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**Hooligans' Attitudes Regarding Sport Violence:
A Phenomenological Study**

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Declaration by Author

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Abstract

The present study investigates hardcore fans' perceptions regarding sport violence. Phenomenological approach was used and the author conducted semi-structured interviews with the participants (N=5). The inclusion criteria for the participants consisted of having participated in sport riots and perceiving themselves as hardcore fans of their favorite team. The interviews were structured around three main research questions including team identification, participation at sport riots and the reasons of such behaviors. Several themes emerged such as the relation between team identification and violent behavior, the reasons that someone joins a fight and the normalization of such ways of behaving. All in all the participants stated that taking part in sport riots is for the benefit of the team in terms of protecting it against mistreatment as well as in terms of demonstrating superiority against rival fans. Sport fields are thought to be, according to the participants, as a place where someone is allowed and expected to act violently but the results revealed a differentiation among being violent in sport contexts and being violent in daily routine.

Keywords: Hooliganism, Team Identification, Sport Violence, Riots

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Introduction

Definition of fans

To begin with, Spinrad (1981) defined as the sport fan a person who thinks, who talks about and who is oriented towards sports even when he/she is not actually observing, or reading, or listening to an account of a specific sports event. Sport fans can be distinguished in two different categories, according to Spinrad, the fans and the hooligans. The differentiation among these two categories is that the hooligans do not follow the social norms and rules while attending a sport event.

Later, and as the crowd which attends sport events is evolved, another two categories of sport fan might be suggested: hoolifan, which refers to the sport fans who do not take part in sport riots but support them who do it (Rookwood & Pearson, 2010) and pseudo-fan, which refers to the people who attend sport events only for joining fights without even care about the sport itself (Sahaj, 2009). The term pseudo-fan consists of the word pseudo which means in Greek lie, indicating that the pseudo-fans are not fans at all.

Giulianotti (2002), also, categorized sport spectators' identities in four different groups using a figure with a horizontal and a vertical axis and the four categories emerged are: supporter, fan, follower and flâneurs. It should be mentioned that his categorization does not refer to criteria related to violence but it is about the consuming habits of spectators and the relation they perceive to have with a sport team.

Motives for being a fan

During the past century the phenomenon of hooliganism captured the interest of, mainly social, researchers. Many different theories tried to explain hooliganism through their own lens and, most of the times, the researchers added their point of view and explanation at the bibliography but, after all, there is not a catholic theory explaining hooliganism. Sport involvement as a spectator covers some principal needs. Such needs are the need of belonging in a group as it was suggested by Schachter (1959) or the need to demonstrate superiority against others (Festinger, 1954). It is suggested that these needs are over fulfilled by the team identification (Wann & Branscombe, 1993; Coakley, 2009), the connection of each sport fan with the team that he/she supports. Team identification, based on social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), refers to the degree that someone is psychologically connected with a sport team or a sport event.

Participating in sport events as a spectator covers also some other needs, Sloan (1989) stated that the participation in a sport event as a spectator motivates people to cheer for a success and express feelings that they cannot express in their daily routine. Moreover, he added for the first time the meaning of the symbolic win of fans through their team's success. The importance of a sport team playing in front of their fans was identified very early and, as Edwards (1973) stated, fans can affect their team's performance while Varca (1980) added that through their presence sport fans can affect, also, opponent's performance.

Psychosocial aspects of hooliganism

Dunning and his colleagues (1988, 1993, 1999, 2000, 2002) have based their twenty-year-long research on sport fans in Elias' theory (1939). Elias suggested that

civilization is not a state but a process and as in each process, the things into and around it change continuously. Having this on mind, Dunning and his colleagues came into the conclusion that as, especially in Europe, the lifestyle changed completely at the 20th century, the sport fields became a facilitator for the expression of feelings and behaviors which people were not any more allowed to express in their daily life, because of the laws and the social norms that they were supposed to follow.

Moreover, the Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977) suggests that people learn how to behave by observing others and by receiving reinforcement for their actions. The observation might refer to media, friends but most importantly the parents that are the role models for each child. That means that a child which is exposed to violent incidents has much more chances to demonstrate violent behavior, especially if the incidents were incidents of domestic violence. Furthermore, if the person received reinforcement after a violent action, it is much more likely to demonstrate such behaviors again. The term of Crowd (or Mob) Psychology, as suggested by Le Bon in the late years of 19th century and revised some decades later by Freud (1921), is a very popular theory among each study related to crowds. As it is suggested the person as a part of a big crowd, where he/she probably is among unknown people, loses a part of his/her personal identity, his/her qualms and his/her own willing. An important characteristic of the Crowd Psychology is that the crowd as a whole, feels unbeatable, unstoppable and under the same goal.

Alcohol abuse and other antisocial behaviors

Having the previous theoretical background in mind, recent researchers have examined this kind of phenomena through their own perspectives and framework. Hooliganism has been linked with several unhealthy or antisocial behaviors but most

of the researches are focused on the symptoms and not at the reasons of why a person has the need to express violent behaviors against others in sport contexts.

Many different researchers (Lewis, 2007; Rees & Schnepel, 2009; Pearson & Sale, 2010; Sage & Eitzen, 2013) have indicated that alcohol use can lead someone to compete in sport riots while the results of other researches (Dunning, Murphy & Waddington, 2002; Frosdick & Marsh, 2005; Maniglio, 2007) have shown that the alcohol use is not necessarily connected with sport riots. Many sport fans consume alcohol without being violent and many fans who provoke riots do not consume any alcohol before. As the findings are controversial we could suppose that alcohol might be a symptom and sometimes a facilitator for someone to join a riot, but we cannot think of it as an important factor for the prediction of hooliganism. Alcohol abuse, however, is connected with other antisocial forms as it was found from Jessor and Jessor (1977, 1987) who suggested, in a simple way, that a person who demonstrates a form of antisocial or unhealthy behavior (e.g. smoking or alcohol abuse) has much more chances to demonstrate also another form of such behaviors (e.g. domestic violence). They named their theory Problem Behavior Theory and, even if, it has not yet been applied to the context of sport fans, it might be useful in the understanding of hooliganism. Papaioannou, Karastogiannidou and Theodorakis (2004), based on Problem Behavior Theory, have linked sport violence with other forms of antisocial behaviors such as smoking or hashish use but their research was focused on the violence in adolescents while taking part on sports and not while observing as spectators.

To support on the belief that antisocial behaviors are very likely to be connected with each other Courtney and Wann (2010) found a strong connection among participating in sport riots and being a bully earlier at the school life. It seems, as they

suggest, that the violent children and adolescents when growing up need to find other places where they will be able to demonstrate their power and their need to act in a violent way. Psychopathy has also been examined by Russell and Arms (1995, 1998) as a predictor for someone's pleasure to join a fight.

Team identification and fans' behavior

As already said, the term of team identification refers to the degree that someone is psychologically connected with a sport team or a sport event (Wann & Branscombe, 1993). Team identification could be conceptualized as a form of socialization where the young children tend to follow the social norms and the role models seen by their significant others, mainly their parents, as far as it concerns the choice of the sport team that a person will support (James, 2001; Grusec & Davidov, 2007). This kind of socialization with a sport team has both cognitive and emotional dimensions and, when referring to children, the latter may be dominant (Duquin, 2000). Wann (2006) found that team identification is related to the psychological well-being, not because of the identification itself but because of the opportunities given to the sport fan to socialize with others with the same shared beliefs. Positive relation among team identification and well-being was found both for adult and children populations (Wann, Brasher, Thomas, & Scheuchner, 2015). Although Spaaij and Anderson (2010) tried to frame the process of how a child bonds with a sport team their results, only, revealed the importance of the role of the father regarding a child's choice of the team.

Researches have shown that the level of team identification can be influenced from someone's need to belong in a team (Theodorakis, Wann, Nassis, & Luellen, 2012) and it can even influence perceptions related to sport events such as the expectancies

about stadium facilitations when attending a match (Theodorakis, Koustelios, Robinson, & Barlas, 2009). Team identification can be present even in cases of sport fans that live in different countries or even continents than the team that they support (Al Ganideh & Good, 2015). In terms of behavior, the team identification seems to have a strong relation to someone's pleasure to demonstrate aggressive behavior (Dimmock & Grove, 2005).

Rocca & Vogl-Bauer (1999) examined the relationship among someone's team identification and the perception of how appropriate are the violent behaviors related to sport events. It was found that the more someone feels connected to his/her team, the more likely is to perceive aggressive behaviors as normal during attending a sport match. Taking these results a step further, Wakefield and Wann (2006) found that the fans with higher levels of fan dysfunction do believe that acting in a violent way during sport events is something widely acceptable. It was also found from Donahue and Wann (2009) that there is a reciprocal relationship between the levels of a fans' dysfunction and the levels of appropriateness when attending a sport match.

Hooligans' collective identity

In his study, Spaaij (2008) collected sample of sport fans from several different countries demonstrating the globalization of the phenomenon of hooliganism. He stated that the hooligan identity consists of some characteristics such as hard masculinity, territorial identifications and a sense of solidarity, belonging and sovereignty. Given that the main body of hooligans' population is composed of young men or adolescents as suggested from any research, such characteristics may seem very attractive to a person who is searching for his/her personal identity. Similar findings were met in the study of Gibbons, Dixon and Braye (2008). The participant

in their study stated that what made him remaining an active member of the hooligan gang for a decade was the sense of belonging in a group alongside with the feeling of rejection in his personal life. This finding, also, revealed at the study of Wann, Dimmock and Grove (2003) where the authors connected team identification with lower levels of loneliness.

Radmann (2014) conducted a longitudinal study including two different interviews with the same participants after 14 years. He highlighted the difficulties of gaining the trust of the participants and he added useful elements in the literature body as he was able to enroll how the perceptions of each participant had changed after so many years. Many of his participants denied the "hooligan identity" stating that hooligans are people provoking vandalisms and that they only want to join fights between rival fans. His participants identified hooliganism as a whole subculture which is difficult to be explained and as a taboo among sport-related people.

Stott, Adang, Livingstone and Schreiber (2007) examined by observation and semi-structured interviews the behavior of England fans during Euro 2004. Their evidence showed that England fans in most of the cases did not demonstrate any deviant behaviors although some of the most well-known hooligans in UK had travelled to Portugal for the tournament. The authors reasoned their findings at the collective identity as an "England fan" that almost everyone tried to protect by demonstrating a legal behavior. It is also mentioned that at the only city where England fans took part at sport riots is the city that the local police was much tougher against them comparing to the fans from the other countries. We might consider that the term of self-fulfilling prophecy has been applied in such an occasion, as the fans "were forced to" demonstrate the behavior that the police expected from them to have.

Present Study

Although the study of fans' self-image can provide researchers' community with some very important information on the pursuit of better understanding the motives and the reasons for someone's pleasure to join a sport riot, there are only few studies examining the phenomenon of hooliganism through the perspective of the hooligans. We could assume that the main reason, why this is happening, is that approaching and gaining the trust of hooligans is a very difficult situation for a researcher to be as the vast majority of hooligans have engaged in illegal actions. Examining hooligans' own point of view can give us a more clear picture about why and how someone decides to adopt such antisocial behaviors which probably he/she will not adopt in his/her daily life.

The present study aims to add some further knowledge to the phenomenon of hooliganism from the point of view of those who engage in behaviors widely accepted as "hooligans' typical behaviors". From the research in existing bibliography, only few researchers were able to conduct qualitative study with participants that were active hooligans during the period that the study was conducted. The issues raised when a researcher studies a field where delinquent behaviors take place are more or less known. What can be thought as a valuable way of studying hooliganism are ethnographic studies where the researcher can become member of a sport fan club and have the chance to investigate the phenomenon inside. This kind of research includes both ethical and practical issues (Pearson, 2009). Not only the participants contribute to a research without their approval but also the researchers might be forced to compete to deviant behaviors or to risk their physical well-being.

As indicated by Dart (2008), a potential good resource of conceptualizing the phenomenon of hooliganism is what called “hoolie-lit”. The term, although informal, has gained recognition both from publishers and readers and refers to the auto/biographical books written by former hooligans. This book category is very popular in UK, where a lot of hooligans of past decades have decided to share their stories. As it is stated, auto/biographical books can provide researchers with plenty of useful information but there is skepticism about their reliability and the extent that the real situations are described. In addition, the nostalgic sense that someone might add when he/she adverts to the past is probably another concern.

In the study of Radmann (2014), the author highlights the importance of knowing someone who can make the contact between the researcher and the participants, someone who can guarantee to the participants that anonymity does exist. A more achievable way to select information from people engaged to hooliganism is by interviewing them some years after quitting such a way of life (Gibbons, Dixon, & Braye, 2008). As mentioned in plenty of the previous studies (Dunning et al., 2002; Spaaij, 2008; Dart, 2008) the phenomenon of hooliganism should be treated as a complex subculture with dynamic process, so more qualitative studies are needed to be conducted for the better explanation of it. The current study focuses the attention on three principal points:

1. How each participant perceives his team identification
2. How each participant perceives his involvement in sport riots
3. How each participant reasons that way of behaving

Methods

For the needs of the present study phenomenological approach was selected as the most appropriate. Phenomenological approach describes the participants' meaning of their lived experiences about a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007) such as hooliganism. Semi-structured interviews, organized around a set of pre-determined open-ended questions, were conducted. Each interview lasted for about thirty minutes. In the initial plan of this study, observation of the participants thought to provide the researcher with some more useful evidence but observation was not accepted by the participants.

Participants

The selection of the participants was made with the 'snowball method' in order to gain access in the field, which means that someone who knew someone made the contact so that the present study came to life. Participants were five males, aged from 20 to 26 years old ($M=22.8$, $S.D.=2.39$) and all of them were active members of a fan club of the same Greek team, and the inclusion criteria consisted of having joined at least once a sport riot with their willingness and perceiving themselves as members of the hardcore fans of their team. Although the number of the participants is not so extensive, it meets the least required criteria for conducting phenomenological study. It is indicated that the participants were given pseudonyms for reasons of confidentiality.

Procedure

Ethical approval was asked and given from the Ethics Committee of University of Thessaly, Department of Physical Education and Sport Science. All interviews were

conducted by the same researcher, who had good knowledge on the subject both from his own experience as a sport fan and from studying the literature review and was able to control the flow of the conversation. The author had met, at first, with a larger number of candidate participants in order to give them the consent forms, trying to earn their trust for conducting the interviews. As the interview would require from the participants to give out some confidential information about their delinquent behaviors, some of them denied continuing the procedure.

Data Collection

Two of the five interviews were conducted by using Skype because the participants were located in different city than the author. The rest of the interviews were conducted face to face, at a place of participants' choice. All the interviews were audio recorded. At the period of the data collection, it was almost off-season and the participants had not participated as a spectator in any sport event for a period of at least ten days. The absence of the stimulus of sport observation before the interviews could be construed either positively or negatively. On one hand, the participants were able to give their answers in "cold blood" which probably made them more sincere but, on the other hand, if the interviews were conducted within some hours after the participants had attended a sport event, the answers received might be even more comprehensive because of the emotional arousal that the fans have. However, the existing bibliography suggests no differences at fans' perceptions between season and off-season period (Wann, Keenan, & Page, 2009). It is highlighted that the time of conducting the interviews was not on purpose as it was a combination of positive answer from the candidate participants and the available time that it was needed by the author.

Data Analysis

As mentioned before, the interviews were audio recorded. The author, then, listened to them several times before transcribing verbatim. Then again he listened to audio recordings to check if something was missing or if something was not understood correctly. Having on mind the research questions and being sensitive to whatever the participants mentioned and probably the study had not considered in first place, several themes emerged such as the influence of the significant others at someone's team identification and normalization of violent behavior when attending sport events. The findings are presented below at the Results part.

Results

The role of significant others on team identification

The first part of the interview included some demographic questions about age, level of education as well as current working status and the participants' total years belonging to a fan club. After that, the participants were asked to describe why they selected the team that they support, what made them to support the specific team and why, according to them, someone choose to support a specific team rather than one other.

Some of the participants replied, at first, that it is something that happens automatically as Vasilis said'' the choice of the team happens accidentally, actually not accidentally but whatever, it is up to the family to make you support a team''. All of them highlighted the influence of the family that made them to support the specific team. Most of them indicated, especially, their father as the key-person for making their decision. Only Marios replied that his father supported another team than he

does but as he said “he is not so into sports, that’s why my older cousins (who supported a different team than his father) took me to football matches”.

Although all of them replied that family was the crucial factor for making their choice, some of them needed to reason their choice and as it was said by Themis “it was family at first, but then you see what this team represents, what this team means to you and to others and you are bonded with it”. Manolis said that when he was a little child he used to support a local team of his hometown because of his friends but as the years went by he decided to change team because of his father, who has season ticket for his favorite team until nowadays. When the participants were asked to say how someone chooses the team that he supports in his life, no clear answers were given. All of them replied that perhaps it happens because of the family, as happened to them.

Team identification: What the team means

Team identification was found to have a strong meaning for each participant, as it was probably expected. Vasilis said “it is the team of my neighborhood that’s what it means for me. For someone living away from here (he means the area that his team comes from) it might mean something else but for me it’s a part of me, a part of my childhood something that connects me with this place”. The answers received from Themis and Manolis who live away of the team’s hometown was a kind of identical: “it’s our life” and “it’s my whole life” respectively. It should be highlighted that this was the only question that it was replied almost without thinking from the majority of the participants. When the author tried to learn something more about what “it’s my whole life” means, he did not receive any answer than “just it, do you think anything more important than your life?”. The rest of the participants who had

grown at the area where their team is located, also, mentioned the importance of supporting a team that is connected with their city and their daily life.

When asking the participants about their emotions while going to the stadium the answers of the participants were more or less similar. They described their presence in the field as a whole ritual which is differentiated depending on whether the match is located at home or away. As it was mentioned by Aris ‘‘you know for us going to the match does not last two hours. We prepare some days before, especially, if we have to travel or it is a derby. We meet altogether several hours before the match, a lot of feelings I cannot describe them’’. Yet Themis who comes from outside of team’s hometown declared ‘‘happy to arrive home’. ‘‘For us coming from far to watch the team it is something that we are waiting for with impatience and the worst thing is to lose the game and, then, have to travel sad and frustrated for so many hours’’ was mentioned by Manolis. The author asked them how they feel when their team scores an important goal giving them the example of scoring goals and winning some of the best teams in Champions League (the highest European competition), Marios said ‘‘It’s a madness, totally madness winning Manchester United for example or Atletico it’s a madness’’. Vasilis laughed at the specific question saying that ‘‘things related to sex should not be said to the interview’’.

Violent behavior during sport events

As it was mentioned before, the principal inclusion criterion for taking part at the research was to have, at least once, participated in sport riots. It should be noticed that we were interested in those who declare guilty for joining a fight and not for those who were the victims of the riot without their willing. The violent behavior was differentiated in two categories: related to a sport event and not related to a sport

event. The importance of the differentiation among the two categories is only practical as when riots take place at a sport stadium the team might be punished by the federation but when the riots are away from the field no fines are received by anyone. Participants, in general, denied provoking riots during sport events stating that it would only harm the team and that's, why, "it would be better if riots happen outside of the stadiums" as Marios said. Aris stated "I don't like riots in the field but I can understand those that provoke them. Being mistreated by the referees it is not something acceptable and, if the president cannot do something, then the fans have to take action". The reasons that someone prefers to act violently during attending a sport event, according to the participants, can be concluded as the referee's mistakes, the sense that some teams are continuously mistreated by the federation as well as the propaganda from the newspapers and the TV channels.

As deepest causes of sport violence, participants said that propaganda from the news was a reason and, also, the profit made from the presidents of the sport teams. When he was asked about the factors provoking violence Aris said "there is a president of a team who owns a TV channel and he makes a lot of money by having programs which say lies and make the people feeling that our president faults for everything". Manolis added "because other teams cannot reach us, they believe that it is our fault but it is not. If you cannot have a president who gives money to the club then find someone to give money. But they prefer to listen and to believe to the propaganda from their president's channel and newspaper". All the participants agreed that no real efforts are made to stop violence as "everyone makes a profit from it".

Moreover, Vasilis described of an incident of having a fight against police officers while he was leaving from a stadium at an away match "you know the time that you

have lost (he means the match) and you see the police mistreating you and burning you up, such things can happen. We didn't mean to do it but it happened, sometimes you cannot control the intensity that you have''.

Violent behavior outside of the sport fields

As it was said above, the participants said that in their field there are not, generally, incidents of sport violence during matches. They reasoned that as ''the others (he means the fans of the rival teams) think that by sport riots they fight the status quo'' (Manolis) or that ''sometimes the others provoke riots against the owner of the team or because of their bad results in domestic and European competitions'' (Marios). None of the participants declined to have participated outside of the field in sport riots. Actually, if he had declined it then he should be excluded from the study.

Manolis stated ''joining a fight against other fans in the streets is a matter of proving that you are the best, that your team is the best that your Gate (every team's fan club in Greece has a nickname related to the gate where they are sitting in the field) is the best''. Asked from the author in what terms he means ''best'' he replied ''you know if you hit them, then you say it to the others and, after that, anyone knows that here (he means his hometown- a small city away from team's hometown) our fans rule the streets''. Vasilis said '' it is a matter of pride, you cannot let them think that they can beat you, you need at every chance to show them who you are and what you can do''.

Some of the participants stated it by own and others were asked but all of them agreed that joining a fight against other teams' fans is a matter of ego, a matter of proving that you as a fan and, by extension, your team are better than the others. Aris declared ''I would not join a fight by my own. I mean if it is not about teams I will

not fight with someone without reason. It is different hitting someone because of team preference”. The author asked Aris if it is something like a street war between different gangs and he received the answer “yes, you can say so”. None of the participants declared violent in his daily routine but when it comes about teams, then anyone is welcomed to join the fight. Themis, although, said “nobody will ask you to join a fight unless you want. Here in our fan club because we are from a small city many have joined the club only for the trips and the tickets and the others are ok with that”.

Team identification and violent behavior

After differentiating the riots in the two categories, inside and outside from the field, the common theme that emerged is that no matter where these behaviors take place, the fans reasoned their behaviors for the “good of their teams”.

Firstly, when participating in riots during a sport event the fans perceived it as someone’s try to protect his team. Aris said “if you felt most of the times mistreated what would you do? I think that you and I and everyone would do the same”. “Fans are the 12th player of the team; fans are integral part of the team that’s why they do whatever they do. You will not see any fan that comes only at big matches to join a riot because he doesn’t care. But the fans who are always there do care and cannot see their team being treated unfairly” was added by Vasilis. Themis, also, said that “it is not about winning or losing. Actually it is about winning or losing but it depends on how you lose. I can understand those who provoke riots”. Asked if it is worthy for the teams to be punished because of their fans Manolis stated “fanatics are the core of the team, without them there is not any team. So yes probably it is worthy” and Marios mentioned “every family pays for the mistakes of its members. Without us the teams

would not be the same”. We could assume that the sense of belonging to the team and, maybe, the sacrifices that they have done for their team, according to them, allow them somehow to behave in this way and think that it is logical.

The situation is even tougher when the sport riots take place away from a sport event. When something like that happens the fans do it on “cold blood” and the reasons behind it are not totally related to sport itself. As it was mentioned before, Manolis talked about territory “joining a fight against other fans in the streets is a matter of proving that you are the best, that your team is the best that your Gate is the best”. He was asked whether he thinks that when joining a fight he represents his team and he replied “yes I represent my team against others and we prove that we can overmaster them”. Aris said that “it is a matter of proving who can hit the other. You do not join a fight as a person but as a member of the team against the rivals”.

Themis replied that it is a matter of choice if someone will join a fight but it does not make him more or less supporter of the team. He believes that when someone chooses a lower profile and a quieter lifestyle as a fan it is totally ok. He said “the passion for the team is proved at the stadiums and not in the streets”. Vasilis and Marios, also, stated that whoever does not want to join a fight, he is allowed to do it but then he will never gain reputation among team’s fans.

Normalization

The last theme that emerged while conducting the study was the normalization that each participant demonstrated at almost every aspect of the interview. Firstly, as it was already shown the participants believe that, by lack, they have found the right team to support. Themis said that “it was family at first but then you see what the team means”. While the author asked him if he would have chosen another team if

his family was doing so, he replied “hmm, I don’t think so, I love my team”. Yet another example of normalization was from Manolis who said “it is inevitable when you go to a match to act violently that’s why you go there, you need to take out all your intensity” and Vasilis mentioned “if everyone was silent and sit on his position then there would not be any meaning, you don’t help your team by just sitting and watching”. All of the participants replied that being violent when attending sport events is something normal, acceptable and, maybe, the actual reason for going there.

Moreover, their love for their team reasoned, in their opinion, their violent behavior away from sport events. They believe that demonstrating superiority against rivals is ‘a win of our team’ as mentioned by Aris. Marios said ‘as the team wins in the field, we win the others in the street. It is pretty much the same’. Representing their team on street fights was also mentioned by Manolis while Themis said that it is a matter of choice but it does not prove that you love your team more.

Discussion

We might consider that the findings of our study, as presented above, give a clear enough picture of how the participants-hooligans perceive their relation to the team that they support. The present study aimed to investigate hooligans’ perceptions about their team identification, their behavior and the reasons of their behavior. As it seems, although the sample was small, the participants gave to the researcher plenty of information that can be useful for future researches. Some of the findings are consistent with the existing bibliography and some others added something new to the literature related to sport riots and hooliganism. Moreover, conducting interviews with such a sample gave us the opportunity to see through our participants’ point of view

and to conceptualize, in a better way, each participant's meanings about the phenomenon of hooliganism.

Bandura (1977) when building his Social Learning Theory stated that each person's behavior is a combination of what behaviors he/she sees from the significant others and of the reinforcement received when behaving in such way. Later on, Wann and Branscombe (1993) described someone's connection with the sport team that he supports by the term of Team Identification. They based their theory on Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The participants of our study stated that what made them supporting their favorite team was, mainly, the influence of their family and, especially, of their father. It is suggested that every child perceives his parents as role models and tends to demonstrate similar behavior (Bandura, 1977). As we could assume, though, the participants, when constructing their team identification, did nothing more than just copy the example that they have watched from significant others (father or other relatives). Moreover, when asked they replied that probably, and by their own experience, is up to the family to guide someone to support a specific sport team. Even they might not know it, their experience is consistent with the existing bibliography suggesting family as the major factor for someone to support a sport team (James, 2001, Spaaij & Anderson, 2010).

In addition, as the construction of the connection with the team becomes very strong before a child enters adolescence, it is very unlikely for a young supporter to change his favorite team (Spaaij, & Anderson, 2010). Although in adolescence the young people tend to change behaviors and beliefs due to the influence of their friends, team preference seems to be stable. In fact none of the participants knew someone who changed team because of his friends. Even if the participants were not able to describe the procedure of how their connection with their favorite team was

built, we can assume that this happens because of the unawareness of the socialization process they have gone through.

Team identification has been widely studied the last two decades. Since Wann and Branscombe (1993) introduced the term, plenty of studies have focused their attention on the supporters' perceptions related to the connection with their favorite team. What the connection with a sport teams offers, can be thought as the fulfillment of some principal needs. It has been found that being a fan of your hometown local team can cover the need for belonging to a group (Theodorakis, Wann, Nassis, & Luellen, 2012). Their finding is consistent with the findings from Gibbons, Dixon and Braye (2008) where the participant stated that though membership in the fan club, he was able to fulfill the rejection that he was feeling in other aspects of his life. In the present study, although, the participants were coming both from hometown and other town than the team that they support, all of them stated that a reason for supporting their favorite team and being members at the supporters' fan club was that they could be together with others with the same passion and beliefs. Except from that, one of those outside of the team's hometown referred to the team's stadium as "his home". We could assume that the need of belonging, as someone's perception, can be covered by living either close to the team's hometown or even hundreds of kilometers away. Wann (2006) stated that the team identification facilitates someone's social life, not because of the identification itself but because of the interaction with others with the same beliefs and passion. Indeed, some of the participants talked about their bonding with their favorite team as well as with the other members of the fan club. One of the participants stated that the reason that made him join the fan club was the nice atmosphere during matches and the fact that he could be among others with the same passion for the team.

As mentioned, both of the two categories of our participants, these who have grown close to the team's hometown and these who have grown kilometers away stated that their daily routine is connected with their team. Even if some of them live hundreds of kilometers away from their team's location, one of the participants referred to team's field as his 'home' stating that he is very happy every time that he returns there. Moreover, the participants declared that their favorite team is narrowly connected with their life and most of them stated, without even thinking, that their team means everything, that their team is their life. As we could think, the connection with the favorite team has a different meaning for each of the participants, but all of them have found a way to perceive themselves as an integral part of the team.

Trying to explain why someone connects his life with a sport team, we need to take into consideration some other aspects in order to reason the perceptions that could make such a connection possible. A combination of the characteristics of the hooligans such as hard masculinity (Spaaij, 2008), the probability of the rejection from others in daily life (Gibbons, Dixon, & Braye, 2008) as well as the difficulties in everyday life (Sloan, 1989) can explain why a young, mainly, man needs to connect his entire life with the support of a sport club. Given that the participants of our study belong to the generation of their team's fans that have celebrated a lot of successes as a team, they might be able to demonstrate, via their team, the superiority (Festinger, 1954) that they cannot demonstrate in their daily routine. Such reasons can give us some framework about our participants' way of thinking, as when asked they were not able to locate what really made them so connected with their favorite team.

As the participants perceived themselves and the rest of the fanatic supporters as an integral part of the team, they believe that each sport fan has the right not only to

act in a violent way but also to reason that behavior for “the good of his team”. The “good of the team” was the main reason, for the majority of our participants, about the riots which happen to the sport fields and is consistent with the findings of Donahue and Wann (2009). Even though the participants stated that they do not like and do not approve provoking riots at their field, they can understand the reasons why someone chooses to act in this way. Protecting the team was the most common reason that most of the participants said. It was claimed that supporters have the right and need to take actions if they believe that their team is mistreated by the federation or the team’s board. Rocca & Vogl-Bauer (1999) had, also, found a similar finding in their study where they connected team identification with the tense of someone to join a riot in sport contexts. One of our participants said that the connection with the team is what makes someone to join a riot. He, actually, stated that someone who is not very connected with the team will not join a riot as he does not, really, care for the “good of the team”.

Another reason for provoking riots was the need to exaggerate the intensity that someone has, according to some of our participants. The term of Mob Psychology (Freud, 1921) finds a quite obvious application in such cases and contexts. Furthermore, this finding was also found in plenty of other studies (Dunning et al., 2002; Berkowitz, 1999; Russell, 2004). A participant, also, noted that the only time that he had joined a fight in sport contexts was because of the police’s behavior. He stated that it was not fans’ fault but it happened because of the police mistreatment to them. A similar incident was found at the study of Stott, Adang, Livingstone and Schreiber (2007) when the England fans joined a fight during a football tournament after the police mistreated them. As the authors in that study stated, it was notable the absence of such incidents in the rest of the tournament and probably the police’s

mistreatment was the trigger for such a behavior from England fans. A similar assumption could be made, also, in the incident described by our participant. He mentioned that the incident took place after his team losing a match stating that they were already frustrated about the match result and as we could think, police's way of treatment to them did not provoke the riot itself but, probably, worked as a trigger for the fans to express their anger. It seems that, according to our participants, it is widely acceptable among the sport fans that sport events is an appropriate place for someone to demonstrate behaviors that he/she is not able to have in the other aspects of his life, such evidence was also found at the study of Wakefield and Wann (2006) or Dunning and his colleagues (1998, 2000, 2002).

Behaving violently outside of the sport contexts but on the name of the supported team is another important aspect of the present study. Our participants not only accepted their presence in fights among rival fans but also declared being proud of their accomplishments during such fights. They stated that joining such fights gives them the opportunity to represent their team outside of sport contexts as well as gain reputation among their team's supporters. As suggested by existing bibliography (Dunning, 2002; Spaaij, 2008; Dart, 2008; Radmann, 2014), each researcher, who tries to explain the phenomenon of hooliganism, should have on mind that it is a multidimensional subculture with its dynamics processes and rules among the members. In the study of Spaaij (2008), one of the participants stated that there is a code of solidarity, even among the members of rival clubs. He stated that he had joined several fights during his hooligan life and, although, the rival hooligans had the chance to beat him at the place where he was working, something like a code of honor did not allow them to do so. He, also, stated that he was not afraid that the rival hooligans will beat him, because of this kind of rules among hooligans. He said that

these fights are not personal but someone who participates in such a riot, he does it as a part of the team. The same findings were found in the present study where some of our participants stated that they would not join a fight by their own or they would not hit someone who was alone. They denied being violent in their daily routine but riots among rival hooligans is a matter of ego, pride and recognition. Some of the participants stated that joining a fight does not mean that you support your team more than the others. However, they do believe that they represent their team against rival teams while fighting with other teams' supporters.

In the research of Radmann (2014), the participants denied the term of hooligan saying that it has a negative meaning and it refers to someone who makes vandalisms. Our participants neither denied nor accepted the term of hooligan, as the term "hooligan" was mentioned both on the consent forms that were given and during the interviews. We cannot be sure whether this difference can be explained in terms of more or less violent behavior by the participants of each study or it is, just, a matter of different meaning in each language.

During the interviews, the participants talked about their experiences and behaviors, reasoned their actions and left the author with the impression that they believe that this kind of behavior is, absolutely, normal. The normalization that each participant expressed, of course indirectly, about his beliefs and behavior might be the key-point for this kind of deviant actions. Trying to explain from where this normalization comes from, we could take into consideration Festinger's Theory of Cognitive Dissonance (1954). Festinger had stated that beliefs and behaviors of each person should be consistent or at least no contradictory. That means that someone does not behave differently than his beliefs, ideas or values dictate and when he/she does so, then the person tends to change either the beliefs or the behavior in order to

avoid mental stress or discomfort. In the present study as the participants had chosen to behave in a deviant way, they needed to reason and justify their deviancy that they had by believing that this way of behaving is normal and acceptable in such contexts. Some of the participants stated that being violent when attending a sport event does not prove anything about someone's passion for the team, some others stated that participating in riots for 'the good of the team' proves that someone does care about his favorite team. All of them, however, admitted believing that the participation in riots is a reason for someone to attend a sport event and, also, a good way to gain reputation among team's supporters. They stated that participation in riots and fights is, only, someone's choice whether to do it or not to do it, while they overlooked the delinquent nature of such behaviors. Moreover, they denied being violent during their daily routine stating that fights among fans are a matter of ego, pride and reputation. As members of supporters' club they are supposed to follow some norms, such as not attacking a rival who is alone or taking revenge if someone from their supporter's club is hit by the rivals. A participant was asked if this situation is something like a gang war in the streets and he accepted that term.

Moreover, they reasoned the differences in behavior between their daily routine and their presence at the fan club at the need to represent sufficiently their team. They believe that fighting against rival fans proves the superiority of their team against others. Some of them said that as the team wins in the field, they win in the streets. In such an occasion, the term of symbolic win (Sloan, 1989) probably is taken to the next level, where fans not only demonstrate superiority through their team's wins but also they demonstrate superiority on behalf of their team by fighting others.

Limitations and Future Researches

The first barrier that appeared on the way for conducting the present study was the recruitment of the participants. Although the author gained access in the field of hooligans from a person of his trust, the situation that he faced was even tougher than he had, firstly, thought. The initial plan involved more participants in order for the study to provide research community with more pieces of information, however some of the participants denied participating even in the very last hour before the interview. Furthermore, the participants that finally took part might not have been very comfortable during the interviews. Some of them were a little nervous and the author left with the impression that there might have been even more things to be told. Talking about deviant behaviors could put some pressure on them, especially while talking to someone that they did not really know. It should be highlighted that all of them denied participating in delinquent behaviors outside of sport contexts and, as this finding does not agree with the literature, we could suppose that there is a chance that some of the participants might hide or present differently some aspects of their behavior. In some occasions where the author tried to ask for a clarification or push the participants to say something more, he was even swore by some of them. Given that the interviews were conducted in Greek, the meaning of some words presented in Results part might differentiate from the original text but as the analysis of the interviews was conducted in Greek we could be sure that no meanings were lost in translation.

Despite the barriers faced on the way for conducting this research, adequate evidence is thought to have been collected. None can overlook the fact that the present study describes situations and opinions through the eyes of these who join

fights and sport riots. Taking this study step further, future researches should be conducted in order to support these findings and to understand in a better way how someone conceptualizes and connects his participation on sport riots with the team identification and the psychological benefits the participant thinks to gain. From the literature review, we have found studies that show the relation among team identification and participation in sport riots. It should be studied whether the levels of team identification increases because of participating in sport riots or the participation in sport riots happens because of the team identification. A good way to conduct this kind of study would be by observing or even integrating with the hooligans, but as discussed earlier there are both practical and ethical issues. According to the author this relationship is reciprocal but it is, only, a personal thought left from conducting this study.

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Appendix



ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟ ΘΕΣΣΑΛΙΑΣ
ΤΜΗΜΑ ΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΗΣ ΦΥΣΙΚΗΣ ΑΓΩΓΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΑΘΛΗΤΙΣΜΟΥ



Έντυπο συναίνεσης δοκιμαζόμενου σε ερευνητική εργασία

Τίτλος Ερευνητικής Εργασίας: Hooligans' Attitudes Regarding Sport Violence: A Phenomenological Study

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1. Σκοπός της ερευνητικής εργασίας

Σκοπός της μελέτης είναι η διερεύνηση μέσω συνεντεύξεων των στάσεων και των απόψεων ανθρώπων που συμμετέχουν στον αθλητισμό με την ιδιότητα του φιλάθλου-οπαδού. Ερευνητικά μας αντικείμενα είναι η σύνδεση του φιλάθλου-οπαδού με την ομάδα του και η συμπεριφορά του κατά την παρουσία του σε αθλητικά δρώμενα.

Διαδικασία

Οι συμμετέχοντες θα παραχωρήσουν από μία συνέντευξη σε κάποιο ουδέτερο μέρος στον ερευνητή διάρκειας περίπου μισής ώρας. Τα δεδομένα που θα συλλεχθούν αφορούν και μόνο ερευνητικούς σκοπούς και είναι εμπιστευτικά.

2. Κίνδυνοι και ενοχλήσεις

Κανένας κίνδυνος δεν ελοχεύει για τους συμμετέχοντες καθώς τα δεδομένα που θα συλλεχθούν αφορούν και μόνο ερευνητικούς σκοπούς.

3. Προσδοκώμενες ωφέλειες

Με την συμμετοχή σας θα βοηθήσετε στην μελέτη και την κατανόηση από την επιστημονική κοινότητα των στάσεων και των αντιλήψεων του φιλάθλου κοινού.

4. Δημοσίευση δεδομένων – αποτελεσμάτων

Η συμμετοχή σας στην έρευνα συνεπάγεται ότι συμφωνείτε με την μελλοντική δημοσίευση των αποτελεσμάτων της έγκριτα επιστημονικά έντυπα, με την προϋπόθεση ότι οι πληροφορίες θα είναι ανώνυμες και δε θα αποκαλυφθούν τα ονόματα των συμμετεχόντων. Σε περίπτωση δημοσίευσης θα χρησιμοποιηθεί ψευδώνυμο για τον κάθε συμμετέχοντα, ώστε το όνομα σας δε θα φαίνεται πουθενά.

5. Πληροφορίες

Μη διστάσετε να κάνετε ερωτήσεις γύρω από το σκοπό ή την διαδικασία της εργασίας. Αν έχετε οποιαδήποτε αμφιβολία ή ερώτηση ζητήστε μας να σας δώσουμε διευκρινίσεις.

6. Ελευθερία συναίνεσης

Η συμμετοχή σας στην εργασία είναι εθελοντική. Είστε ελεύθερος-η να μην συναινέσετε ή να διακόψετε τη συμμετοχή σας όποτε το επιθυμείτε.

7. Δήλωση συναίνεσης

Διάβασα το έντυπο αυτό και κατανοώ τις διαδικασίες που θα ακολουθήσω. Συναινώ να συμμετάσχω στην ερευνητική εργασία.

Ημερομηνία: __/__/__

Όνοματεπώνυμο και
υπογραφή συμμετέχοντος

Υπογραφή ερευνητή

Όνοματεπώνυμο και υπογραφή
γονέα ή κηδεμόνα

Όνοματεπώνυμο και
υπογραφή παρατηρητή