

Attitudes and the Instrumental Value of Violence in Hockey: A Test of the Occupational Subculture of Violence Thesis¹

Sherry L. Golding, School of Recreation, Physical, and Health Education, Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia B3H 3J5

INTRODUCTION

Violence attracts considerable attention in society. It is a complex phenomenon, playing significant roles in both social control and social demise. It exists in a variety of forms and contexts, and consequently, no one definition, explanation, or theory can encompass its meaning. An age old argument exists as to whether or not violence is best explained as innate or as a learned behaviour. This study is a test of the Occupational Subculture of Violence Thesis. This theory stipulates that people will adopt and adhere to specific violent behaviours in order to gain and maintain acceptance and membership in an occupational setting. The theory was tested by examining attitudes towards violence, including the acceptance of violence and beliefs about the instrumental nature of violence, among male hockey players.

METHODS

One hundred and thirty-two high school hockey players from a maritime high school hockey league were asked to be involved in the study. Fifty-four players consented to be participants for a return rate of 40.9%. A questionnaire was completed by these players during a meeting held in their respective schools, administered by a male faculty member.

The instrument was designed specifically for this study. It contained written descriptions of ten scenarios depicting violent behaviours frequently found in ice hockey. Two scenarios were developed for each of five behaviours: (1) high-sticking, (2) cross-checking, (3) fighting, (4) pushing from behind, and (5) spearing. For each type of behaviour, one of the scenarios indicated a situation involving emotions, such as anger or frustration, while the other depicted instrumental value as the motivating force behind the violence.

After reading each scenario, players were asked to indicate on a Likert-type scale their response to the statement "I think what player B did is acceptable". This was the acceptance of violence scale. They were then asked to do the same for the statements "I think that player B is just doing his job" and "I think that what player B did will help his team win". Responses from these two scales were used to measure the perceived instrumental value of hockey violence. Also, penalty and point averages were tabulated for each responding hockey player, using official league records.

The data were analyzed in the following ways. First, the relationship between acceptance and the perception of instrumental value was examined. Second, the variables of position, penalty averages, point averages, and injury history were tested in order to determine whether any of these factors were related to acceptance of violence. Third, results were analyzed to discover the extent to which illegitimate violence is linked to major injuries, according to players' recall of events.

¹ Winner of the Marion Miller Award.

RESULTS

A very strong relationship was found between acceptance and the instrumental "job" variable ($r = 0.96$; $n = 54$), while a strong relationship was found between acceptance and the instrumental "win" variable ($r = 0.40$; $n=54$).

In examining the variables of position, point averages, penalty averages, and injury history, nothing was discovered that would indicate that any of these factors play a significant role in influencing the acceptance of violence. Multiple t-tests were conducted that revealed no differences in attitudes towards violence based on these variables. Finally, results did not provide support for the linkage of illegitimate violence to major injuries.

DISCUSSION

The results only partially support the Occupational Subculture of Violence Thesis. Specifically, evidence suggests that acceptance of violence in hockey is related to the perception of instrumental value. However, it would appear that the relationship is stronger in relation to doing one's job opposed to helping the team win.

The portion of the study that focused on task oriented behaviour did not provide support for the Occupational Subculture of Violence Thesis. Acceptance did not appear to be contingent upon position, penalty averages, point averages, or previous injury history. This may have been a result of the

level of play involved in the study. Relationships between these task oriented behaviours may be detected at higher levels of play where position in particular may be more task specific.

Finally, this study did not provide evidence linking injury with illegitimate violence according to the players' recollection of events. Major injuries received and caused were no more likely to be a result of illegitimate violence than legitimate violence.

PROCEEDINGS
Sixth Canadian Congress on Leisure Research
May 9-12, 1990

COMPTE RENDU DU
Sixième Congrès Canadien de Recherches en Loisir
Le 9-12 mai, 1990

University of Waterloo

***Leisure Challenges:
Bringing People, Resources and
Policy into Play***

***Les défis des loisirs:
agencer les personnes,
les ressources, et les décisions***

Editor/Le rédacteur: Bryan J. A. Smale

©Ontario Research Council on Leisure 1990
©Conseil Ontarien de Recherche en Loisir 1990

Copyright © 1990 Ontario Research Council on Leisure/Conseil Ontarien de
Recherche en Loisir

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or used
in any form without written permission of the editor or ORCOL.

Printed and bound at Graphic Services
University of Waterloo



Appropriate Use of Documents: Documents may be downloaded or printed (single copy only).
Please note that this document is copyrighted and CREDIT MUST BE PROVIDED to the originator
of the document when you quote from it. You must not sell the document or make a profit from
reproducing it. You must not copy, extract, summarize or distribute downloaded documents outside
of your own organization in a manner which competes with or substitutes for the distribution of the
database by the Lifestyle Information Network (LIN). <http://www.lin.ca>