

**‘HEADCASES’, ‘NUTTERS’ AND  
‘HANDY LADS’  
FOR A CRITICAL PSYCHOSOCIAL  
UNDERSTANDING OF MALE TO MALE  
VIOLENCE**

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# THE MEN

- **Group of white males aged early 20s – late 40s**
- **Born and raised in communities characterised by de-industrialisation and decline**
- **Family**
- **Employment**
- **Variety of violence and contexts:**
  - Football hooliganism
  - Boxing/martial arts
  - Bouncing
  - Pub/bar fights
  - Kidnap
  - Debt collections
  - Drug markets
  - Fists, knives, hammers, firearms...



## FATHER TO SON

**Darren:** ...he used to go to the football matches and get involved in the bother when it was boot boys, skin heads, he were one of the first skin heads round here...He were from a rough background...I remember being mesmerised by stories, he told me about when they went to Tottenham and they had this fight...Even now everybody who sez it, they can kind of see him in me...

**Paul:** He wouldn't take no shit off anyone from the estate...he just wouldn't let things drop...And when he went off on one he were proper intimidating...

**Brett:** I reckon I'm violent cos of my dad, he was an horrible bastard, a right bully, he used to knock me about, and I think that's why I get angry about stuff, I just flip out...

**Liam:** My earliest memories of violence, thinking really is my dad hitting my mum obviously...Cos that used to kill you as a kid...Horrible. [I] Remember sitting at top of the stairs listening to them arguing and smashing things, it's awful...he did have a temper, think it was the drink that used to do it...

# HUMILIATION

**Gary:** ...one of their lads hit me on the side of the head, just like a cheap shot... I chased him down the street then I got banged out again. So I lost twice that night [Gary thought] you are not telling your mates what you've done, you know bigging yourself up at my expense. So I tried to claw back a bit of pride and got knocked out

**Paul:** I hated that they had got away with doing me in, I hated it. I hated that I didn't know who they were, I hated that I never saw them anywhere. I felt like they had one over me and then when we saw him that night it seemed too good of a chance to turn down really

**Shane:** I broke a lad's jaw cos he was laughing at me...in front of all my mates...Just taking the piss...calling me a dickhead and everything, so I got into a rage cos I was embarrassed...he shouldn't have done what he'd done is my point. Had he not done that, that situation would never have arisen. I was just enjoying a normal day and then that happened, and as far as I'm concerned you've got to deal with it. Cos otherwise you just give people licence to take the piss, don't you?

**Carl:** ...he started mouthing off at me from inside the car and I just couldn't cope with it... [I] dragged him out, knocked the living crap out of him and smashed his car up

## IT'S 'NOT ME'...IT'S 'THEM'

**Shane:** I've spent many nights on the observation ward in hospital because I didn't walk away. But you just get up the next day and go home, my self-respect is intact isn't it? But if I hadn't I'd torture myself over it, and I'd go over it and over it in my head...I've always respected everybody else, other people's feelings, other people's wishes, other people's beliefs. You know, I've never put anybody down, bullied anybody, taken something off someone, nothing...I can't sit here and say I've fucked my life up cos I haven't, I've lived it...I've lived it according to what I think is right. Even though what I've done is, in the eyes of the law wrong, it's still how I perceived things to be at the time...that's not bullying, that's a form of defending the people that are around you...You protect your kids, your missus, your house...

# FOR A CRITICAL PSYCHOSOCIAL UNDERSTANDING

- **Individual:**
  - Emotion – humiliation
  - Trauma, abuse
- **Social:**
  - Enclassed masculinity and socialisation
  - Toughening up – but for what?
- **Political economy:**
  - Capital flight
  - Political abandonment