. This suggests that this style of brief is effective because it provides an opportunity to undermine any focus upon negative history. Put slightly differently, this briefing style can set the right tone from the outset by offsetting any tendency towards disproportionate responses to fan groups, particularly those with which there has been a history of disorder.

The study suggests that the relationships between Silver and Bronze are important, particularly as this relates to the *degree of autonomy* that an operational structure affords to its Bronze commanders. Effective forward command is given such importance because of the very common and ongoing use of containment tactics, where large crowds of fans develop as a natural outcome. The ability of the police to manage these crowds is also affected by the degree of complexity and fluidity in command structures and protocols. This is an important issue because Bronze level autonomy to override these structures and protocols seems to affect the ability of police resources to respond rapidly, efficiently, proportionately and robustly to emergent risk. In other words, risk emerges from the sometimes rapidly developing pattern of interactions (e.g., between police, home and away fans). It is Bronze commanders who are often best positioned to assess and respond rapidly to these interactions and manage them in ways that can shift their dynamics away from those associated with widespread disorder.

At the same time it is *essential* to recognise that empowerment of Bronze commanders can itself be problematic. On the one hand there can be issues relating to rank authority. In some operations a high rank authority in forward command roles tends to create tensions within the operational structure that are at best counterproductive. On the other hand the analysis highlights the central importance of ensuring that the relevant strategic competencies are present at the level of Bronze command. Clearly, then there is a fine balance to be found in determining the appropriate levels of autonomy for Bronze commanders that must be set against the extent to which those Bronze commanders are adequately trained and actually willing and capable of acting in ways that are likely to meet the strategic objectives.

The extent to which the relevant competencies are present appears to be linked to the extent to which some operational Silver commanders seek to remain directly in control of the important tactical decisions and operational protocols throughout the operation (e.g., transfer of resources). This form of operational structure appears to have some potentially counterproductive impacts upon the level of strategic and tactical competency that *can* be exercised at the level of Bronze command (even when the necessary competencies are present). It may be that these issues actually interrelate. Certainly, where there is an operational structure that facilitates 'Bronze autonomy', there was evidence of a generalised process through which proportionality was more capable of being exercised. However, there was also evidence that the relevant competencies for effective forward command were emerging over time as a natural outcome. It follows from this that where organisational structure denies this responsibility by consistently taking away the decisions from Bronze commanders it may also inadvertently prevent necessary competencies from developing.

Intelligence concerning the movement of such fans travelling to matches with violent intent can also be incorrect, unclear or simply impossible to gather. Thus, on a number of occasions all of the away fans arriving in a particular location are grouped together. This can result in large crowds with a mix of prominents and 'lower' risk fans, all of whom are treated as posing a uniform level of threat. The

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analysis suggests that since some of these fans do not see themselves or those around them as posing a risk to public order some come to view their containment and therefore their relationship with the police as illegitimate. The existing research suggests that this sense of illegitimacy and indiscriminate containment are two of the essential components of riot psychology and therefore tactics of indiscriminate containment can increase the likelihood for riot dynamics to emerge (Stott and Adang 2003, Stott *et al*. 2007).

The effective management of these crowds is complicated even further by the evidence which suggests that being in large groups within escorts is empowering for fans; it affords hooligans anonymity and allows them to express antagonisms without fear of retribution from opposition prominents (or the police). Moreover, walking through areas normally populated by home fans and arriving at the stadium 'mobbed up' can feed negatively into the 'codes' of hooligan culture. In this way this study suggests that escorting fans in large crowds, while very effective, is resource heavy and can initiate forms of intergroup interaction between opposing fans that may actually escalate tensions at the time and sustain antagonisms between the fan groups over the medium to long term. Thus, the analysis suggests that containment tactics can actually shift crowds towards rather than away from conflict. Indeed, in some circumstances the containment tactic acts almost as a self-fulfilling and self-reinforcing prophesy producing large groups of rival fans seeking to confront each other and the police.

This study suggests therefore that the issue facing the police is not exclusively one of handling known prominents, but also of risk assessing and handling the dynamics of crowds within which prominents are present – dynamics which, of course, the police are a component part. There is evidence that the more negative aspects of these dynamics can be offset by the containment of away fans in public houses. In addition, it was evidently beneficial in some circumstances for PSU officers to become proactive and engage positively with fans. Such a focus upon facilitation and communication also provides the police with a platform for the efficient use of resources, accurate risk assessment, channels of liaison and the opportunity to build and reinforce positive relations with even high risk fan groups. There is also evidence that quite forceful and relatively indiscriminate police containment exercises can actually be met with good humour when police also utilise a tactic of positive interpersonal interaction towards those fans that are contained. FIOs, FLOs and spotters play critically important roles in this regard. More generally, the present findings suggest that any resources that can be used to enhance the intelligence and risk assessment process can be very effective indeed, as long as care is taken to avoid situations in which intelligence officers are 'under utilised' or face impossible demands.

The analysis also focused upon the alternative 'criminal intelligence' and 'community policing' models that underpin the function of spotters within the operational theatre. It is suggested that the former is motivated by the requirement to gather evidence on fans that are judged to be consistently posing risk across a number of events. The rationale for this is to obtain convictions and FBOs to assist in the process of preventing risk fans from attending events. The latter is motivated by a requirement for the spotters to establish good links with their travelling fan base in order to liaise with them. While these models potentially leave officers facing incompatible demands, the present findings suggest that by developing a

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'community' policing-based role spotters can go some way towards reconciling these demands. Moreover, the analysis suggests that when performing such a role (liaison with fan groups, shifting tolerance levels upwards regarding minor issues, seeking to ensure the early release of arrested fans, etc.) spotters often do a great deal to undermine the potential for conflict (and add tactical depth to the host force operations). Additionally, by being seen to act in the interests of the legitimate intentions of fan groups, such interventions may actually help to overcome the antagonistic and counterproductive polarity that can exist between police and high risk fans.

While the present findings provide important insights, it is important also to consider their limitations. First, the study draws upon observations of police practice and crowd behaviour. While the relationships between these are consistent with previous research, the current study does not touch directly on the underlying psychological processes mediating the observed relationships. Secondly, the focus of this study does not include a detailed exploration of strategies of long-term conflict reduction. This necessitates further work focusing upon the management of high risk fan groups over a long-term period across different operations. This work should also draw data from fans themselves to examine how the observed relationships between policing and public order outcomes are mediated psychologically.

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Conclusions

The current analysis supports the contention that risk should be seen as a dynamic process that can rise and fall during an event as a consequence of particular patterns of intergroup interaction. In other words, risk is not just a matter of the presence of prominents but (a) rises and declines as an outcome of the patterns and dynamics of intergroup interactions; (b) is therefore highly dynamic; and (c) can emerge from the complexity and operation of tactical models and police organisational structures. Given that this is the case the study also supports the idea that it is important to conceptualise the effectiveness of public order policing in terms of its ability to proactively manage crowd dynamics and social identity processes.

It would appear that the most effective means of managing these processes is by ensuring that ongoing threat assessments are linked as closely as possible to graded, dynamic, specifically targeted, information led and rapid tactical deployments. Within police organisational structures it is evidently Bronze commanders that are best positioned to perform this function because they can adapt both the operational protocols and the tactical plan. This would suggest that Bronze level autonomy is an important feature in allowing police organisational structures to adapt efficiently and effectively to the dynamics of risk that emerge during an operation itself. The analysis suggests that it is therefore important to empower Bronze commanders and train them with the necessary strategic competencies.

This tactical depth should also reflect a strategy of the facilitating fans' legitimate intentions and the early use of non-confrontational tactical options, such as communication and positive interpersonal interaction (Stott *et al.* 2006, 2007, forthcoming). Moreover, interacting with fans positively assists the police in risk assessment, the accurate targeting of their resources, developing channels for liaison and actively constructs views of police legitimacy in the wider crowd. In this respect

it is also evident that there would be some benefit in developing the 'community policing' function provided by some visiting spotters.

Another implication of the present findings is that police costs and the likelihood of disorder are increased because of a failure of clubs and local councils either to invest in infrastructure development or to be flexible in the use of existing infrastructure. Moreover, there are important benefits arising from clubs sending stewards with their fans to away fixtures. Together, this highlights the importance of a multi-agency response to football-related disorder. Where clubs and councils invest in dealing with these issues developments can be made that significantly undermine the likelihood of disorder over the long term. Moreover, it also clear that when this input is absent it leads to significant increases in the requirement for the police to provide resources to tackle the resulting and ongoing potential for disorder, with all of its subsequent costs and consequences.

In conclusion, there is substantial evidence that, consistent with earlier work, a social identity approach to football-related disorder in England and Wales can be fruitful both theoretically and practically (e.g., Northam 1989, Della Porta and Reiter 1998, Stott 2003, King and Waddington 2004, Reicher *et al.* 2004, De Lint 2005, Waddington 2007, Waddington and King 2005). It is evident that risks to public order in football are not just a feature of the crowds or those within them but emerge from the dynamics of the events themselves; dynamics of which the police can and do play an integral role. The available research suggests that the policing of football, and indeed public order policing more generally, involves the management of crowd members' social identity. While there is no universal panacea that can act as a national model within England and Wales there are clearly underlying principles that can be of use for those developing and implementing strategic and tactical models at a local level. In order to achieve this however, it is essential that the correct background theoretical understandings of crowds are in place.

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Notes

1. 'Dynamic risk assessment in the context of international football matches: a model (8241/05)' and of 'Police tactical performance for public order management in connection with international football matches (8243/05)'.
2. A preliminary report of this research was given in the form of a presentation to the 2005 Association of Chief Police Officer's National Football Ground Commanders and Intelligence Officers Conference which was hosted at the University of Liverpool and appeared as an official report to ACPO distributed by the UKFPU (Stott and Hoggett 2006).
3. Currently Chief Constable David Swift (Staffordshire).

4. However, there was some overlap with data gathered during a later phase of this study. Consequently, it is worth noting that data was gathered from the following matches in the season 2005–2006: Arsenal vs. Cardiff City; Cardiff City vs. Leicester & Millwall; Coventry vs. Cardiff City; Leeds United vs. Cardiff; Liverpool vs. Anderlecht; Manchester United vs. Wigan (Carling Cup Final, Cardiff); Plymouth Argyle vs. Cardiff; Sheffield United vs. Cardiff & Sheffield Wednesday; Sheffield Wednesday vs. Sheffield United & Barnsley; Stoke City vs. Cardiff City; Wigan vs. Bolton; Wolverhampton Wanderers vs. Cardiff City; Yeovil vs. Bournemouth; Swansea vs. Barnsley (Millennium stadium, Cardiff). In the 2006–2007 season observations were undertaken at Leeds Utd vs. Cardiff and Cardiff vs. Birmingham City.
5. PSUs are essentially a paramilitary style police unit generally composed of eighteen Police Constables, three Sergeants and Inspector. They are trained to a National Minimum Standard and have available protective equipment including helmets, shields and batons. They are used specifically to deal with incidents of public disorder and to allow for Mutual Aid across different county police forces.
6. For example, a pregnant woman was being crushed up against a wall by the horse pushing onto the crowd. Her husband pulled her from the crowd and, along with other fans, began to become agitated towards the mounted officer. The situation was dealt with by an officer in ordinary uniform interacting with the woman and her husband and allowing them to stand in a gateway away from the crowd.
7. These are highly trained Police Support Units but they are referred to by different titles in different force areas (e.g., Tactical Support Group, Matrix, Level 1 PSUs, etc.).
8. This is usually a lower ranked officer who is highly experienced in public order policing. Their role is defined primarily in terms of supporting the relevant commander's tactical knowledge and decision making.
9. It is worth noting that this tactic was not a formal aspect of the tactical plan but occurred at the initiative of the POTAC who was himself a Bronze commander on different occasions.

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