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TRABAJO DE FIN DE GRADO

**British Casuals:  
Influences, Music, Film, and the Cult of Clothing**

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## ABSTRACT

By revisiting the subcultures that British youngsters followed throughout the second half of the twentieth century, principally Mods, Skins, and Casuals, this BA Dissertation searches the principal connections among them. Starting with influences from the decade of the 60s, and following with the next decades, the Casual subculture historically evolved from earlier tribes such as Mods or Skins. The similarities among the three tribes have been shown to stem from the sociologic development of the working-class teenagers of the United Kingdom, attracted by the British clothing brands that were popular among the high class. Their aim was to appear well dressed and thus, unperceived by the police authorities during the violent clashes that frequently surrounded them. This dissertation will trace those developments to finally describe how the role of music and film, as much as football, has been crucial in spreading the success of Casual fashion and clothing styles internationally.

*Keywords:* Casuals, British subcultures, clothing, music, film, football.

## RESUMEN

Revisitando las subculturas que los jóvenes Británicos siguieron durante la segunda mitad del siglo XX, principalmente Mods, Skins y Casuals, este Trabajo de Fin de Grado busca las principales conexiones entre ellas. Empezando con las influencias de la década de los 60, y las posteriores décadas, la subcultura Casual evolucionó históricamente a partir de tribus urbanas anteriores como los Mods o los Skins. Las similitudes entre estas tres tribus tienen su raíz en el desarrollo sociológico de los adolescentes de la clase obrera de Reino Unido, atraídos por marcas de ropa británicas que eran populares entre la clase alta. Tenían el propósito de vestir bien y por consiguiente no llamar la atención de la policía durante los frecuentes enfrentamientos violentos que los rodeaban. Este trabajo trazará esa evolución para finalmente describir cómo los roles de la música y el cine, así como del fútbol, resultaron cruciales para expandir el éxito de la moda Casual y su estilo de ropa en el ámbito internacional.

*Palabras clave:* Casuals, subculturas británicas, ropa, música, cine, fútbol.

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## **Introduction**

### **The Origins of Mods, Skins, and Casuuls**

British subcultures of the second half of the twentieth century, such as Mods or Skins, became worldwide cultural trends thanks to music, films, and of course, their way of dressing. Each of these movements became popular in a different decade, but there are some connections that have linked them throughout time. Obviously, the idiosyncrasy of these urban tribes has been influenced by their place of origin, Great Britain, but also from cultural aspects that go from sociological to political ones.

Their history started in England in the 1960s. British and American rock music was an important influence on English youth. The first culture tribe we refer to has nothing to do with The Beatles or The Rolling Stones, neither The Doors nor the hippie movement. This first subculture are the Mods. Mods were influenced by artists such as The Who and were involved in a war of tribes against the Rockers (more influenced by American culture), a clash that is reflected in the British film of the late 70s called *Quadrophenia* (1979). The connection to British identity that the Mods originated influenced the following generations in both music and fashion.

A second important movement was active in Britain in the decade of the 1970s: the Skins. This new urban tribe was born around a music genre that evolved from former British colonies like Jamaica: Ska-punk, the natural development of Jamaican reggae that had become popular in the islands at the beginning of the decade. The political environment

and the British youth's identification with Ska-punk popularised the Skin movement. Together with the Mods, this tribe was noticeable among young working-class individuals, who this time politically and socially involved. The rise of extremist politics in the United Kingdom, such as that defended by the National Front (NF) or the British National Party (BNP) in the late 60s, together with the sense of abandonment from the Labour party, spread a political view among these youngsters that was distant from the democratic systems. In the Skin subculture, internal disagreements existed from the beginning, but there were not many differences in the way they dressed. Anarchists and Nationalists used to dress similarly, with only a few differences of detail. Their fashion is reflected in the film *This Is England* (2006), by the awarded director Shane Meadows. The wardrobe that can be seen in the film contains "high class" UK brands such as Fred Perry or Dr. Martens. Certain music bands were popular among them, like Buzzcocks or Cockney Rejects, to name those that became a crucial part of the skinhead movement.

The last important movement that appears in the 80s in the United Kingdom and the one who survives into the 90s as a fashion subculture was Casual clothing. The context this time is quite different, but still has a relation with the Mods and Skins: Skins coexisted with Casual clothing at the beginning of the 80s, when the predominant political stand was distorted by the Falklands War and Margaret Thatcher's agenda. The breeding ground of this subculture was English football and, to be more precise, the fanbase, the supporters that started to dress on the match day on a Sunday. This was a strategy, because of the emerging violence in the surrounding area of the stadiums before and after a football match. Dressing alike had the goal of becoming invisible, as in camouflage, to be able to avoid security or

the police. A Casual supporter would wear the same brands as Mods and Skins, very expensive English clothes, to be able to be recognised as a “high class” lad. Nevertheless, English football became a bigger phenomenon and so did its teams. The turning point was when the supporters started to travel through Europe following their team. They came back from other countries with “snobbish” clothes such as Lacoste, Sergio Tacchini, or Adidas. Those trips set a new style among Casuals which endured throughout the following decade with the phenomenon of “Madchester” and “Britpop,” these two involving both music and casual culture. There are cinematographic products too that reflect this, such as, for instance, the films *Spike Island* (2012), directed by Mat Whitecross, and *Awaydays* (2009), directed by Pat Holden and based on the namesake novel written by Kevin Sampson.

The BA Dissertation that follows will survey the connection between the three subcultures above, Mods, Skins and Casuals, laying emphasis on the importance of fashion and Casuals and their influence in our own days. It traces the similarities and connections present in these subcultures, principally Mods, Skins, and Casuals, in every aspect possible. It focuses on the sociological roots of their development in British working-class youngsters, with an accent in music as a crucial aspect in the cristalization of each tribe, and ends with the importance of the cult of fashion in the spread of the subcultures internationally among the following generations.

Casual subculture is not very well documented, as a consequence of the risk that was associated to hooliganism and the desire of their followers to pass unnoticed. The press and publishers in general used to dynamite this subculture as well as the others. Therefore, this study principally follows the testimonies of authors that were involved with those

subcultures and know them very well. Many of the sources this study draws on are autobiographical, such as, for example, interviews of Cass Pennant, a football hooligan that became one of the most important figure of the Casual subculture, or the book *Casuals: The Story of a Terrace Cult* (2003) the so-called “Bible” of the Casual subculture written by Phil Thornton, with interviews of eye-witnesses. The volume by media theorist and sociologist Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (1993) shows the relation of the subculture to the fields of music, as the subculture was followed by many British music bands, a showcase for youngsters, just like films and TV shows. Several other academic works, as well as webpages that are specialised in this topic, have also been consulted.

These works are important in order to prove the evolution and development of these tribes and to be able to identify and highlight the similarities and the differences among them. The main aim of this study is to trace the history and development of those subcultures, and demonstrate that Casual subculture evolves from Mods and Skins in terms of clothing or music.



## Chapter 1

### **Mods and Other Coetaneous Subcultures: From Edwardian Era to British Mainstream**

At the beginning of the 50s, there were several cultural movements among the teenagers in Great Britain. Most of them wanted to achieve their own style and be distinguishable. These youngsters were interested in music and clothing mostly and they emerged after World War II while the first subcultures appeared in the city of London. Years later, these tribes spread northwards, into Manchester and Liverpool.

Before looking into the Mod tribe, it is indispensable to present a previous subculture that is directly connected with it; this movement was called the “Teddy Boys.” This term came from the Edwardian era (“Teddy” was the nickname used by the press to refer to the Territorial Army volunteers), just like the fashion that these teenagers followed. They used to dress like their grandparents did, somehow like a modern “dandy.” Phil Thorton in his work *Casuals* argues on the importance of Teddy Boys in the Casual subculture and its social impact, as well as the importance of fashion. He describes them as “Victorian Hooligans” (15), but criticizes the way that Teddy Boys were later reflected by society:

This wasn't the crepes-and-drapes pantomime look adopted later by cartoon Teds such as *Showaddywaddy*; Ted was a stylish and subversive return to classic tailoring. It was Italian suits and elegant overcoats, topped with the over-elaborate quiff, a cultural nod towards America and the rock 'n' roll explosion that Teds were most closely associated with. (14-15)

Indeed, the Teddy Boys were white people influenced by black culture, specially from the United States. The Jazz and RnB from the 20s and the 30s were also a direct influence on this movement. It could be said that these youngsters were the first “hipsters” of the United Kingdom. These white boys belonged to middle and high class and apart from those old genres, they were also influenced by the Rock and Roll of the decade of the 50s and in the field of literature, they have connections with the Beat Generation, like the subculture of values, the use of drugs, and the love of black music.

The social background and some characteristics of the subculture of the Teddy Boys are not like other tribes that will be described below, but they have some reminiscence in the importance of belonging to a collective, the meaning of fashion in their group, as well as music, drugs, and violence. Hebdige points to the social impact that, like rock ‘n roll, the beat, and the hipster, they had on conservative society:

This unprecedented convergence of black and white, so aggressively, so unashamedly proclaimed, attracted the inevitable controversy which centred on the predictable themes of race, sex, rebellion, etc., and which rapidly developed into a moral panic. (47)

After the Teddy Boys, the next important subculture that spread from the United Kingdom were the Mods, which made a greater impact on society due to the music that followed their members. British mainstream bands in the 60s were famous all over the world but the mod subculture was mostly followed in Great Britain and maybe even more British than the Teddy Boys which had a big influence from United States. Of course, Mods are somehow the evolution of Teddy Boys, sharing their origins in Black Music, but the development of Mods in the decade of the 60s was quick and popular. Phil Thornton

agrees that Mods followed patterns similar to the Teddy Boys but with different social background and a sense of originality: “Mod was a uniquely British movement and, more importantly, a working- class movement that devoted itself to traditional proletarian ethics: narcissism and hedonism, looking good and behaving bad. Sex and drugs and R&B” (16).

The fashion of the Mod subculture was also an important element for their members and new British brands of clothing such as Fred Perry or Ben Sherman started to make a huge impact between the youngsters of this decade. These are the main brands that Mods use to wear in those years and became very popular in this subculture.

The term “Mod” came from an abbreviation of the word “modern” that was the adjective that the press used to describe these youngsters while the subculture started growing. But not only the press gave the name of this tribe, but they also criticised them because of the way they dress and vexed them with homophobic descriptions. As Michelle R. Prather explains in *Pink, blues, blacks, and the Union Jack*:

By 1966, when the original Mods had long since moved on following the absorption of their elite clique’s fashion sense into mainstream, British newspapers continued to carry on about Mods’ lack of manliness, an assessment based on articles similar to the Town profile, as well as Mods’, Rockers’ and other teenage boy’s lucky avoidance of conscription. (77)

Bands such as The Rolling Stones, The Kinks, and mainly The Who catapulted this new tribe to fame. For instance, one of the most popular symbols of Mod subculture is the one that these rock bands used to have in their albums, a target with the colours of the British flag that was used in the aviation army. In the official webpage of the clothing brand

Ben Sherman (a famous British brand who became well-known because of their plaid shirts), which was used by these Mod teenagers and later used by Skin youngsters try to explain possible facts that agree the development and the origin of this popular symbol. In the web page of Ben Sherman, there is a blog that explain the story behind the target:

[T]he story goes that the Who's management persuaded the band to adopt the logo, adding it to t-shirts and album artwork as they went. As one of the biggest bands on the scene, it was only a matter of time before the target filtered down to the band's fans, and so the link between Mods and the target was made.

Due to the rapid increase in popularity, the Mod period only lasted the decade of the 60s and not even the whole decade. The late 60s started to follow different kinds of genres in terms of music with bands that today are consider as classic rock or heavy metal. But also, the direct influence of the United States with the hippie movement and the anti-war phase, fades out the Mod subculture until a brief recovery in the 90s because of Britpop. Another important fact was the next big revolution in terms of subculture which was the skin movement that in the next chapter will be explained. This transition between tribes is explained by Hebdige in *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*:

By 1966, the mod 'movement', subject to the concerted pressures of the media, market forces, and the familiar set of internal contradictions (between keeping private and going public, between staying young and growing up) was beginning to break down into a number of different scenes. Most noticeably, there was a polarization between the 'hard mods' and those overtly interested in fashion and the 60s 'look'. As Stan Cohen (1972b) observes 'the more extravagant mods . . . involved in the whole rhythm and blues, camp, Carnaby Street scene . . . [were] . . . merging into

the fashion-conscious hippies' and the incipient Underground, while the "hard mods" (wearing heavy boots, jeans with braces, short hair . . . jumpy . . . on the paranoic edge) began to turn away from the fancy arabesques of acid rock to champion ska, rocksteady and reggae.

But before moving on, which are the similarities and differences among Ted Boys, Mods and Skins? To answer this question, it is useful to remind of the audio-visual narrative called *Quadrophenia* (1979), directed by the British Franc Roddam and his best-known work. The story is located in London in 1964 where the two subcultures (Mods and Rockers) clashed; Mods and Rockers, and the main themes of this famous film are drugs, fashion, mod as a way of life, and the emotions of an entire generation who used to love going to parties in Brighton (they also used to go to the coastal town of Margate). The journey to Brighton and how these youngsters spread chaos through its streets is shown in the film: "Between 1964 and 1966, teenagers rioted in British seaside towns. Violence flared between Mods and Rockers, two youth movements that were connected in the press with drug-taking, vandalism and delinquency" (Tunzelmann, 18 Aug 2011).

The title of the film is the homonym of an opera rock album from The Who, which features prominently on the soundtrack of the film with songs such as "The Real Me" or "Bell Boy." The main character of this film is crazy about The Who and Mod subculture. He also rides a scooter, which is a characteristic of the Mob scene, and of course the abuse of drugs, sex, and clothing. His words in the film reflect paradigmatically what being a Mod is: "No, Kev, that's it. Look, I don't wanna be the same as everybody else. That's why I'm a Mod, see? I mean, you gotta be somebody, ain't ya, or you might as well jump in the sea and drown."

The film shows the problems of a working-class gang that follows the patterns of mod subcultures and treats situations of friendship and love. However, the plot is surrounded by violence against “Rockers” and authority, which is something this tribe had in common with other ones like Teddy Boys, Skins, or Casuals. Another similarity is the fashion theme, which have an important component in those subcultures. Sports brands such as Fred Perry, which was developed by a professional tennis player, are common in Mods, Skins, and Casuals. This brand is well-known among these subcultures, and they usually wear their polo shirts with the famous symbol of the brand which is a laurel.

Despite the relative ephemerality of these movements, both Teddy Boys and Mods left their trace on the following decades. This was specially so in the 70s, with the second wave of Teddy Boys due to shoegaze or glam music; and the most recently with that big genre in the United Kingdom which was Britpop during the 90s.

Two bands may be said to represent Britpop, and its musical and cultural influences in the 60s: Oasis and Blur. To be fair, Blur only have two records that can be consider pure Britpop, but for instance, Oasis was able to exploit this genre through the years with always the same structures. In the last chapter will be explained with every detail this kind of music due to the importance in “Casual” idiosyncrasy.

Just to point out the similarities in here, there is a good example in the frontman of the band Oasis, who is Liam Gallagher which is a mix between Mods and Casuals. He was not only influenced by 60s music but also about its fashion, so he developed his own brand of clothing and gave it the name of Pretty Green. The way Liam conceives style of music and clothing is best represented by his parkas, which his followers followed: “Liam’s

followers wear a clear-cut uniform worn by in his honour of parka/smock, tapered jeans, and suede desert boots” (Williams). This is a Mod way of dressing, but also mixed with the Casual fashion wearing Adidas or Novestar. As A. G. Williams puts it, wearing those clothes was “[a] safe and sure way of saying, I like music, clothes, and have a strong class identity.”





## **Chapter 2**

### **Ska-Punk and Skins Subculture:**

#### **Far-right Politics vs. Jamaican Influences**

Right after the period of impact of the Mod subculture, or even coetaneous to it, if we consider its last phase in the late 60s, the next subculture to have influenced the following British generations of youngsters appeared. This new subculture was Punk.

The most popular Punk wave, and which is best known to everyone, for sure belongs to the late 70s in America (represented by rock bands like Ramones, New York Dolls, Misfits, etc.) and in the United Kingdom, to the beginnings of the 80s (made famous by punk rock bands like The Clash, Sex Pistols, Buzzcocks, etc.). However, this subculture has its origin in Jamaica, the colony of the British Empire, from where it arrived at Great Britain: Ska-punk.

The term “ska-punk” refers to a Jamaican genre of music which became very popular in that Caribbean island. It influenced other genres such as reggae or mix styles like rap, electronic, or punk. Reggae itself developed a slower rhythm than ska, due to the climatic conditions in the Caribbean, and had its own religion, Rastafarianism, coming from Ethiopia. Along with Teddy Boys, reggae in turn influenced ska-punk with black culture, in this case, from the African continent.

Hall wrote that reggae addresses a community in transit through a series of retrospective frames (the Rastafarian movement, the back-to-Africa theme) which reverses the historical sequence of migrations (Africa-Jamaica-Great Britain): “Africa finds an echo

inside reggae in its distinctive percussion. The voice of Africa in the West Indies has traditionally been identified with insurrection and silenced wherever possible” (qtd. in Hebdige 31).

Several years later, Ska-punk and Reggae, especially Reggae, arrived in mainstream music with bands such as Bob Marley and the Wailers, Toots and the Maytals, or the Specials. These had a huge sway on the skin movement as well as some punk bands that were also very well-known during the following decades. For instance, The Specials named one of their album *Skinhead Girl*, whose namesake song speaks about a girl who follows the skin subculture with her head shaved: “There she was / Swinging down the high street, yeah / Hair cropped short, butts and perm.”

In fact, there is something noticeable in these new subcultures that in the earlier ones did not exist: the presence of women. For instance, in tribes like Teddy Boys or even Mods, women did not have a special or common place. They were gangs of youngsters. However, in ska-punk and in the skin subculture, they occupied an important space and followed almost the same patterns as men. For example, they used to dress the same way as men, had the same taste in terms of music, and socialized in the same places, such as pubs, events, or concerts.

Another example of the importance of women in these two tribes is the figure of Vivienne Westwood, who was a pioneer in the aesthetics and clothing of the punk subculture. She also was able to custom her own brand of clothing which was not only well known around these subcultures. Thornton wrote about this event in history of punk in his work:

London had its celebrity punks, its Kings Road tourist places, latter-day Beefeaters entertaining the camera-happy Yanks and Japanese with their mohicans and designer bondage gear, marketed and mass-produced by the clown prince and princess of punk, Malcolm McLaren and Vivienne Westwood. (18)

Westwood was able to unify this aesthetics in such way that New York and London punks were able to recognise themselves in the same subculture. She also was an influence in the way of dressing to one of the most popular punk bands in Great Britain, the Sex Pistols, due to her engagement with the manager of the band Malcom McLaren.

But of course, this was only a point of the influence of Ska and Skins subcultures on the Punk tribe, although Punk became far more popular, because it became worldwide in a short period of time. Another fact that they have in common was the violence that surrounded skins and punks. It was inherited from the Mods and rescued years later by the casual tribe, though relocated in the surroundings of a football pitch. The fact that tribe to which an individual belonged was easily recognizable through their clothing and aesthetics caused several fights between followers of these subcultures in Great Britain.

Just to give an example of the hate and violence that these subcultures exerted among them, there is an event that took place in London at the end of the decade of the 70s were skins and punks fight against each other, at a time when the city and the whole country was undergoing a period of rise of far-right politics. It was in 1979, when the American punk band The Misfits that was immerse in a tour in the United Kingdom was attacked after a concert by a gang of skins. The episode influenced the band in their next album and included a song called "London Dungeon," whose lyrics reflect the time they

spent in London and how bad their welcome was: “They called us walking corpses / Unholy living dead / They had to lock us up / Put us in their British hell . . . / . . . I don’t want to be here in your London Dungeon.”

The incident was described by one of the lead singer’s friends, Bobby Steele, in an interview for *Vice* of 1 October 2008. When Nick Gazin asked him about the lyrics of the song, he answered:

Those skinheads back there are talking about us... There are skinheads there and they’re planning on fighting us... Suddenly, bouncers from the Rainbow Theater ran out and grabbed and dragged him [Danzig] inside... I ran in and threw my bag of chips in one of the bouncers’ faces, and one of the others pinned me to the ground.

There is a myth about this event, and it is possible that those skinheads were not truly skinheads. Yet, there was a sense of danger and conflict with those tribes, just like earlier, with mods and rockers or even a decade later, with casuals. A contradiction that happened too with skins. They belong to the same tribe, but they fight because of external arguments: football team, politics, etc.

The Skin subculture replaced the Mod tribe at the beginning of the decade of the 70s. Obviously they had some points in common, but some crucial differences too. While Mods or Teddy Boys usually belong to middle or high class, the Skins had a lower-class or proletarian background and a Puritan and a Calvinist origin. This religious characteristic is not present in other tribes as much as this one. It is possible to relate this characteristic to the ska subculture because of the importance of religion and the Bible in Jamaica and in the Rastafarian religion.

Of course, the greatest difference between them was that Skins were whites and identified very much with their whiteness that later some of them became racists, in consonance with a trend of British politics that spread through the country. At the time, in Britain, working-class white boys coexisted with black boys (many of them from Jamaica or other British colonies) in the same proletarian neighbourhoods.

In those decades, especially the 60s and 70s, Britain lived under a huge impact of far-right parties. Parties such as The National Front (NF) or The British National Party (BNP) were not able to win any election, but they spread those politics through Great Britain and youth skins started to follow their far-right principles. This had consequences on the British youth.

They shared music and a new concept of tradition with earlier subcultures such as Teddy Boys or Mods. However, they were more politicised. On the one hand, they used the discourse of hate against immigrants and progressive ideas, reaching this young people and persuading them that the enemy of England was the different, the one who came from English old colonies mostly. On the other hand, they impress these subcultures that were hopeless in their daily day, that a change was possible and that they were important and crucial in that period of England; they were listened and felt important.

Skins and punks created several organizations that involve this far-right ideology along with music movements like Rock Against Communism. Ryan Shaffer in his book *Music, Youth and International Links in Post-War British Fascism* (2017) argues that, after those music movements in London, radical teenagers throughout the world have associated British fascist outreach by listening to a genre of music that was developed in Britain.

These radical parties started to use this youth to reach their goals at the elections but of course they failed because of their marginal popularity and the increase of violence. The response from the far left to those organizations that put together that white supremacy was also reflected in their own music movements, in this case, Rock Against Racism or the Anti-Nazi League.

The connection between Skins and Casuals with respect to this last point is remarkable, because of their politization and the use of violence. Hebdige argues that the skin subculture and casuals overlap in the late 70s and that the influence that the skinhead subculture had on casuals was so great that even many of these youngsters changed subcultures: the “collapse of the working-class week-end,” the “bourgeoisification” of football and leisure in general, and the sensitization of “consumer capitalism to a market available for a class-based product” were factors central to the decline of the skinhead subculture (58).

After these changes, the politics that casuals (which will be dealt with in the next chapter) followed were not organised in political parties, but around football firms. To be more precise, they keep following the same far right or far left ideologies but with a different goal, which was fighting for the respect of their football firm.

Clothing was their identity brand. Skinheads use to wear only British brands such as Fred Perry polos, Doc Martens boots, Ben Sherman shirts, Baracuta Harrington jackets (usually with Fraser tartan incorporated), and black braces. This way of dressing is almost the same as Mods (no braces or boots and the use of parkas) and very similar to Casuals (no braces or boots too and inclusion of foreign brands). It exemplifies the rejection that all

these different English subcultures made of middle-class ephemeral fashions that came from other parts of the world, such as Hippies or Rockers, and reinforced their “Englishness.” It may be said that the continuity and the coherence between these tribes in terms of fashion is the reason why, even today, these subcultures still survive among mass cultures, apart from Romantic ideas about past periods and the role of idolatry bands and films from different decades.

There is a cult film that perfectly reflects this period of skinheads in the United Kingdom: *This is England* (2006). This film is directed by Shane Meadows, also creator of *Somers Town* (2008) and *The Virtues* (2019), who is highly influenced by the British Realism of the film director Ken Loach, known through works like *Looking for Eric* (2009) and *I, Daniel Blake* (2016). *This is England* is formed by the film of 2006 and by the Channel 4 series (2010-2015) that completes the whole decade of the 80s. The full-length film as well as the TV series received several BAFTA awards.

The work is autobiographical and covers the period of 1983 to 1990 in the Midlands city of Nottingham. It has a strong political tone and perfectly reflects the suburbs of the city. The main characters are formed by youngsters that belong to a gang of skinheads and the action is developed through their day-to-day. The plot revolves around the extreme nationalism that young people, in this case, skinheads, are following in the 80s, just after the Falklands War that took away many British and Argentinian lives during the Margaret Thatcher term. There is much racism featured in the film which is represented by these white boys against immigrants.

The Skinhead subculture is represented by its characters and the way they look, but also by the amazing soundtrack that passes thorough Reggae, Ska, and Punk. The clothing brands that the film shows are the same ones that they used to wear due to a good election in wardrobe and make-up characterisation.

The climax of the film and the final moral message shows the viewer a beautiful scene where the youngest boy of the gang is now doubting whether to be a far-right skin; he is no more brainwashed and throws the English flag to the sea. This action symbolises all the hate this young boy had and how he had to hide himself under some immoral thoughts.



## Chapter 3

### The Casual Subculture: Football Joins Fashion

At the end of the decade of the 70s, there were important changes in British terraces due to football hooliganism and new waves of music. The changes in terms of music genres due to the involvement of artists in this subculture plus the new musical movements in the United Kingdom such as “Madchester” or the appearance of Britpop, catapulted this tribe and cover the previous one. The third culture that I will study here, the Casual subculture, was the result of the evolution of skins in a different context: football.

Cass Pennant, an ex-member of the Inter City Firm, one of the most violent hooligan firms in England who supported West Ham United, wrote about this period in his work *Casuals* (2011), which, years later, became a film produced by Pennant himself. During an interview in the podcast *Vivid Riot* in 2012, he explained his first contact with the casuals and the direct links they held with Mods, Skinheads and earlier subcultures:

The Casuals were a terrace phenomenon, they incubated in and around football grounds, so it was predominantly a working-class thing and I really became aware of it around 1980/81. The people who became those first Casuals had been Mods, and skinheads, and Glory Boys who I knew. It grew out of other working-class cults... The papers were still going on about skinheads for years after the real terrace hooligans had moved on.

In the 1980s, football was a worldwide phenomenon and English teams were successful throughout Europe with very competitive squads such as Liverpool FC or Manchester United. The rivalry between English teams was the rivalry between the

different communities each represented: cities, neighbourhoods, or even counties (the Leeds United vs Manchester United matches were called the “Roses rivalry” due to the War of the Roses between Yorkshire and Lancashire). This spread a parallel sense of competition among their respective fans, for whom not only was the result of the game important, but also the ambience in the stadium terraces and streets, usually surrounded by pubs. Because of the sense of community which they acquired with their teams and their cities, as well as the anger that they as working-class people felt, these youngsters started to join what nowadays is called “hooligan firms.”

Like with their predecessors (Mods, Skins), violence was an important characteristic in those fanbases. The way of dressing became very important to these working-class youngsters, at a time when the police abuse was huge. They started to dress well-known brands of clothing to be able to look as similar as possible to the other. They stopped wearing scarfs or jerseys with their football team colours. The aim was to avoid the authorities, as well as being identified by their rival’s fans. In 1993, Richard Giulianotti described this phenomenon of the rise of a ‘casual’ hooligan style in “Avenues of Contestation”:

The stylised absence of club colours and motifs has been most graphically illustrated by the ‘soccer casual’ hooligan style. This emphasises the wearing of quality leisure and sportswear. The style was dominant among young male fan groups in the early 1980s and is now conventional among most British supporter groups. (3)

The main expensive brands they used to wear in that period were mostly British and there are almost the same brands that Mods or skins used to wear. These were, for example,

Fred Perry, Ben Sherman, Burberry, Barbour, or Hackett. Of course, these brands are still used by Casuals, but at the beginning of the 80s, they added the Italian and French brands that they discovered during the European Cup. In those days, English football was at a tremendous level and won several European trophies with teams like Aston Villa (Birmingham), Nottingham Forest, or Liverpool FC. As a consequence, Hooligan firms used to travel through Europe supporting its teams, so they started to buy or even robbed in expensive boutiques. Brands like Lacoste, Ralph Lauren, Sergio Tacchini, or Fila, which were difficult or impossible to find in the United Kingdom, became popular in the terraces. Those supporters that could not follow their small team through Europe, but used to go on vacation to Italy, Spain, or France, bought them there.

As mentioned earlier, their new outfit with these expensive brands was very useful between casuals to become invisible to the police, just like a camouflage. At the same time, these football matches were usually played during the weekend, Sundays mostly. These means that they were able to camouflage among other people who on that day dressed good clothes to attend Church. Another crucial element was the appearance of the bucket hat when the authorities started to use CCTV cameras around the stadiums.

Later on, in the mid/late 80s, when the subculture was at its prime, they added to their expensive outfits brands that were related to sport clothing and sneakers such as Reebok (United Kingdom), Adidas Originals and Puma (Germany), or Diadora and Emporio Armani (Italy).

Besides fashion, music was a significant important element for casuals. They gave it the same importance that the previous subcultures had given them. In this case, Casual

subculture was interested in the post-punk wave that hit the United Kingdom and the United States at the end of the 70s and the beginning of the 80s.

Post-punk is the evolution of punk and electronic music, mixed in some way with New Wave. This rock music was raw, but it could also be danceable at the discos or pubs. The main reason this genre became popular resides in the unprofessional and home-made background that it used to have, just the same as punk music. The main difference is that it was popular in every working-class neighbourhood and that everyone could join a band along with their mates. They used to play in garages, and they were self-taught.

Bands such as Talking Heads, Joy Division, The Cure, or Gang of Four were famous around Casuals, who in the terraces used some of their songs to support their teams. For instance, the well-known song by Joy Division “Love Will Tear Us Apart” is a very popular chant in Ellan Road, the home ground of Leeds United.

In terms of music diversity, the Casual subculture is very rich. They used to be interested in the music of the 70s, punk, disco, New Wave, and post-punk, but they were also interested in the music of the 60s, just like the Mods. The casual tribe developed a taste in music that changed every decade but retained every genre that remained popular among the fans. That is why they can listen to Iggy Pop (The Stooges) from the 60s or Arctic Monkeys, which are popular nowadays. The bible of casual culture, written by Phil Thornton, explains this diversity:

They had the Bowie lot on one side and started playing punk on the other side. I wore plastic sandals and a mohair jumper. The music was fantastic, all sorts of punk classics like

[The Damned's] "New Rose", mixed with Bowie's "Heroes", The Normal's "Warm Leatherette", Dillinger's "Cocaine in My Brain". It felt like something was happening, like it was New York.

Another important link that the Casuals have with music is that the members of those bands are usually involved with some football teams. They attended football matches and even played concerts in their team's stadium to support them. That involvement with their clubs and with the football culture made the band members adopt the Casual way of dressing. In this way, they contributed to make this tribe more popular and make it international little by little. Some bands even wrote songs about this football subculture like the punk band Cockney Rejects or the always controversial Pete Doherty, first in "War on the Terraces" by Cockney Rejects (1981): "The seats and the stands are bare / But you remember, not long ago / All the times that we battled there / The sun, it shines right on the gutter"; then, in "Hooligans on E" by The Libertines (2005): "Hooligans on E / Meat pies and Burberry / And Aquascutum / If you're lucky."

The sensationalist press made a strong impact on this tribe. The bad publicity that circulated in them affected this subculture in England but also worldwide. However, because the national football team of England was followed by these hooligans during the international Cups, this subculture was also reported as dangerous by the international press. The violent events shock different brands of clothing that were not happy that these individuals wore their clothes. The result was an increase of the price of their items, so that the working-class fans could not afford to wear them. In the web page of *Campaign Live* (10 September 2004) they made echo of a cancellation of a product of an important brand due to hooligan incidents:

Burberry axes baseball cap due to football hooligan links . . . The cap has become favoured by professional hooligans such as Cardiff City's 'Soul Crew,' whose favoured 'uniform' of Burberry and Aquascutum clothes have become as distinctive as those of the police who arrest them . . . The label was called into disrepute last year when football hooligans calling themselves 'The Burberry Boys' ran riot at the England v Turkey match in Sunderland, attacking a coach full of Turkish fans.

Those brands were not only condemning hooligans or Casuals, but also other tribes that used their clothes such as teenager fans of 80s and 90s rap music (the Bling Bling subculture), or the charvers and scallies who used to wear branded sportswear by important designers. They were also influenced by the black culture and lived in working-class neighbourhoods. In 18 August 2018, the *Daily Mail* published an article about this that reflects that the chavs did not survive like the Casuals, explaining that Burberry is also happy now not to be involved with those tribes, with the headliner: "Burberry finally shakes off its 'chav check' reputation as millennials re-embrace the iconic print."

The film industry echoed the increase in popularity of the Casual subculture, both in documentaries and films. Some became very famous. They reflected the subculture from different points of view. Many were adaptations from autobiographies by authors that were involve in hooliganism and with casual tribes. However, others were interested in the music and cultural movements that were connected with the tribe. A great example is the film *Spike Island* (2012), directed by Mat Whitecross. It dealt with the movement called "Madchester," which started in Manchester at the end of the 80s and reached its peak of popularity after the publication of the first album of The Stone Roses. This movement was entirely about music, but the aesthetics were directly influenced by casual subculture.

The plot is about a group of teenagers from the suburbs of Manchester whose only aim is to be like their idols, for example, Ian Brown, also known as “Monkey Man,” the leader and frontman of their favourite band, The Stone Roses. These youngsters formed a garage band in honour of their idols and their only desire is to go to a concert of their favourite band in Spike Island in the summer. The film reflects the way they used to dress in the late 80s, especially influenced by casuals. The main characters wear Adidas Originals jackets and sneakers, as well as the famous bucket hats that were popular among firms and musicians like Brown or Liam Gallagher later in the 90s. This film also describes the struggles of teenagers that belong to deprived neighbourhoods in industrial cities.

The music and the aesthetics of Whitecross’s work clearly represent the phenomenon of Madchester and its link to casual subculture. The Stone Roses were deeply involved in football, as their members were supporters of Manchester United and were also well-known of being representatives of casual clothing. In fact, this band has some of the most important songs related to casual subculture. Their “Waterfall” can be sung by the fans of Hibernian FC (Edinburgh) and “I Wanna be Adored” is also very popular in the terraces.

This last song became more widely known because of the film *Green Street Hooligans* (2005), directed by Lexi Alexander. It shows the day-to-day life of the Inter City Firm. In the film, brands like Stone Island or Adidas Originals are the wardrobe of the characters and were popularised by the success of the film internationally. The film portrays the power of friendship and the importance of family, but also shows xenophobe in terms of religion and country of origin.

Recently, ex-member of ICF Cass Pennant explained that he never suffered racism in his own firm and that other firms such as the Zulus of Birmingham City used to have mixed-race members (*Vivid Riot*). It seems, however, that the reality was that the white power that skinheads used to defend was transmitted to football terraces and almost every firm in England have or used to have racism, as well as misogynistic behavior and homophobia.

Moving forward, during the 1990s, when Casual subculture and hooliganism was at its peak, new brands joined the old ones. Brands like Weekend Offender, Peaceful Hooligan, or Pretty Green became popular. This last one was introduced by Liam Gallagher, who started to develop it. The figure of Gallagher was really important in making the casual subculture more visible.

Gallagher was the most recognisable frontman during the 90s in England due to the band he formed with his brother Noel. The band, Oasis, have sold more than a hundred million copies of their albums. After this explosion of fame, Casual trends became more mainstream and its relation with football, which was mainstream too, and Britpop. They formed an indivisible bond that became popular in the media and in the pop culture. The other band that had a huge success during the 90s was Blur who also had a great impact in casual subculture due to its members as being fans of Chelsea FC and for wearing casual brands such as Fred Perry or Stone Island during its concerts.

The article by Ramón Spaaij “Football Hooliganism as a Transnational Phenomenon” includes one reflection by Steve Redhead about the triumph of casual subculture which is indeed supported by the fame of football and pop music (417). Here is



a change in the casual structure; because of its popularity, it became more accessible among youngsters so that is why during the 2000s casual tribe still surviving.

The beginning of the new millennium continued to publish films (*Diary of a Hooligan*, in 2004), some based on autobiographical novels (*Bloody Casuals*, 1989, and *Awaydays*, in 1998). In them the casual subculture is presented in a nostalgic way by people who were its true followers in the 80s or 90s. However, in terms of music, there was a revival caused by the decadence of Britpop. New bands revisiting the 60s and 70s music have begun a new wave of post-punk and garage rock.

These are bands such as The Libertines, The Strokes, Interpol, or Arctic Monkeys, which were able to mix the New York rock sound with the English culture in their lyrics. Pete Doherty, the frontman and leader of The Libertines and eventually later of Babyshambles, is an example of this new era of casual tribe. His truly love for Queens Park Rangers FC (always shows the jersey at his concerts) and for fashion (including his romance with Kate Moss) made him a window display for brands such as Burberry, which had a collection with Moss until they have several problems with drugs and the brand broke the contract.

Nowadays, the casual tribe is still alive in almost every terrace of Europe and has directly influenced new styles of clothing in the millennial generation, but of course with different contexts and arts. Now, this community that was created in Britain in the 80s, is now big throughout Europe and it now English casuals that are receiving feedback from the south or the east of the continent, as described by Spaaij:

This diffusion of cultural practices also occurred in a reverse direction, as for example seen in the introduction into British fan culture of Continental designer-clothing (casual) styles in the early 1980s. Furthermore, the ultra subcultures dominant in countries such as Italy, Spain and parts of France have come to influence supporter groups in northern Europe, with similar fan groups being formed, to varying extents, in countries such as Germany, Austria, the Netherlands and parts of Scandinavia. (9)

To conclude, after having seen the main similarities and differences they have, it is important to highlight how important the development of these tribes was for society in general, fashion, music, or other arts, as well as the sense of Englishness that they spread across Europe until they themselves received their feedback from the continent.

## Conclusion

### From Teddy Boys to Casuals

This BA Dissertation has revised the subcultures that British youngsters followed throughout the second half of the twentieth century (above all, the Mods, Skins, and Casuals), in order to identify the principal connections among them. It has traced their development from the 1960s to the 1990s and described how the cult for clothing was their most common link and how music, film, and football have been crucial in spreading Casual fashion and clothing styles internationally.

Everything started with the Teddy Boys in the decade of the 1950s, with their sense of Englishness inherited from their grandparents of the Edwardian age and their love for Jazz and Rock and Roll music. This is the starting line of the next generation and their subculture. First, their Englishness and their high class clothing style that every British youth culture tribe in the future followed, and second, their involvement and love for music that the Teddy Boys used to have.

Next came the Mods in the 1960s. This new subculture was influenced directly by their predecessors and were also interested in clothing and in music. This tribe became more popular because of bands such as The Who and films like *Quadrophenia* (1979), and they had their own symbols and idols. The Mods introduced well known clothing brands such as Fred Perry and Ben Sherman, that later on were dressed by the future subcultures. Nevertheless, their importance lies in that they left two new traits of great importance for their successors. On the one hand, their belonging exclusively to the working-class neighbourhoods, like the Skins in later years; on the other hand, there became known for

their use of violence and drugs, which is also characteristic of Skins and Casuals.

Because of that, this subculture was always criticised by the press. This did not stop them from being internationally known. Thanks to music bands like Blur or Oasis, the tribe became mainstream, to disappear in the late 1980s before being reborn during the mid 90s because of Britpop and its direct influences on characters such as Liam Gallagher, who described himself both as a Mod and as a Casual.

After the dissolution of Mod subculture, a new tribe was born in the United Kingdom in the 70s: the Skins. At the beginning, this subculture, like the Teddy Boys, was interested in black culture from Jamaica. Ska and Punk were the main genres that this subculture used to follow. They had an international impact, as can be seen in the New York Punk scene years later. As for clothing, Skins inherited the love for British brands such as Fred Perry and Ben Sherman that Mods had before them. However, they added elements that could differentiate from them like Dr. Martens boots or braces on their shirts. The term 'Skinhead' came from the look they had after having shaved their heads. Eventually they also used to tattoo their face.

Like Mods, Skins were also popular for being extremely violent and apart from the use of violence they were also known for the support of the British far-right parties such as the National Front. This element of being interested in politics was new among these subcultures and had a new impact in Casual subculture, just like their connection to the world of football. At the end of the decade of the 70s, many Skins started to change their meeting points to football stadiums, standing in the terraces to support their club.

The Casual subculture is an evolution of Skins. As Cass Pennant had described, at the beginning, the Casual subculture were only Skins supporting their local team. Their

connection is also noticeable in the fashion they wore, with also Fred Perry as a prominent brand around the stadiums. However, Casuals started wearing high class brands like Lacoste or Sergio Tachinni, bought on the continent during the international football cups. They were also known for their use of violence (hooliganism) and wearing this kind of clothes on a Sunday morning was very useful to remain unnoticed, to be able to avoid the police authorities. The highest peak of popularity of casual subculture was at the end of the 80s, with those iconic photos of the supporters on the terraces wearing Adidas Originals, until the use of CCTV cameras made the tribe start to decline.

Music for them was also important. Movements such as Madchester or genres like Britpop reinforced the subculture far from the stadiums. Fans wore bucket hats not only on the terraces but in the concerts of The Stone Roses, Oasis, or Blur. These bands of the 1990s onwards, for example, The Libertines, used to wear Casual clothing in their concerts and in their day-to-day lives, and in that way the members of the tribe were influenced by their music idols, who used to wear expensive brands such as Burberry or Ralph Lauren.

To conclude, there are many aspects that reinforce the argument that these subcultures are connected in many fields. The most important seem to be that sense of Englishness developed through their wearing of expensive brands and the importance of music, which obey to external elements that go from political to sociological factors.

The context or the place can be different: pubs, concerts, raves, terraces, or working-class neighbourhoods, but their clothing style, although distinct of each tribe, always kept noticeable similarities.



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