Relationship Among Factors Which Contribute to the Probability of Spectator Violence at Aggressive-Competitive Sporting Events

Alison Osinski

1981

DISSERTATION SUMMARY

A Predictive Equation for Determining the Probability of Spectator Violence at Aggressive-Competitve Sporting Events

The purpose of this study is to show that the overt aggressive behavior of sport spectators can be predicted and therefore controlled. The interrelationships of contributing factors which lead to spectator violence will be examined, and from this correlation, an equation for determining the probability of the occurrence of violent behavior at an aggressive competitve sporting event (in this case, ice hockey) will be developed.

It is hypothesized that aggressive behavior is learned through visual and auditory social contact, and is a function of the correlation among a covert aggressive personality and various contributory hostility provoking factors.

ABSTRACT

Alison Osinski, Doctor of Philosophy, 1981

Title of Dissertation: Relationship Among Factors Which Contribute to the Probability of Spectator Violence at Aggressive-Competitive Sporting Events

Dissertation directed by: Dr. Burris F. Husman
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In order to identify interrelationships among contributing factors which lead to the occurrence of sport spectator violence, a field study was conducted using professional ice hockey fans. Subjects were 105 paying spectators attending a regular season National Hockey League game between the Washington Capitals and Hartford Whalers.

After being seated, subjects were approached by trained research assistants and asked to participate in the study. Volunteers were then given a pre game packet to complete, consisting of the Zuckerman and Lubin Multiple Affect Adjective Check List (MAACL), the Buss-Durkee Hostility-Guilt Inventory, an author designed demographic informational questionnaire, an identification number, direction sheet, and consent form.

During the competition, research assistants observing five subjects each, recorded displays of overt aggressive behavior using Sysler's Spectator Activity Rating Scale (adapted for ice hockey). Observed behaviors for which points were awarded included: clapping hands, cheering or yelling, standing up, jumping up and down, forceful arm movements, fighting, using a noise maker, and throwing objects toward the rink.

Frequency scores were tabulated for each of the three periods and for twelve, five minute, intervals.

Immediately following the game, the MAACL was readministered, along with a second short questionnaire.

In order to determine the extent of competitive violence, the hockey game was filmed. The game film was later divided into twelve, five minute, segments corresponding to the observed spectator behavior time intervals. Five judges watching the videotaped TV replay recorded the frequency of predetermined aggressive game behaviors.

In all, 187 informational variables were collected on each subject. The relationship of personality traits and states, demographic information, level of interest or degree of involvement, and game violence to spectator aggression was assesses. Data was coded and analyzed using BMD computer programs P1D--Simple Data Decsription, P2V--ANOVA, and P6M--Canonical Correlation.

Significant finding at the .05 level suggested the following relationships among factors:

1. The higher the observed aggressive behavior of spectators: the higher their predicted attendance at '80-'81 season NHL hockey games, the closer they sat to the ice during the game, the higher their attendance at '79-'80 season NHL games, the more likely they were to be rooting for the home team, the shorter the distance they traveled from home to attend the game, the more acquaintances they attended the game with, and, the lower their guilt resulting from the display

of aggression.

2. Male subjects, subjects attending the game with a number of acquaintences, and subjects with lower educational levels: traveled farther to attend the game, were more likely to be rooting for the visiting team, and were sitting a greater distance from the ice.

3. Male subjects and those who snacked a great deal during the game: participate regularly in both aggressive and nonaggressive team and individual/dual sports, had a lower level of attendance during the '79-'80 season and lower predicted level of attendance at '80-'81 NHL hockey games, watched nonaggressive sporting events on TV, and were sitting a greater distance from the ice.

4. Older subjects and those with higher income levels: were more likely to be attending the game because of having free, discount, group or season tickets; did not have a bet placed on the outcome of the game, and were less likely to participate regularly in aggressive sports.

5. Subjects with low assaultive behavior scores, low suspicion scores, and high post game anxiety: participated regularly in nonaggressive and individual/dual sports, preferred the uniforms of the visiting team, and were more likely to have played hockey themselves.

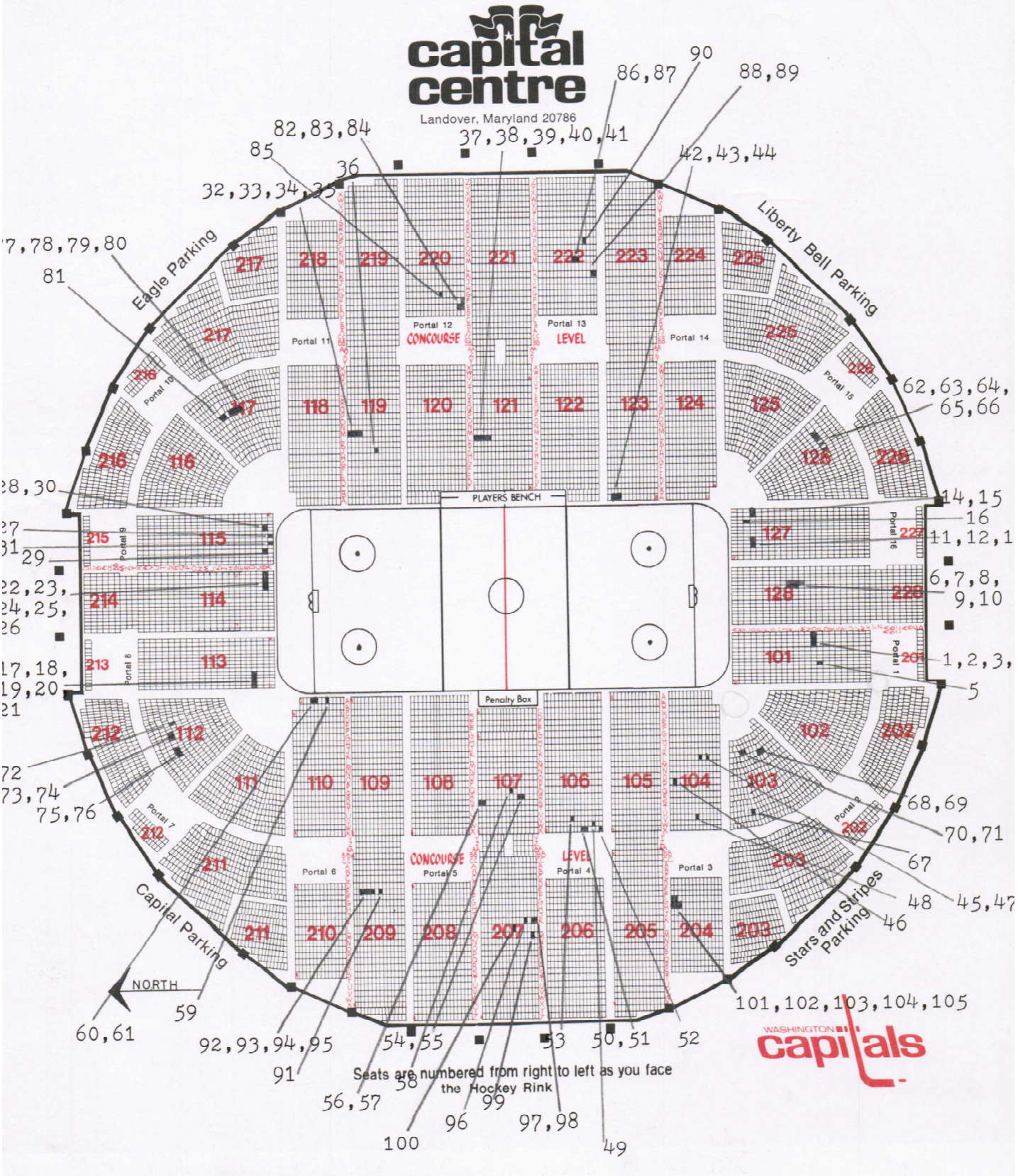
6. Within periods, spectator aggression reflected game violence, but from beginning to end of the game, violence increased while displays of spectator aggression decreased.

It was concluded that the aggressive behavior of sport

spectators is a learned response to auditory and visual stimuli, and a function of the correlation among covert aggressive personality traits, a number of demographic factors, and level of interest and involvement in sport. Serious incidents of sport spectator violence result when aggressive behavioral responses influenced by factors identified in this study get out of control. Aggressive behavior combined with panic or amplified by mob behavior may result in personal injury, destruction of property, or mortal danger.

Based on findings of this study, recommendations and techniques of spectator control are suggested. It was determined however, that spectator violence will continue to occur as long as the display of aggressive behavior is allowed and encouraged as an acceptable normative response in the relaxed and less inhibitive atmosphere of the arena.

HOCKEY
SEATING PLAN AT




WASHINGTON
capitals
VS.
HARTFORD
SUN., JAN. 18, 1981 - 7:05 P. M.
WORKING
PRESS
211
capital centre
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C 22
SUN., JAN. 18, 1981
7:05 P. M.
CAPITALS VS. HARTFORD
211

APPROVAL SHEET

Title of Dissertion: Relationship Among Factors Which Contribute to the Probability of Spectator Violence at Aggressive-Competitive Sporting Events

Name of Candidate: Alison Osinski
Doctor of Philosophy, 1981

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Burris F. Husman
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Date Approved: Dec. 9, 1981

ABSTRACT

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Title of Dissertation: Relationship Among Factors Which Contribute to the Probability of Spectator Violence at Aggressive-Competitive Sporting Events

Dissertation directed by: Dr. Burris F. Husman
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In order to identify interrelationships among factors which contribute to the occurrence of spectator violence, a field study was conducted using NHL hockey fans.

Subjects completed pre and post game inventories, including the Zuckerman and Lubin Multiple Affect Adjective Check List (MAACL), the Buss-Durkee Hostility-Guilt Inventory, and author-designed demographic informational questionnaires.

During the competition, trained research assistants recorded displays of overt aggressive behavior using Sysler's Spectator Activity Rating Scale (adapted for ice hockey). A videotaped replay of the contest was also judged for frequency of game violence.

The relationship of spectator aggression to personality states and traits, demographic information, sport interest and involvement, and game violence was assessed. Descriptive statistics, ANOVA tables, and canonical correlations were generated.

RELATIONSHIP AMONG FACTORS WHICH CONTRIBUTE TO THE PROBABILITY OF SPECTATOR VIOLENCE AT AGGRESSIVE-COMPETITIVE SPORTING EVENTS

by

Alison Osinski

Dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of the University of Maryland in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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"I went to a fight the other night
and a hockey game broke out."

Rodney Dangerfield

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