

HOOIGANISM – CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL PHENOMENON

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Abstract

The proposed scientific theme is going to approach and study the hooliganism phenomenon as a contemporary social matter, in terms of conceptual and etiological.

The present work has four main purposes:

- (1)- that of explaining the meaning of hooliganism social phenomenon;*
- (2)- that of discovering the origins of hooliganism;*
- (3)- that of knowing which are the causes that encourages the occurrence of the hooliganism;*
- (4)- that of knowing how to control and minimize this phenomenon.*

Keywords: *Hooliganism ,Violence in sport, Hooligans, Supporters, Crowd's Psychology.*

Introduction

More often we have encountered in mass media the term of hooliganism or hooligan. This should determine us to question somehow this phenomenon, being rather new for Romanian society, but rapidly growing. Thus, in the frame of this project we are going to analyze the hooliganism meaning, its roots, the causes which determine its manifestations in contemporary society and which are possible prevention and control methods. This can be attained focusing especially on London sport teams, but secondary we are going to study the hooliganism which has started to turn up in Romania as well.

What does hooliganism mean?

According to the Explanatory Romanian Dictionary, hooliganism implies grossly encroaches upon all the behavioral norms. Also the definition includes public order and moral disturbance through behavior showing lack of respect and decency regarding social interaction/brutal behavior or attitude which are manifested by overstepping the other citizens' rights and liberties, through aggression, dangerous and harmful behavior.¹

There is no definition of hooliganism related to football. This term has been introduced by mass media, and lately, this label has been applied to more and more often violent incidents where supporters have been involved. According to majority of researchers, hooliganism in football is associated to any violent manifestation when supporters are implied.

Representing a collective form of violent behavior in sport, hooliganism should be understood better by a thorough knowledge of **collective conduct** and the **group categories** present in contemporary society.

Collective behavior implies a certain type of emergent action (spontaneous and guided by norms created by participants) and disregarding institutional norms (ruled by other norms, most of the time different from those socially accepted). Among its characteristics we can mention: the purpose, the participants degree of organization and its duration. The aims of these actions might be explicit (externalizing participants feelings) or instrumental (achieving some rights or advantages). Regarding the degree of organization of the participants manifesting this type of behavior, a distinction is made between non-organized collective conduct (spontaneous, without an appointed leader) and those highly organized (having an action program and an official leader). Between these two extremes there is **intermediary collective conduct**.

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¹ www.dexonline.ro

Their duration is also variable; some may last a few hours, as is the case of some events, other may last a few days, weeks or more (racial tensions or social movements).²

In order to establish which **group categories** are, it is very important to know and define what a group is. Thus, a group/crowd/mass is a temporary gathering of people, in a close assembly, either by chance or after an agreement, driven by a common interest or objective. Having common interests, similar objectives, implying some people presence at the same place and time, does not represent enough conditions to create connections, relationships for a structure. Sociologically, the notion of **crowd** covers a variety of gathering forms, defined by lack of homogeneity, cohesion and organization, emotional response to situations in which it is involved in. There is a fortuitous **crowd**, defined by a reduced degree of emotional and organizational interaction, gathered by chance and whose existence is in fact momentary. People found in this crowd have in common a momentary aim. Examples of this type include: a crowd waiting at a bus station or in front of a theater booking office.

The crowd whose behavior is conducted by mediating some ruled expectations of traditional or contractual models is a conventional one. The crowd which has no clear defined objective, but reaches a collective behavior as a result of mutual stimulation of effects, is an expressive crowd. For example a dancing, mourning or joyful crowd.

The range of reactions which might define a crowd lay from ecstasy to destructive aggression, including nervousness, anxiety, panic. According to the efficiency of social control and the stress created by dysfunctional or by a state of no moral principles in a situation, the crowd might be passive or active. Crowd sociology studies social and cultural conditions of behavior inside a gathering, the link between reactions frequency and their amplitude and the type of political, economic and social organization; factors and ascendancy which contribute to pass from non-defined group, having mostly a chaotic action, to a structured collectivity; the action of social mechanisms used to manipulate and the predominance of a psychological profile in a determined form of social organization.³

However, two main categories of incidents might be labeled as 'hooliganism':

a) Spontaneous incidents, most of the time minor, produced by supporters on stadiums or nearby (the type of incidents which take place, for example, in most cases in United Kingdom, when a team plays 'away').

b) Premeditated violent actions, when usually there are implied organized gangs (or crews) gathering sport clubs fans. The incidents sometimes take place far away from the stadium and long time after the match was played.

The origins of hooliganism

Hooliganism is an often manifested phenomenon nowadays. It started around 60s-70s in United Kingdom, where it is supposed that football originated. Hooliganism is manifested by public order disturbance, especially by football fans, usually supporting rival teams.

Rivalries on the pitch usually generate even bigger rivalries outside, where the club's fans gather to fight. This is, without any doubt, a brutal attitude, maybe a manifestation of frustrated people, which unfortunately, has appeared in Romania too. Dougie Brimson relates in his book, *Barmy Army*, that he has known doctors, lawyers, businessmen, taxi drivers, journalists and even policemen who are hooligans.

Thus, it does not matter what they do for a living. The hooligans have a sort of double life, becoming totally different when they gather to support their favorite team. They gather before any match, establish their territories, routes and make plans so that everything to go according to their plan.⁴

² <http://www.dictsociologie.netfirms.com/Termeni.htm>

³ Idem

⁴ <http://ultras.sportlocal.ro/eseu-despre-huliganism.html>

Dougie Brimson considers that through hooliganism someone might detach from all the problems he or she has and might throw all his or her frustrations in brawls against rival gangs. Thus everything in this respect become a sort of fashion. Gangs even have names, meetings and history.

For example, *The Headhunters*, the hooligans from the Chelsea football club, are one of the oldest and best known from British and international football. Their most important opponents are Milwall, West Ham and Tottenham fans.⁵

Hooliganism in United Kingdom is like drink-driving. Some of them either have practiced or know someone who has done it, but do not take any measure to stop this sort of behavior. It is the same with hooliganism. If someone is caught it is not assumed that he or she is an offender, but just had bad luck.

Moreover they do not consider their behavior an offense. Actually, hooliganism is nothing else but an offense much more serious than drink-driving.

Anytime this sort of behavior might have dreadful consequences for those implied in such situations, and they are aware of the consequences and make everything for a flawless action. Once being part of such gangs, their life is no more secure.

Motivation for their behavior cannot be easily established. For them, a T-shirt having their logo's team does not represent anything more than the blood on the face of person in front of them. Everything is a game for them.

And most of all is the fact that in a game like this someone might die in the arms of his opponent. This means that they do not want to stop. If a gang is brutally beaten by another, it will not go to complain to police, but will take revenge next time.

Hooliganism is called 'British Disease'. Unfortunately, this devastating phenomenon has spread across Romania and we can notice that among hooligans there are mostly uneducated people, who have no connection with football and have no idea about the legalities. One of the reasons they assault most of the time innocent people, reaching almost deadly aggression, is the fact that they want to be noticed and to get the others attention. For a while, we have not recorded a big number of casualties implying criminality, but we are not far away from the United Kingdom.

There is a big difference between a supporter and a hooligan. A supporter is the person who comes to see a match, buys a ticket and has a favorite team, wears the clothes colors and symbols of his favorite team, encouraging it; a hooligan is a braggart, with a great inclination to violence, who comes at the stadium without knowing anything about the event, having rebellious thoughts, which are then transformed in violent deeds, sometimes fatal.

As we have previously mentioned 'hooliganism' phenomenon was referred for the first time by the end of 60's in United Kingdom, reaching a peak in 70's and 80's. Football violence on stadiums could be traced back in time since XIX; for example, in 1880 in Derby, when following a match an emergency state was set up and two horseback squads were called to intervene and face the unruly crowd. Invading a pitch by spectators has become a common practice after 1880, but this type of action cannot be analyzed due to the lack of proof. It cannot be precisely stated if this type of phenomenon emerged in 70's -80's or simply it has become more mediated and obviously exaggerated. For example, after a careful analysis of incidents during Sweden - England match (September 1989) it became clear that media coverage of the disorders was exaggerated and irresponsible. A calm period followed after the very violent incidents on Heysel stadium (39 casualties) and Hillsborough (96 casualties).

Recently in England, hooliganism phenomenon has decreased as a result of measurements taken according to Taylor's report in 1990. Safety measurements, such as numbered sits, and especially video surveillance have contributed to a substantially decreasing of the number of incidents inside the stadiums (especially in Premiership). More than that, the number of arrests for

⁵ [Http://sadak.ro/2009/02/huliganismul](http://sadak.ro/2009/02/huliganismul)

offenses associated to football matches has been greatly diminished after the end of 80s, this happening while the number of spectators has been continuously increasing. However, this does not mean that the hooligan action number or gravity has been reduced. Many football-related violent manifestations have 'moved' outside the stadiums, with the opportunity to become more extreme.

The fact that destructive incidents take place now on different areas means that they are less reported to police and the possibility to keep them under control, restraints or arrests are more diminished.

As we have mentioned from the beginning, there are two types of incidents labeled as 'hooliganism'. First, the spontaneous ones, have a low violence level, and take place around stadiums and, usually, when British teams go abroad. These types of incidents are rarely encountered on the British island considering the great number of spectators who attend matches in England.. However, when abroad, British fans have been often involved in violent actions (Marseille 1998, Charleroy 2000, Slovakia 2002, Albufeira 2004, Stuttgart and Koln 2006, Rome 1997,2007). Most of the time media coverage of these incidents presents British fans mostly as victims of local supporters and seldom as aggressors. Usually the media states that the main causes of these incidents is the fact that hooligans take part to these official trips having clear intention to fight and they succeed to involve the other spectators in incidents, usually under alcohol influence.. However, analyzing the incidents during 1990 - 2007, published under the title "*Dealing with English Disease*" (2007 Pennant Book) this statement is questioned, considering external factors, such as: police attitude and intervention, provocation and so on. The second category includes incidents emerged from hooligan groups from United Kingdom. Internally, this is continuing to be a major problem, most of the clubs having "dangerous" fan groups. British police is always preoccupied by the problem represented by rival groups, always looking for confrontations, this in conditions, as it was mentioned earlier, the 'fighting area' is more and more difficult to be surveyed in the new conditions.

3. Cause of hooligan behavior

In order to answer this question we have to look into collective behavior. This shows how people change their behavior when they are in a crowd. Collective behavior is a type of spontaneous behavior, guided by fortuitous norms, sometimes diverging from those generally accepted, generated by the participants in a given situation⁶. This is a wide area of research which studies the collective behavior response in various circumstances and difficult situations. From one point of view this might mean a study of coordinated and organized social movements; on the other side, it defines apparently spontaneous emergence of a common behavior⁷.

Throughout history, many social psychologists have been interested by this subject and have discussed it in their papers. Among the firsts who have been preoccupied to study mass psychology have been Gabriel Tarde and Scipio Sighele (*The Crowd Criminal*), but they have studied the problem only from criminality point of view⁸. The first who defined a mass was Gustave Le Bon in his paper about mass: '*Mass Psychology*'. He defines mass as a gathering of people, no matter their nationality, profession or sex and led by an event which made them to be together. However, is not enough that a number of persons to be at the same place in the same time; in order to become a mass they need to have a common purpose⁹. He has suggested that all individual reactions are lost in the crowd and a so called 'collective soul' emerges, which make them feel, think and react in a totally different way that they would feel, think and act if they were alone. Mass are formed due to

⁶ Septimiu Chelcea, 2008,p.81

⁷ Norman Goodman,1992, p. 426

⁸ Gustave Le Bon, 1985, p. 7

⁹ Idem 4, p. 9

anonymity (which allow diminished personal responsibility) contagiously (ideas rapidly rumored in the group) and through suggestibility¹⁰.

Vierkandt (1928, p. 42) defines a mass as polar opposite of individual. It engulfs elites, aristocrats, intellectuals and so on. Mass could contain anyone, once people are together.

Many detailed studies regarding mass riots, crowds and similar collective disturbances, among them belonging to Gabriel Tarde and Sigmund Freud, develop the mental contagiousness hypothesis already stated by Gustave Le Bon.

A sociological approach of the collective behavior is present in the *scheme of added value* by Neil Smelser (*Theory of collective behavior*, 1963); also R. H. Turner and L. M. Killian have been preoccupied by this theme (*Collective behavior*, 1957). Turner supported the idea that norms have the most important role in a mass. In this there is an under-group where the norms emerge from, which are then internalized by the remaining members, thus their actions are justified through framing in those norms¹¹.

Moreover, in the great Max Weber sociologist papers we find a mass definition: a mass is a group of people situated at the external side of an establishment who takes a certain attitude towards it in a crisis situation. It derives from a temporary dissolution of communities and masses. A mass, in a social system, is considered a lack of system, a gap and finally, more as a collectivity attitude than a social one¹².

The French psycho-sociologist, Romanian born, must be quoted too: Serge Moscovici with his paper '*The Masses Epoch*' where he stated that a crowd is a social animal which has broken its leash, a group of people in continuous turmoil and agitation. It is also an unforgivable and blind force, able to remove any obstacle, to sway mountains or destroy age worth work¹³.

Another definition belongs to Norman Goodman: the most important and dramatic form of collective behavior, a temporary and unorganized gathering of people very close to each other, possessing a common center¹⁴.

We are quoting Anthony Giddens definition too: a crowd is that numerous gathering of people who interact with each other in a public space (a part of urban daily life)¹⁵.

Last but not least, A. P. Nazaretean's definition: a crowd is a gathering of persons who are not united by common aims, a unique structure regarding organization and decision, but are connected through common center of attention and the same emotional state¹⁶.

The characteristic psychological process of masses is the lack of individuality. This is a state defined through diminished self-evaluation activity and evaluation fear. The lack of individuality gives way to anti-normative and uninhibited attitudes¹⁷. It appears mostly as a consequence of inability to identify the participants.

Bhumer (1969) identified four types of masses. The category which we are studying is the most active and is included in the contestant type. In this type of gathering a uniformity of reactions takes place (The law of action uniformity). Members of a group have a safety feeling inside the mass. Masses, as Gustave Le Bon states are impulsive, versatile and irritable. Other way said, masses can suddenly change their state, emotion, to something totally opposite, without a pertinent explanation, and considering their impulsiveness we can explain their deeply irascible reaction.

¹⁰ Oxford, Dictionary of Sociology

¹¹ www.gioconda.ro

¹² Serge Moscovici in Adrian Neculau, 1996, p. 400 (Weber 1949, p. 369)

¹³ Serge Moscovici, 2001, p. 11

¹⁴ Norman Goodman, 1992, . 427

¹⁵ Anthony Giddens, 2000, p. 23

¹⁶ A. P. Nazaretean, 2006, p. 23

¹⁷ Postmers and Spers apud Stefan Boncu, 1999

There are also theories which explain mass dynamics. Among them, we are going to mention the following:

3.1. Contagion theories¹⁸

Initially stated by Le Bon, contagion theories explain mass behavior as a result of a collective soul, individual identity is lost due to contagious spread of situational generated emotions. Under anonymity and momentary emotions, people transfer opinions and responsibility to the collectivity. The crowd has its own life, no matter attendee personalities or existent social norms.

This sociology-psychological perspective was amplified by Bhemer (1951) who supports the idea that emotional states a crowd is going through are a result of people around. These emotions are accepted without an attentive selection and spread around emerging emotional level and focusing attention toward a common target.

3.2. Convergence theories¹⁹

In a psychological approach, convergence theories explain crowd behavior as an action of some like-minded people having the same emotional and mind state, driven into a situation and then commonly acting due to some similitude in their personalities. The first convergence theoreticians advocate that a crowd releases primary emotional impulses from social restriction which have controlled them so far. Others (Allport 1924) support the idea that the social shallowness more than contamination is the major trigger in a crowd behavior.

3.3. Emergent norm theory²⁰

Turner and Killian do not think that crowds are irrational gathering of people, driven by spontaneous emotions or predispositions. Their point of view is that a crowd behavior and action can be explained by those social norms which appear through collective interaction during a collective event. This explanation is named emergent theory norm. Turner emphasizes that careful studies on different types of crowds show that the participants are not sincere, they are considerably different in respect to their reasons, attitude and behavior and in their involvement in a certain event as well.

3.4. Mass psychology

Firstly, a crowd represents a gathering of people which is characterized by new features, different for each individual. An organized crowd is characterized by lack of conscientious personality and its feeling and thoughts are driven to the same direction. Thus, thousands of people, under some sort of strong emotional state, for example a national or international sport event, might get the features of a psychological mass.

This theory has its origins in the paper "Mass psychology" belonging to Gustave Le Bon, and studies mass from psychological point of view.

The theory of mass psychology approaches the most encountered feelings in a mass, and the consequences of this type of collective sense²¹.

Impulsion a very often encountered feeling in a mass, because almost entirely driven by subconsciousness, a person reaches the point where he or she acts randomly according to instigation. Mass impulsion is a result of external spurs. If alone, a person is able to control his or her reactions, but a mass has no such ability.

Versatility is another characteristic feeling. Masses are extremely versatile. There are numerous examples, such as mentioned before, during and after a sport event, when crowds go from

¹⁸ Norman Goodman, 1992, p.428

¹⁹ ibidem

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²¹ Gustave Le Bon, *Mass Psychology*, Scientific Edition, 1991, p. 23,

ibidem

a state of bloody ferocity to a heroic one, in the case their team is the winner. Found under momentary instigation, crowds might go through a whole range of most contradictory feelings.

Irritability is a feeling generated by the number of people in a crowd. A feeling of undefeated power is transmitted to anyone in the crowd and an individual loses the notion of impossibility and most of the time this feeling of irresistible power drives to violent actions.

Intolerance is represented by feelings that make a crowd not to accept any contradictions, which determine a fast change from a positive state to a negative one. An example could be a public gathering where the smallest contradiction risen by a speaker is immediately received with furious shouts and violent reactions, sometimes requiring public authorities interventions in order to prevent speaker's lynching. It was noted that besides intolerance, it is present more evident authoritarianism, especially for Latin crowds compared to the Anglo-Saxon ones, where the individual feeling is predominant²².

Suggestibility is another state very present in crowd. A crowd is many times in a state of favorable expectation for certain suggestions. First suggestion is immediately adopted through a contagious process, then the idea tends to become action, everything depending of the nature of excitement.

Credulousness is also an exaggerate feeling present in a crowd, as improbability is not acceptable for a mass. The simplest event lived by a crowd can easily become distorted. A crowd things through images and a exhibited image, display itself any other images without any connection with the first one. Collective observations are the most erroneous of all and represent a person's bare illusion, who through contagion influences the others²³.

4. Methods to struggle against hooliganism

Can hooliganism be stopped?

There is little probability, that sometimes violence to be eradicated from sport. Anytime, when large crowds of people, mostly men, sometimes under alcohol influence meet, there are potential reasons for conflicts, either a football match is or not involved. Throughout time, many methods have been tested to keep under control hooliganism, including tough sentences, legal actions or actions involving police crews (Football Intelligence Unit). In the, so called, peak period of hooliganism, ('70s – '80s) many governments adopted drastic measurements which proved a limited understanding of hooliganism problem. Most of the measurements worsened the problems, creating more and more tense relationships between fans and police. The only 'positive' outcome was 'driving away' violence out of stadiums. The action has reached its peak with ID plan (a way of identifying supporters based on cards) described by Lord Justice by a simile "using a sledgehammer to break a nut". The method was canceled after the disaster on the Hillsborough. Other attempts to prevent hooligan actions have included very severe laws as 'Football Act 2000' endorsed in order to stop those suspected to be hooligans to travel and take part as supporters at matches held abroad. These kinds of measurements have had a negative effect upon ordinary supporters. More than that, even the utility of interdiction (Banning orders), which was obviously had the purpose to reduce the number of violent incidences where British supporters were involved, was questionable because most of the time the people implied were recognized hooligans. However, it must be emphasized that violence on British stadiums has been greatly diminished compared with last decades, stadiums being today safer places than a city central area on a Saturday evening.

In my view, in order to prevent the phenomenon, we should start to educate our offspring from early childhood. If the youths were appropriately educated, focusing on damages this phenomenon can produce, everything would finish at some point in the future. The number of hooligans would gradually decrease and young generation would reject this type of attitude and they

²² Gustave Le Bon, *Mass Psychology*, Scientific Edition, 1991, p. 34-35,

²³ Gustave Le Bon, *Mass Psychology*, Scientific Edition, 1991, p. 25,

would be protected by such a virus. Fewer and fewer would follow these types of groups, and the hooligan groups would be diminished, and would not produce the same effects we can see nowadays. The problem cannot be resolved like a mathematical one, on the spot, or using an equation. All legal and coercive methods that public order possesses must be used.

The importance of education has been brought to attention because, generally, the lack of proper education represents the most important factor that generates violence on stadiums.

The main and most important elements in human personality formation are settled in childhood when he or she is educated and prepared for life. Besides family, school plays an important part in education, preparing an individual for real life, helping people to define their personality and properly react in society. Teachers are those who should try to offer their students the necessary knowledge, so that they would be able to choose the best way, as coaches train sportsmen for great performances.

We can ask ourselves why those children who have practiced sport since early childhood, even sport performers have a strong personality and healthy life principles. A realist answer would imply that these people have been educated in the light of fair competition.

Sport implies ambition, physical fight and physical strength, tenacity and success, optimism and health, as quoted in Latin saying "*Mens sana in corpore sano*", (Healthy mind in a healthy body). Any sportsman and sportswoman is able to receive the victory and defeat as well.

Unfortunately, teachers have no more authority over their students. Recently media have been presenting more and more often cases involving students bullying teachers during classes. It seems that in Romania violence appears since secondary school. Physical education classes have been transformed to social education classes.

Thus the lack of physical education generates the absence of team spirit, organization, initiative, determination, ambition, perseverance, punctuality; selflessness has been replaced by selfishness and individuality.

Physical education envisages a harmonious development of the whole body and soul, strengthens health and harnesses physical qualities (Cretu, 1999, Jinga&Istrate, 1998).

This is the first 'type of education' which greatly influences the whole, body and mind. Physical education affects biological side of human being and its social part as well.

This influences human being at any age and answer to double needs:

Individual

Social

Health state of the human body

Its normal development

Lengthen life span

Biologic health is one of the essential values which merges with nature and human mental health in the value system of a society. Through this double necessity, physical education and sport is hereditary and ambiance conditioned.

Conclusions

Contemporary societies evolution emphasizes the fact that despite the increasing number of methods and specialized institution interventions in controlling criminality and offenses, in many countries there is an obvious recrudescence and increasing number of violent and aggressive offenses even in economical areas, banking and finance, such as fraud, blackmail, bribery and corruption. Violence, however, is not a new phenomenon, its appearance and evolution being closely linked to people, groups, organizations and even human society evolution. This is one of the reasons some researchers and specialists believe that violence is a permanent human feature, close connected to human essence and society development.

To sum up, hooliganism represents a contemporary type of violence in sport, but we cannot evaluate this phenomenon in a pure form. Most of the time hooliganism is present through primary physical violence which degenerates into conflicting, collective, community violence which is even more difficult to combat.

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