

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Spectator violence at competitive sporting events is not a new problem, but the frequency and intensity of violent disruption continues to increase. The enthusiastic encouragement and support of spectators is highly sought, but open displays of pent-up hostile feelings and overt excessively aggressive behaviors are not. It is recognized that a spectator who creates a public disturbance may trigger the start of an event which may eventually erupt into full scale mob violence.

There seems to be a need for investigative field research to explore the relationship among factors which, when taken together, often contribute to the development of aggressive behavior and the eventual display of spectator violence. Recognition of these factors would also create the option of change or control by team and/or facilities management. Because of the increased growth in popularity of spectator sports and resultant increase in numbers of spectators in attendance at sporting events, it would seem advantageous to understand the effect of athletic competition on the emotional reactions of spectators. Some aggression eliciting factors could be eliminated or altered, thereby preventing altogether, or at least quelling, a disturbance before it explodes into a major riot.

### Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this research is to identify and examine the correlation among contributing factors leading to a probable display of spectator violence at an aggressive competitive sporting event.

This study will attempt to show that the overt aggressive behavior of sport spectators can be predicted, to a degree, in that it is a behavior learned through social contact, demonstrated in collective behavior, and a function of the correlation among a covert aggressive personality, demographic characteristics, level of interest or degree of involvement in sport, and other various contributory hostility provoking factors.

### Hypotheses

#### Research Hypothesis

Interrelationships among factors which contribute to the occurrence of sport spectator violence can be identified. Spectators who watch an aggressive-competitive sporting event and who possess these factors will display more instances of overt aggressive behavior than those spectators who do not.

#### Statistical Hypothesis

##### Null Hypothesis

The hypothesis under scrutiny in this study states that differences in levels of displayed aggression between spectators who do and do not possess certain

factors are either due to the observation of game violence itself, or chance. Since it is logically impossible to prove this statement true, and differences between means due to a true difference or to error cannot be distinguished, limits or boundaries will be imposed to prove the logic. The null hypothesis will be rejected if the probability of the differences being due to chance is less than 5 in 100.

#### Alternative Hypothesis

Alternatively, the tenable hypothesis if the null hypothesis is found to be false, states that differences in levels of displayed aggression in spectators are due to a correlation among several factors, including covert aggressive personality traits, a number of demographic variables, and level of interest or involvement in sport. Frequency of displays of aggressive spectator behavior are not directly related to frequency of game violence.

#### Limitations

Restrictive weaknesses, conditions or stipulations of this study include: (1) the use of volunteers as subjects; (2) the use of volunteer workers as inventory distributors and observers; (3) the inability to control or manipulate game violence or outcome; and (4) problems associated with observation techniques.

Use of volunteer subjects may bias the sample by personality type. Highly aggressive, extremely shy, or



those perspective subjects totally absorbed in the competition may not choose to volunteer to participate in the first place. Subjects had no real incentive to volunteer, complete the questionnaire and inventories, remain in their same seats throughout the entire game, or remain through the end of the game to fill out the post-game questionnaire and checklist. Some subjects might feel apprehensive about revealing large amounts of personal information about themselves.

Inventory distributors and observers received both written and oral instructions on procedures and took part in practice sessions to test reliability of their observation techniques, but training was still somewhat limited. Although inventory distributors were reminded and made an effort to avoid systematic selection of subjects, subjects who appeared less threatening may still have been approached. Also, many observers felt their job tedious and difficult to fight the urge to turn around and watch the game action during an exciting play rather than continuing to observe the spectators.

Lack of control over competitive behavior and observed actions, along with the inability to pre-determine game statistics and results, limited experimenter control over the dependent variable. It simply was not possible to interfere in professional league competition.



A number of problems arose with observational techniques due to the nature of field research conducted in a "real game" situation. Some spectators were aware of the fact that they were being observed and their resultant behavior may have been affected. Observers were not always seated inconspicuously. It was necessary for observers to watch their subjects from various distances and positions. Not all observers had an equally advantageous view of their subjects. For instance, darkness inhibited observation the farther from the lighted ice rink a subject sat.

#### Delimitations

Analysis of research was confined to those topics relating to personality, demographics, level of interest or involvement in sport, observed aggressive spectator behavior, and game violence. Collection of research data was narrowed down to one NHL hockey game between the Washington Capitals and the Hartford Whalers. Boundary limits were placed on age of subjects. Only adults were selected as subjects. Specific seating sections were assigned to inventory distributors so subjects could be randomly selected but systematically represented.

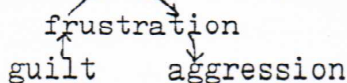
### Terminology

1. AFFECT - emotions, feelings, or moods which are measured by means of verbal or written responses
2. AGGRESSION - overt act which has the potential to psychologically or physically injure

(a) Defined by theory:

(1) INSTINCTUAL (CATHARSIS) (Freud, Lorenz, Storr) - appears naturally in humans and is closely related to motivation, thanatos turned outward by the libido against others to avoid self-destruction; or innate drive to defend personal territory; an outlet, release or discharge of pent-up feelings through an emotional display

(2) CIRCULAR (FRUSTRATION-AGGRESSION) (Dollard, Doob, Miller, modified by Berkowitz) - circular theory, blocking or thwarting of goal directed behavior causing frustration which causes aggression which results in guilt which again causes frustration mostly learned.



(3) SOCIAL LEARNING (Bandura) - a learned behavior acquired and maintained by means of reinforcement and conditioning; experiences, rather than instincts or drives, determine situations, frequencies, forms, and targets of aggression (Bredemeier, 1978)

(b) Classified by direction of aggression:

(1) EXTRAPUNITIVE - aggression directed outward at another

(2) IMPUNITIVE - reaction which denies or minimizes frustration; evades, glosses over or condones responsibility

(3) INTRAPUNITIVE - aggression directed inward at one's self (e.g. regression, displacement, repression), and by primary reinforcement sought through the aggressive act



(c) Classified by goal of the aggression:

(1) INSTRUMENTAL - aggressive (assertive) behavior to reach some goal or reward without intent to harm or injure

(2) REACTIVE (GOAL) - aggressive behavior with intent to harm someone, reinforced by anger or resentment

3. AGGRESSIVENESS - habitual tendency to display hostility; vigorous pursuit of a goal; self-assertiveness
4. ASSERTIVENESS - display of rule or norm permitted forceful, bold, or goal directed behaviors which may or may not involve the intent to harm or injure
5. BEHAVIOR - internal and external responses of an individual to stimuli

COVERT BEHAVIOR - hidden or concealed behavior which cannot be directly observed without the use of instruments (e.g. thoughts, feelings, physiological reactions)

OVERT BEHAVIOR - behavior which is readily observable without the aid of instruments

6. CATHARSIS - release of tensions or pressures
7. FANATIC (FAN) - one who has an attitude of, or displays excessive zeal for, a point of view or cause
8. FRUSTRATION - blocking or thwarting of goal directed behavior
9. HOSTILITY - tendency to wish to inflict harm on or to feel anger towards others
10. TRAIT - consistent biological characteristic or persistent behavior pattern revealed or displayed in a wide range of circumstances
11. VIOLENCE - extreme or unnecessary use of force in violation of the normative order (physical, verbal or nonverbal, property destruction, retaliatory vengeance, self-destruction)

(Chaplin, 1975; Silva, 1980)