THE ENDLESS LOOP OF US-AGAINST-THEM IN A FOOTBALL CONTEXT.

A SWEDISH STUDY ON LEGITIMACY FROM THE SUPPORTER’S PERSPECTIVE.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the football supporters’ perspective on problems and the police in a Swedish football context. More specific, the study examined the indirect effect of legitimacy on perceived violence/disorders and the supporter-police relationship through social identity, aggression and morality. The study is quantitative in nature and a web-based survey was distributed to recruit football supporters to participate. The sample consisted of 800 football supporters who were minimum 15 years old. The results showed that Swedish football supporters, in general, perceive a small amount of problems with violence/disorders in a football context and, further, supporters perceived the supporter-police relationship as bad with a need for a change. The present study’s mediation analyses showed that legitimacy had a statistically significant indirect effect on the supporter-police relationship through both social identity and aggression. Based on the result, future research should continue investigate supporter-police relationship from the supporter perspective. The police could use this information in their development of future strategies to work for a better relationship and mutual respect with supporters. Concluding remarks of this study highlights the essential aspect supporters contribute in the work of safety and order in a football context in Sweden. The legitimacy of the Swedish police is low from the supporter’s point of view which damages the relationship between them.

Keywords: football, supporter perspective, legitimacy, policing, elaborated social identity model. 
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INTRODUCTION

Problems and traditions with violence, disorder and aggression related to football and its supporters has been recognized as far back as the 14th century, however the concept of hooliganism was first introduced half century later (Cleland & Cashmore, 2016; Green, 2009). Football hooliganism is a word to describe violence and/or disorders in the context of football, the concept is often related to those supporters who have a lifelong, religion-like, devotion for a specific football-club (Foer, 2004; Joern, 2006; Rowe, 2001). This devotion unites supporters in the worship of the same club and/or by the feeling of contempt towards enemies/rivals (Maffesoli, 1996) where “each club has its own flavor, and this is created by the supporters, who last a lot longer than players, managers and chairmen.” (King & Knight, 1999. p.14). Supporter devotion develops territorial ownership and deep hatred for rivalry teams as well as their fans which leads to a struggle for the police in crowd management and safety related to it (Cleland & Cashmore, 2016). Reicher, Stott, Cronin and Adang (2004) writes that crowds can be unpredictable in their violence and even the calmest crowds can, easily and quickly, escalate into violence. Legitimacy is defined as the right to rule and the recognition by the ruled of that right (Beetham 1991; Coicaud 2002; Tyler 2006; Bottoms & Tankebe 2012). This indicates that it’s essential for those exposed to policing to perceive the police as legitimate – as the rightful law enforces who do not abuse their position as powerholders (Tyler, 2011; Schulhofer, Tyler & Huq, 2011). A powerholder (for example, the police) who fails to achieve legitimate status in the opinion of a crowd can fail to solve conflicts, they may instead aggravate the situation and cause more violence than before (Reicher et al., 2004).

SEF (2018) write that Allsvenskan (the highest football-division in Sweden) had more than two million spectators in the year of 2018. Overall, Allsvenskan is considered to be a calm league with a small amount of reported violence and disorder (Fogis, n.d.). Despite its overall calmness, there are in fact incidents that occur, and a lot of Swedish football supporters perceive police actions as negative in those situations. Supporters in Sweden feel that the police are authorized to use excessive violence without consequences, and therefore, they are afraid of encounters with the police in a football-related situation (Fotbollskanalen, 2016; 2018). Almgren, Lundberg, Williams and Havelund (2018) write that collective behaviors include the interaction between multiple actors within a given context. There are many meetings/interactions that occur outside of a football arena, for example, the police interact with supporters and/or supporters interact with each other. The preparations for these interactions will determine the outcome, will it be positive or negative, relaxed or tense, violently or calm. “It is important to include all perspectives in Swedish football operations” (p.8). Football supporters are an important group which needs to be included in a realistic work for safety and order in a football context (Almgren et al., 2018).

Previous research shows that most football supporters have no violent intentions, stands against those who have and feel mistreated by the police. This has, in many cases, caused unnecessary violence or disorder between the police and supporters (Stott & Reicher, 1999; Cleland & Cashmore, 2016). Brännberg (1997) introduces the concept of frustration-hooliganism – when the police adopt a harsh and brusque strategy to maintain order which, in many cases, causes an aggressive and tense climate among the supporters. As mentioned before, if the police mishandle
a crowd it can have devastating effect (Reicher et al., 2004), this is why police legitimacy is important within the context of football (Cleland & Cashmore, 2016; Stott & Reicher, 1999; Tyler, 2011; Schulhofer et al., 2011). Green (2009) indicates that it is common to find empirical evidence about large crowds who get violated by unreasonable and brusque police (e.g. Cleland & Cashmore, 2016; Stott & Reicher, 1999) and therefore, frustration hooliganism is a common concept to find within the football context (Brännberg, 1997). Today, there is insufficient research within Sweden that includes the important opinions and experiences of supporters themselves. The overall aim for this study is therefore to investigate police legitimacy from the supporter-perspective in a Swedish context. How police legitimacy is related to supporters’ perceptions of problems and the police in Swedish football and how social identity, aggression and morality affects that relationship. A theoretical model that focus on the relevant aspects of this study is the Elaborated Social Identity Model.

**Elaborated Social Identity Model (ESIM)**
The ESIM (Drury & Reicher, 1999; Reicher, 1996, 1997a, 1997b; Stott & Drury, 1999; Stott & Reicher, 1999) is developed from Stephen Reicher’s social identity approach (Reicher, 1984; 1987) and this model has substantial empirical evidence in the scientific literature. The empirical evidence began in the 1980’s England through an analysis of the major inner-city disturbances in Bristol (Reicher, 1984). The model has gained further empirical support by studying riots, demonstrations and protests in different contexts (Reicher, 1987; Reicher, 1996; Stott & Drury, 2000; Stott & Pearson, 2007). Stott (2009) writes that these studies shared similar dynamics “where police used relatively indiscriminate tactics of coercive force (e.g. baton charges) they would tend to do so against those in the crowd who saw themselves or others around them, as posing very little, if any, threat to public order” (p.7). These indiscriminate actions of the police had negative consequences on their legitimacy where numerous crowd participants perceived the police as illegitimate and saw a conflict with police as an acceptable behavior. The crowd unifies in a feeling of legitimacy in opposing themselves to the police, those with no confrontational or violent intentions changed their mindset and those who were prepared to get physical in their confrontation with the police gets fired up (Stott, 2009). To elaborate and deeper understand this change in behaviors, the process of social identity needs to be explained.

*The process of social identity*
Almgren et al. (2018) writes that according to ESIM, “crowds and social groups can, in certain contexts and under certain conditions, be seen as a gathering of individuals with one or more common social identity” (p.10). Drury and Reicher (2000) argue that the concept of social identity is closely linked with actions of the world and social relations. One’s social identity is therefore an erratic process that changes consequently to actions of the world and social relations. Social identity should therefore be defined as a list of attributes or a collection of traits that goes in line with this process (ibid.). Reicher (1997a) indicates that there are three essential concepts in ESIM, whereas the recently explained social identity is the first. The second is the concept of context, Stott and Drury (2000) state that any actions of a group are somewhat, if not entirely, formed by other groups actions. For example, if the police understand and act on the notion that the crowd is dangerous they may choose to deploy riot-shields. The crowd understands and acts according to their given reality (aggressive police with riot-shields) and choose to get aggressive and defensive. Now the police are given a new reality (a more defensive and aggressive crowd) and acts accordingly. This become an
unbroken chain which benefits no one (Stott & Drury, 2000). The third context is the relationship between social identity, intention and consequence. Condor (1994) writes that the process of social identity creates intentions that groups automatically acts upon. These intentions can be both intentional and unintentional, but they often have unintended consequences. If crowd events are analyzed as intergroup interactions, this unbroken chain will become interrupted (Stott & Drury, 2000). An example of how ESIM can be applied to a real-life event is highlighted in Reicher’s (1996) analysis of a student demonstration and the conflict which developed with the police. Students began their demonstration by exploiting their democratic rights to protest with a feeling of proudness as if their actions were honorable and that they stood up against radicals with confrontational intentions – they saw themselves as legitimate demonstrators. The police had a different view of the students. They saw the students as a threat to public order and believed that they needed to intervene. The police acted accordingly, which was, from the student’s point of view, an illegitimate action. The demonstrating students unified in opposition to the police which empowered them to actively change to a confrontational behavior towards the police (ibid.). At the beginning, most of the students had the social identity of a peaceful demonstrator but when the police acted as if the students were violent and dangerous, it changed that peaceful social identity to an identity that accepted violence as a legitimate behavior.

Almgren et al. (2018) argue that football supporters have different types of social identities, individual and collective. Supporters may, as individuals, identify with various forms of supporterships (e.g. calm vs violent supporter) or subcultural alignments (e.g. occupational background). Supporters also have a collective identity, which indicates common norms, values and perceptions of the world created and shared by many supporters. The collective identity may promote or inhibit different types of behaviors, such as the consideration of pyrotechnics to be a legitimate action when expressing supportership. The collective identity can also “decide” that one particular group is, by definition, the enemy, for example the police or rivalry teams’ supporters (ibid.). Inter-group dynamics (norms and values of collective identities in one group develop in relation to surrounding actors) create and/or change norms out of common experiences and collective memories. That’s why it’s essential to have a relationship-building, cooperative and planning approach to impede the development of injurious norms. Swedish supporters are one side of the coin that develop their own norms while the police are on the other side of the coin developing theirs (Almgren et al., 2018). Stott (2009) writes that empirical and theoretical development of ESIM have illuminated the significance of policing tactics that shapes and reshapes the social identity of a crowd. Almgren et al. (2018) highlights that in a football context, the aim is not that the supporters and the police should agree on everything. Instead, it should be about a mutual respect and understanding of the other groups views and wishes. Stott (2009) argues that when the two important dimensions of the ESIM, legitimacy and power, are misused, there will be consequences on a crowd’s social identity. It will foster a feeling of us-against-them (Stott, 2009) and historically, that feeling is the reality when it comes to the relationship between the supporters and the police.

Us-against-them in a football context
O’Neill (2005) writes that all modern policing strategies in preventing violence and disorder in a football context have its origin in the 1980’s England. At this
time, the policing strategies was prison-like were the police fought violence with violence. The stands at the arenas had high-fences with heavily armed and riot-dressed police and they treated all supporters as violent criminals and communication between the two groups were non-existing (ibid.). It was at this time the deep mistrust between the police and supporters began to grow. In line with this, fight violence with violence was the strategy of the Italian police when managing England supporters in the world cup qualifiers in 1997. Stott and Reicher (1999) found that most of the England supporters who had traveled to Italy to support their team had no violent intentions but were treated as they all were criminals with a violent nature. A lot of fans experienced that they were attacked, beaten and discriminated by the Italian police. Fans said that they could have a good time with chants, drinks and laugh, but before they knew it, they could be running for their life with riot-dressed officers close behind with a baton ready to strike (Stott & Reicher, 1999). A more recent study in England found that supporters still experience the police as discriminating and illegitimate. Supporters are treated as violent criminals and animals, they feel trapped and argue that the police need to be sorted to change this (Cleland & Cashmore, 2016).

The previous presented research of illegitimate policing strategies presented above is just the tip of the iceberg in the literature of this topic (Cleland & Cashmore, 2016; Stott & Reicher, 1999; O’Neill, 2005). Trust is something you earn and in the case of the police-supporter relationship there are decades of incidents that have negative effects on the legitimacy of the police seen from the supporter's perspective. As the empirical evidence suggest, supporters do not see the police as a fair and rightful powerholder in a football context (Cleland & Cashmore, 2016; O’Neill, 2005; Schulhoef et al. 2011; Stott & Reicher, 1999; Tyler, 2011). In relation to frustration hooliganism (Brännberg, 1997), the police have the power to adapt their preventive strategies to avoid unnecessary supporter-aggression. More supporter-aggression will in many cases lead to more violence and disturbances with the police involved.

Social identity, Morality and Aggression
Ellmers, Pagliaro and Barreto (2013) write that morality has an essential role in defining who we are and where we belong. Research has shown that morality is “identify defining” and that people tend to identify with and be proud of groups they find “morally right” (Ellemers & van den Bos, 2012; Leach, Ellemers, & Barreto., 2007). Further, Ellmers et al. (2013) writes that “the more individuals identify with and value the ingroup, the more they should be motivated to show they are “good” group members” (p.186). Boehm, Thielmann and Hilbig (2018) write that morality can shape human interactions in both positive and negative ways. Morality can foster harmony within groups, which is a good thing, but it can also inflame the conflict between groups. Interactions of groups with different moral convictions lay the foundation for a long-term intergroup conflict and violence with intentions to harm each other (Boehm et al., 2018; Halperin, Russell, Dweck, & Gross, 2011; Waytz, Young, & Ginges, 2014). Previous research has also shown that people who identify strongly with their own group (the in-group) show more aggressive behaviors towards other groups (the out-group) who pose a threat to the morals, values and norms developed in the in-group (Ellemers & van den Bos, 2012; Merrilees et al., 2013; Nesdale, Maass, Durkin & Griffiths, 2005; Nesdale, Milliner, Duffy & Griffiths, 2009). Further, research has proven that individuals tend to adhere to laws that are consistently in line with their moral conviction. If laws are understood and reflect the morality of
a specific context, it’s easier to follow the laws within that context (Tyler, 2006; Tyler, 2009). Based on the research presented above, social identity, morality and aggressions is relevant and interesting to include in the present study.

**Aims and purpose of the study**

Previous research has in summary found a correlation between legitimacy and both social identity and morality (Almgren et al., 2018; Reicher, 1996; Stott, 2009; Tyler, 2009), social identity and both aggression and morality (Boehm et al., 2018; Ellmers et al., 2013). Further, research have shown that the variables legitimacy, social identity, morality and aggression can determine an outcome of interactions between groups (Almgren et al., 2018; Waytz et al., 2014; Ellmers and van den Bos, 2012). Reicher et al. (2004) writes that legitimacy is important when policing crowds and it’s easy for the police to aggravate the situation rather than solving it, which Green (2009) argue is common in a football context. In line with this, Drury and Reicher (2000) writes that social identity is a process that is dependent on actions of the world and social relations. Morality can define an individual’s belongings and personality (Ellmers et al., 2013) while aggressive behavior is acceptable by the in-group if there are an out-group threat (Merrilees et al., 2013). This research makes legitimacy, social identity, aggression and morality interesting variables when investigating the supporter-police relationship and perceived violence/disorders in a football context. Adding the fact that there is insufficient research in Sweden that investigate these variables with the focus on the supporter’s perspective, a perspective that Almgren et al. (2018) argues is crucial to a realistic work for safety. Makes this study needed, interesting and relevant with its unique approach and focus in Sweden.

The more specific aim for this study is primarily to map supporters’ perceptions of the police and problem related to football in Sweden. A secondary aim is to investigate if legitimacy (LG) has an indirect effect on the supporter-police relationship (SPR) and perceived violence/disorder (PVD) when social identity (SI), Aggression (AG) or Morality (MO) is included as a mediator. Based on Elaborated Social Identity Model and previous research, four hypotheses were developed.

H1: Overall, supporters will have a negative experience and opinion of the Swedish police in a football context.

H2: Legitimacy will have an indirect effect on both SPR and PVD through Social Identity (see figure 1.).

H3: Legitimacy will have an indirect effect on both SPR and PVD through Morality (see figure 1.).

H4: Legitimacy will have an indirect effect on both SPR and PVD through Aggression (see figure 1.).

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![Figure 1. LEG in relation to SPR or PVD through SI, MO or AG.](image-url)
METHOD

Participants
Data were collected from 800 football supporters (N = 800) and participants was predominantly male (91.1%). 39.5% of the participants were aged between 15-25, 37.5% were between 26-35 and the rest 23% were aged 36 or above. A large majority of the participants were born in Sweden (97%) and had either a high-school (46.6%) or a bachelor’s degree (27.4%) as highest achieved level of education. With respect to marital status, 38.4% were single, 45% were married or living with a partner and 13.4% had a partner which they do not live with. As for employee status, most of the participants were either a full-time employee (63.5%) or a student (25.6%).

The football supporters participating in the study were in average attending between 11-20 matches live/season in Allsvenskan (52.6%) and there were multiple reasons why they attend football matches. The most common reasons were “love for the club” (91.1%), “The atmosphere at the arena” (84.6%) and “love for the sport” (76%). The most uncommon reasons were “other than specified, for example, to get an outlet of any kind of emotions“ (1.9%), “for violence and verbal attacks” (3.3%) and “to get rid of anger/aggressions” (9.4%). At the arena, 59.4% of the participants were attending the stand and 37.1% were seated. 3.4% answered that they attend the seated section on the arena but were standing and active (seated stands).

Design and procedure
The present study had a cross-sectional design which means that the variables was measured at one point in time (Breakwell, Smith, & Wright, 2012). The author wanted to reach out to as many football supporters as possible and social media was acknowledged to be the best platform to fulfill that goal. Andrews, Nonnecke and Preece (2003) indicates that web-based surveys are effective and appropriate when the nature of research requires it and both costs and opportunity are a constraint. Once the author knew where and how the data would be collected, a construction of an online questionnaire began. The questionnaire consisted of questions to measure the variables legitimacy, social identity, aggression, morality, the supporter-police relationship and perceived violence/disorders. All the questions were found in English and was translated by the author to Swedish. The translation was controlled by a bilingual person to make sure it had the same meaning after the translation (Hilton & Skrutkowski, 2002). Once the questionnaire was completed and approved by both the supervisor and the ethical board of the university it was posted on social media. More precisely, it was posted on the authors personal Twitter and Facebook accounts. On Facebook it was posted in specific football supporter-groups by both the author and the authors Facebook friends. On Twitter, a friend of the author, which is a football supporter, posted the information about the questionnaire on his personal Twitter account. All posts on social media included brief information about the purpose of the study and a link to the online questionnaire. Once the participants clicked on the link, they were presented to an information letter (see appendix 1 or 2.) concerning the author, the study and consent to participate. The questionnaire took between 5-15 minutes to answer. The criteria to participate was the same as the targeting population, to be a football supporter in Sweden and at least 15 years old.
Instruments
The distributed questionnaire began with an information letter (see appendix 1 or 2) regarding the purpose of the study, how the collected data would be handled and how the data was going to be analyzed. Information regarding consent in participation was provided at the end of the introductory letter. The questionnaire consisted of 73 questions including background items regarding age, gender, education, ethnicity, marital state, employee status, how many live matches attended/year, why attend football matches and location of the arena’s attended.

Legitimacy
This study conceives legitimacy as a multidimensional variable and the first dimension is police effectiveness. Participants were asked how they perceived the police as doing a good or bad job. This dimension consists of two items: “The police are doing well in controlling crimes in and outside of the football arena.” and “the police are doing a good job preventing crimes in and outside the football arena.”. Previous research has shown that this dimension is reliable (Cronbach’s \( \alpha = .71 \); Reisig, Tankebe & Mesko, 2012). The second dimension is trust in the police. Participants answered questions about how much they trust and are proud of the police. This dimension consists of four items, for example, “The police in my community are trustworthy” and “I am proud of the police in this community”. Obligation to obey is the third dimension and is constructed with two items: “you do what the police tell you to do even if you disagree” and “you accept police decisions even if you think they are wrong”. The second and third dimensions have in previous research been combined into one variable with good reliability (Cronbach’s \( \alpha = .63 \)). The fourth dimension of the legitimacy scale is procedural fairness which asks the participants of how fair, respectful and evenhanded the police are. This dimension consists of eleven items and can be divided into two components, interpersonal treatment (for example: “The police treat everyone with dignity” and “the police take time to listen to supporters”) and quality of decision-making (for example: “The police make decisions based on facts” and “the police explain their decisions to the supporters they deal with”). This dimension has been proven to be very reliable in previous research (Cronbach’s \( \alpha = .90 \); Mesko, Hacin & Eman, 2014). The last dimension is feelings and consists of one item with six sub-questions: “to what extent does these feelings fit into your perception of the police in and around football arenas in Sweden?”. The participants answered this question based on six different emotions: respect, trust, appreciation, fear, contempt and anger. Each emotion is one answer and all answers were combined into the dimension feelings.

The legitimacy variable consists of 5 dimensions, police effectiveness, trust in the police, obligation to obey, procedural fairness and feelings. All these dimensions were answered by the participants on a 4-point Likert scale where 1 = strongly disagree and 4 = strongly agree. The dimensions were coded so that higher values indicate more positive result (for example, more trust in the police or a better feeling towards the police) and the dimensions were then combined into a 5-dimensional police legitimacy scale, higher scores reflect higher levels of police legitimacy. The reliability of this final scale in the present study was good (Cronbach’s \( \alpha = .90 \)).

Social identity
The measure of social identity consisted of nine items which were all answered on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree. These
nine items were divided into three sub-scales: (1) Private self-awareness, consisted of three items and have been proven to be reliable in previous research (α = .70; Hiel, Hautman, Cornelis & De Clercq, 2007). Example of questions: “during the football match I feel at one with my group” and “if my team scores a goal I really lose myself completely”. (2) Public self-awareness, consisted of four items and have been proven to be reliable in previous research (α = .67; Hiel et al., 2007). Example of questions: “when I am with fellow fans, I feel strong and I am much more reckless” and “together with the fans of my side I shout bad things about others, because they can’t catch me anyway”. (3) Personal identity consisted of two items and have been proven to be reliable in previous research (α = .72; Hiel et al., 2007). Example of questions: “I am proud of our side” and “I resemble the other members of our side”. The reliability of the social identity scale was in the present study questionable (Cronbach’s α = .54).

Morality
Similar to the legitimacy scale, the measurement of morality is multidimensional in its nature. The morality scale consists of five different dimensions and is answered in a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree) if not stated otherwise. The first dimension is moral alignment with the police. This dimension consists of three items, for example, “the police generally have the same sense of right and wrong as I do.” and “I generally support how the police usually act”. This dimension is the only one that the participants is answering on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The second dimension is legal cynicism and it consists of five items combined from the Human Development in Chicago Neighborhoods Community Survey (PHDCN-CS; Earls, Brooks-Gunn, Raudenbush & Sampson, 1994). Example of items: “rules and laws are made to be broken” and “there are no longer any good or bad ways to make money, only easy and hard”. Compliance with the law is the third dimension, participants were asked whether they agree or disagree with different law-breaking behaviors. The dimensions consist of six items, for example, “in your opinion, how wrong is it for someone to break traffic laws?” and “in your opinion, how wrong is it for someone to steal a car?”. Previous research has used similar scales and proven that the internal consistency is good (Cronbach’s α = .69; Mesko et al., 2014). The fourth dimension is moral credibility and consist of four items, for example, “most people in my community believe that the law punishes criminals the amount they deserve” and “innocent people who are accused of crimes are always protected by the law”. Previous research has found an acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach’s α = .60; Mesko et al., 2014). The last dimension of the morality scale is cooperation with the police which consist of five items. For example, “imagine that you were out and saw someone steal a wallet. How likely would you be to call the police?” and “how likely would you be to call the police if you saw someone break into a house or a car.”. Previous research has proven that this dimension is performing well (Reisig et al., 2012).

These five dimensions, moral alignment with the police, legal cynicism, compliance with the law, moral credibility and cooperation with the police were all coded so that higher values indicate something positive (for example, better compliance with the law and cooperativeness with the police). All dimensions were combined into a 5-dimensional morality scale where higher scores reflect more positive morality. The reliability of the final morality scale in the present study was good (Cronbach’s α = .87).
Aggression
The measure of aggression consisted of four items and the participants answered the questions by marking one of the following alternatives: Never, 1 time, 2-3 times, 4-5 times, 5-10 times and more than 10 times. These scores were recoded into 0, 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 respectively. Previous research has found that both verbal and physical aggression are reliable ($\alpha = .79$ and .91 respectively; Hiel et al., 2007). The questions was: “have you ever been involved in riots with fans of another team?”, “have you ever been involved in fighting with the police?”, “have you ever been involved in name calling fans of another team?” and “have you ever been involved in railing at the police?”. The present study found that this scale had an acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .75$).

Supporter-police relationship and Perceived violence/disorders
The measure of the dependent variable supporter-police relationship (SPR) consisted of one item, “How good or bad would you describe the relationship between supporters and the police in Sweden?”. The participants answered the question in a 5-point Likert scale where 1 = very bad and 5 = very good. The measure of the dependent variable perceived violence/disorder (PVD) consisted of one item with five sub-questions and the participants answered in a 4-point Likert scale where 1 = strongly disagree and 4 = strongly agree. “In a Swedish football context, how much problem do you think there is with… (a) violence/disorders outside of the arena, (b) violence/disorder inside the arena, (c) violent police-officers, (d) violent home-team supporters and (e) violent away-team supporters. The answers from the five sub-questions was combined into one variable. Both scales were coded so that higher values indicated a positive result, for example, higher PVD scores indicated less perceived problems with violence/disorders.

Experience of policing
Beyond the above-mentioned scales, the questionnaire in this study included four items to gain a more detailed description of the participants experience of the police. First, supporters contact with the police included two items, “in the past 2 years, have you been stopped/contacted by the Swedish police in a football-related situation?” and “if yes… How dissatisfied or satisfied were you with the way the police treated you the last time this happened?”. The participants answered that on a 5-point Likert scale were 1 = Very dissatisfied and 5 = Very satisfied. Secondly, the participants were asked if they had experienced, themselves or witnessed, excessive violence from the police in a football-related situation. The participants answered this question by choosing one of the following alternatives: Never, 1 time, 2-3 times, 4-5 times, 5-10 times or more than 10 times. These answers were coded 1-6 where never = 1 and more than 10 times = 6. Third and last, “the relationship between supporters and the police must improve for a decrease in problems with violence/disorders related to Swedish football”. The participants answered on a 4-point Likert scale were 1 = strongly disagree and 4 = strongly agree.

Analysis
All data were processed and analyzed in Statistical Package of Social Sciences 24.0 (SPSS). First, the author conducted a descriptive analysis on the variables legitimacy, social identity, morality, aggression, supporter-police relationship (SPR), perceived violence/disorders (PVD) and the “experience of policing” items. To investigate and answer the hypotheses of the study several mediation analyses was conducted through a supplementary program in SPSS called
PROCESS (Hayes, 2013). More specifically, the author analyzed the relationship between the independent variable legitimacy and the dependent variables SPR and PVD through the mediation variables social identity, morality and aggression. These analyses were conducted to investigate the magnitude between the independent variable and the mediation variables (line a; see figure 1.) and between the mediation variables and the dependent variables (line b; see figure 1.). Further, the analysis investigates the relationship between the independent- and dependent variables in two different ways, both with and without the mediation variables. This will result in a direct- and indirect effect that the independent variable has on the dependent variable (Preached & Hayes, 2008). Hayes and Scharkow (2013) indicates that a mediation analysis is a common method in the field of psychology, and it intend to result in an indirect effect of $X$ (independent variable) on $Y$ (dependent variable) through the mediation variable $M$.

The present study considered the result to be statistically significant when $p < .05$. Fisher (1925) indicates that $p$ is a traditional value to statistically ensure adequate evidence against a null hypothesis but, according to Cohen (1990), $p$ is not a dichotomous value and the results should therefore be critically discussed before any conclusion can be drawn. Preacher and Hayes (2008) writes that in a mediation analysis, the indirect effect is not given a $p$-value, instead the statistical significance is determined through a 95% confidence interval (CI). The results were discussed as statistical significance if the indirect effect didn’t contain zero (du Prel, Hommel, Röhrig, & Bettner, 2009). A process called bootstrapping was used to obtain CI, which is a procedure that generates data for the population based on the data collected by the researcher. From this generated data, cluster samples are taken and each of these cluster samples are given an indirect effect (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). This is repeated a numerous of times to identify the “true value” on the indirect effect (Morey, Hoekstra, Rouder, Lee, & Wagenmakers, 2016). The present study used 5000 random cluster samples.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics
Table 1 reports the descriptive statistics for the variables legitimacy, morality, social identity, aggression, perceived violence/disorders and supporter-police relationship. The participants in the study had in general low police-legitimacy ($M = 2.29, Sd = .58$), positive moral values ($M = 3.01, Sd = .45$), identified slightly with fellow supporters ($M = 3.38, Sd = .50$) and had a small amount of aggressive tendencies ($M = 4.40, Sd = 1.27$). Participants also perceived that there was a small amount of problems with violence/disorders related to football in a Swedish context ($M = 3.22, Sd = .43$). Further, the results show that the general perception of the supporter-police relationship was bad ($M = 1.99, Sd = .86$). Despite the means of the variables, there were participants who were on the extreme-points on all variables except for social identity. This means, for example, that there were participants who perceived the supporter-police relationship to be very bad and others perceived it as very good. There were supporters who perceived the police legitimacy as very low and those who perceived it as very high etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEG</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2 reports the correlations between the different variables. The results found a positive statistically significant relationship between legitimacy, morality, social identity, aggression and supporter-police relationship. Further, a negative statistically significant relationship between aggression and perceived violence/disorders was found. The study found a non-statistically significant relationship between the variable perceived violence/disorders and legitimacy, morality, social identity and supporter-police relationship. The results also show a non-statistically significant relationship between social identity and aggression.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>LEG</th>
<th>MO</th>
<th>SI</th>
<th>AG</th>
<th>PVD</th>
<th>SPR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LEG</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOR</td>
<td>.66**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SI</td>
<td>.18**</td>
<td>.30**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AG</td>
<td>.54**</td>
<td>.48**</td>
<td>.38**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PVD</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.92**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPR</td>
<td>.66**</td>
<td>.42**</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: ** = p < .01. Legitimacy (LEG), Morality (MO), Social Identity (SI), Aggression (AG), Perceived violence/disorders (PVD), Supporter-police relationship (SPR).*

Hypothesis 1

The results from the descriptive analysis of the policing experience items showed that 351 participants (43.9%) had been stopped/contacted by the police in a football related situation in the past two years. Regarding the satisfaction from those encounters with the police, 30.7% were very dissatisfied, 36.1% were dissatisfied, 23.8% were either dissatisfied or satisfied, 6.3% were satisfied and 3.2% were very satisfied. Further, figure 2 shows the exact spread on the participants experiences of excessive violence from the police and in general, participants have experienced, themselves or witnessed, excessive violence from the police 4-5 times ($M = 3.56, Sd = 1.75$). Regarding the last item, which was the question about if an improvement of the supporter-police relationship is needed in a Swedish football context. A large majority of the supporters indicated that an improvement in the relationship is needed, more precisely, 52.8% strongly agreed and 37.3% agreed fairly ($M = 3.43, Sd = .69$).
Mediation analyses

The results from the mediation analyses showed that the total effect of legitimacy on the dependent variable Perceived Violence/Disorders (PVD) is non-statistically significant ($\beta = -.03$, 95%CI = -.08, .02, $p > .05$). This result indicates that mediation can’t be claimed (du Prel et al., 2009) and therefore, PVD results will not be presented in the hypotheses. For more detailed information, see table 3. Hayes and Scharkow (2013) states that all paths of the mediation analysis (a, b, c and c’; see figure 1) are estimated using a set of ordinary-least-squares (OLS) regression analyses.

Table 3. OLS regression results from mediation analysis of the total effect from legitimacy on PVD without mediator.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>$p$</th>
<th>CI (lower)</th>
<th>CI (upper)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model PVD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEG PVD (c)</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$R^2_{x-y}$</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Legitimacy (LEG), Perceived violence/disorders (PVD).

Hypothesis 2

Mediation analysis found a statistically significant direct effect between legitimacy and the supporter-police relationship ($\beta = 1.0$, 95%CI = .92, 1.08 $p < .001$). This indicates that supporters with high police-legitimacy also perceive the relationship as good. Further, the results found a statistically significant negative indirect effect of legitimacy on the supporter-police relationship through social identity ($\beta = -.02$, 95%CI = -.04, -.01, $p < .001$). This indicates that supporters with high police-legitimacy also identify more strongly with supporters. This strong identification with supporters does, in turn, result in an impaired supporter-police relationship. Legitimacy and social identity could together explain 44% of the variance in the perceived supporter-police relationship. Finally, the result showed that legitimacy could explain 3% of the variance in social identity. For more elaborated and detailed information see table 4.
Table 4. OLS regression results from mediation analysis of the effect from legitimacy on SPR through social identity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>CI (lower)</th>
<th>CI (upper)</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Model SPR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEG SPR (c)</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²x-y</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model with mediator</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEG SI (a)</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SI SPR (b)</td>
<td>-.14</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-.24</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEG SPR (c’)</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect effect</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²-m</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²-y</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Legitimacy (LEG), Social Identity (SI), Perceived violence/disorders (SPR), x = LEG, y = SPR, m = SI.

Hypothesis 3
The mediation analysis found a statistically significant direct effect between legitimacy and the supporter-police relationship (β = 1.05, 95%(CI) = 1.06, 1.15 p < .001). This indicates that supporters with high police-legitimacy also perceive the relationship as good. Further, the results found a statistically significant negative indirect effect of legitimacy on the supporter-police relationship through aggression (β = -.08, 95%(CI) = -.13, -.03, p < .001). This indicates that supporters with high police-legitimacy have less aggressive tendencies. Supporters with less aggressive tendencies, in turn, experience a worse supporter-police relationship. Legitimacy and aggression could together explain 44% of the variance in the perceived supporter-police relationship. Further, the result showed that legitimacy could explain 29% of the variance in aggression. For more detailed information see table 5.

Table 5. OLS regression results from mediation analysis of the effect from legitimacy on SPR through Aggression.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>CI (lower)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model SPR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEG SPR (c)</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²x-y</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model with mediator</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEG AG (a)</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AG SPR (b)</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEG SPR (c’)</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect effect</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²-m</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²-y</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Legitimacy (LEG), Aggression (AG), Perceived violence/disorders (SPR), y = SPR, m = AG.

Hypothesis 4
The mediation analysis failed to find a statistically significant indirect effect of legitimacy on the supporter police-relationship through morality (β = -.01, 95%(CI) = -.08, .05, p > .05). Despite that, a strong statistically significant positive effect could be found between legitimacy and morality (β = .50, 95%(CI)
where legitimacy could explain 43% of the variance in morality. This indicates that supporters with high legitimacy hold more positive moral values. For more detailed information see table 6.

Table 6. OLS regression results from mediation analysis of the effect from legitimacy on SPR through Morality.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>CI (lower)</th>
<th>CI (upper)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model SPR</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEG SPR (c)</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( R^2_{x-y} )</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modell with mediator</td>
<td></td>
<td>794</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEG MO (a)</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MO SPR (b)</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>-.16</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEG SPR (c’)</td>
<td>.99</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect effect</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( R^2_{-m} )</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( R^2_{-y} )</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Legitimacy (LEG), Morality (MO), Perceived violence/disorders (SPR), \( y = SPR, m = MO \).

DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present study was primarily to investigate footballs supporters’ perceptions of the police and problems with violence/disorders in a football context in Sweden. The more specific aim was to explore the supporters’ perspective on legitimacy in relation to the supporter-police relationship (SPR) and violence/disorders (PVD) when including social identity, aggression and morality as mediators. The results from the study found both statistically significant and non-significant results.

Hypothesis 1

The results from the present study supports the hypothesis that Swedish football-supporters generally had negative experiences and view of the police in a football context. More specifically, Swedish football supporters had in general low police-legitimacy and perceived the SPR as either bad or very bad. Close to 60% of the supporters who had been contacted by the police in a football-related situation in the past two years were not satisfied with the treatment from the police. Further, 90.1% of the supporters indicated that an improvement in the SPR is needed in Sweden. Which has found that supporters feel mistreated by the police and that the solution starts with a change in the actions taken by the police (Cleland & Cashmore, 2016; Stott & Reicher, 1999). The present study also found that 80.1% of the participants have themselves experienced or witnessed excessive violence from the police. Green (2009) argues that it’s common to find these kinds of results where brusque and harsh police are violating football-crowds (Cleland & Cashmore, 2016; Stott & Reicher, 1999).

Legitimacy and Perceived Violence/Disorders

The correlation matrix (table 2.) shows that there are non-significant relationships between PVD and all other variables except aggression. Du Pret et al. (2009) writes that in a mediation analysis there must be a significant relationship between X and Y (path c; see figure 1) to claim mediation. The non-significant relationship between legitimacy and PVD, the X and Y in this case, indicates that mediation
can’t be claimed with the models using PVD as the dependent variable. In
general, supporters did not experience a lot of problems with violence/disorders
related to football in Sweden, which is in line with Fogis (n.d.) which writes that
Allsvenskan is overall a calm league with a small amount of problems with
violence/disorders. Could the non-significant correlation between legitimacy and
PVD indicate that most of the participants in this study do not experience any
problems with violence and disorders in Swedish football? Most likely not, let us
elaborate on this using ESIM (Drury & Reicher, 1999; Reicher, 1996, 1997a,
1997b; Stott & Drury, 1999; Stott & Reicher, 1998). It has already been stated
that the legitimacy for the police is low and as a result, supporters have a negative
view of their relationship with the police. In a football context, low legitimacy and
negative perceptions of the police are common. Almgren et al. (2018) argue that
interactions between supporters and the police occur all the time in a football
context. Reicher et al. (2004) writes that if a crowd see the police as illegitimate, a
conflict will probably not be solved, it is more likely to cause greater disturbance.
The non-significant relationship in this study regarding the PVD could indicate
two things. First, that there is such a small amount of violence/disorders that
supporters don’t perceive any problems with it. If this is the case, the non-
significant relationship is logical because legitimacy cannot influence a problem
that does not exist. Secondly, Almgren et al. (2018) indicates that norms and
values of a group’s collective identity changes in relation to surrounding actors.
Supporters who frequently have experienced violence/disorder in a football
context could have changed their norms and values to match those of their
collective identity to tolerate and accept the “normal” amount of
violence/disorder. This, in turn, could explain the result of the present study as the
problem with violence/disorder exists but supporters do not perceive it as a
problem. This is also supported by ESIM, which indicates that one group adapt
and react to a given reality from other groups actions.

**Legitimacy and the Supporter-Police Relationship**
The present study found a significant relationship between legitimacy and the
SPR. According to du Prel et al. (2009), this is one of the requirements to claim
mediation, which means that all models using SPR as a dependent variable could
claim mediation. To be more precise, the present study found a statistically
significant direct effect of legitimacy on SPR. This result was in line with
previous research. Green (2009) writes that it’s common to find empirical
evidence about football crowds who are violated by unreasonable and brusque
police, which is proven in many studies (e.g. Cleland & Cashmore, 2016; Stott &
Reicher, 1999). O’Neill (2005) argues that since the 80’s there have been us-
against-them in the SPR and Cleland and Cashmore (2016) confirms it still exists
in the modern world. Adding the fact that most supporters have no violent
intentions causes a problem, if supporters see themselves as legitimate actors
expressing their supportership and the police, again and again, mistreat them with
harsh strategies, the supporters will eventually respond in a negative way.
Supporters will respond with the perception of the police as illegitimate and the
feeling of us-against-them will start to develop. This cycle will not stop if things
do not change. Stronger feelings of us-against-them will probably cause less
police-legitimacy seen from the supporter’s perspective which will in turn foster a
more inferior SPR. This is supported by the empirical and theoretical research this
study is based on (Cleland & Cashmore, 2016; Drury & Reicher, 1999; Reicher,
Hypothesis 2
The result of the present study supports the hypothesis that legitimacy will have an indirect effect of SPR through social identity. More specifically, the results found a positive relationship between legitimacy and social identity. This is in line with previous research which has proven that legitimacy has a significant relationship with social identity (Almgren et al., 2018; Reicher, 1996; Stott, 2009). Research has proven that it is essential for those experiencing policing to perceive it as legitimate and it could have negative consequences if not (Reicher et al., 2004; Tyler, 2011; Schulhofer et al., 2011). Social identity is an erratic process (Drury & Reicher, 2000) and Stott (2009) highlights the significance of policing tactics in shaping and reshaping a crowd’s social identity. In the case of Reicher (1996), students were united in opposing themselves against police because of aggressive police-tactics. Legitimacy and social identity have, in that case, a negative relationship where students who perceived lower legitimacy gained a stronger collective identity. In contrast, the present study found that high police-legitimacy is related to stronger collective identity of supporters. Almgren et al. (2018) writes that crowds are a gathering of individuals with one or more common social identity. It is possible that supporters in the present study did not unite in an opposition to the police to gain a strong collective identity. Instead, the strong collective identity could be explained by the supporters shared love for the sport and the club, which means that the perception of the police-legitimacy could be high at the same time. Another explanation for these results could be that supporters who perceive high legitimacy also perceive stronger collective identity because supporters with better legitimacy could focus more on fellow supporters without the need for police officers that intervene. It could also be argued, based on Reicher’s et al. (2004) study and Drury and Reicher’s (2000) view on social identity, that if the police misuse their power, supporters will not only unite in the love for the sport and club, they will probably change, or add to, their social identity to unite in an opposition to the police, exactly as the students did in Reicher’s (1996) study.

Historically from the supporter’s perspective, the police have abused their powerful position in a football context all over Europe (Cleland & Cashmore, 2016; O’Neill, 2005; Schulhoef et al. 2011; Stott & Reicher, 1999; Tyler, 2011). The general perception of the police in the present study adds to the pile of this previous research. Despite that, the mediation analysis found a statistically significant negative indirect effect of legitimacy on the SPR through social identity. This indicates that the supporters perceive the SPR as worse if the collective identity is strong and legitimacy is supporting the strong collective identity. Shouldn’t it be more logical if the results showed that supporters with lower legitimacy and stronger collective identity perceived the relationship as worse? The answer to that question is yes. An elaboration on why the results contradicts the logic is needed. Previous research has found that legitimacy is correlated to the erratic process of social identity (Reicher et al., 1994; Reicher, 1996; Stott, 2009), which in turn is proven to have both negative and positive effects on the outcome of human interactions (Boehm et al., 2018; Ellmers et al., 2013). In other words and with the help of to the ESIM (Drury & Reicher, 1999; Reicher, 1996, 1997a, 1997b; Stott & Drury, 1999; Stott & Reicher, 1999), police actions and social relations can shape the collective and personal identity of supporters which, in turn, can determine the outcome of the interaction between the supporters and the police. It’s arguable that decades of incidents creating frustration hooligans (Brännberg, 1997) could have led to the development of
injurious norms among the supporters (Almgren et al., 2018). Further, these injurious norms could have damaged the supporters’ baseline of legitimacy and the present study’s result could be based on that. Higher legitimacy scores could therefore indicate that nothing happens that isn’t “normal” in the eye of supporters. When or if something out of the ordinary happens, supporters will most likely unite and oppose themselves to the police. If not, the supporters will not indicate a low legitimacy but maintain a strong collective identity due to other factors. Regardless the nature of the relation between legitimacy and social identity, supporters will perceive the relationship with the police as bad because of their history. This could explain the indirect effect in the present study, police-legitimacy is high because of the normalization of illegitimate actions and, at the same time, the social identity among supporters is strong (due to other factors). Which, in turn, results in a bad perceived relationship between the supporters and the police.

**Hypothesis 3**

The result of the present study supports the hypothesis that legitimacy will have an indirect effect of SPR through aggression. More specifically, the results found a positive relationship between legitimacy and aggression. This is in line with previous research which has found that supporters who feel mistreated by the police have responded with aggression/violence that could have been avoided (Brännberg, 1997; Stott & Reicher, 1999; Cleland & Cashmore, 2016). This result could be explained using the ESIM in relation to frustration hooliganism (Drury & Reicher, 1999; Reicher, 1996, 1997a, 1997b; Stott & Drury, 1999; Stott & Reicher, 1999). If the police use, from the supporter’s perspective, an illegitimate (often harsh and brusque) action, the response to that is often aggressive supporters. To quote England supporters in Stott and Reicher’s (1999) study, “Everywhere we go there is a coach load of Carabinieri (Italian police) waiting to kick your head in.” (p.368), “… the police were totally indiscriminate as to the way they were picking people up” (p.368) and “They charged us so we also charged them. Rocks and stones were thrown to stop the Carabineri firing tear gas” (p.370). Supporters react to the actions of the police and their given reality. The participants in the present study are no different, the overall police-legitimacy is low and as Almgren et al. (2018) stated, interactions between supporters and the police occur all the time in a football context. Their given reality could be illegitimate actions from the police and the response is more aggressions from the supporters, which would explain the relationship found in this study.

The results also found a statistically significant negative indirect effect of legitimacy on the SPR through aggression. In other words, those supporters with higher police-legitimacy and lower aggressive tendencies perceive the SPR as worse. To explain this, a continuation on the discussion of the differences between legitimacy and the SPR is needed. Empirical findings indicate that the SPR could be based on all historical interactions between the two groups (Cleland & Cashmore, 2016; Stott & Reicher, 1999; O’Neil, 2005). Legitimacy, on the other hand, is defined as how those who experience policing perceives the police as the rightful powerholder and that the power is used properly (Tyler, 2011; Schulhofer, Tyler & Huq, 2011). With this point of view, the SPR is long-term while legitimacy is a more short-term concept. For example, it’s not the same supporters that experience policing today compared to twenty years ago. There are both different supporters and different police. Modern supporters have their own experiences of the police which could differ from the experiences of supporters twenty years ago. Modern supporter’s perception of the SPR could, on the other
hand, be based on how the police treated supporters twenty years ago which affect their view of the police today. The present study found that higher legitimacy also gives less aggression, which is a logical relationship that goes in line with previous research. Further, those supporters that are less aggressive due to higher legitimacy also perceive the SPR as worse. This could be explained by looking at legitimacy and aggression as if it’s based on the supporter’s own experiences of the police but historically, the supporters know that the relationship is inferior and answered the survey accordingly. For example, a supporter could, out of own experiences, perceive high legitimacy and therefore be less aggressive. The same supporter knows that the SPR is and has always been bad and answer that question with that view.

**Hypothesis 4**

The result of the present study failed to support the hypothesis that legitimacy will have an indirect effect of SPR through morality. Despite this, the results found a positive relationship between legitimacy and morality. Research has shown that people are more amenable to adhere to laws if the laws goes in line with their moral values consistently (Tyler, 2006; Tyler, 2009). Further, Tyler (2009) writes “If people correctly understand the law, and if the law truly reflects moral standards of the community, then the internalized sense of morality acts a force for law abidingness” (p. 329). The results of the present study indicate that people with higher legitimacy have more positive moral values. Important to mention, the present study is measuring both legitimacy and SPR in the football context specifically and the participants are answering as supporters. Morality, on the other hand, is measured in the context of the normal life of the individual and the participants is answering the questions with that perspective. Almgren et al. (2018) indicates that supporters are individuals with different norms and values based on which context they are in. Individuals could define themselves in multiple moral contexts, for example both the context of being a football supporter and being a co-worker. The present result could therefore be explained as supporters who, in their every-day life, have more positive moral values will, in the football context, see the police as more legitimate. For example, individuals who think that it is wrong to use drugs or steal a car also obey, trust and have more positive feelings for the police in the football-context. Being a football supporter has in previous research been compared to religion with a lifelong devotion and supporters therefore create the norms and values within the football context (Foer, 2004; Joern, 2006; King & Knight, 1999; Rowe, 2001). The supporter-created norms and values (Foer, 2004; Joern, 2006) could differ significantly from the norms and values of the co-worker environment. Morality is proven to be identity defining and that people identify with groups they find morally right (Ellemers & van den Bos, 2012; Leach, Ellemers, & Barreto., 2007). The football context is unique, when expressing supportership a lot of deviant behaviors are accepted that, in another context, would have been rejected. The present study failed to find a statistically significant indirect effect of legitimacy on the SPR through morality and this could be explained by different contexts. Participants of this study could hold certain moral values in their every-day life but, in the football context, their moral values could be very different.

**Method**

The present study used a self-reported questionnaire and according to empirical evidence, this could be a limitation because of multiple factors that could affect the results (Chan et al., 2015). First, self-reported questionnaires could be a problem because the author cannot guarantee that all participants responded
truthfully and thoroughly. Further, previous research has proven that obscure items, exhaustion when answering many questions and the education level among the participants could affect the answers (Krosnick, 1991; McClendon, 1991; Podsakoff, MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2012). The questionnaire in the present study was 73 items and took approximately 10 minutes to complete. A questionnaire of this extent could be enough for the participants to develop an exhaustion which, in turn, could have an impact on the quality of their answers. There were items that had a large non-response rate, those items could have been hard to understand or had lack of response alternatives. For example, “the police follow through on their decisions and promises they make.”, the absence of an “I do not know” alternative could have caused participants to skip that, and similar, questions. Last, most of the items were found by the author in English and translated to Swedish for the usage on the Swedish population. Even though the author got help from a bilingual person to make sure the translation was correct (Hilton & Skrutkowski, 2002), it could have affected the understanding and meaning of items.

The present study was web-based and Andrews et al. (2003) argues that there are five methodological components of an online survey design that are critical. (1) Survey design: web-based surveys should support multiple platforms and browsers, prevent multiple submissions, collect both quantified and narrative open questions and provide feedback. In the present study the survey could be answered on both computers and smartphones in any web-browser. The participants were only able to submit one answer per computer/smartphone. There were opportunities to answer with quantified and open answers. All the participants received a “thank-you” note after the completion of the survey. (2) Subject privacy and confidentiality: The present survey was totally anonymous, even if the author tried to identify a specific participant, that wouldn’t be possible. Further, all data was stored on a password protected computer in a password protected file to make sure only the author had access to the data. In line with this, the survey was accepted by the ethical board at Malmö University regarding the ethical concerns before publishing. (3) Sampling and subject selection: The present study used a self-selection invitation to participate and the invitation went out on multiple internet locations. The author couldn’t control the sample and the selection of the participants but in the invitation the author specified clearly to whom the survey was for. More precise, the invitation stated clearly that the survey was only targeting football-supporters. This means that persons who saw the invitation but were not football supporters themselves would have ignored the invite. This information was also present in the information letter before starting to participate in the survey, just in case a non-supporter clicked the link. (4) Distribution and response management: The survey was distributed on social media and it’s impossible to get an exact number on the non-response rate. The author estimates that between 40-50 thousand people have seen the invitation to participate but it’s impossible to know how many of these were relevant for the study (football supporters). The author does know that there were around 450 people who clicked the web invitation, started to answer the questions and quitted without submitting an answer. Feedback from online forums indicated that the lack of an “I do not know” response alternative was one of the reasons for not completing the study. Important to mention is that a reason to why participants chose to cancel their participation was not required. (5) Survey Piloting: A pilot study is crucial to reach the research goal and to make sure participants complete the survey (Andrews et al., 2013). The present study did not have a pilot test on
the survey. Which was, after reading feedback from participants, something that would have helped during data-collection. Feedback stated that the survey needed some modifications, for example, the need for an “I do not know” alternative to some of the questions. A pilot study could have helped reducing the attrition rate and increased the quality of the questions. Which, in turn, would have increased the response rates and quality of the results in the study.

Implications
The results of the present study highlight that supporter’s legitimacy is related to the supporter-police relationship and that the relationship is indirectly affected by both social identity and aggression. This is essential information for the powerholders trying to reduce, regulate and work with the security and order within the football context. These results indicate that police tactics and strategies when dealing with supporters is crucial for the relation between them and the outcome of that interaction. To start working together towards common goals instead of continuing the path that foster a feeling of us-against-them. As far as the author knows, the present study is unique because it’s one of the first (if not the first) study in Sweden that focuses on the supporter’s perspective with this quantity of participants. There is a lot more to learn and much more research that need to be done on the topic of the relationship between football-supporters and the police.

Future research
Future research should continue focusing on the supporter perspective when it comes to problems in the football context and the relationship with the police. It’s clear from this study that supporters are frequent visitors to football because the love, passion and dedication to the sport, the atmosphere and the club. To exclude, look past or overrule supporters in the study of the supporter-police relationship would be a mistake. Future research should also specify the sample and participants more than the present study. For example, focus on only one city or one teams supporters to get a more local perspective. The perceptions of, for example, the police could be different if you live in a large city and supporting a large club compared to a smaller city supporting a smaller club etc. Future research should therefore have this in mind when conducting their research. Further, future research should not only focus on quantitative data but also the usage qualitative methods to get a deeper understanding of supporters’ legitimacy and relationship with the police. What are the consequences of the inferior relationship between the supporters and the police? What, how and who must change for the supporter-police relationship to get better? These questions are in need for further investigation in the Swedish football context. This can be done by conducting research that include both supporters and police to compare them in, for example, how they perceive different situations or contexts. Is it congruent or not? There are many interesting questions that still waits for an answer.

Conclusion
Concluding remarks of this study highlights the essential aspect supporters contribute in the work for safety and order in a football context in Sweden. The legitimacy of the Swedish police is low from the supporter’s point of view which damages the relationship between them. The police and other powerholders need to include supporters in the equation and open a dialogue to work for a more relationship building approach. The passion and dedication supporters display for their teams is something you should take advantage of, not ignore and overrule. A
change is needed, and that change is only possible if the supporter’s voices gets heard and respected in the Swedish football context.
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APPENDIX

Appendix 1 – Information letter Swedish

Supportrars perspektiv på polis och problem relaterat till fotbollsmatcher.

Hej!

Jag studerar kriminologi på Malmö Universitet och skriver just nu en uppsats för att få min masterexamen. Syftet med min studie är att fånga fotboll-supportrars upplevelser av framförallt polis men också andra problem i samband med fotbollsmatcher i Sverige. Som en fotboll-supporter blir du nu tillfrågad att delta i min studie. Deltagandet i studien är helt och hållet anonymt, vilket betyder att ingen kommer att få reda på vad just du svarade. All insamlad information går till att analysera hur supportrars relation till polisen ser ut i Sverige.


Har du några frågor så tveka inte att kontakta mig,
Tack på förhand!

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Appendix 2 – information letter English

The supporter’s perspective on the police and problems related to football-matches.

Hello!

I’m studying criminology at Malmö University and I’m currently writing a masters thesis. The purpose of the study is to capture football-supporters perspective on how they experience both the police and other issues related to football-matches in Sweden. I’m now asking you as a football supporter to participate in my study. The participation is completely anonymous, which means that no one will find out your specific answers. All collected data will be used to analyze how supporter’s relationship to the police really looks in Sweden.

The questionnaire you have in front of you takes approximately 10-15 minutes to answer and its mostly questions about your experiences as a football-supporter. The participation is voluntarily, and you can choose to quit participating anytime you like without telling anyone why and without any negative consequences attached to it. All the information will be treated with confidentiality, which means that the information you choose share won’t be seen by any unauthorized people or be used outside of the purpose of the study. The information will also be analyzed and treated on a group-level, this means that no one will analyze any individual supporters’ answers. Because of this, I’m asking you to answer as honest, sincerely and spontaneous as possible to make sure that the result is as plausible as possible. If you choose to continue participating after reading this information, you give your consent to participate in the study.

Do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions,

Thanks in advance!

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