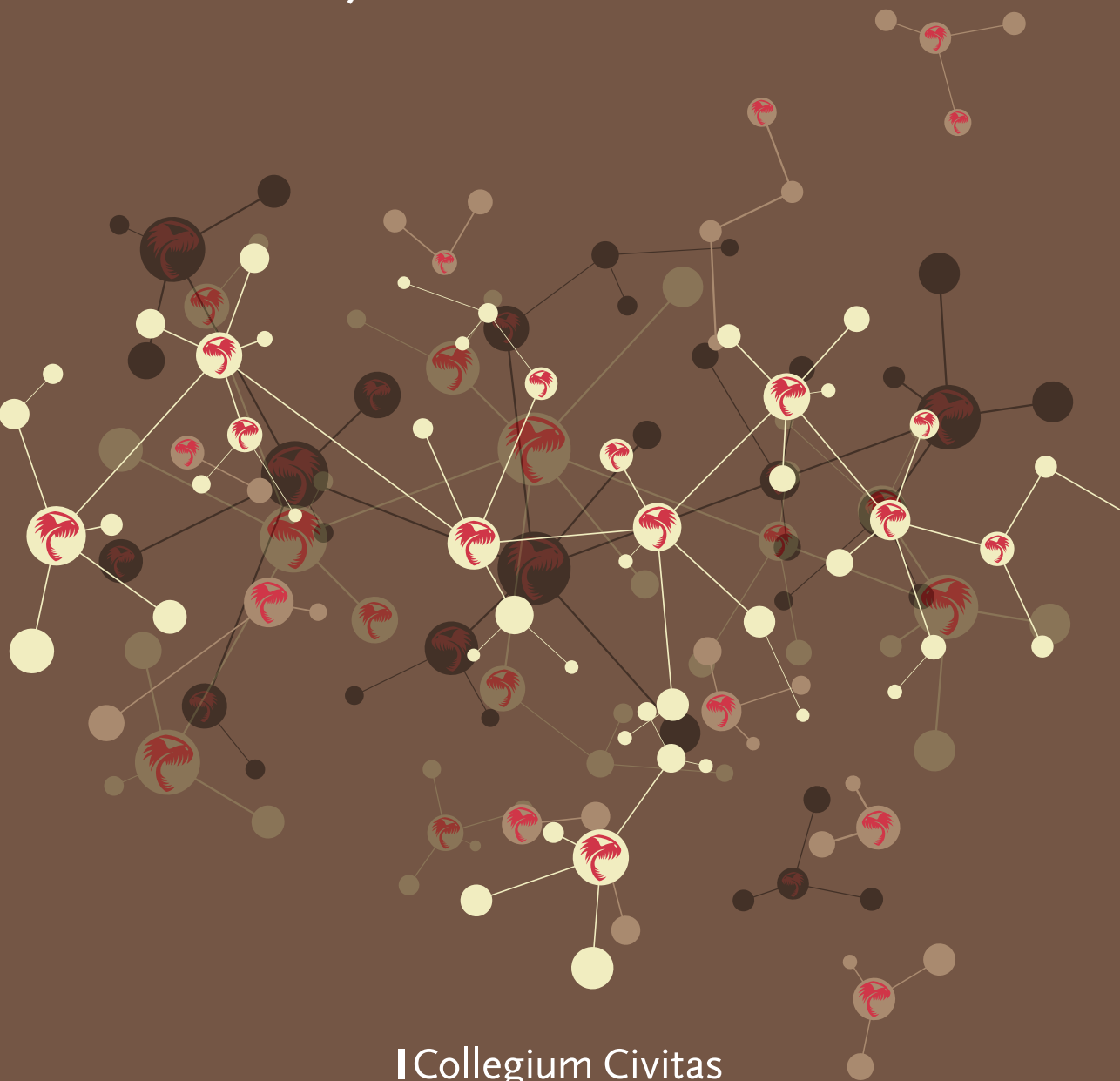


Toxic masculinity – Polish football fans as a far-right political actor

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! Collegium Civitas

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Abstract

Football fanatics fighting with fans of other clubs and with the police are a violent part not only of the Polish society Poland, but also in many other countries. The analysis is based on the results of interviews conducted in 2018-2019 as part of the Dialogue About Radicalization and Equality (DARE) research project. To explain the path of fanatics into politics, we refer to the concepts of such classical anthropologists, as Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner. Also to the thesis that radicalization is a deeply gendered process formulated by the contemporary researcher Michel Kimmel. The article presents the process of socialization in two ways: becoming strong men and Polish patriots at the same time. The “zoom effect” proposed in the summary explains how Polish fans move from spontaneous *communitas* (“fanatics”) to ideological *communitas* (“patriots”). This is how they become allies of the populist party in Poland since 2015, which uses homophobic discourse.

Keywords

Polish far-right, football fans, homophobic discourse, rites of passage, masculinity, hate speech

Introduction

“Radicalization is a deeply gendered process, one that virtually no one has addressed, because the gender composition has been so normal that it has passed entirely under our analytic or journalist radar. Becoming an extremist is a way to prove your manhood, to feel like a man” (Kimmel 2018: 25)

The analysis below refers to the politically and ideologically radicalized faction of Polish football fans who call themselves “fanatics.” It is based on the results of the international study Dialogue About Radicalization and Equality, which was also conducted in Poland. I intend to document a thesis parallel to the position of the author of *Healing from Hate*. Michael Kimmel analyzed mechanisms of radicalization leading to neo-fascism and Islamophobia to show “how young men get into – and out of – violent extremism.” The subtitle of his book might as well accompany our analysis, with one exception: we will not be addressing the important issue of deradicalization.

Some Polish football fans call themselves “fanatics” to distinguish themselves from the millions of consumers of television broadcasts of football matches. They also do this to counter the bad reputation that accompanies them, due to fights between clubs, or clubs joining together to fight the police. Fanatics do not want to be identified with “janusze” or “kibole.” When it comes to brawls on the streets and in stadiums, fanatics do not differ much from hooligans – their British prototype. For the last dozen years or more, a new thread has woven itself more and more deeply into the history of hooligan mobilization, and not only in Poland (Pankowski 2010). Its name may be difficult to agree on, because for one person it is “patriotism” and for another it is nationalism or even ethnonationalism, which constantly threaten democracy (Wieviorka 1993).

In the country report referring to the Polish part of the DARE project, we stated:

“The rituals, ideologies and patterns of behaviour embedded in football fan culture are not limited to the confines of the stadium. On the contrary, they can be observed in numerous other settings. The same banners and chants, with their origin in the stadium, can be witnessed, for instance, during street demonstrations taking place on historical anniversaries such as the annual Polish Independence Day march in Warsaw (11 November). In this way, the ideological component which was brought into the fan culture from the «outside» is amplified and channeled back into the broader social environment well beyond the world of football. (...) In Poland, football culture has been used as a cultural resource and political tool by nationalist movements promoting particular versions of national «memory» and «identity» and symbolic propaganda theatre where the most taboo and desired ideals of the current Polish right-wing populist movements are supported and presented” (Kuczyński et al. 2020: 3-4).

One of the main aims of this article is to explore the role of masculinity in young men transitioning into football-related right-wing violent extremism. We propose an anthropological approach using Arnold van Gennep’s notion of rites of passage, to describe how a young man enters adulthood with a little help from his friends – fanatics.

Although we do not deal with the problem of deradicalization, it is worth quoting one more time Michael Kimmel’s observation:

“Gender – masculinity – provides both the psychological inspiration to young men to join these groups and the social glue that keeps them involved. Challenging violent extremism, therefore, means engaging these young men as men, not simply as jihadists or Neo-Nazis or white supremacists. It means offering them new ways by which they can prove their masculinity, to feel that they are real men, that their lives matter” (Kimmel 2018: 13).

Gender and toxic masculinity

Our basic thesis is very simple: fanatics represent to young men what it means to be a strong (and Polish) man. To clarify the route to extremism, we use an anthropological approach focusing on rites of passage.

One important factor should be taken into account: young men in football fans' groups often feel a sense of indignation. Their lost or weak identity seems to be their reason to search for a leader: a "second father," or somebody to follow.

The classic term "rites of passage" comes from Arnold van Gennep's *Rites de Passage*, published in French in 1908. The concept of liminality is very useful when analyzing rituals in different communities. Van Gennep placed a particular emphasis on rites of passage; he claimed that such rituals marking, helping, or celebrating individual or collective passages through the cycle of life exist in every culture, and share a specific threefold sequential structure.

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of his approach, and not only with reference to those times, when he presented his unbiased view of nonliterate societies, which researchers of his generation, such as Emile Durkheim, looked at "from above" and treated as less advanced. Although more than a hundred years have passed, this aspect of van Gannep's approach is worth recalling if we want to maintain an anthropological, not an ideological, perspective on football fans. Although I personally believe that fanatics are a formation that threatens democracy, I do not put myself in the position of a sociologist who looks down on this milieu. When describing fanatics, it is difficult to dismiss the threads of xenophobia and violence against minorities which are so visible in their behavior. Thus it seems helpful to use categories taken from the concept of rites of passage to build a cognitive distance.

Directing our attention towards a relatively small but noisy group of fanatics, we follow the trail indicated by Victor Turner and van Gannep's critical followers, adopting some of their style. The liminality in our analysis of radical football fans is used to describe the "scene" in which the values of Polish society are revealed in the form of myths and heroes. One of these dramatically depicted values is the role of a man, who is no longer who he was several decades ago. Contemporary men in Poland

live in a society that is neither industrial nor post-industrial. It is neither traditional nor postmodern. It is a society in transition, just like the men and women living in it.

Male initiation

Male initiation, considered the most typical rite, helps us to gain a better understanding of the “tripartite structure” of liminal situations defined by van Gennep. In such rites of passage, the experience is highly structured. The first phase (the rite of separation) requires the child to go through a separation from his family; this involves his “death” as a child, as childhood is effectively left behind. In the second stage, the boy must pass a “test” to prove he is ready for adulthood. If he succeeds, the third stage (incorporation) involves a celebration of the “new birth” of the adult and his welcoming back into society.

By constructing this three-part sequence, van Gennep identified a pattern he believed was inherent in all ritual passages. He was convinced that the sequence was universal: “all societies use rites to demarcate transitions.” In a liminal situation, young men live outside their normal environment and are encouraged to question their own self and the existing social order through a series of rituals that often involve acts of pain. In this sense, liminal periods are “destructive” as well as “constructive.”

The trips were better then. There was no screwing around. We got stuck in right away. The brawl was hardcore, nobody pussied out. But the gang then was just right. And then we walked around the city, singing like a choir, drunk out of our fucking minds, and colors up. Then on the train and back home. The cops were praying for us to leave already. (Adam)

I became a fan. When the weekend came, I had goosebumps, butterflies in my stomach. I can't explain it, you'd have to be there, at the match. When I arrived at a Lech match, when I heard 30,000 people insulting Legia, nothing else was important. (Panufcy)

I was proud to have older mates. At some point, the stadium became my second home. I was always there, spent lots of time there. I was tall, athletic, I went to matches, so some people got interested in me, which wasn't good and I don't want to talk about it. (Andrzej)

The second rite of passage

“There are many sorts of initiation, many models, many sequences of rituals and teachings. All sequence of initiatory stages are linear, and initiation itself resembles a sphere. With this warning, we could look at a linear view of male initiation in five stages. First, bonding with mother and separation from the mother. (We do the first moderately well, and the second not well at all, particularly in the suburbs and the ghetto.) Second, bonding with the father and the separation from the father. (We often postpone the father bonding until we are fifty or so, and then separation still has to be done.) Third, the arrival of the male mother, or the mentor, who helps a man rebuild the bridge to his own greatness and essence” (Bly 2004: 29).

We considered the first two of these stages as crucial. The first of interest to us here is the step toward community and halfway to adulthood. The best example of this traditional ritual is the first haircut (Polish: *postrzyżyny*). This occurs in many cultures and involves shaving off or cutting short the boy's hair and often granting him an additional name. In Slavic culture, this ritual most often involved boys aged seven. This rite led to the transition of the boy from his mother to his father.

Quoting Mircea Eliade's work, Robert Bly writes that the boy between eight and twelve years of age, having been taken away from the mother, passes into the hands of the old men guides who cover his face and sometimes his whole body with ashes to make him the color of dead people and to remind him of the inner death about to come.

“Initiations of boys begin with two events: the first is a clean break with the parents, after which the novice goes to the forest, desert, or wilderness. The second

is a wound that the older man gave the boy, which could be scarring of the skin, a cut with knife, a brushing with nettles, a tooth knocked out” (*Ibidem*: 96-97).

From now on, the community will provide the boy with relative independence and care. Self-empowerment takes place under the supervision of his father as preparation for independent life; that is, practical activities such as hunting, making tools, and crafts. Thus, the young man learns the requirements of adulthood, consisting most often of the ability to work and start a family that he will be able to support.

“A boy was initiated into manhood after he found his source, his validation, his reason for being, his foundation *in* being. We would say his place in the universe. Up to that point he was considered a boy, a nonbeing, a ghost, and a hungry ghost at that” (Rohr 2004: 32).

Thinking about male initiation, we focus on the second rite of passage, which comes some years after the haircut. It is a second important stage towards community; the question is, what sort of community will incorporate the youngster? The second male rite of passage signifies a road to adulthood, when the teenager passes into the hands of a group of men. We will later discuss the notion of *communitas* to define this group. The role of an older man – father, uncle, older brother – in the group that has incorporated the young man is of interest to psychologists and teachers. For us, the most interesting angle is a sociological view on the evolution of masculinity and the father’s role in the twentieth century.

“By the middle of the twentieth century in Europe and North America a massive change had taken place: the father was working, but the son could not see him at work” (Bly 2004: 100).

Robert Bly underlines that this was not the case in hunter, agricultural, and craft societies, where fathers and sons worked together: “When a father, absent during the day, returns home at six, his children receive only his temperament, and not his teaching. If the father is working for a corporation, what is there to teach?” (*Ibidem*: 102).

A football fan group, functioning as a *communitas* or antistructure, offers youngsters an alternative life to family, school, or work. None of

those three highly structured and hierarchical spheres offers as much as the football community. The young man is involved in direct social relations and experiences a spirit of freedom and equality, as well as gaining a “second father”:

“The general assumption underlying all initiatory rites is that unless a young male is shown real power through a community of wise elders, he will always seek false power and likely will spend much of his life seeking prestige, perks and possessions” (Rohr 2004: 17).

Unless a young “fanatic” candidate, while searching for a masculinity pattern (which is so important for him), is shown a community of wise elders, he will find false power equal to violence. In this vein, Andrzej said:

I don't remember my father well. I was eight years old when they split up. Father left. There, abroad, he started a new family, but he kept sending us money, so it wasn't all that bad. I was raised by my mother, and there were my two younger siblings. As a child, I was an altar boy until the end of primary school. The church also raised me because my mother is very religious. As a teenager, I did various sports. I regularly went to matches with boys from the neighborhood (my peers and a few years older). I was 14 or 15 at the time. (Andrzej)

Other fanatics echoed similar themes:

In my family, my father discouraged me, mocked me, and always made fun of it. At first, he forbade it, then when he saw he couldn't stop me, he started to poke fun at me, trying to put me off, and later it turned out that when he'd get a free ticket from work, he'd bring it home. He always thought football was shit, Legia were losers. I only heard that stuff, you know? But my older brother started going, and of course I imitated my older brother. (Kitka)

The importance of male role models in the family was stressed by Kajetan in a different way:

I come from a family with strong football fan roots. I started to go to matches with my dad and grandad. The first matches I remember were when I was

about four years old. Sometimes my uncles joined us (one is my father's aunt's sister's husband, the other is his mother's brother). (Kajetan)

Communitas and the struggle for recognition

Communitas is a Latin noun referring either to an unstructured community in which people are equal or to the very spirit of community. According to Victor Turner (1988; 1995) whose analyses are creative and critical development of van Gennep's ideas, communitas has the form of a structureless society based on equality and solidarity. Communitas is opposed to the "normal society" with a social structure built on hierarchy, nonreciprocal relations, distances, and conflicts. Turner, who defined the anthropological usage of communitas, used the notions of "structure" and "antistructure" to stress that liminality and communitas are both components of antistructure. Communitas is characteristic of people experiencing liminality together; it allows the whole of the community to share a common experience and individual life experiences.

Axel Honneth defines the most important aspect of modern society as "a struggle that subjects conduct in order to have their identity claims confirmed" (Honneth 1995: 21). The first form of relating is self-confidence, established and developed in relationships of friendship and love, usually in childhood. One is capable of forging an identity by receiving recognition from others. Without a special relationship with another, it is not possible to become aware of one's own uniqueness, develop a positive image of one's abilities, and achieve an identity. If one experiences love, an ability to love one's self and others ensues. These relationships support the expression of a person's needs without fear of rejection or abandonment. If this essential ingredient of development is not available, or a negative message about self-worth is given to a child, the outcome may damage that person's personality, and they may find "expression through negative emotional reactions of shame, anger, offence or contempt" (Honneth 1995: 257).

Screams, singing together – it's like at Mass. Those people who need to go to a demonstration, go to a parade, go to Mass, go hunting in the forest, then meet over some stew and vodka probably feel the same emotions. Some group that gives you the feeling you're something more valuable, something better, and when you're young, then obviously your self-esteem is zero or you're a nobody. (Kitka)

I don't like football, but support is the most important for me. As a child, I went to matches not for the game, but for support. It wasn't about who wins. The atmosphere was important. I had a row about quarrels. Especially those with other girls. I liked to drain others in... I felt like a lady in the district because my brother had good support and his mates as well. Nobody would jump me. I also always liked the boys. So I felt confident. I liked the trips away. (Mirra)

Our question is as follows: what happens if the “essential ingredient of development as a fundament of self-confidence” is not present in early childhood? How possible is the next stage of personal development: self-respect? One hypothesis worth considering is this: the group (football fans with older leaders) gives young men a chance to start their own personal “struggle for recognition.”

One of the most important observations made by Francis Fukuyama and Axel Honneth about identity and the search for recognition leads us to a better understanding of the fanatics' opinions gathered in interviews. Fukuyama (2018) argues that economic distress is often perceived by individuals not as resource deprivation, but as a loss of identity. The nationalist can translate loss of relative economic position into loss of identity and status. You have always been a core member of our great nation, but foreigners, immigrants, and your own elite compatriots have been conspiring to hold you down. Your country is no longer your own, and you are not respected in your own land:

It seems very complicated to me, because we're in this European Union, which opened our borders, and all the people, from every country, practically, from Europe, can just come to us. And also Poland is forced by the

European Union to welcome immigrants, which I don't necessarily like. Poland should also be this country in which there live... Well, there's some nationality, that's why countries were created, to be inhabited by people who come from them. I mean, I also think that Poland is, when I compare it to European countries, after all, there are fewer of these immigrants. Somehow, lately, a lot of Ukrainians have been coming to us, and actually, history kind of shows us that they're our good friends, but somehow they always made it harder for us and, well, generally they butt in too much into everything that's going on and that's what I don't like. (Mirra)

In the case of Sweden, it's already too late, they are already in deep shit. They are already cutting their pensions because they need money for immigrants, such a rich state, with such developed welfare, they thought that they would simply attract employees. Well, and Germans, the Kanaks even somehow assimilated with them, although they had their groups. But now another nation flowed in there. Then why did Saudi Arabia, these rich countries, not take these Arabs? They only said they could give them cash for mosques in Europe, but they didn't want to take these people to Dubai. Why didn't they accept them? Because they're simply the poorest, uneducated society. So why should they take them into Arabia or whatever? They could accept these refugees; why didn't they do it? They didn't because it is a problem. (Pawel)

Violence: how to be a man

To understand how the group is a new and better “home” for a young man, we have to observe the liminal rites which are typical for the fanatics' milieu. In a liminal situation, young men are encouraged to contest the existing social order through a series of rituals that often involve acts of violence. If we think about the patterns of behavior in a “normal society,” the liminal phase is destructive.

The decisive factor for the liminal phase is violence, which is a sign of *communitas*:

There are many years of tradition there, arrangements between the fans, arrangements where there are agreements, arrangements where there's bad blood, arrangements where you go, when you go to a match, you go on a kind of adventure. For example, the last visit of Legia fans in Legnica ended in a little riot there, a clash with the supporters of Śląsk Wrocław onsite. And during the fight there was a clash with Widzew fans who came to Siedlce. On the highway, two brawls like this happened along the way. And how is this interconnected? These are long-standing traditions. (Piotr)

I had a friend from my block of flats, Karol Piróg, he's called "Monkey" and he was also such a diehard fan, no militia fighting or something, only a normal fan and he had our Korona flags hanging in the stadiums. It was summer and we played against Legia Warsaw, then in 2004. And there was nice weather, he cracked open the window in the car, and the day before they installed GPS under the bonnet, those guys from Wisła Kraków. They just knew he would have these flags so they would know where he was going. And when he stopped at a red light, he had that window open, and they stabbed him, but they didn't steal the flags because they knew they'd killed him. He had 13 stab wounds. There's bad blood between us and Wisła. (Robert)

There is this unwritten contract between the fans that the fights are unarmed. Cracovia and Wisła Krakow fans break this rule; they swing at each other with machetes, axes, and baseball bats. When we arranged fights in the woods, there was, for example, an agreement that someone would pull the handbrake on the train and the fans would get off where we were to meet. Is the number of fighters predetermined? It happens, but often only Teddy Boys 95 go. (Panufcy)

If someone really believes in where he or she is, who he or she socializes with, and wants to fight for his or her ideas, then sometimes there's violence in all that, not just physical one, really. It's not just about beating someone up, but also about this violence, this very psychological violence, that you have to hammer your point home, and the other side doesn't necessarily need to like that. (Mirra)

We went to church on Sundays and holidays, didn't eat meat on Fridays, went to confession a few times a year. When I started getting into fights with others, I stopped going to confession. My parents had no idea about it. In the final year of school, I got closer to the church. I think two things led to that. First, I was beaten up after a match. I had my head split open. I was hit with a wooden bat with a sharpened tip. I was in hospital because I needed stitches. They also broke my arms. I saw it differently after that. I also beat others up (with a hammer handle I took from our workshop). I still went to matches, but I stopped fighting, graffitiing the walls. I didn't have time to go on trips. Other things consumed me. Later I went to the seminar. It was a very conscious decision. I saw myself as a fan differently. That was in the past. I am a priest-fan, and recently also a coach. (Kajetan)

Who am I?

How do fanatics construct a frame for mythology: "I am a real Patriot?" Let us turn to the other quotes from the interviews which are related to this point. They largely speak for themselves and thus do not require extra commentary. We underline three dimensions of analysis to understand better how a violent extreme right-wing movement is constructed: mythology, external enemies, and internal enemies.

Mythology: war, honor, faith

I miss the adrenaline rush in the stands. I belong to a generation that built Legia's legend in a different way. With my own blood and authority. (Adam)

I am a Patriot with a capital P. For me, God, Honor, and Homeland are not empty words. Unfortunately, I had to leave Poland, my beloved club, and live far away for many years. Someone who is not a patriot and doesn't know what it means to love his country won't understand it. It hurt even more because I couldn't come to Poland for matches because I couldn't afford it. I felt like a traitor. I am a fan to the core. Not some football hooligan. I'm no

choirboy; I had a few slips, some club riots, spontaneous brawls, but I'm not a hooligan or thug. I traveled around the country with people who think the same way I do. When I worked in Ireland, I always wore the club badge and the Polish flag, a little pin. I often pray for the good fortune of the club. When I was a young boy, I would hop off to the church before every match and pray. (Andrzej)

External and internal enemies

At the heart of the rites of passage for these young men one can find two tensions: an unstoppable search for identity and a permanent struggle for recognition. Moreover, as Michael Kimmel (2018: 15) stated, “these men developed a word-view that constantly shored up their own sense of masculinity through the emasculation of «others» against whom they are fighting: feminist women, immigrants, Jews, gays – all depicted as not «real men»”:

I personally say... that it is, this is not an issue for the fans at the stadium. It certainly is not, I can't agree with that there, because Legia has long had black players and there are also the Portuguese, and those darker ones. There has never been a manhunt in Legia cos a Negro has come, so he can't play. It's more likely when a player comes from Lech, some Kaczurowski or another, why did he come here because he once said bad things about Legia. So what are you here for now, that's stronger than skin color and shit. I haven't even heard anyone in my area, and I've been going to this stadium for so many years, that someone said because he's a Negro. Even from a foreign team, if a Negro boy runs and so on, then they say, “Oh, this black guy plays all right,” yeah? Or that he's agile as hell. (Paweł)

When we were at the match with Lech, we hung up a sign in Poznań about pedophiles that “they fuck your children”; it was in the times of the Poznań Nightingales and Archbishop Paetz. I never saw such rage ever before, I thought we would never leave the stadium. (Panufcy)

For a moment I tried to join a fan group, an older one. I figured that there are no tickets for any interesting matches because the club gives them to the fans and the fans organize themselves. We met, you know, I went there twice, I saw what they were talking about, their views, and so I never showed up there again. I just can't; first of all their views, and secondly, I have long hair. When I go to watch a match, I have to be careful not to get hit in the head with a scarf because I'm the enemy. Because I'm a leftist, some queer, maybe a liberal, fuck knows what else. Because I have long hair, so you can see it right away. "Hey, you like getting fucked hard?" This hostility to foreigners, the racism. First of all, I'm too intelligent, and secondly, I have long hair. Or he doesn't like my shoes, my trousers because I don't wear track-suits. If you stand out a little bit from this crowd, it's not cool anymore. You don't get along so well. (Kitka)

A queer... means he's wearing this and that. That would be a problem, why did a queer come to see Legia? More than a black guy. (Pawel)

LGBT was once a taboo subject and there was discrimination. Even discriminatory law. And then such struggle made sense. Now maybe they could make sense. Only if it was shown to people that it is not strange and unnatural, but that's paying a bit too much attention to the issue. You want to be treated like others, then behave like others. Heterosexuals don't organize such marches, but, true, they don't feel discriminated against. Now homosexuals are not discriminated against. (Kamil)

Homosexual marriages? No, absolutely not, because, after all, how can you have two fathers or two mothers, I can't even imagine it at all, we're... A traditional family, that's what a family is, exactly, a mother and a father, and then there can be children, and if there are two people of the same sex, well, then they're not exactly going to make children. So, in my opinion, that's also why these people shouldn't adopt children or get married, also because according to the Church and this tradition that we have in Poland, that I agree with, well, a family is made up of a man and a woman. (Mirra)

Feminists don't come to matches because it's not a place for them; if they came to matches, they would probably meet some cool guys there, start to

take care of themselves and stop being feminists. Homosexuals are a freak of nature and this should be treated, but they realize that apparently it can't be done very well. It'll be with you till you die. During fights and other skirmishes, when I was a teenager, I often called these girls, "You lesbo." (Anonymous woman, beauty shop owner)

The fanatics as a political actor

In the above analysis, one can identify childhood experience as one crucial problem, whereby the father was missing or was insufficiently present, and therefore there were no strong foundations for building self-confidence in a young person. However, family relationships do not explain everything. Of course, many testify to the fact that if a person grows up in a family where there is no bond, no patterns, and violence is not eliminated, this is a burden that will affect their further development. In the eyes of a young man shaped in such circumstances, their family, school, and professional environment start to represent a structure. At that point, the offer of an antistructure – for example, a community of football fans where you can build self-respect and self-esteem on your own terms – becomes highly attractive. The struggle for identity and recognition, speaking the language of Fukuyama and Honneth, moves to the interior of a hermetic group that is different, unlike “society as a whole.”

In the midst of a diverse, heterogeneous society, full of conflict and dilemmas, tensions and choices, the national community is emerging as a complete remedy that attracts “fanatical” opinions and behavior. One may talk about a “zoom” or “blow-up” effect, whereby honor, valor, courage, and other qualities cultivated by football fans in the form of tribal games and rituals create fertile ground for developing national mythology. The next and final step in the post-liminal phase leads the “fanatics” to identify with the part of the history of Poland that is heroic.

This is a way to exploit national symbolism and found individual identity in it. A young man can identify himself not only as a brave Legia or even Polish national team football fan but as a proud Polish patriot.

The “zoom effect” explains how Polish football fans make the transition from a *spontaneous communitas* (“fanatics”) to an *ideological communitas* (“patriots”). Since 2015, when anti-refugee slogans dominated the national parliamentary electoral campaign, most patterns of behavior and the leading values of the fanatics-patriots have been very close to the political language of the ruling party and the public media. In 2020, homophobic discourse largely dominated the presidential campaign. Mainstream politics and media have not been free from xenophobia and intolerance; on the contrary, they have frequently reinforced them.

Therefore, the radical nationalist views of many of the fanatical football fans can be found in the “middle of society.” This creates room for populist movements which “erupt at the times of rapid social change and the accompanying crises. They delay rationalization of politics by causing degeneration of political elites and political «decay» that is weakening the core political institutions of the state, rule of law, and democratic accountability of political leaders” (Pakulski 2016: 57).

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About the book "The Virus of Radicalization":

"I regard this monograph as an example of high-quality academic craftsmanship. It is an important supplement to the literature on the phenomena and processes of radicalization and extremism (primarily those taking place in the Polish socio-political system, but not only). It will be interesting both for scientists, students and a wider audience interested in socio-political issues."

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"The volume is a collection of chapters on the topic of mostly right-wing political radicalization in Poland, Europe, and the world. (...) Excellent empirical case studies of particular cases of political radicalization in Poland and Europe are the bulk and the highlight of the volume. (...) Overall, the volume is a useful, well-written and well-conceived contribution to literature on political radicalism and crisis of liberal democracy."

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