Abstract

This paper expands upon research on the use of Police Liaison Teams' (PLTs) within public order policing operations surrounding football fixtures. Using a Participant Action Research approach, the paper reports on PLT use across multiple events and locations with different police forces, different personnel and fans and divergent command perspectives as well as comparative data from PLT and non - PLT events. It identifies how accountability dynamics associated with the classification and management of risk in the policing of football may explain the continued reliance on more coercive policing tactics, as well as a number of other barriers that hinder the development of PLT use at football. Despite this, the paper provides evidence that PLTs can offer similar benefits to the policing of football as they do to the policing of protest. In particular we argue that developing such approaches will make the policing of football more human rights complaint.

Key words: Police Liaison Teams, Public Order, Risk Classification, Human Rights, Football.

Introduction

Public Order and Public Safety (POPS) Reform in the UK: policy, law and concepts

Police public order policy and practice in the UK has seen a slow but steady series of evidence based reforms since the publication of two key reports in the aftermath of the policing of the G20 summit in London 2009 (Hoggett & Stott, 2012). Adapting to Protest (HMIC, 2009) and the subsequent national guidance framework 'Keeping the Peace' (ACPO, 2010) identified the statutory requirements and implications of the Human Rights Act (HRA; 1998) for public order policing. These reports and subsequent related policy changes put forward a new conceptual paradigm for public order policing that is focused around the balancing of rights and police capacity for conflict resolution, through communication and dialogue as well as proportionate coercion (Stott, 2009; Stott, Scothern & Gorringe, 2013). The recognition of the positive role that police dialogue and engagement can play operationally in making public order strategy and tactics more human rights compliant and the de-escalation and resolution of conflict are supported by a corpus of studies using the Elaborated Social Identity Model (ESIM; Reicher, 1996; Stott, 2009). These studies highlight the role that inter-group dynamics and social identity processes play within crowd events (e.g. Drury and Reicher, 1999; Stott & Reicher, 1998).

The implications of ESIM for the police are profound and far reaching. An understanding of 'risk' to 'public order' and how it is related to the intergroup dynamics of crowds forces the police to reflect on their own practices and the potentially negative impact police strategy and tactics can have on crowd behaviour (Reicher et al, 2004; 2007). It also requires the police to understand the importance of 'dynamic risk assessment' and balanced tactical profiles (ACPO, 2010; Reicher et al, 2007). As such, the theory suggests that the traditional means used by the police to characterise 'risk' as related merely to the presence or absence of individuals or groups that can be categorised as such at an event are too rigid. This is because 'risk' can emerge and decline during an event

because of the patterns of intergroup interaction and can involve people who had come to the event with no prior intention of engaging in 'disorder'.

Consequently, from an evidence based perspective (Hoggett & Stott, 2012) 'risk' is dynamic within crowds; a dynamic governed to some extent by interactions between crowd members and the police (Reicher, 1996; Stott & Adang, 2003; Stott, 2011). In particular, where police deployments are seen as illegitimate (unwarranted, heavy handed, indiscriminate, etc.) they can feed a dynamic of escalation. In other words, particular forms of police intervention into a crowd which are understood as illegitimate and indiscriminate increase the likelihood of crowd members understanding conflict with the police as acceptable and those who engage in conflict as sharing the same social identity (Stott & Drury, 2000). Moreover, research has highlighted the ways in which such attempts to control 'disorder' can create the conditions for widespread conflict as a kind of 'self-fulfilling prophesy'. Evidence suggests that police commanders misunderstanding of crowd dynamics lead them to deploy into crowds in ways that actually create the very disorder they are seeking to prevent (Stott & Reicher, 1998).

On the other hand, the corollary of this process is that if the police can maintain intergroup relations with crowd participants that are widely perceived as legitimate the opposite effect takes place, a dynamic of 'self-regulation' is empowered, the potential for conflict is undermined (Stott et al, 2007; 2008) and greater opportunities are recognised for avoiding confrontations (Hoggett & Stott, 2010a; 2010b; Stott, Hoggett & Pearson, 2011). Thus, research and theory suggest that the police need to be able to create and maintain a balance between their deployments and crowd members perceptions of the 'appropriateness' of such deployments in order to enhance their effectiveness in managing 'risk' during crowd events (Stott et al, 2007; EU, 2010; College of Policing, 2017).

ESIM informed POPs: Strategy and tactics.

It has been argued that both the HRA (1998) and ESIM provide a legal and conceptual basis for considering alternative options in the use of force continuum (Stott, Scothern & Gorringe, 2013). On this basis, it has been suggested that the police should begin to move away from deterrence, or instrumental compliance oriented, control and coercion tactics aimed at large sections of the crowd (Atak, & Della Porta, 2016; Atak, 2017; Hoggett and Stott, 2010). Instead they should pursue more facilitative and consent - based approaches which enhance perceptions of police legitimacy and normative compliance among crowd participants (Stott et.al, 2011). To help achieve this, police can work towards developing tactics that reflect strategically four central tenets of ESIM (Reicher et al., 2004, 2007). The first, 'Education', suggests the police develop ways of gathering information that enable them to understand the objectives and motivations of the identities of those within crowds, not just those believed to pose a risk to public order but also others who come with no intention of creating 'disorder'. The second, 'Facilitation', suggests that once these objectives have been understood the police can reorient toward not just the control of negative behaviours but also the facilitation of the legitimate objectives of those different identities within crowds. Thirdly 'Communication', suggests that tactics and technologies that aid communication between police and protesters need to be enhanced and should form a central component of all public order operations. Finally, the fourth, 'Differentiation' demands that if the police are required to intervene with force then, as far as is possible, it should not be directed at the entire crowd whose peaceful behaviour must continue to be facilitated, as far as it is reasonable and possible to do so. These four principles have been incorporated into policy and form an element of national curriculum for police public order command training within the UK (College of Policing, 2017)

Taken together then, theory, evidence and policy require the police to undertake a strategic shift from merely seeking to control crowds through coercion toward seeking to empower crowds,

where possible, to control themselves through 'self-regulation'. At the tactical level, within protest policing at least, ESIM's four pillars have been achieved through the development and deployment of teams of specialist officers known as 'Police Liaison Teams'. PLTs operationalise ESIM strategic principles as interlocutors with protest 'organisers' at the event planning stage and throughout the event itself. Open and constructive dialogue is at the heart of the intended relationship to build mutual confidence and engender a 'no surprises' approach (HMIC, 2009). Such a relationship affords a greater understanding, for commanders, of the needs of groups within the crowd and how best to facilitate their lawful objectives. Through their ongoing engagement PLTs can better 'read' the emerging and dynamic 'risks' and this insight enhances the capacity for police proportionality by avoiding unnecessary tactical interventions and differentiation in their tactics should intervention actually be required. (Gorringe & Rosie, 2013; Waddington, 2017)

While the implementation of PLTs has not been without its problems (Gilmore, Jackson & Monk, 2017) research from a range of events supports such predictions with evidence of less confrontation, fewer arrests and less demand on resources (Stott, Scothern & Gorringe, 2013; Gorringe et al, 2012; Waddington, 2013). Holgersson and Knuttson (2011) find similar benefits with the 'Dialogue Police' in Sweden. Whatever the jurisdiction, the evidence surrounding the dialogue based approach points toward the fact that the use of PLTs can play a key role in the effective management of crowd dynamic and the avoidance of conflict.

Beyond Protest

The case of Friend and Countryside Alliance v United Kingdom (2009) makes clear that Article 10 (Freedom of Expression) and 11 (Freedom of Assembly and Association) rights arising under the HRA, carry a universal application that are not confined exclusively to those engaging in protest but also applies to crowds gathered in other contexts for other reasons. The relevant section merits inclusion:

> *[The] primary or original purpose of art.11 was and is to protect the rights of peaceful demonstration and participation in the democratic process…nevertheless, it would, in the Courts view, be an unacceptably narrow interpretation of that article to confine it only to that kind of assembly, just as it would be too narrow an interpretation of art.10 to restrict it to expressions of opinion of a political character..[the] court is therefore prepared that art. 11 may extend to the protection of an assembly of an essentially social character* (cited in James & Pearson, 2015, p.15).

Any activity of an 'essentially social character' is thus to be protected. It is perhaps unarguable that football is synonymously a shared social event and it follows then that the protections of Articles 10 and 11 apply as much to football crowds as they do to protest crowds. Accordingly, James and Pearson (2015) argue that the specific aims of the crowd, whether protesting or attending a football match, is immaterial - the overarching legal framework and obligations on the police remain the same, to facilitate the rights of peaceful assembly, and expression. Consequently, James and Pearson (2015) question the legality of current approaches to policing football within the UK by highlighting that, the police systematically fail to apply what has been learned, codified, and operationalised in protest policing. They thus rightly question why such developments do not appear manifest in the policing of football crowds when the fundamental rights underpinning both are the same and where the strategic and tactical advances made within policing of protest should be equally suitable to football crowds. Indeed, much of the evidence used to develop and support ESIM principles for protest was itself generated from the management of football crowds (e.g. Stott et al, 2007, 2008).

One area that might shed light on this lack of development in the policing of football can be found in relation to risk classification and associated accountability issues. Within the UK, the process of 'risk' assessments surrounding football fixtures exists in order to underpin the operational planning for the police public order operation. The 'risk' assessment largely determines the number and role of officers that will be rostered by the responsible Basic Command Unit (BCU) to police the event. In other words, 'risk' assessment is as much about mobilisation and resource planning as it is about actual disorder. Officially, football match risk classifications range across; Police Free, where no risks are identified that require police officers to be deployed to the event (e.g., 999 or

101 response only); SO – Spotters Only – no specific risks identified but police spotters deployed. Spotters are police officers who are deployed both at home and away matches who have a wider knowledge of all supporters associated with the clubs they police and whose main role is information/intelligence gathering and community engagement; A – low risk of disorder, B – medium risk of disorder, C – high risk of disorder, CIR – increased risk of disorder due to specific concerns (College of Policing, 2017).

The College of Policing (2017) suggest that it is essential that the risk in relation to individuals and groups is quantifiable and dynamically assessed. The description of a group or individual as 'risk' is not sufficient on its own; there must be a specific reference to the actual risk posed by individuals or groups. Despite this, research has consistently found that risk assessment at football is based on intelligence reports regarding the likely presence or absence of 'risk' fans who follow each club (see Council of Europe 2010 or College of Policing APP for formal definition of risk fans) as well as more informally upon the history of any prior disorder between the clubs playing each other (Hoggett & Stott, 2010a).

Reflecting this, the policing of football has historically been focused around the identification and control of 'risk' fans and, where 'risk' is expected to materialise, dealt with primarily through the mobilisation and deployment of 'spotters' to categorise, exclude or identify those fans deemed as 'risk' and public order trained officers (PSU's) who seek to control the movement of fans that are categorised in this way (Hoggett & Stott, 2010a; 2010b). To go against such institutional orthodoxy in the policing of football may raise accountability issues and be perceived by senior officers as a recipe for both 'on' and 'in the job' trouble (Waddington, 1994). This overall approach to risk and operational planning might therefore help explain why research on the policing of football suggests it has become stuck with a particular command and control policing model when compared to the policing of protest (James & Pearson, 2015; Hoggett & Stott, 2012).

Recently however, there have been signs that innovations may be beginning to challenge this orthodoxy. For example, Stott, West and Radburn (2016) analysed the deployment of PLTs during a routine football match. They found that in line with protests, the presence of PLTs played an important role in adding depth and quality to risk assessment thereby improving command decision making. PLTs appeared to enhance the capacity for dialogue between the police and fans supporting self-regulation and assisting the police commander to avoid disproportionate interventions. PLTs also reported examples of their positive influence on influential figures in the crowd and how they added to the situational awareness of their commanders.

Despite this, Stott, West and Radburn (2016) identified problems with the integration of PLTs within the operational plan. Put as plainly as possible, there was considerable resistance to their use among many of the police officers involved in the operation itself. Therefore, the tasking of PLTs was piecemeal and their involvement not recognised as a tactical means for the police to achieve their Article 10 and 11 obligations or operationalising ESIM crowd management principles. A striking feature throughout the study was not so much their relationship to fans but the internal dynamics at play between the PLTs and their colleagues.

The current study

While existing evidence of benefits and barriers to PLT use within the policing of football is illuminating it is also limited in terms of wider applicability due to its single site, single event method (Stott et al., 2016). The current study therefore expands upon the existing research by reporting on a wider exploration of PLT use at football across multiple events and locations with different police forces, different personnel and fans and divergent command perspectives as well as comparative data from PLT and non - PLT events. By doing so, the study begins to address the limitations of Stott et al.'s (2016) single case study approach to develop a wider evidence corpus through which to assess the potential of PLT use at football.

Method

In keeping with previous research in this area (e.g. Stott et al, 2013) a mixed method approach was adopted (Johnson, & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Using a broadly ethnographic framework, data was obtained from field observations, focus groups, semi structured interviews and a qualitative survey with police officers, interviews with fans, police policy reviews and police data (resources and arrests). Such a framework allowed for multiple data points and triangulation as well as the narrative power of the case study (Gray, 2014).

The research was a collaborative project between the first author (an academic) and the second author (a senior operational police officer). This collaborative approach was further strengthened by adopting a Participant Action Research (PAR) approach (Stott et.al, 2016; Rai, 2012). Observations were made by teams of police officers and academics who attended the event as guests of the host police force. These teams were comprised of experienced public order commanders from a number of different police forces from around the country as well as academics with backgrounds in public order policing and crowd psychology. At each observation either one or both authors were part of the team while the other members were comprised of different personal at different observation sites.

As part of this process, observation teams were able to attend operational briefings, conduct interviews in the field and record field notes. During the operations, the teams were split into pairs or small groups and spread across the operational footprint to enable the capture of data from multiple viewpoints. Data captured included direct observation recorded as written field notes, transcripts of police radio transmissions cross referenced against command and control logs, and police deployment records. All of the data relating to each event was reviewed by the observation teams to reach a consensus of key themes and their relevance to theoretical points of interest. The benefits of having academic expertise and experience in field observations alongside police officers is that it promotes knowledge co – production between police and academia and allows data to

emerge from the theoretical as well as the operational perspective (Crawford, 2017; Denicolo, 2014; Heron, 1996). This approach gave confidence in understanding how the police operation related to the behaviour of the fans as well as confidence that variations in what happened on the ground potentially linked to the presence or absence of PLTs in the operation.

To address the issue of generalisability the research adopted a multisite approach (Herriott, & Firestone, 1983) using data obtained in relation to observations made at 6 different football police operations across two police force jurisdictions, specifically West Yorkshire police (WYP) and West Midlands police (WMP). These matches were sampled purposively as they represented a broad range of risk and resourcing issues. Within West Yorkshire two operations were observed where PLTs were deployed; Bradford V Oldham (5th April, 2014; Category B-IR) and Huddersfield v Leicester (26th April 2014, Category B) and two observed where PLTs were not deployed; Leeds V Derby (3rd May 2014, Category B) and Leeds V Millwall (14th February, 2015; Category C). Within the West Midlands force area observations took place at two games where PLTs were deployed, West Bromwich Albion v Sunderland (21st January, 2017; Category A) and West Bromwich Albion v Stoke City (4th February, 2017; Category B).

Additionally, data was also captured from two focus groups, one with officers from WMP who included Police Liaison Officers (PLOs), football spotters, and public order commanders (n=12) and one with PLOs from WYP (n=8). These focus groups discussed PLT use at football more generally rather than focusing on any specific fixture and this data was further supplemented by interviews with PLOs from WMP (N=13) and a qualitative survey completed by PLOs from WYP (n=34). Finally, post event interviews were also conducted with away supporters (n=9) from the two WBA fixtures observed.

All the data was initially treated as independent case studies to enable a detailed and contextualised in-depth level of analysis to be developed. Each separate case study was then critically analysed using a broadly thematic framework (Braun and Clarke, 2006) to identify and then draw out

common theoretical and practical points of interest. These points were then triangulated to build an understanding of the common patterns across the events observed and an analysis of police perspectives and approaches more generally, which form the framework for the analysis set out below. The analysis is organised into two sections, the first is based primarily on the observational data from the operations and the second is based primarily upon interview data (both contemporaneous and post hoc) on the policing of football and PLT use at football more generally (including focus groups, interviews and survey data).

1. Analysis: Observational accounts

1.1 Risk classification

Observations from across all events identified some common issues that are worthy of discussion. It was evident that despite the College of Policing (2017) stating that it is essential that risk in relation to public order operations be quantifiable and dynamically assessed this was not occurring in relation to the football operations we observed. Instead information about risk was largely based on historical information about disorder between fans of the two teams, recent information about disorder involving fans of either one of the teams at other games that season and the anticipated presence of risk supporters from either club at the fixture. Where there was little or no direct information about such risk then general behavioural information, for example about alcohol consumption and the possibility of spontaneous disorder was used to justify the risk classification for the fixtures. Observations suggest that there was little questioning of the intelligence or analytical discussion about whether the existing classifications were justified. Subsequently, this resulted in a focus in both pre-planning and preparation stages, as well as during the operations themselves, on categorising and then controlling 'risk' supporters of the visiting team.

1.2 Pre-planning and preparation

In terms of pre-planning and preparation, intelligence that was gathered before the event to classify the risk posed by the fixture was important because it related directly to subsequent decisions on the number and type of resources deployed. Yet, despite being 'intelligence' led, issues of 'under' and 'over' resourcing matches were observed at several of the fixtures. For example, for one category C game resource data shows that two hundred and forty-five officers were deployed by the end of the operation while the total number of visiting fans was only two hundred and thirty-six. Our observations identified no apparent threats to public order throughout. Perhaps unsurprisingly there was subsequent widespread condemnation of the police operation in the local media (Jacks, 2015). In contrast, in a cup fixture the following day in a nearby city under the same police jurisdiction, there were strong indicators of potential risk identified by our observations and 'disorder' did occur. Yet here only 100 officers were deployed to police a contingent of more than 4,000 away fans.

1.3 Risk and operational deployment

Observations across all events also identified how the categorisation of risk prior to the football operations impacted on the overall operational focus, in that for each, resources were generally focused on categorising risk supporters associated with both teams as well as managing the movement of away supporters more generally. However, our observations often identified that it was home supporters who posed the greater risk for public disorder. Indeed, our observations identified how the simple act of arriving as an away supporter at a fixture meant by default that you were subject to the greatest police attention. Ad hoc discussions with several commanders suggests this decision is simply determined by the ratio of officers to supporters and recognition that if needed, it is easier to control a relatively smaller number of away supporters with the resources available than a much large number of home supporters.

This focus on away supporters was also linked to the type of resource that took primacy within all operations we observed. Police Support Units (PSU's), are a structure that allows for the effective mobilisation and deployment of police resources as a standard unit (College of Policing, 2015). Invariantly PSUs were the dominant choice of police resource. While a proven public order resource, research suggests their deployment should be as a final option within a more balanced tactical profile to policing football crowds (Stott et al, 2007; 2008). Their deployment at football in advance of any disorder therefore raises questions about proportionality and human right compliance. Furthermore, this favouring of PSU's as the default resource meant that in the operations observed that did utilise PLTs, they appeared 'bolted onto' this existing structure rather than replacing or operating separately from it. This raises questions about whether PLTs have the same ability to operate at football as they do at protest events where in respect to the latter they have greater tactical autonomy to deliver facilitative strategies because they are more routinely used and integrated into planning and mobilisation processes (Gorringe & Rosie, 2013; Waddington, 2017). Despite this observations were still able to identify some key differences between those operations that used PLT officers and those that didn't in terms of operational flexibility, dynamic risk assessment, decision making, and de-escalation.

1.4 Static risk and deployment intransigence

For one fixture, categorised in advance as C-IR at which PLTs were not utilised, away supporters were required to meet the host police at a rendezvous point at a nearby motorway service station and were then escorted to the stadium. Our data indicate only 216 away fans travelled to this fixture and that no individuals categorised by police as risk were identified at the rendezvous point. Despite this manifestation indicating the earlier 'intelligence led' categorisation was less than accurate no reconsideration of the risk classification for the fixture or potential redeployment of resources was undertaken by the Silver commander.

The bulk of away supporters were escorted to the stadium without issue, but just after the match had kicked off a small group of away supporters arrived unexpectedly and unescorted at the stadium, some, but not all, of whom were identified as 'risk' by the away team spotter. Subsequently, the entire group became referred to in radio transmissions as "*the away risk group*". As if to illustrate their status as 'risk' the Silver commander called for additional resources from the Operational Support Group, or OSU (specialised public order officers). It was apparent that it was the act of moving and arriving outside of police control measures that was the primary factor that led to their designation as 'risk', their presence in turn then used not just to justify the police's initial categorisation of the fixture and the related resource requirements but also to legitimise the subsequent call for reinforcements in an already heavily resourced police operation.

This notion of the group as risk fans continued even after the visiting football spotter spoke to the group to ascertain why they had not travelled to the fixture via the RV point. The fans claimed they had made their own way as a deliberate protest against the pre-match travel conditions imposed on them. In other words, they had travelled independently as a reassertion of their rights. The supporters were ultimately denied entry to the ground and a PSU was used to escort them from the stadium to the train station and accompany them on the first available train out of the force area[1]. This is a powerful example of how an apparent lack of dynamic 'risk' assessment was associated with use of police resources in ways that appeared disproportionate to the actual risk posed and to tactics which, at the very least, appeared at odds with the facilitation of supporter's rights arising under the HRA in terms of both expression as well as assembly and association.

1.5 Dynamic risk assessment, operational flexibility and decision making

Observations from another match within the same force identified that where PLTs were deployed they could assist in making dynamic risk assessments which did feed into operational decision

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[1] The legal basis for the refusal of entry to the ground and the subsequent removal from the force area was not captured by the observation team.

making in a way that enabled flexibility in tactical deployments. In turn, such deployments could avoid being disproportionate or perceived as illegitimate. For example, during the operation, approximately eighty away fans had coalesced at a pub a few miles away from stadium. Several individuals affiliated to the home team and subsequently categorised as 'risk' mobilised towards the pub, in what our observations noted appeared to be an attempt to attack the away contingent. This situation put the commander under some pressure to enforce a police containment and escort on the away fans and he began making preparations for such including issuing a request for the force helicopter to be used. On this occasion, however, the PLTs through their early and ongoing dialogue and engagement with the group of away fans had established that most presented no risk of premeditated disorder and therefore did not need to be treated as if they all did. Moreover, realising the need to get the group to the stadium in time for kick off, a PLT influenced the majority to make their own way to the stadium in safety by taxi (Stott, West & Radburn, 2016). Consequently, the overwhelming majority of fans, that otherwise would have been escorted, made their own way to the stadium. Only a relatively few individuals, categorised by the visiting police spotter as 'risk', were left at the premises. Eventually the few fans remaining in the pub also decided to travel by taxi and the requirement to undertake the escort was removed and increased resources required for it were stood down.

Further evidence of the benefits that PLTs can offer through their ability to validate risk and influence operational decision making can be found after the match at the same fixture. A prominent away 'risk' supporter was seen drinking in a city centre pub of the home team and concern was raised by the police about his intentions and the risk he posed by merely remaining in the city. However, through their engagement with him the PLT officers were able to ascertain that he did not pose a threat and able to influence the commanders decision such that he did not deploy officers to unnecessarily coerce him to leave the city centre even though it was recognised by some officers that they did not actually have any legal power to lawfully require him to do so.

Observations from another event at which PLTs were deployed also identified how they could proactively intervene in situations themselves using dialogue and communication to de-escalate risk. For example, as away supporters were making their way back to their transport after a match an individual could be heard aggressively shouting and swearing at officers complaining that he had just been assaulted by a police officer. While this original altercation was not observed, PSU officers were seen pushing him away from them which appeared to be taken by several fans as further incitement. However, a PLT officer stepped up to the individual and begun talking with him. During a period of approximately 5 minutes they were able to calm and placate the individual and defuse the situation.

2. Officer and Supporter Accounts

2.1 Risk, accountability and barriers to change

While observational accounts are useful for drawing out illustrative examples, data captured from a range of other sources are also illuminating. For example, analysis of the 2014/15 Gold strategy for football within West Yorkshire Police indicated a stark contrast to the strategic developments that have been made in the policing of protest and the application of Articles 10 and 11 of the Human Rights Act. The strategy states the 'overall aim' for the police is *'to work with stadia management and local authorities and other agencies to ensure the safety of spectators and the communities surrounding the venues'*. It also requires crime control activity as well as a requirement to *'collect, assess and disseminate intelligence'* (West Yorkshire Police, 2014). A similar strategic focus on crime control was identified from discussions in the WMP focus group where an officer noted how;

> *'Historically you have been directed to focus on preventative tactics to prevent disorder, and an intelligence feed to support the FIOs'* (RES9).

Reflecting the observational analysis, it can be seen how this 'crime control' focus is underpinned by static pre-event risk classifications which in turn influence the number and type of resources that are deployed. Our analysis suggests that this is partly because the classification of risk creates accountability issues for officer decision making. Within such a context doing something different to the 'crime control' approach may be perceived as a risk of 'in the job' trouble to both the officers involved as well as the wider reputation of the organisation. This was noted by officers in the WMP focus group who were explicit about how fears of reputational damage explained why operational change at football was slow and not yet widespread across the force;

> *'Would we have been happy to have done it at other football clubs as well, [use PLTs], but like there wasn't a willingness from the force to do that. I think they felt they were putting their neck, or their head above the parapet a little bit with this anyway because I think politically it was not deemed as the right thing to be doing'* (RES11).

While concerns about possible 'in the job' difficulties that might arise from trialling something different were noted, WMP officers also discussed how colleagues had concerns about the potential for 'on the job' trouble to develop in games where PLTs were used. This was due to a perception that the gap created by replacing public order officers with PLTs might mean that the police's ability to control crowds through coercion should they need to would be weakened. Officers identified how such concerns could again make fellow officers more risk averse;

> *'I think you're always going to have a situation whichever season it is where some games you're going to come away and say whoo bloody hell … we got away with that [yeah] but actually if you turn it round every single week and say we got away with that, and you've had two season where you've got away with it and nothing's happened, are you actually getting away with it or actually are you averse to the risk sometimes. If I look back to when the football unit's set up, okay swinging the lead a bit here, but you look at all the spotters there, the thought of reducing any resources on any fixture would have been frowned upon*

as being ahh it's just going to be complete chaos, you can never have those two teams playing on the same

day … you can never have a kick off at that time' (RES1).

Analysis of officer accounts also identified a range of other issues that appear to impede the use and development of PLTs at football. In a survey of PLTs used by one of our participating forces many reported experiencing resistance and hostility by police colleagues to their role in football policing. For example, in the survey we asked PLOs in West Yorkshire to describe any negative aspects to their experiences; 87% reported hostility and negative reactions from colleagues and 47% described what they believed to be inappropriate, ineffective or counterproductive deployments by their Commanders. Similar concerns were shared in interviews with PLOs in WMP, for example;

> *"On the whole the role has been very successful but it has also depended on who the bronze has been for the*
> *game and how keen or supportive they are of the role"* (PLT2 WMP).

And;

> *"I have found some Gaffers have been very positive when viewing PLT officers on their deployment, however*
> *some clearly do not like the role and see it as taking level 2[2] resources from them"* (PLT5 WMP).

2.2 The benefits of managing risk through engagement and communication

PLOs and some commanders spoke about how they could play an important role in managing risk through their ability to engage with supporters. In fact, one of the key drivers for the deployment of PLTs at football was recognition that public order officers (PSU's) when deployed stopped

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[2] Level 2 resources refer to officers that have received appropriate training and equipment to deal with potential/actual threat(s) and who can be called upon to provide mutual aid to other forces.

talking with people thus creating a communication gap. For example, within the WMP focus group it was noted:

> *"I think the issue is it's the mind-set of the officers, if you've got a yellow jacket on and you're a level two there's a tendency not to engage so much whether its football or protests"* (Focus group RES2)

In terms of discussing why it is that officers, who in their normal roles would be proactively engaging with members of the public, don't when deployed in public order operations another officer explained how;

> *'It's almost a Pavlovian response, they've been given this twelve month refresher training which includes petrol bombing and physical confrontational situations, they're dressed in the same attire, they're given a briefing and if you say to them you must be wandering around they might not physically be able to break away from the mould of, they're in a van, they're wearing the pads, they're there for the worst case scenario'* (RES11).

Given evident concerns about the ability of PSU officers to communicate with supporters, PLTs appear to have been deployed to potentially plug this gap, reflecting observations about their bolt on nature. Despite this, officers described how when they were deployed, they were able to pro-actively engage in dialogue with fans. For example, a PLO spoke about the positive benefits that they had experienced while engaged in the role at football;

> *"At WBA v Tottenham we were allowed to go up to this pub and engaged well with some definite prominent figures from Tottenham, and the feedback was good with them comparing us positively against the policing styles that they were used to in London. This was also the same with West Ham, but again they were under no illusion that the policing was still tight and professional and I also made it known that we would also be inside the ground during the game. I can add that a number of these same persons actively engaged with us in the ground when we were posted to the gantry areas and the smoking area at half time"* (PLT4 WMP).

Similar experiences from West Yorkshire were also discussed by PLOs;

"…one of the lads says y'know I quite like it now you're here because we're all still doing our chants and singing our songs and this and that and the other, but they're not getting as lairy as they usually would…they're [Oldham fans] happy you're here and it's nice to y'know interact with you rather than being stared at all the time and it's a little oppressive really innit when they're stood there like monkeys wi' muscles, just glaring and spoiling people's fun, and sometimes once they've had a pint, it's a bit of a challenge innit, bit a bravado, let's see if we can goad a police officer a little bit or do something that we wouldn't usually, go a little bit too far. We didn't have none of that, they were lovely…" (RB, Bradford City Vs Oldham Athletic).

PLOs also provided examples of where the earlier rapport created with fans through communication and dialogue paid dividends later when the same group were becoming problematic. For example, a WMP PLO noted;

"I was present when a group of supporters were becoming rowdy and a steward feared disorder. I approached the group who I had spoken to earlier. Straight away their barriers were down as there was an element of recognition and we were able to resolve the matter without resorting to arrest (PLT3 WMP)".

Arguably, in these instances at least, PLO engagement with supporters appeared to enhance their capability to provide improved intelligence to commanders which in turn could assist in their decision making. For example, PLOs noted how fans were confident in communicating with them when they had concerns about fellow supporter's behaviour;

"I have witnessed first-hand supporters informing me of problem supporters within the away section. Perhaps without the rapport we foster this would not have been the case" (PLT3, WMP).

The benefits of PLTs at football in terms of the greater communication and interaction they engendered between police and supporters were also commented upon by supporters themselves.

For example, from the fixture between West Bromwich and Sunderland, supporters noted how the;

> "*Policing seemed quite low key and far more relaxed than we might expect from WMP, at least based on some experiences of a few years ago*" (SU2).

Similarly, from the match between West Bromwich and Stoke, fans reported how;

> "*West Midlands Police in the past had a well-earned reputation for being anti football fan, and in general with my red/white tinted specs on anti-Stoke. Maybe it's something well-earned with regards my beloved Club and indeed, this particular fixture does seem to attract some proper Neanderthals from The Potteries. Still, it seems like the modern era has made WMP a different beast*" (SC1);

Accounts from PLOs and some commanders acknowledge that they could offer benefits to policing operations at football as well as at protest events. PLOs discussed how they felt that football supporters benefited from their involvement in match day operations;

> "*All off this was hugely welcomed by the fans, the feedback was positive some saying it was the best approach they had seen at football grounds*" (PLT1 WMP).

Similarly, other PLOs described how;

> "*All in all I think this role has been a great success at West Brom. On various occasions I have been asked by supporters why officers have suddenly started approaching and attempting to talk to them. It is at this time that I have been able to explain the role of PLT which has always been greatly received as a step in the right direction*" (PLT4 WMP).

A public order commander from WMP also identified similar benefits;

> "*I think what we are getting is we're getting some really positive feedback on those away supporters that are coming, and suddenly finding hang on a second, I've had a police officer here that's welcoming me to wherever … spoken to me and that's not the police I remember from a couple of .. you know the last time*

I came here, it was horrendous and I got pushed around, this, that and the other, and word spreads out' (RES1).

Importantly it was acknowledged by officers that football has changed a lot since the days where a fear of and focus on football hooliganism dominated peoples thinking and experience and that it was time that policing reflected this. This would help to make policing of football more Article 10 and 11 compliant as well as potentially improve police legitimacy at and public enjoyment of football;

> *"Football has changed and we need to change with it. Clearly we must retain an ability to respond to sporadic disorder but we should not forget that the vast majority of modern football supporters have paid large sums of money and travelled large distances to watch this particular form of entertainment. I have found that fans reactions to being spoken to throughout the day have been 100 % positive. Fans appreciate being treated as normal members of the public rather than an assumption of disorder"* (PLT 5 WMP).

Discussion

The current study examined the policing of football across multiple events and locations with different police forces, different personnel and fans and divergent command perspectives as well as comparative data from PLT and non - PLT events to develop a wider evidence corpus through which to assess the potential values and problems of PLT use at football. The analysis was divided into two sections. The first, observational accounts, identified issues relating to risk classification, pre-planning and preparation, as well as risk and operational deployment. The second, an analysis of officer and supporter accounts, identified issues relating to risk, accountability and barriers to change, as well as the potential benefits of policing football through greater engagement and communication. Overall the analysis suggests that PLT officers at football have the same ability to create meaningful dialogue with football supporters and increase perceptions of police legitimacy as they do with protestors at marches and demonstrations (Gorringe et al, 2012; Stott, Scothern &

Gorringe, 2013; Waddington, 2013) but that several issues need to be addressed to increase their effectiveness (Stott et al., 2016).

In terms of pre-planning and preparation for policing football matches, observational accounts suggest that currently risk classification within the arena of football is primarily an organisational process to unlock and mobilise resources. However, our study suggests that it is not merely the 'intelligence led' risk of disorder that takes president but the risk of not having resources available if disorder were to occur that drives this process. This in turn appears to result in a strategic focus on controlling those fans categorised as 'risk' specifically, as well as away fans more generally, and a tactical pre-occupation with using PSU officers and spotters to achieve strategic goals in practice. This might help explain why when PLTs where used they did not appear to be well integrated with the wider operation and instead were almost bolted on, that is used as an additional resource with no clear understanding of how they were to be used or resourced. Overall, this suggests that the organisational architecture surrounding the policing of football plays a role in the creation of policing operations that have become 'stuck' on identifying and controlling 'risk' fans rather than recognising their important negative and positive duties for facilitating supporters through the prioritisation of Article 10 and 11 rights (James & Pearson, 2015).

What is more, our observations identified several examples of what we judged to be over and under resourcing, and subsequent deployments that lacked proportionality in both a psychological and legal sense. Observations also identified a reluctance to alter deployments or re-categorise risk as behaviour materialised on the ground in ways that indicated the initial risk assessment was inaccurate. Not only is this counter to College of Policing (2017) risk assessment directives and at odds with Article 10 and 11 based approaches but it also has the potential to create negative intergroup interactions and escalate conflict (Stott, Hoggett & Pearson, 2011; Stott, et al., 2007; 2008).

Despite this, where PLTs were deployed, observational data suggests that the police were better able to respond to information and emerging risk in a more proportionate and dynamic way. Observations suggest that PLTs could play an important role in providing information to aid risk assessment thereby improving command decision making and avoiding unnecessary interventions. This is important as ESIM research shows that risk is dynamic and the outcome of intergroup interaction and therefore it is vital that the police are able to create and maintain a balance between their deployments and crowd members' perceptions of the appropriateness of such deployments to effectively manage risk in crowd events (Stott & Adang, 2003).

Building on observational data, our officer accounts are illuminating. Our analysis identified how static definitions of risk within the policing of football created accountability issues for commanders. These accountability issues in turn may influence police decisions to adopt 'command and control' orientated approaches, in effect drawing upon an orthodoxy in order to be able to defend against colleagues' accusations of failing to 'get a grip' should disorder develop on 'their watch'. Because of these established processes, to move beyond the orthodoxy may leave operational commanders susceptible to criticism for going against accepted practice and wisdom. In other words, our analysis suggests that doing something different is a 'risk' in and of itself as it opens the police up to accountability dynamics associated with 'on the job' and 'in the job' trouble (Waddington, 1994). The key reports and developments into the policing of protest crowds (HMIC, 2009; ACPO, 2010) has to some extent mitigated such accountability issues within the arena of policing protest through a recognition of the dynamic nature of risk in protest events. This led to the development of 'bottom up' innovation (Gorringe, Stott & Rosie, 2013) that has evolved into new national strategies and tactics and a supporting evidence base, but this innovation has not yet occurred within the policing of football and it appears change has not been as self-evident (Hoggett & Stott, 2012).

In common with Stott et.al. (2016), further examination of officer accounts identified a number of additional barriers to and internal tensions with the implementation of PLTs at football that may hinder such development. Conflict over the role and responsibilities of PLTs compared to PSU officers and football spotters was identified, as was command concerns that PLT deployment was taking away PSU resources. This suggests that in order to create internal legitimacy for the approach, more work is needed to educate mainstream public order officers of the value, role, and benefit of their PLT colleagues in the policing of football. Such 'change management' issues have previously been identified in the policing of protest (Hoggett & Stott, 2012). We suggest that in order to achieve this the growing evidence basis for PLT use needs to be highlighted so that the resulting clarity of purpose and prior learning can filter down into operational practice.

Despite the range of issues that impacted upon the deployment of PLTs at football, officer and supporter accounts also suggested several benefits. Firstly, it was identified how PLTs could address a communication gap created by a lack of engagement of PSU officers at football. PLT officers discussed how they were able to engage with supporters, both risk and non-risk and develop rapport with them and work toward the facilitation of legitimate behaviour. Analysis therefore suggests that their benefits relate to the embedding of ESIM's four central tenets, 'EFCD', (Reicher et al, 2007) within the PLT role when policing football. Secondly, PLOs reported how their ability to create dialogue and engagement also opened up lines of communication with supporters that added to the depth and quality of information that they could provide to commanders to assist with their decision making. It was identified how this information could help avoid unnecessary or potentially disproportionate actions that may result in an escalation of conflict as a kind a self-fulling prophecy (Stott & Reicher, 1998).

Thirdly, as with previous research into PLT use in public order events, officers reported a resultant greater situational awareness (Stott et.al., 2016) which in turn enabled them to 'problem solve' as and when situations developed which helped to manage risk in a dynamic manner. For example,

PLT officers spoke about how through engagement they had been able to gain compliance from supporters, both risk and non-risk, which enabled them to avoid having to use more coercive methods such as arrest. Finally, supporters suggested that they had noticed a positive change within WMP where PLTs were used and reported how such experiences compared favourable to those they had previously experienced when attending football at West Bromwich.

Limitations

There are of course important limitations that need to be acknowledged. The observations were conducted over a long time frame rather than within a single season. It is possible police attitudes towards PLT use at football have altered between the 2014-2017 observations. Similarly, supporter data from 2017 observations were not matched with comparative data form earlier observations. Moreover, the analysis is largely conjectural in its assumptions that PLTs helped prevent 'disorder' since we have no guarantees that the potentially escalatory situations we encountered within the study would have otherwise developed into actual confrontation. Conducting the same research within the same season, across the two force areas, from a greater number of games and capturing data from fans in all of these events would increase confidence in overall analysis. Despite this, the study set out to address limitations identified in the previous study of PLT use at football (Stott et al, 2016). It did so through adopting a multi-event, multi-force approach including comparative data from PLT and non PLT events as well as by capturing supporter perspectives. This evidence basis therefore helps add to that which already exists and begins to enable specific recommendations about the precise tactical deployment of PLTs at football to be discussed.

Conclusion

It is apparent that there is growing recognition both external and internal to the police that the way in which football is managed and football fans treated needs to change. James and Pearson (2015) identify that there is a human rights issue that underpins this need. While of course this is important, the theory and evidence underpinning the development and use of communication and

engagement based tactics such as PLTs and how they enable compliance with Articles 10 & 11 as a by-product of their ability to manage crowd dynamics also needs recognition. While the use of PLTs in the policing of protest in the UK has become common practice, the policing of football is currently lagging behind in both practice and policy. This paper highlights that there are a number of barriers that need to be addressed in order to overcome this. For example, it has identified how this lag results from an organisational architecture in which the primary purpose of football 'risk' assessments appears to be to determine the ability to mobilise resources. In turn, this feeds into a form of institutional orthodoxy surrounding the strategies and tactics used to police football. Within this context accountability dynamics place pressure on officers to not deviate from these established processes resulting in a continuing default reliance on strategies of control and the primacy of PSUs to tactically deliver this strategy. Despite this, where commanders are willing to risk innovation, for example through the use of PLTs, the current paper argues that similar benefits are offered to the policing of football as they are to the policing of protest. Moreover, while the current paper has focused on PLTs, it is their ability to engage with supporters that appears to deliver benefits. As such this paper advocates that it is this capability that needs to be developed and delivered within the policing of football rather than it simply being dependent on the presence or absence of PLTs. The current paper adds to the growing evidence basis, which, suggests that in the future the policing of football and protest can become re-aligned through communication and dialogue based approaches, thus making it human rights compliant and reducing conflict at and costs incurred by such events.

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