chapter

7

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VIOLENCE IN SPORTS

How Does It Affect Our Lives?

IT'S THE MOST PERFECT feeling in the world to know you've hit a guy just right, that you've maximized the physical pain he can feel. . . . You feel the life just go out of him. You've taken all this man's energy and just dominated him.

—Michael Strahan, NFL player, 2007 (in Layden, 2007)

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Visit *Sports in Society*'s Online Learning Center (OLC) at www.mhhe.com/coakley10e for additional information and study material for this chapter, including the following:

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I DRILLED HIM as good as I can drill him, right in the rib cage. You could hear the air go out of him, and it was beautiful.

—Goose Gossage, Hall of Fame major league pitcher, 2008 (in Etkin, 2008).

YOU CAN'T TAKE the violence out of the game, and that's okay, because it wouldn't be football without the violence, I guess. But if you can't take the violence out, you gotta at least help the people who get hurt.

—Dave Pear, former NFL player (disabled), 2008

I DON'T WANT TO SOUND LIKE I'm bragging, because I'm not, but back [in the 1960s, when I played basketball] the violence was much more intense.

—Satch Sanders, former NBA player, 1999

Discussions of violence in sports, like discussions of deviance, are often connected with people's ideas about the moral condition of society as a whole. When athletes engage in quasi-criminal violence on the field or criminal violence off the field, many people see it as evidence that the moral foundation of society is eroding. They fear that young people who look up to athletes as role models are learning a warped sense of morality.

Statements about violence in sports are often confusing. Some people say that violence is an inherent part of many games, whereas others say that it destroys the dynamics of games. Some people say that violence in sports reflects natural tendencies among males in society, whereas others say that men use violence in sports to promote the idea that physical size and strength is a legitimate basis for maintaining power over others. Some say that violence in sports is worse today than ever before, whereas others say it is less common and less brutal than in the past.

Contradictory statements and conclusions about violence in sports occur for four reasons. *First*, many people fail to define important terms in their discussions. They use words such as *physical*, *assertive*, *tough*, *rough*, *competitive*, *intense*, *intimidating*, *risky*, *aggressive*, *destructive*, and *violent* interchangeably. *Second*, they may not distinguish players from spectators, even though the dynamics of violence differ in these two groups. *Third*, they categorize all sports together, despite differences in meaning, purpose, organization, and amount of physical contact involved. *Fourth*, they may not distinguish the immediate, short-term effects of experiencing or watching violence in sports from more permanent, long-term effects.

The goal of this chapter is to enable you to include information based on research and theories in your discussions of violence in sports. Chapter content focuses on five topics:

1. A practical definition of *violence* and related terms
2. A brief historical overview of violence in sports
3. On-the-field violence among players in various sports
4. Off-the-field violence among players and the impact of sports violence on their lives apart from sports
5. Violence among spectators who watch media coverage of sports and attend events in person

In connection with the last three topics, I will use research findings to identify strategies for controlling violence on and off the field.

WHAT IS VIOLENCE?

Violence *is the use of excessive physical force, which causes or has obvious potential to cause harm or destruction.* We often think of violence as actions that are illegal or unsanctioned, but there are situations in which the use of violence is encouraged or approved in most groups or societies. For instance, when violence involves deviant underconformity to social norms, it is often classified as illegal and sanctioned severely. However, when violence occurs in connection with enforcing norms, protecting people and property, or overconforming to widely accepted norms, it may be approved and even lauded as necessary to preserve order, reaffirm important social values, or entertain spectators. Therefore, violence may be tolerated, or even glorified, when soldiers, police, and athletes are perceived to be protecting people, reproducing accepted ideologies, or pursuing victories in the name of others.

When violence occurs in connection with the widespread rejection of norms in a social world, it may be described as anarchy or lawless mayhem. When it occurs in connection with extreme methods of social control or extreme overconformity to norms, it often is associated with a sense of moral righteousness, even when people are maimed or killed and property is destroyed. Under certain political conditions, this latter expression of violence is tied to fascism and dictatorial leaders.

In the case of sports, punching a referee who penalizes you or a coach who reprimands you is violence based on a rejection of norms. These actions are defined as illegal and punished severely by teams and sport organizations, even

if the referee or coach is not seriously injured. However, it is different when a football player delivers a punishing tackle, breaking the ribs or blowing out the knee of an opposing running back after his coach told him to be aggressive and put his body on the line for the team. Such violence involves overconformity to norms and is seen as entertaining, highlighted on video replays, and used by teammates and many other players as a mark of one's status in football culture. The player might even feel righteous in being violent, despite the harmful consequences, and would not hesitate to be violent again. His violence is not punished because it helps achieve a valued goal for the team and the people it represents. Furthermore, his ability to do violence and endure it when perpetrated by others is used to affirm his identity as an athlete and a football player.

The term **aggression** is used in this chapter to refer to *verbal or physical actions grounded in an intent to dominate, control, or do harm to another person.* Aggression is often involved in violence, but violence may occur inadvertently or carelessly without aggressive intent. This definition allows us to distinguish aggressive actions from other actions that we might describe as assertive, competitive, or achievement oriented. For example, a very competitive person may use violence during a game without the intent to dominate, control, or harm others. However, there is often a difference between being aggressive and simply being assertive or trying hard to win or achieve other goals. The term **intimidation** is used to refer to *words, gestures, and actions that threaten violence or aggression.* Like aggression, intimidation is used to dominate or control another person. These definitions focus our discussion, but they will not eliminate all conceptual problems.

VIOLENCE IN SPORTS THROUGH HISTORY

Violence is not new to physical activities and sports (Dunning, 1999; Guttmann, 1998; 2004). As noted in Chapter 3, so-called blood sports were popular among the ancient Greeks and throughout the Roman Empire. Deaths occurred regularly in connection with ritual games among the Mayas and Aztecs. Tournaments in medieval and early modern Europe were designed as training for war and often had warlike consequences. Folk games were only loosely governed by rules, and they produced injuries and deaths at rates that would shock and disgust people today. Bearbaiting, cockfighting, dog fighting, and other "sporting" activities during those periods involved treatment of animals that most people today would define as brutal and violent.

Research indicates that, as part of an overall civilizing process in Europe and North America, modern sports were developed as more rule-governed activities than the physical games in previous eras. As sports became formally organized, official rules prohibited certain forms of violence that had been common in many folk games. Bloodshed decreased, and there was a greater emphasis on self-control to restrict physical contact and the expression of aggressive impulses in the emotional heat of competition (Dunning, 1999).

Social historians also point out that rates of violence in sports do not automatically decrease over time. In fact, as actions and emotional expression have become more regulated and controlled in modern societies, players and spectators view the "controlled" violence in sports as exciting. Furthermore, the processes of commercialization, professionalization, and globalization have given rise to new forms of instrumental and "dramatic" violence in many sports. This means that goal-oriented and entertainment-oriented violence have increased, at least temporarily, in many Western societies. Sociologist Eric Dunning (1999) notes that violence remains a crucial social issue in modern sports because their goal is to create tension rather than relieve or discharge it. Additionally, violent and aggressive sports serve, in patriarchal societies, to reproduce an ideology that naturalizes the power of men over women. Overall, historical research shows that sports are given different meanings by time and place and that we can understand violence in sports only

"Now that we've invented violence, we need a sport so we can use it without being labeled as uncivilized."

Violence in sports is not new, but this does not mean that it is a natural or inevitable part of sport participation among men or women.

when we analyze it in relation to the historical, social, and cultural contexts in which it occurs.

VIOLENCE ON THE FIELD

Violence in sports comes in many forms, and it is grounded in social and cultural factors related to the sport ethic, commercialization, gender ideology and ideas about masculinity, the dynamics of social class and race, and the strategies used in sports. Violence also has significant consequences for athletes and presents challenges for those who wish to control it. As we discuss these topics, it is useful to consider the different types of violence that occur in sports.

> **There are a lot of unwritten rules in the game of baseball that you tacitly accept when you put on the uniform. When one of those is broken, there is yet another unwritten rule of retaliation.** —Doug Glanville, former minor league baseball player, 2008

Types of Violence

The most frequently used typology of on-the-field violence among players was developed by the late Mike Smith, a respected Canadian sociologist (1983; see Young, 2000, 2002a; 2007a). Smith identified four categories of violence in sports:

1. *Brutal body contact.* This includes physical practices common in certain sports and accepted by athletes as part of sport participation. Examples are collisions, hits, tackles, blocks, body checks, and other forms of forceful physical contact that can produce injuries. Most people in society define this forceful physical contact as extreme, although they don't classify it as illegal or criminal, nor do they see a need to punish it. Coaches often encourage this form of violence. As one coach said after a big playoff victory in high school football, "We preached to the kids all week that we had to get back to what we do best—playing smash-mouth football" (in Trivett, 1999, p. 30C).
2. *Borderline violence.* This includes practices that violate the rules of the game but are accepted by most players and coaches as consistent with the norms of the sport ethic and as useful competitive strategies. Examples are the "brush back" pitch in baseball, the forcefully placed elbow or knee in soccer and basketball, the strategic bump used by distance runners to put another runner off stride, the fistfight in ice hockey, and the forearm to the ribs of a quarterback in football. Although these actions are expected, they may provoke retaliation by other players. Official sanctions and fines are not usually severe for borderline violence. However, public pressure to increase the severity of sanctions has grown in recent years, and the severity of punishments has increased in some sports.
3. *Quasi-criminal violence.* This includes practices that violate the formal rules of the game, public laws, and even informal norms among

players. Examples are cheap shots, late hits, sucker punches, and flagrant fouls that endanger players' bodies and reject the norm calling for dedication to the game above all else. Fines and suspensions are usually imposed on players who engage in such violence. Most athletes condemn quasi-criminal violence and see it as a rejection of the informal norms of the game and what it means to be an athlete.

4. *Criminal violence.* This includes practices that are clearly outside the law to the point that athletes condemn them without question and law enforcement officials may prosecute them as crimes. Examples are assaults that occur after a game and assaults during a game that appear to be premeditated and severe enough to kill or seriously maim a player. Such violence is relatively rare, although there is growing support that criminal charges ought to be filed when it occurs. This support grew recently after a hockey player intentionally smashed an opponent's head with his stick. The act was such a blatant and dangerous assault that a fellow player known for his on-ice violence said, "He's lost the respect of every player in the league."

Sociologist Kevin Young (2002a, 2004b, 2007a) has noted that this is a useful general typology but that the lines separating the four types of violence shift over time as norms change in sports and societies. Furthermore, the typology fails to address the origins of violence and the relationship of violent acts to the sport ethic, gender ideology, and the commercialization of sports. Despite these weaknesses, this typology enables us to make distinctions between various types of violence discussed in this chapter.

Violence as Overconformity to the Norms of the Sport Ethic

In Pat Conroy's novel *The Prince of Tides* (1986), there is a classic scene in which the coach addresses his team and describes the ideal football player. He uses words that many athletes in heavy-contact sports have heard during their careers:

> Now a real hitter is a head-hunter who puts his head in the chest of his opponents and ain't happy if his opponent is still breathing after the play. A real hitter doesn't know what fear is except when he sees it in the eyes of a ball carrier he's about to split in half. A real hitter loves pain, loves the screaming and the sweating and the brawling and the hatred of life down in the trenches. He likes to be at the spot where the blood flows and the teeth get kicked out. That's what this sport's about, men. It's war, pure and simple. (p. 384)

Many coaches don't use such vivid vocabulary because they know it can inspire dangerous forms of violence. However, some coaches and team administrators seek athletes who think this way. For example, during a recent NFL draft, a reporter observed that the coach of the team in his city was seeking "cold-blooded defenders who smile when quarterbacks bleed" (Kiszla, 2001, p. 3D).

When athletes think this way, violence occurs regularly enough to attract attention. Journalists describe it, sociologists and psychologists try to explain it, and athletes brag or complain about it. When an athlete dies or is paralyzed by on-the-field violence, the media present stories stating that violence is rampant in sports and in society, and then they run multiple replays or photos of violent acts, knowing that this will increase their ratings or sales.

Although players may be concerned about brutal body contact and borderline violence in their sports, they generally accept them. Even when players don't like them, they may use them to enhance their status on teams and their popularity among spectators. Athletes whose violence involves overconformity to the sport ethic become legends on and off the field. Athletes who engage in quasi- and criminal violence often are marginalized in sports and may face criminal charges, although prosecuting such charges has

Violence is often connected with overconformity to the norms of the sport ethic. This high school rugby jacket presents violence as part of team culture. By associating violence with excellence, players learn what is expected on the field, even if they do not feel comfortable with brutal body contact and borderline violence. (*Source:* Jay Coakley)

been difficult and convictions are rare (Young, 2000, 2002a, 2004b, 2007a).

Violence as deviant overconformity is also related to insecurities among athletes in high-performance sports. Athletes learn that "you're only as good as your last game," and they know that their identities as athletes and status as team members are constantly tested. Therefore, they often take extreme measures to prove themselves, even if it involves violence. Violence reinforces feelings of self-worth by inviting affirmation from other athletes. This is why athletes who don't play in pain are defined as failures, whereas those who do are defined as courageous. Willingly facing violence and playing in pain honors the importance of the game and expresses dedication to teammates and the culture of high-performance sport.

It is important to understand that violent expressions of deviant overconformity are not limited to men, even though they are more common among male athletes than female athletes. Women also overconform to the norms of the sport ethic, and when they play contact sports, they face the challenge of drawing the line between physicality and violence. For example, when sociologist Nancy Theberge (1999) spent a full season studying the sport experiences of women on an elite ice hockey team in Canada, she discovered that the women loved the physicality of hockey, even though body checking was not allowed. As one woman said,

> I like a physical game. You get more fired up. I think when you get hit . . . like when you're fighting for a puck in the corner, when you're both fighting so you're both working hard and maybe the elbows are flying, that just makes you put more effort into it. (in Theberge, 1999, p. 147)

The experience of dealing with the physicality of contact sports and facing its consequences creates drama, excitement, strong emotions, and special interpersonal bonds among female athletes just as it does among men. Despite the risk and reality of pain and injuries, many women in contact sports find that the physical intensity and body contact in their sports make them feel alive and aware. Although many women are committed to controlling brutal body contact and more severe forms of violence, the love of their sport and the excitement of physicality can lead to violence grounded in overconformity to the norms of the sport ethic.

Commercialization and Violence in Sports

Some athletes in power and performance sports are paid well because of their ability to do violence on the field. However, it would be inaccurate to

identify money as the sole cause of violence in sports. Violent athletes in the past were paid very little, and athletes in high schools, colleges, and sport clubs today are paid nothing, yet many of them do violence despite the pain and injuries associated with it.

Commercialization has expanded opportunities to play certain contact sports in some societies, and media coverage makes these sports and the violence they contain more visible than ever before. Some sociologists note that the media tend to make events appear more violent than they actually are (see Weed, 2001; Poulton, 2005)—a point covered in the discussion of media influence in Chapter 12. Children watch this coverage and may imitate violent athletes when they play informal games and organized youth sports, but this does not justify the conclusion that commercialization is the cause of violence in sports.

Football players and athletes in other heavy contact sports engaged in violence on the field long before television coverage and the promise of big salaries. Players at all levels of organized football killed and maimed each other at rates that were far higher than the death and injury rates in football today. There are more injuries in football today because there are more people playing football. Violence in certain sports is a serious problem that must be addressed, but to think that it is caused mainly by commercialization and money would be a mistake.

This is an important point because many people who criticize sports blame violence and other problems on money and greed. They claim that if athletes were true amateurs and played for love of the game instead of money, there would be less violence. However, this conclusion contradicts research findings, and it distracts attention from the deep cultural and ideological roots of violence in particular sports and societies. We could take money away from athletes tomorrow, but violence would be reduced only if there were changes in the culture in which athletes, especially male athletes, learn to value and do violence in sports.

Many people resist the notion that cultural changes are needed to control violence because it places the responsibility for change on all of us. It is easy blame violence on wealthy and greedy team owners, athletes without moral character, and TV executives seeking higher viewer ratings, but it is more difficult to critically examine our culture and the normative and social organization of the sports that many people watch and enjoy. Similarly, it is difficult for people to critically examine the definitions of *masculinity* and the structure of gender relations that they have long accepted as part of the "natural" order of things, but such critiques are needed if we wish to understand and control violence in sports.

The point emphasized in this section is that commercialization is not the *primary* cause of violence in sports. But money is not irrelevant. Consider the following statements made by a boxer and two football players:

> I'm challenging Laila Ali. . . . Kicking [her] butt will be a walk in the park. . . . And if she wants a rematch, I'll dust her off again. (Jacqui Frazier-Lyde in Farhood, 2000, online)
>
> I want to hurt him. . . . I love to see people bleed. I do my talking [in the NFL] by hitting my man, throwing him on the ground, jumping on him. (Orlando Brown in Montville, 1999, p. 100)
>
> The first thing on our mind is to be violent and disruptive and rip someone's head off. (Marcus Stroud in Fleming, 2005, p. 66)

These are three among dozens of similar statements from popular sports publications. They express the language and rhetoric that has come to be used in certain commercial sports. The most extreme examples of this rhetoric can be found in professional wrestling and mixed martial arts (Ultimate Fighting Championship and Cage Fighting Championship). Therefore, when images of intimidation are used by Jacqui Frazier-Lyde (daughter of former heavyweight boxing champion Joe Frazier) as she challenges Laila Ali (daughter of Muhammad Ali) to a prize fight with a big payoff and when NFL players tell reporters that they want to hurt one another

and rip someone's head off, their violent rhetoric tells us less about the way they *play sports* than it does about how they want us to *think* they play sports.

Professional athletes are entertainers, and they use a promotional and heroic rhetoric that presents images of revenge, retaliation, hate, hostility, intimidation, aggression, violence, domination, and destruction. These melodramatic images attract attention and serve commercial purposes. The NFL, the NHL, and even the NBA use these images to hype their games. They sell videos that present image after image of glorified violence in slow-motion close-ups accompanied by sounds of bodies colliding, bones and tendons snapping on impact, and players gasping in agony and pain. In true promotional fashion, the same media companies that sell or promote these videos also publish articles that condemn violence and violent players. Their marketing people know that violence *and* moral outrage about violence attract audiences and generate profits (Layden, 2007). ESPN has done this with its popular and controversial segment called "Jacked Up," during which they televise the five most violent hits of the week in the NFL.

Does this commercially inspired rhetoric represent real on-the-field orientations among athletes, or is it part of a strategy to make money by creating personas and attracting attention? Research is needed to answer this question, but my sense is that most athletes don't relish hurting opponents and seeing them bleed. At the same time, some athletes have become experts at using violent rhetoric to enhance the entertainment value of what they do and boost attendance at the events in which they participate. When the boxer Mike Tyson, renowned for his own violence in the ring, refereed the Cage Fighting world championships in Manchester, England, in 2006, he is said to have stated that he would not stop a fight until there was an eyeball rolling across the canvas. According to Tyson, Cage Fighting (also known as mixed martial arts, ultimate fighting, and No Holds Barred):

> Is basically bone against bone, so there's probably going to be some blood and broken bones. It's a bit gory, not for the weak to watch. (in *The Observer*, March 19, 2006, p. 22)

Such rhetoric is part of the spectacle dimension of sports, similar to dramatic storylines delivered by paid announcers, sexy performances by cheerleaders and halftime dancers, and use of toy tomahawks for the symbolic "chopping" of opponents. However, it raises this question: How far can the spectacle be emphasized before people conclude that a particular sport has lost its authenticity as a game and has become choreographic violence devoid of play? Professional wrestling (WWE) crossed this line long ago, and the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) seems to be crossing it now. Many people will watch violence in the context of an authentic game, but few will pay to watch violence week after week when it is not part of a goal-oriented structure that gives it meaning beyond the blood and gore.

Violence and Masculinity

Violence in sports is not limited to men. However, research based on critical feminist theory indicates that *if we want to understand violence in sports, we must understand gender ideology and issues of masculinity in culture*. Sociologist Mike Messner explains:

> Young males come to sport with identities that lead them to define their athletic experience differently than females do. Despite the fact that few males truly enjoy hitting and being hit, and that one has to be socialized into participating in much of the violence commonplace in sport, males often view aggression, within the rule-bound structure of sport, as legitimate and "natural." (1992, p. 67)

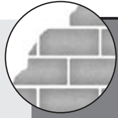
Messner notes that many male athletes learn to define injurious acts as a necessary part of the game, rather than as violence, as long as those acts occur within the rules of the game and within the informal norms players use to evaluate each other.

Both men and women are capable of violence on and off the playing field. However, women may not connect violent actions to their identities in the same way that some men do. Prevailing definitions of *masculinity* lead many people to feel that violence is more "natural" for men than for women, and it may lead men to feel more comfortable with violence in their sports. (*Source:* Daniel Maurer, AP/World Wide Photos)

In many societies, participation in power and performance sports has become an important way to prove masculinity. Boys discover that if they play these sports and others see them as being able to do violence, they can avoid social labels such as *pussy*, *girl*, *fag*, *wimp*, and *sissy* (Ingham and Dewar, 1999). In a review of the research on this issue, Phil White and Kevin Young (1997) note that if a boy or young man avoids these sports, he risks estrangement from his male peers.

Boys and men who play power and performance sports learn quickly that they are evaluated in terms of their ability to do violence in combination with physical skills (Lance, 2005). This learning begins in youth sports, and by the time young men have become immersed in the social world of most power and performance sports, they accept brutal body contact and borderline violence as part the game as it is played by "real" men. For example, when Ozzie Guillen, manager of the Chicago White Sox, was asked to comment about some of his players who complained about a vicious collision between a teammate and the catcher on the opposing team, he said, "If we don't like it, [we should] go and play softball or go play tennis. I don't want them to be a bunch of ladies playing this game" (*Denver Post*, 2004). When gender is viewed in these terms, the ability to do violence becomes "one of the cornerstones of masculinity" (White and Young, 1997, p. 9).

A tragic example of the connection between masculinity and violence in sports occurred at a Massachusetts hockey rink a few years ago. As a few boys practiced hockey skills during an



breaking **BARRIERS**

Ideological Barriers

The Hit Isn't Real Unless It Bends Steel

Murderball is unique. It's four-on-four competition with players in wheelchairs customized to function like mini-chariots, with angled wheels, bucket seats, safety harnesses, and protective metal bars that shield legs and feet during crashes. Using a volleyball on a basketball court, the teams engage in a contest that resembles a mix of rugby, team handball, and football that was organized by an X Games promoter.

In the Paralympics, murderball is officially called wheelchair rugby. Many people call it quad rugby because participants have quadriplegia or limited use of three or four limbs. Each of the twelve members of a team is rated in terms of upper-body muscle function, from 0.5 (most impaired) to 3.5 (least impaired). During games the four players on the court from each team may not exceed a cumulative rating of 8.0 points. Participation is open to men and women, but most teams are all-male. During the four eight-minute quarters, points are scored when a player possessing the ball crosses the opponents' end line.

Wheelchair rugby was invented in Canada in 1981 and first played in the Paralympics in 1996. It

Wheelchair rugby, a.k.a. *quad rugby* and *murderball*, is played in the Paralympics. Pictured are the Portland Pounders, one of many teams in North America. Some quad rugby players use a highly masculinized vocabulary to describe the intimidation and violence that occur in their games. Wheelchair rugby challenges stereotypes about people with a disability, but it also reaffirms a gender ideology in which manhood is defined in terms of the ability to do violence. When sports embody contradictory ideological themes, making clear sense of them is difficult. (*Source:* Jason E. Kaplan Photography, Portland, Oregon)

informal skating session, a father became angry because his son failed to defend himself when other boys pushed him around. The father entered the rink and told his son to "be a man" on the ice. The boy turned away and walked to the locker room, but his father continued to harass him. Another father passed by and told his fellow dad to ease up because it was a minor incident. This further irritated the angry father, and he punched the man who gave him the unwanted advice. He exited the rink and then came back, found the man whom he had punched, and beat him to death in the lobby of the rink, in front of a few children, mothers, and a rink employee.

This case was covered in the media as an extreme example of parental "rink rage," but it was never discussed as an expression of ideas about masculinity in American society. The father, who was later convicted of voluntary manslaughter, first became enraged when his son failed to meet

immediately became popular among men with multiple limb impairments, especially those who favored power and performance sports involving heavy physical contact. Paul Davies, a former player and now manager of the British national team, describes wheelchair rugby as "a real in your face sport [resembling] chess with violence" (BBC Sport Academy, 2005).

Many wheelchair rugby players have impairments caused by accidents in risky activities, including sports. They like wheelchair rugby because it differs from other sports in the Paralympics. When players and other insiders refer to the sport as *murderball*, it implies a closer connection to able-bodied heavy-contact sports than there is for other Paralympic sports.

Some athletes say that murderball allows them to express their aggression and gain a sense of control over their bodies. But as one member of the U.S. team said, "Of course, you're gonna have healthy aggression and unhealthy aggression." And then one of his teammates added, "But when you can use your body and your chair just to go knock the shit out of somebody, it helps" (in Anderson, 2005; from the documentary film, *Murderball*).

Although other Paralympic sports are organized so that violence is inconsistent with the strategy and rhythm of participation, some athletes with disabilities want to play a violent sport and reaffirm their identities as athletes and men by doing violence. For example, when the U.S. team faced Canada in the gold medal game of the 2002 Wheelchair Rugby World Championships, the coach reminded the players that, "It's not buddy-buddy time anymore, guys." And when a member of the U.S. team was asked about their goal for the 2004 Paralympics in Athens, he quickly replied, "We're not going for a hug, we're going for a f__ing Gold Medal" (in *Murderball*, 2004).

"Hugs" are associated with the Special Olympics, which are organized to emphasize play and personal accomplishment among athletes with intellectual disabilities. There is little emphasis on competitive success in the Special Olympics and none on dominating opponents. Volunteer coaches frequently hug athletes who complete an event, regardless of the outcome.

Many Paralympians, influenced by the ideology of ableism, want to distance themselves from the Special Olympics because it doesn't match dominant sport forms in society and it perpetuates the idea that people with disabilities cannot play "real" sports—that is, the sports played by able-bodied male athletes.

Ableism is a *web of ideas and beliefs that people use to classify bodies perceived as unimpaired as normal and superior and bodies perceived as (dis)abled as subnormal and inferior*. This ideology is widespread in society and many people, including some with disabilities, use it to evaluate themselves and others. Similarly, some murderball athletes use traditional gender ideology to connect power, status, and male identity with the ability to do violence. As expressed through words on a player's T-shirt: "The hit isn't real unless it bends steel" (Grossfeld, 2005). This is not surprising because none of us lives outside the influence of ideology, even when we move around in wheelchairs.

his definition of how a man should behave on the ice, and then he killed another man who told him that the issue was minor. This case highlights the problems associated with a gender ideology that leads people to think that masculinity is proved by doing violence in sports.

When women do violence in sports, it may be seen as a sign of commitment or skill, but it is not seen as proof of femininity. Dominant gender ideology in many cultures links manhood with the ability to do violence, but there is no similar link between womanhood and violence. Therefore, female athletes who engage in violence do not receive the same support and rewards that men receive—unless they wrestle in the WWE, do mixed martial arts in Fatal Femme Fighting, or skate on a roller derby team where the sport personas of female athletes are constructed, in part, to shock or titillate spectators (Berra, 2005; Blumenthal, 2004). The emergence of women's

boxing provides a context in which female athletes are rewarded for doing violence, but most female boxers do not feel that doing violence in the ring makes them more of a woman than the boxers they defeat.

Overall, none of us lives outside the influence of ideology. This point is highlighted in connection with a rapidly growing sport that participants call murderball. Officially known as wheelchair rugby, murderball is the focus of Breaking Barriers on pages 204–205.

OLC ON THE *OLC*:
See the OLC—Additional Readings for Chapter 7—for the author's review of the documentary film, *Murderball.*

The Institutionalization of Violence in Sports

Certain forms of violence are built into the culture and structure of particular sports (Guilbert, 2004). Athletes in these sports learn to use violence as a strategy, even though it may cause them pain and injury. Controlling institutionalized violence is difficult because it requires changing the culture and structure of particular sports—something that most people in governing bodies are hesitant to do. These topics are discussed in the following sections.

Learning to Use Violence as a Strategy: Non-contact Sports In some non-contact sports, participants may try to intimidate opponents, but violence is rare. For example, tennis players have been fined for slamming a ball to the ground in protest or talking to an official or opponent in a menacing manner, but they're seldom, if ever, rewarded for violent actions. Therefore, it is doubtful that playing or watching non-contact sports teaches people to use violence as a strategy on the field.

Athletes in non-contact sports may use violent images as they describe competition, but they don't have actual opportunities to convert their words into deeds. For example, a sprint cyclist on the U.S. cycling team used violent imagery to describe his approach to competition on the track:

> I am really aggressive out there. I pretty much hate the guy I'm racing. It wouldn't matter if it were my brother. . . . I want to destroy the guy. End it quick. Boom. One knockout punch. (in Becker, 1996, p. 4E)

Of course, cycling does not allow him to physically destroy or punch a competitor, but the language he used had violence built into it.

Men who play non-contact sports use violent images in their descriptions of competition much more often than women use them. The use of a "language of violence" is clearly linked to masculinity in most cultures. Women may use it on occasion, but men use it more frequently. Part of the reason for this difference is that many women realize that a language of violence reaffirms a gender ideology that privileges men, works against women's interests, and subverts the health and well-being of everyone in society.

Learning to Use Violence as a Strategy: Men's Contact Sports Athletes in heavy contact and collision sports learn to use intimidation, aggression, and violence as strategies to achieve competitive success on the field. Success in these sports depends on the use of brutal body contact and borderline violence. Research shows that male athletes in these sports readily accept certain forms of violence, even when they involve rule violations, and this acceptance increases with the frequently and force of collisions in a sport (Pilz, 1996; Shields and Bredemeier, 1995; Weinstein, Smith, and Wiesenthal, 1995; White and Young, 1997). These athletes routinely disapprove of quasi-criminal and criminal violence, but they accept brutal body contact and borderline violence as long as it occurs within the rules of the game. They may not intend to hurt, but this does not prevent them from doing things

that clearly put their bodies and the bodies of opponents in harm's way.

In boxing, football, ice hockey, rugby, and other heavy-contact and collision sports, athletes also use intimidation and violence to promote their careers, increase drama for spectators, and enhance publicity for their sports and sponsors. They realize that doing violence is expected, even if it causes harm to themselves and others. This was illustrated in 2004 when Brian Burke, the general manager of the NHL Vancouver Canucks, promised that his team would go after an opposing player who had injured one of their players in a previous game. Burke stated, "There's definitely a bounty on his head . . . It's going to be fun when we get him" (in Sadowski, 2005, p. 7C). In the game that followed this comment, a Canucks player wrapped his left arm around the target player's neck, punched his head repeatedly, and slammed him to the ice. This "fun" resulted in a broken neck, a closed head injury, and deep cuts on the face of the victim. The Canucks were fined $250,000, and the attacking player was suspended, causing him to lose $502,000 of his $6.8 million salary. The victim sustained serious physical and neurological damage and has not played hockey since being attacked. The attacker was charged with criminal assault and, after pleading guilty, was sentenced to twelve months of probation and eighty hours of community service; additionally, he was prohibited from ever playing against the person he attacked, but he currently plays in the National Hockey League (NHL) and earns a multimillion-dollar salary.

With the smart coach, fighting is a tool. . . . Fighting can be used to inspire your team, send a message, change momentum. —Barry Melrose, ESPN hockey announcer, 2002

Violence is also incorporated into game strategies when coaches use players as designated agents of intimidation and violence for their teams. These players are called "enforcers," "goons," and "hit men," and they are expected to protect teammates and strategically assist their teams by intimidating, provoking, fighting with, or injuring opponents. Their violent acts are an accepted part of certain sports, including hockey and basketball. For example, former Los Angeles Lakers player Rick Fox regularly played the role of enforcer on the basketball court. To do it right, he says, "You have to look within and find the evil that's inside of you. It's not the kind of talk you want your kids to hear, but we're grown men" (in AP, 2000).

Players who act as enforcers are paid primarily for their ability and willingness to do violence. However, every time they maim or come close to killing someone on the ice, court, or playing field, people raise questions about institutionalized violence in sports. Football, basketball, and baseball have taken actions to control certain forms of institutionalized violence, but hockey has been slow to do so. Once violence is built into the culture, structures, and strategies of a sport, controlling or eliminating it is difficult.

Learning to Use Violence as a Strategy: Women's Contact Sports Information on violence among girls and women in contact sports remains scarce even though more women are participating in them (Lawler, 2002; Young 2007a). Participation creates the possibility for cases of violence among female athletes, but few studies explore if and why it occurs.

Women's programs have undergone many changes over the past thirty years. They have become more competitive with a greater emphasis on power and performance and higher stakes associated with success. Today, as women become increasingly immersed in the social world of elite power and performance sports, they become more tolerant of rule violations and aggressive actions on the playing field, but this pattern is less clear among women than men (Nixon, 1996a, 1996b; Shields and Bredemeier, 1995; Shields et al., 1995; Tucker and Parks, 2001; Young, 2007a).

In the words of one researcher, "We know of no biological reasons that would prevent women from using intimidation and violence or being as physically aggressive as men" (Dunn, 1994). However, most girls and women become involved in and learn to play sports in ways that differ from the experiences of most boys and men. As women compete at higher levels, they often become similar to men in the way they embrace the sport ethic and use it to frame their identities as athletes. Like men, they are willing to dedicate themselves to the game, take risks, make sacrifices, pay the price, continue playing despite pain and injury, and overcome barriers. However, it is rare for them to link toughness, physicality, and aggression to their gender identities. In other words, women do not tie their ability to do violence to their definitions of what it means to be a woman in society. Similarly, coaches don't try to motivate female athletes by urging them to "go out and prove who the better woman is" on the field. Therefore, at this time, women's contact sports are less violent than men's contact sports.

With this said, many research questions have not yet been answered: Do elite female athletes develop the same form of hubris (pride-based arrogance) that many elite male athletes develop? If so, how is it linked to their identities, and how do they express it in sports? Do female athletes use a rhetoric of violence when they talk about sports? Some studies suggest that they don't (Nelson, 1994, 1998; Theberge, 1999; Young and White, 1995), but more information is needed. A good place to start might be with the women now playing heavy-contact sports such as football, ice hockey, rugby, and boxing or participating in dramatic spectacles such as ultimate fighting and professional wrestling.

Becky Zerlentes took a shot to the head above her left eye, then staggered forward and fell to the canvas. . . . [She] never regained consciousness and died, becoming the first female boxer to die in a sanctioned event. — *CBS News*, 5 April 2005

"When are you gonna learn when it's necessary to use unnecessary roughness?"

Physical intimidation and violence are used as strategies in men's contact sports. They have been effective in winning games and building the reputations of players and teams.

Pain and Injury as the Price of Violence

Many people think about sports in a paradoxical way: They accept violence in sports, but the injuries caused by that violence make them uneasy. They seem to want violence without consequences—like the fictionalized violence they see in the media and video games in which characters engage in brutality without being seriously or permanently injured. However, sports violence is real, and it causes real pain, injury, disability, and even death (Dater, 2005; Farber, 2004; Leahy, 2008; Rice, 2005; Smith, 2005b; Young, 2004a).

Ron Rice, an NFL player whose career ended when he tackled an opponent, discusses the real consequences of violence. The brutal body contact of the tackle left him temporarily paralyzed and permanently disabled. He remembers that "before I hit the ground, I knew my career

was over. . . . My body froze. I was like a tree that had been cut down, teetering, then crashing, unable to break my fall." Reminiscing about his life as a football player, Rice says that he was "programmed from a very young age to live and think a certain way," to be a warrior who keeps going no matter what (Rice, 2005). He did just that, and today he lives with chronic pain in his neck, wrists, hands, ankles, knees, and back—the toll of doing violence to others and enduring it in return. Rice says, "I'm 32 now, . . . These injuries are a part of my life. And I got off easy compared to a lot of these guys" (Rice 2005, p. 83).

Research on pain and injury among athletes helps us understand that violence in sports has real consequences. As noted in chapter 6, studies indicate that professional sports involving brutal body contact and borderline violence are among the most dangerous workplaces in the occupational world (Leahy, 2008; Nixon, 2000; Waddington, 2000a, 2000b; White, 2004; White and Young, 1997; Young, 1993, 2000, 2004a). The same could be said about high-profile power and performance intercollegiate sports in which 80 percent of male and female athletes sustain at least one serious injury while playing their sports and nearly 70 percent are disabled for two or more weeks (Nixon, 2000). Rates of disabling injuries vary by sport, but they are high enough in many sports to constitute a serious health issue (Gessel et al., 2007; Mueller and Cantu, 2008; see Chapter 4, pp. 103–108). The "normal" brutal body contact and borderline violence in contact and collision sports regularly cause arthritis, concussions, bone fractures, torn ligaments, and other injuries. In other words, the violence inherent in power and performance sports takes a definite toll on the health of athletes (Leahy, 2008; Theberge, 2008c; Young, 2004a).

Research shows a close connection between dominant ideas about masculinity and the high rate of injuries in many sports. Ironically, some power and performance sports are organized so that players feel that their manhood is up for grabs. Men who define *masculinity* in terms of physically dominating others often use violence in sports as an expression of this code of manhood. Until they critically examine issues related to gender and the organization of their sports, they will mistakenly define violence as a source of rewards rather than a source of chronic pain and disabilities that constrain and threaten their lives.

Controlling On-the-Field Violence

The roots of violence on the playing field are deep. They're grounded in overconformity to the sport ethic, processes of commercialization, and definitions of masculinity. Therefore, many of the men who control and play power and performance sports resist efforts to reduce violence. They understand that their identities in the context of these sports depend on approving and doing violence and that competitive success often requires the strategic use of violence.

Brutal body contact is the most difficult type of violence to control. It is grounded in the culture of power and performance sports and its incorporation of dominant gender ideology. Unfortunately, about 90 percent of the serious injuries in these sports occur *within the rules* of the games and contests. This means that many men inevitably pay the price for their destructive definitions of *sports* and *masculinity*.

Efforts to control brutal body contact require changes in gender ideology and the cultures of certain sports. These changes won't occur without persistent and thoughtful strategies to document the dangers of the actions and the language that men and women use to reproduce violent sport cultures and the gender ideology that supports them. People should demand and keep accurate records and publish information on injuries on a team-by-team, league-by-league, and sport-by-sport basis. Parents should be informed of these rates before they enlist their children in the service of reproducing patriarchy

and a gender ideology that jeopardizes health and development. People should also calculate the cost of injuries due to brutal body contact and other types of violence in terms of medical expenses, lost work time and wages, days missed in college classes, disability payments, family problems, and even loss in life expectancy. Looking at these statistics will help us understand the connections between sport participation and health.

It is less difficult to control borderline, quasi-criminal, and criminal violence in sports, although many people continue to resist taking necessary actions. Enforcers, instead of being hired explicitly to do violence, should be suspended without pay for violent acts; additionally, teams should be prohibited from replacing them during the suspension period and coaches and team owners should be fined for the violent actions of their players. Unless these or similar actions are taken, owners will simply replace one headhunting enforcer with another. As long as owners and league officials escape sanctions, they have little incentive to control violent players who boost their profits. Suspensions prevent players from doing what they love to do, and if they cannot be replaced on rosters, the suspensions encourage coaches and team owners to use their power to discourage violence on the field.

Ultimate Fighting, AKA Mixed Martial Arts, Cage Fighting, Tough Man Contests, and Fatal Femmes Fighting (www.fatalfemmesfighting.com/), involves one-on-one violence. It is among the fastest growing spectator events in the world. The only way to control violence in these events is to ban the events. So far, bans have been successfully resisted by event organizers and competitors. (*Source:* Jon Super, AP/Wide World Photos)

VIOLENCE OFF THE FIELD

When athletes in contact sports are arrested for violent crimes, many people assume that their violence off the field is related to the violent strategies they've learned on the field. For example, *New York Times* columnist Robert Lipsyte says,

> Felony arrests among pro and college [male] athletes may or may not be rising, but better reporting makes it clear that many of them cannot turn off their aggressive behavior at the buzzer. (1999, p. 11)

Jessie Armstead, a linebacker in the NFL, says making the transition from a violent playing field to life off the field is not easy for many players:

> When you think about it, it is a strange thing that we do. During a game we want to kill each other. Then we're told to shake hands and drive home safely. Then a week later we try to kill each other again. (in Freeman, 1998, p. 1)

John Niland, a former NFL player, supports this:

> Any athlete who thinks he can be as violent as you can be playing football, and leave it all on the field, is kidding himself. (Falk, 1995, p. 12)

These statements as well as statements in a study of professional hockey players (Pappas, McKenry, and Catlett, 2004) suggest that the violence used strategically on the field carries over into athletes' lives off the field. However, research on the carryover issue is difficult to do, and good studies are rare. When people refer to statistical correlations that show a relationship between playing certain sports and high rates of off-the-field violence, it does not prove that playing violent sports causes people to be violent outside of sports. Two other issues must be considered before causality can be established.

First, the people who play violent sports may have used violence to establish status or cope with problems prior to their sport participation. In other words, violent sports attract people who already feel comfortable about doing violence.

Second, off-the-field violence among athletes may be due to unique situational factors encountered more often by athletes than by other people. For example, athletes known for their toughness on the field may be encouraged, dared, or taunted by others to be tough on the streets. In some cases, they are challenged to fight because of their reputations in sports. This is most likely to occur when athletes who grew up in high-crime neighborhoods return home and are identified as "marks" by locals who push drugs or run scams to make money. If athletes hang out in those neighborhoods, they're likely to attract locals who define them as "sellouts" to big money and corporate sponsors. Some of these locals would like nothing better than to enhance their own credibility on the streets by successfully confronting an athlete known for his toughness. If trouble occurs and athletes are arrested for fighting in these circumstances, it is misleading to say that their actions were caused by what they learned in sports.

Control versus Carryover

Does playing sports teach people to control violent responses in the face of adversity, stress, defeat, hardship, and pain? Or does it create identitites, personal orientations, and social dynamics that make off-the-field violence more likely?

Trulson's research that was summarized in Chapter 6 (p. 174) showed that aggressive tendencies among male juvenile delinquents decreased after they received training in the philosophy and techniques of tae kwon do (Trulson, 1986). The philosophy emphasized respect for self and others, confidence, physical fitness, self-control, honor, patience, and responsibility. Similar young men who received martial arts training *without* the philosophy actually measured higher on aggressive tendencies after a training period, and young men who participated in running, basketball, and football with standard adult supervision didn't change at all in terms of their aggressive tendencies.

French sociologist Loïc Wacquant studied these issues for three years as he trained and gained the trust of the men who worked out at a traditional, highly structured, and reputable boxing gym in a Chicago neighborhood. During that time, he observed, interviewed, and documented the experiences and lives of more than fifty professional boxers. He not only learned the craft of boxing but also became immersed in the social world in which the boxers trained. He found that the social world encompassed by this gym was one in which the boxers learned to value their craft and dedicate themselves to the idea of being a professional boxer; they also learned to respect fellow boxers and accept the rules of sportsmanship that governed boxing as a profession. In a low-income neighborhood where poverty and hopelessness promoted intimidation and violence, these boxers accepted norms that disapproved of fighting outside the ring, they avoided street fights, and they internalized the controls necessary to follow a highly disciplined daily training schedule.

When Wacquant (1995a) asked the boxers about a boxing-violence connection, their responses challenged popular beliefs. Two boxers answered with these statements:

> Boxin' doesn't jus' teach you violence. I think, boxin' teaches you discipline an' self-respect an' it's also teachin' you how to defen' yourself. . . . Anybody who feels that it teaches you violence is a person tha's really a, a *real incompetent mind* I think. (Twenty-four-year-old night security guard who trained at the gym for eight years, pp. 494–95)
>
> Man, the sports commentators an' the writers and stuff, they don't know nuthin' abou' the boxin' game. *They ignorant.* I be embarrassed to let somebody hear me say [chuckles in disbelief], "Boxing teach you violence." . . . Tha's showin' *their* ignorance. For one thin', they lookin' at it from a spectator point of view . . . on the *outsi' lookin' in*, but [the boxer's] *insi' lookin out.* (Twenty-eight-year-old part-time janitor, seven years in the ring, p. 489)

These statements are not meant to support professional boxing. However, when they are combined with research findings in the studies by Trulson and Wacquant, it is reasonable to conclude that participation in sports, even martial arts and boxing, can teach people to control aggression and violence. Of course, this outcome depends greatly on the conditions under which sport participation occurs. *If* the social world formed around a sport promotes a mind-set and norms emphasizing non-violence, self control, respect for self and others, physical fitness, patience, responsibility, and humility (the opposite of hubris), then athletes *may* learn to control violent behavior off the field. Those most likely to benefit seem to be young men who lack structured challenges and firm guidance as they navigate their way through lives in which there are many incentives to engage in violence.

Unfortunately, many sports are not organized around these norms. Instead, most sport cultures emphasize hostility, physical domination, and a willingness to use one's body as a weapon. They're also organized to produce hubris, isolate athletes from the community and encourage them to view outsiders as unworthy of their respect. For example, recent research on thirteen- to seventeen-year olds in U.S. schools shows that sport participation, especially for young men in contact sports, is associated with fighting and delinquency off the field (Kreager, 2007; Roche, 1999; Portes, 1998; Wright and Fitzpatrick, 2006). Sociologist Derek Kreager analyzed data from a national sample of 6,397 seventh- to twelfth-graders and found that football players and wrestlers were over 40 percent more likely to be involved in fights than male

Some sports, even at the youth level, use symbols and language that encourage orientations supportive of violence. Coaches award skull-and-crossbones decals, as shown on this player's helmet, to 11-year-olds who make "big hits" and intimidate the opposition. (*Source:* Jay Coakley)

peers who didn't play high school sports. Playing basketball and baseball were unrelated to fighting, and male tennis players had a 35 percent *lower* risk of fighting than male peers who didn't play sports. The likelihood of fighting also increased with the proportion of football players in a young man's friendship network.

In another national study, Wright and Fitzpatrick (2006) found that certain high school sports were associated with status dynamics that created or intensified ingroup versus outgroup differences among young people. Other research suggests that these status differences frequently take the form of a social hierarchy that is sustained, in part, through harrassment, bullying, and fighting; in many cases, athletes from certain sports were the perpetrators of these actions (ESPN, 1999).

More research is needed to understand the social worlds of athletes in particular sports, the meanings that athletes attach to their actions, and the place of violence in sport cultures. Similarly, we need to know more about issues of identity, group dynamics among athletes, ideological issues, and social factors associated with violence. Sport participation does not automatically teach people to control violence, nor does the violence used in certain sports inevitably carry over to other relationships and settings. Instead of seeking examples of carryover or control, perhaps we should look for cultural connections between sports and ideologies associated with high rates of violence. This topic is discussed in the box titled "Violence on the Field" on the next page.

Assaults and Sexual Assaults by Male Athletes

Highly publicized cases in which male athletes are accused or convicted of assault, sexual assault, rape, gang rape, and even murder create the impression that violence in certain sports influences off-the-field actions and relationships, especially relationships with women. Athletes are public figures and celebrities, so when they are accused and arrested, we hear and read about it time and time again. This repetition also creates the impression that male athletes are violent and misogynist.

Violent crimes by male athletes are a serious problem. On this, there is no question (Armstrong and Perry, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c; Benedict, 1997, 1998, 2004; Lefkowitz, 1997; Robinson, 1998). Furthermore, the victims of these crimes are often subject to various forms of character assassination and harassment to a degree that may exceed that of victims of similar crimes committed by men who are not celebrity athletes (Hnida, 2006). Therefore, there is a clear need for sport teams and organizations to directly and assertively address this issue. But there's also a need to understand the role of sport participation in violent off-the-field actions and crimes. Without this understanding, the efforts of teams and organizations are likely to be ineffective.

As noted previously, some research indicates that high school athletes in certain sports are involved in fighting more frequently than their peers, but we lack studies that compare specific rates of off-the-field violence for athletes of different ages with the rates for similar peers who don't play elite sports.

Research on the conversations and biographies of athletes suggests that the social worlds created around men's power and performance sports subvert respect for women and promote the image of women as "game" to be pursued and conquered (Curry, 1991, 1996, 1998; Lefkowitz, 1997; Messner and Stevens, 2002; Nack and Munson, 1995; Reid, 1997). However, as noted in Chapter 6, data on the arrest records of NFL players raise questions about the extent to which this is a problem related to sports or whether it is primarily a part of a larger problem in U.S. culture generally (Blumstein and Benedict, 1999).

In the late-1990s, sport sociologist Todd Crosset (1999) reviewed all the published research on sexual assaults by male athletes to determine if there was cause to say that they are disproportionately involved in violence

reflect on SPORTS

Violence on the Field
Does It Distort Our Ideas About Gender?

"Men are naturally superior to women." This is a contentious statement today. However, many people still believe it, mostly because the current hierarchical structure of gender relations depends on its acceptance.

The ideology of male superiority is clearly reaffirmed through sports such as ultimate fighting, boxing, football, wrestling, ice hockey, rugby, and other heavy-contact sports that are valued and viewed worldwide (Burstyn, 1999; Connell, 1995; Messner, 2007a). The violence in those sports supports the belief that hierarchical distinctions between men and women are grounded in nature and cannot be altered.

Power and performance sports emphasize sex *difference* in terms of physical strength, *control* through domination, and *status* as an outcome of victories over others. This "naturalizes" hierarchical differences and reaffirms the belief that power is the basis for success and a person's status or rank compared to others. These ideas and beliefs are perpetuated through the stories that people tell about power and performance sports and how victories and championships are won only by using strength and strategic violence to dominate others (Burstyn, 1999).

The gender ideology formed around these ideas and beliefs has been central in U.S. culture. The stakes associated with preserving this ideology are so high that male boxers are paid millions of dollars for three to thirty-six minutes of brutalizing one another in the ring. Heavyweight boxers are among the highest-paid athletes in the world because they promote the idea that man versus man violent confrontations are "nature in action," even though the combatants often lose millions of brain cells as they "prove" male superiority.

The irony in this approach is that, if a gender hierarchy were truly fixed in nature, there would be no need for sports to reaffirm "natural" differences between men and women. Gender would simply exist without spending so much time and effort teaching girls and boys how they should perform gender. Power and performance sports are used as valuable aids in this teaching and learning process, and the men who play them sometimes serve as the teachers. For example, when rules were passed to partially limit fighting in ice hockey, Tie Domi, an American player with a reputation for being violent, complained, "If you take out fighting, what comes next? Do we eliminate checking? Pretty soon, we will all be out there in dresses and skirts" (Domi, 1992, p. C3). Domi's point was that, unless men can do violence in hockey, there will be nothing that makes them different from women, and the preception in certain sports is that there is nothing worse for a man than being like women—except, perhaps, being gay.

When women participate in violent sports they potentially disrupt the "logic" used to reaffirm traditional gender ideology. This causes some people to argue that women should not participate in these sports, and to treat women athletes in these sports as jokes, oddities, or freaks of nature; these people may watch as women box, cage fight, or wrestle, but they don't take them seriously as athletes or they sexualize them to reaffirm the "logic of sex differences" on which traditional gender ideology is based (see www.fatalfemmesfighting.com/).

The participation of women in violent sports often creates a dilemma for people who advocate progressive changes in traditional gender ideology. Although participation contradicts the ideological belief that women are frail and vulnerable, it also reaffirms the beliefs that have traditionally disadvantaged women through history. For this reason, some women advocate equal opportunities in sports at the same time that they seek alternatives to violent sports. Their goal is to promote sports in which women can be strong and assertive without being violent.

These issues and controversies illustrate that sports have an impact on our lives regardless of our own involvement in them as athletes or spectators. *What do you think?*

against women. His review indicated that male intercollegiate athletes, in particular, seem to be involved in more sexual assaults than other male students, but the differences were not statistically significant in the studies of this issue, and background differences between athletes and other students made the data in these studies difficult to interpret.

In his conclusion, Crosset explained that the evidence did not warrant a conclusion that playing power and performance sports causes men to engage in violence against women. He also noted that some efforts to seek such a causal link may lead researchers to overlook important cultural and ideological issues and distract attention from three important points:

1. Violence against women occurs regularly and is a serious problem in the United States and many other societies.
2. Some male athletes have perpetrated sexual assault and rape, but nearly all violence directed against women is perpetrated by heterosexual men who are *not* currently playing competitive sports.
3. The problem of violence against women in the United States must be understood within the context of U.S. culture and the forms of gender relations that exist in all spheres of society, including sports, if efforts to lower the rates of sexual assault and rape are to succeed.

Building on Crosset's analysis and combining it with other research on patterns of violence in all-male groups, violence against women by male athletes is associated with the extent to which the culture of men's sports

- supports the belief that violence is an effective strategy for establishing one's manhood, achieving status as an athlete, and controlling women
- fosters social bonds and a related sense of hubris that separates athletes from the rest of the community
- creates a sense of privilege based on the belief that people outside the fraternity of elite athletes do not deserve respect and that elite athletes live outside the norms of the general community
- supports the belief that women, apart from mothers and sisters, are celebrity-obsessed "groupies" who can be exploited for sexual pleasure without consequences
- is viewed with such awe and idealism that people and institutions in the general community fail to hold elite athletes accountable for violations of community norms and rules

Research on these factors will help us understand violence against women *in the full social and cultural contexts in which it occurs.*

As noted in Chapter 6, the social dynamics in certain all-male sport groups encourage athletes to demean and humiliate those who don't match their unique, elite status. This suggests that off-the-field violence is not simply the result of carryover from on-the-field violence. Instead, it is action grounded in complex social processes related to the social worlds in which athletes live, define their identities, and deal with social relationships. As athletes are increasingly separated from the rest of the community, it becomes more important to understand these processes if we wish to explain and reduce assault rates among athletes.

When discussing this issue, it's important to remember that even if studies indicated that male athletes had higher sexual assault rates than other categories of people, this would not change the fact that males who don't play elite sports perpetrate nearly all violence, including violence against women. Jackson Katz, a violence prevention expert, explains that it would be useful to explain why some male athletes assault women, but this is only part of what we need to know when trying to answer the main question of why "stockbrokers, teachers, priests, auto mechanics, and Ivy League students" also assault women

(Katz, 2003). Although people from all racial and ethnic groups, social classes, and occupational categories perpetrate violence, it is clear that men commit nearly all rapes.

Finally, the focus on athletes should not distract attention from other sport-related assault issues. For example, sexual assaults, including statutory rape, by coaches have a greater impact in sports and on people's lives than sexual assaults by athletes (Brackenridge, 2001; Brackenridge and Fasting, 2003; Fasting, Brackenridge, and Sundgot-Borgen, 2004). Research done by journalists at the *Seattle Times* (2003) found that 159 coaches in the state of Washington (where only 2 percent of the U.S. population lives) were fired or reprimanded for sexual offenses between 1993 and 2003. Offenses ranged from harassment to rape, nearly all involved heterosexual male coaches victimizing girls, and about 60 percent of these coaches continued to coach or teach after the misconduct was known. Even though 159 coaches were fired or reprimanded, most reports of misconduct were neither investigated by school authorities nor reported to the police. Even when misconduct was admitted, the incidents were kept secret if the coaches agreed to leave their jobs. Sexual offenses in private sport clubs were especially problematic because clubs seldom regulate coaches' conduct, and most parents trust coaches even when evidence arouses suspicions of misconduct (Willmsen and O'Hagan, 2003).

Crimes of assault and sexual assault go far beyond the realm of sport, but when they are committed by celebrity athletes or coaches, they may be reported less often than in other cases, victims may be intimidated by fans and representatives of teams and sport organizations, prosecutors may not file charges, "settlements" may be reached to avoid criminal prosecution, and verdicts may be debated after trials have been held. Even if future research indicates that neither athletes nor coaches have assault rates higher than others, there is a need to address the unique issues associated with sport cultures and the experiences of the victims in these cases.

VIOLENCE AMONG SPECTATORS

Do sports incite violence among spectators? This is an important question because sports capture widespread public attention around the world and spectators number in the billions. To answer this question, we must distinguish between watching sports on television and attending events in person. Further, we must study spectators in context if we wish to understand the emotional dynamics of identifying with teams and athletes, the meanings that spectators give to particular sporting events, and the varying circumstances under which people watch sports.

Violence Among Television Viewers

Most people watch sports on television in their homes. They may express emotions and become angry at certain points, but we don't know much about when and why people express anger through violence directed at friends and family members at home. Nor do we know much about violence among people who watch televised sports in public settings such as bars, pubs, and around large video screens in public areas.

"Hey, watch it, pal! You stepped on my foot."

The language used by some spectators often refers to violence, but it is not known if such language actually incites violent actions.

Thousands of diverse fans gathered around public video screens when the 2007 Rugby World Cup was hosted in Paris. These fans, mostly French, with large groups from England, Ireland, Australia, and New Zealand, were expressive, but violence was not observed by the author, who took this photo and talked with people in the crowd. (*Source: Jay Coakley*)

Most people who watch media sports outside the home restrict their emotional expressions to verbal comments. When they express anger, they nearly always direct it at the players, coaches, referees, or media commentators rather than fellow viewers. Even when emotional outbursts are defined as too loud or inappropriate, fellow viewers usually try control the offender informally and peacefully. When fans from opposing teams watch an event at the same location, there often are sources of mutual identification that defuse differences and discourage physical violence, although verbal comments may become heated.

Since the mid-1990s, the cases of celebratory violence after a favored team wins a big game or championship have increased among men watching sports in bars or other public places. Predicting such violence is difficult, but a combination of heavy alcohol consumption and the presence of peers who encourage extreme actions increase its likelihood.

The belief that watching sports is associated with violence has led some people to wonder if watching sports—the Super Bowl, for example—is associated with temporary spikes in the rates of domestic violence in a community or the nation as a whole. During the 1990s, a journalist misleadingly reported that women's shelters were filled on Super Bowl Sunday because of increased domestic violence on that day. Subsequent examination of his sources and reliable research on this topic proved that he was wrong (Cohen 1994; Sachs and Chu, 2000), but the belief persists. Of course, the anger caused by a televised sport event *could* be a factor in particular cases of domestic violence, but the roots of such

violence run deep, and to blame it on watching sports overlooks more important factors. Furthermore, we don't know enough about the ways that spectators integrate televised sport content into their lives to say that watching sports does anything except provide focused social occasions (Coakley, 1988–1989; Crawford, 2004).

Violence at Sport Events

Spectators attending non-contact sport events seldom engage in violence. They may be emotionally expressive, but violence directed at fellow fans, players, coaches, referees, ushers, or police is rare. The attack and wounding of number-one ranked tennis player Monica Seles in 1993 stands out as one of the only violent incidents at a non-contact sport event, and that incident had more to do with celebrity stalking than with the dynamics of a sport event. Of course, there are occasions when fans use hostile words or engage in minor skirmishes when someone spills a drink on another person, but such cases of violence are usually controlled effectively by the fans themselves. The exception is when there are pre-existing hostilities between particular fans looking to confront each other.

Spectators attending contact sports tend to be vocal and emotional, but most of them don't engage in violent acts. However, crowd violence occurs with enough regularity and seriousness in certain sports to be defined as a problem for law enforcement and a social issue for which it would be helpful to have an explanation (Briggs, 2004; Lewis, 2007; Upton, 2005; Young, 2002b; 2007b).

Historical Background Media reports of violent actions at sport events around the world, especially soccer matches in Europe and college football games in the United States, have increased our awareness of crowd violence. However, crowd violence is not new. Data documenting the actions of sport spectators through the ages are scarce, but research suggests that spectator violence occurred in the past and much of it would make crowd violence today seem rare and tame by comparison (Dunning, 1999; Guttmann, 1986, 1998; Scheinin, 1994; Young, 2000).

Roman events during the first five centuries of the first Christian millennium contained especially brutal examples of crowd violence (Guttmann, 1986, 1998; 2004). Spectators during the medieval period were not much better, although levels of violence decreased in the late medieval period. With the emergence of modern sports, violence among sport spectators decreased further, but it remained common by today's standards. For example, a baseball game in 1900 was described by a journalist in this way:

> Thousands of gun slinging Chicago Cubs fans turned a Fourth of July doubleheader into a shoot-out at the OK Corral, endangering the lives of players and fellow spectators. Bullets sang, darted, and whizzed over players' heads as the rambunctious fans fired round after round whenever the Cubs scored against the gun-shy Philadelphia Phillies. The visiting team was so intimidated it lost both games . . . at Chicago's West Side Grounds. (Nash and Zullo, 1989, p. 133)

This newspaper account also reports that when the Cubs scored six runs in the sixth inning of the first game, guns were fired around the stadium to the point that gun smoke made it difficult to see the field. When the Cubs tied the score in the ninth inning, fans again fired guns, and hundreds of them shot holes in the roof of the grandstand, causing splinters to fly onto their heads. As the game remained tied during three extra innings, fans pounded the seats with the butts of their guns and fired in unison every time the Phillies' pitcher began his windup to throw a pitch. It rattled him so much that the Cubs scored on a wild pitch. After the score, a vocal and heavily armed Cubs fan stood up and shouted, "Load! Load at will! Fire!" Fans around the stadium emptied the rest of their ammunition in a final explosive volley.

Between 1900 and the early 1940s, crowd violence was common: Bottles and other objects

were thrown at players and umpires, and World Series games were disrupted by fans angered by umpires' calls or the actions of opposing players (Scheinin, 1994). Players feared being injured by spectators as much as they feared the "bean balls" thrown regularly at their heads by opposing pitchers. During the 1950s and 1960s, high school basketball and football games in some U.S. cities were sites for local youth gang wars. Gang members and a few students used chains, switchblade knives, brass knuckles, and tire irons to attack each other. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, some high school games in Chicago were closed to the public and played early on Saturday mornings because the regularly scheduled games had become occasions for crowd violence, much of it related to racial and ethnic tensions in the city.

These examples are not meant to minimize the existence or seriousness of crowd violence today. They are mentioned here to counter the argument that violence is a bigger problem today than in the past, that coercive tactics should be used to control unruly fans, and that there is a general decline of civility among fans and in society as a whole (Jayson, 2004; Saporito, 2004; Wulf, 2004). Some spectators do act in obnoxious and violent ways today. They present law enforcement challenges and interfere with the enjoyment of other fans, but there is no systematic evidence that they are unprecedented threats to the social order or signs of the decline of civilization as we know it.

Celebratory Violence Oddly enough, some of the most dangerous and destructive crowd violence occurs during the celebrations that follow victories in important games (Lewis, 2007). Until recently, when middle-class, white college students tore down expensive goalposts after football victories or ransacked seats and threw seat pads and other objects onto the field, it was treated as displays of youthful exuberance and loyalty to the university. However, in the wake of injuries and mounting property damage associated with these incidents, local and university authorities have banned or limited alcohol sales in stadiums and arenas, and they now use police and security officials to prevent fans from rushing onto the playing field when games end. Cases of celebratory violence still occur, but new methods of social control have been reasonably successful in preventing them from happening *inside* the stadium.

Controlling celebratory violence is especially difficult when crowds gather in multiple locations throughout a city. Local police are usually prepared to anticipate celebratory crowds around the stadium, but effective control depends on specialized training, advance planning, and officers who can intervene without creating backlash in the crowd. Breakdowns are relatively common in the face of massive crowds and uncertainty about what might happen. For instance, when thousands of Boston Red Sox fans gathered to celebrate winning the World Series in October 2004, a Boston police officer carelessly shot a projectile filled with pepper spray at a crowd and hit a young woman in the eye. She died of head injuries caused by the impact. In most cases, however, deaths occur when crowds move suddenly and trample people or when people are pushed in the way of vehicles with panicked drivers trying to escape the danger.

Sociologists have studied crowds and crowd dynamics, but scholars in the sociology of sport usually lack the resources to study sport-related celebratory violence. However, if celebratory violence continues to occur, resources will be allocated for law enforcement research. Furthermore, professional sport teams will develop strategies to defuse violence through announcements by highly visible players and respected coaches, bar owners will be asked to control drinking and contain the movement of their customers, and universities will attempt to control the binge drinking that accompanies most celebratory violence. Fans will be encouraged to BIRG, that is, "bask in the reflected glory" of the moment, but the goal will be to facilitate the formation of norms that discourage violence in connection with BIRGing.

We need research on so-called celebratory riots. Research on other forms of collective action suggests that celebratory riots may not be as spontaneous and unplanned as many people think.

Research and Theories About Crowd Violence

Researchers in the United States often study violence, but seldom have they studied violence at sport events. The research that does exist has focused primarily on issues of race relations, and little attention has been given to other issues.

European scholars, especially in Great Britain, have done most of the research on crowd violence, and their studies have focused almost exclusively on soccer and "soccer hooliganism." Social psychological research has emphasized that displays of intimidation and aggression at soccer matches involve ritual violence, consisting of fantasy-driven status posturing by young males who want to be defined as tough and manly (Marsh, 1982; Marsh and Campbell, 1982). These studies describe classic examples of ritualistic aggression, but they understate the serious and occasionally deadly violence perpetrated by soccer fans, especially during pre- and post-game activities.

Research inspired by structural theories, especially forms of Marxism, emphasize that violence at soccer matches is an expression of alienation among disenfranchised working-class men (Taylor, 1982a, 1982b, 1987). In addition to losing control over the conditions of their work lives, these men also feel marginalized by the recently commercialized clubs that sponsor elite soccer in England. This research connects certain forms of violence with class conflict in society, but it doesn't explain why violence at soccer matches has not increased proportionately in connection with the declining power of the working class in England.

Research inspired by interactionist and cultural theories has emphasized a variety of factors, including the importance of understanding the history and dynamics of the working-class and youth subcultures in British society and how those subcultures have been influenced by the professionalization and commercialization of society as a whole and soccer in particular (Clark, 1978; Critcher, 1979). However, the data presented in this research are not very strong, and more work is needed to develop critical analyses of crowd violence across various situations.

Much of the recent research on soccer violence has been based on figurational theory, an explanatory framework based on a synthesis of knowledge from biology, psychology, sociology,

and history. This work, summarized by Dunning (1999), Dunning , Murphy, and Williams (1988), Dunning et al. (2002), and Young (2000, 2007a, 2007b), emphasizes that violence and hooliganism (rowdy and destructive actions) is grounded in long-term historical changes that have affected working-class men, their relationships with each other and their families, and their ideas about community, violence, and masculinity. Taken together, these changes have created a *social figuration*, or a set of historically concentrated social processes, in which soccer represents the collective turf and identity of people in local communities, espcially young British men. Soccer then becomes a site for these men to defend and/or assert community and identity through violence directed at the new status quo. This research provides valuable historical data and thoughtful analyses of the complex social processes in which particular forms of sport violence are located. In fact, is has been used as a guide by officials formulating recent policies of social control related to soccer crowds in England and around Europe (Spaaji, 2008).

As the police have become more sophisticated in anticipating violence associated with soccer crowds, young men, some of whom may not be avid soccer fans, take it as a challenge to outsmart them and create discord and violent confrontations with rival groups. Research indicates that current forms of hooliganism involve semi-organized confrontations that are strategically staged to cause havoc and avoid arrest. The police in this situation play the role of umpire between groups and attempt to confine confrontations to spaces where they are prepared to deal with them and make arrests before serious injuries and property damage occur (Armstrong, 1998; 2007; Brown, 1998; Dunning et al., 2002; Giulianotti and Armstrong, 2002).

Cell phones, handheld GPS devices, and other communications technology are used by the young men to formulate on-the-spot strategies and escape detection and arrest. The police use similar technologies along with surveillance cameras to contain violence. The dynamics associated with this form of violence are not related to sports to the same degree as the so-called hooliganism of the past. Today, soccer matches and tournaments are not the primary focus of those involved in the violence; instead, the perpetrators simply use soccer matches as occasions for seeking excitement through violence.

General Factors Related to Violence at Sport Events

Crowd violence at sport events is a complex social phenomenon. Research shows that it is related to three general factors:

1. The action in the sport event itself
2. The crowd dynamics and the situation in which the spectators watch the event
3. The historical, social, economic, and political contexts in which the event is planned and played

Violence and Action in the Event If spectators perceive players' actions on the field as violent, they are more likely to engage in violent acts during and after games (Smith, 1983). This point is important because spectators' perceptions often are influenced by the way in which events are promoted. If an event is hyped in terms of violent images, spectators are more likely to perceive violence during the event itself and then to be violent themselves. This leads some people to argue that promoters and the media have a responsibility to advertise events in terms of the action and drama expected, not the prospect of blood and violence.

Research by Daniel Wann and his colleagues (1999; 2001a, b; 2002; 2003; 2004) has shown that the perceptions and actions of spectators depend on the extent to which they identify with teams and athletes. Highly identified fans are more likely than others to link their team's performance to their own emotions and identities. Although, by itself, this does not cause violence,

it predisposes fans to take action if and when they have opportunities to do something that they think might help their team. This is important because team personnel and venue management encourage fans to believe that they can motivate home team players and distract visiting team players. Although most fans restrict their "participation" to cheering, stomping, and waving objects, some systematically harass and taunt opposing players.

Taunts from fans are not new, but they've become especially personal and offensive in recent years. Players are expected to ignore taunts, but on occasion some have gone into the stands to attack an obnoxious fan. This has occurred more often in Latin America and Europe than North America, but it appears to be increasing in the United States and Canada. In 2005 there was a highly publicized case when three NBA players on the Indiana Pacers fought with fans during a game with the Detroit Pistons after a fan hit a player with a cup of liquid and ice thrown from the stands. The cup was thrown following an incident of brutal body contact on the court. For a few moments, many people feared a major riot, but players, coaches, security officers, and fans intervened to prevent an escalation of violence. As a result, the three visiting players involved in the fight were suspended for a total of 128 games and forfeited about $11 million dollars of salary between them. Two of these players were charged with assault and battery, two players from the Pistons also were suspended for multiple games, the owner of the Indiana Pacers paid the NBA a fine of nearly $3 million, and two fans were charged with minor crimes and one had his Pistons season tickets revoked.

This incident created discussions throughout the United States. In sociological terms, it highlighted the need to manage more carefully the relationship between players and fans. However, this is a challenge under current circumstances. Fans pay high prices for tickets, they're encouraged by management and media personnel to be emotionally expressive, they expect players to give them their money's worth, and they often detest what they perceive as arrogance displayed by highly paid players. To complicate matters, over 90 percent of fans are white, and a large percentage of the players are black (75 percent in the NBA). This can frame the expectations and perceptions of fans and the attitudes of players in volatile racial terms—as if did in Detroit.

From the players' perspective, the possibility of fan violence creates a strong sense of vulnerability. They realize that they're standing amidst thousands of fans who could kill or main them in minutes if a mass brawl occurred. For example, a Pacers player who was suspended for thirty games and lost $1.7 million in salary for coming to the aid of his teammate in 2005 said this:

> I regret the incident . . . But I never regret helping my teammate. We shine together; we go down together. If my teammate feels threatened, I'm going to be there for him. . . . I protect my brother, my family. . . . Players understand [what I mean]. If you were a player, you would too. (in Le Batard, 2005b, p. 14)

This statement emphasizes the strong bonds between athletes and how those bonds lead athletes to protect each other when there are player-fan confrontations.

Also important in the sport event are the calls made by officials. When fans believe that a crucial goal or a victory has been "stolen" by an unfair or clearly incompetent decision made by a referee or an umpire, the likelihood of violence during and after the event increases (Murphy, Williams, and Dunning, 1990). This is why it is important to have competent officials at crucial games and matches and why it is important for them to control game events so that actions perceived as violent are held to a minimum.

The knowledge that fan aggression may be precipitated by a crucial call late in a close, important contest puts heavy responsibility on the officials' shoulders. For example, the brawl at the Detroit–Indiana NBA game occurred after a flagrant foul by a Detroit player. The officials had allowed players to continue the rough play

that had characterized the game, even though there was less than a minute to play and the Pacers were winning by 15 points. Would the brawl have occurred if the officials had controlled the game differently in the final quarter? We don't know, but officials are important when it comes to managing games in ways that make crowd violence less likely.

Violence, Crowd Dynamics, and Situational Factors The characteristics of a crowd and the immediate situation associated with a sport event also influence patterns of action among spectators. Spectator violence is likely to vary with one or more of the following factors:

- Crowd size and the standing or seating patterns of spectators
- Composition of the crowd in terms of age, sex, social class, and racial/ethnic mix
- Importance and meaning of the event for spectators
- History of the relationship between the teams and among spectators
- Crowd-control strategies used at the event (police, attack dogs, surveillance cameras, or other security measures)
- Alcohol consumption by the spectators
- Location of the event (neutral site or home site of one of the opponents)
- Spectators' reasons for attending the event and what they want to happen at the event
- Importance of the team as a source of identity for spectators (class identity, ethnic or national identity, regional or local identity, club or gang identity)

Instead of discussing each factor in detail, contrasting pairs of game situations will be used to illustrate how the factors might influence spectator violence.

The *location of an event* is important because it influences who attends and how they travel. If the stadium is generally accessed by car, if spectators for the visiting team are limited due to travel distance and expense, and if tickets are costly, it is likely that the local people attending the game have a vested interest in maintaining order and avoiding violence. On the other hand, if large groups of people travel to the game in buses or trains and if tickets are relatively cheap and many of the spectators are young people more interested in creating a memorable experience than simply seeing a game, confrontations between people looking for exciting action increase, as does the possibility of violence. If groups of fans looking for excitement have consumed large amounts of alcohol, the possibility of violence increases greatly.

If spectators are respected and treated as valued guests rather than bodies to be controlled, and if stadium norms emphasize service as opposed to social control, people are less likely to engage in defensive and confrontational actions that could lead to violence. If the stadium or arena is crowded and if the crowd itself is composed mostly of young men rather than men and women of all ages, there is a greater chance for confrontations and violence, especially if the event is seen as a special rivalry whose outcome has status implications for the schools, communities, or nations represented by the teams.

Spectator violence, when it does occur, takes many forms. There have been celebratory riots among the fans of the winning team, fights between fans of opposing teams, random property destruction carried out by fans of the losing team as they leave town, panics incited by a perceived threat unrelated to the contest itself, and planned confrontations between groups using the event as a convenient place to face off with each other as they seek to enhance their status and reputation or reaffirm their ethnic, political, class, national, local, or gang identities. Each of these has different dynamics and requires specific methods of control.

Whenever thousands of people gather together for an occasion intended to generate collective emotions and excitement, it's not

surprising that crowd dynamics and circumstances influence the actions of individuals and groups. This is especially true at sport events where collective action is easily fueled by what social psychologists call **emotional contagion,** *a condition in which social norms are formed rapidly and are followed in a nearly spontaneous manner by large numbers of people.* Although this does not always lead to violence, it increases the possibility of potentially violent confrontations between groups of fans and between fans and agents of social control, such as the police.

Violence and the Overall Context in Which Events Occur Sport events do not occur in social vacuums. When spectators attend events, they take with them the histories, issues, controversies, and ideologies of the communities and cultures in which they live. They may be racists who want to harass those they identify as targets for discrimination. They may come from ethnic neighborhoods and want to express and reaffirm their ethnicity or from particular nations and want to express their national identity. They may resent negative circumstances in their lives and want to express their bitterness. They may be members of groups or gangs in which status is gained partly through fighting. They may be powerless and alienated and looking for ways to be noticed and defined as socially important. They may be young men who believe that manhood is achieved through violence and domination over others. Or they may be living lives so devoid of significance and excitement that they want to create a memorable occasion they can discuss boastfully with friends for years to come. In other words, when thousands of spectators attend a sport event, their actions are grounded in multiple factors far beyond the event and the stadium.

When tensions and conflicts are intense and widespread in a community or society, sport events may become sites for confrontations. For example, some of the worst spectator violence in the United States has been grounded in racial tensions aggravated by highly publicized rivalries between high schools whose students come from different racial or ethnic backgrounds (Guttmann, 1986). In cities where housing segregation has created heavily segregated schools, racial and ethnic conflicts have contributed to confrontations before, during, and after games. Gangs, some of whose members have weapons, may stake out territories around a sport stadium so that a game becomes an occasion for displays of gang power. Similarly, when the "ultras," organized groups of fans prevalent in Italy during the 1990s, attended soccer games, they often used violence to express their loyalty to peers and the teams they followed (Roversi, 1994). The ultras have developed in recent years into commercial enterprises run by business people. However, the violence continues and recent events for which they have been credited include hospitalizing four British fans attending a game in Italy in 2000, and stabbing to death a policeman in 2007.

Finally, it must be noted that nearly all crowd violence involves men. This suggests that future research on this topic must consider the role of masculinity in crowd dynamics and the actions of particular segments of crowds (Hughson, 2000). Female fans generally don't tip and set cars on fire or throw chairs through windows when they celebrate a victory. They may become involved in fights, but this is relatively rare. Crowd violence may be as much a gender issue as it is a racial or social class issue, and controlling it may involve changing notions of masculinity as much as hiring additional police to patrol the sidelines at every event.

Controlling Crowd Violence

Effective efforts to control spectator violence are based on an awareness of each of the three factors previously discussed. *First,* the fact that perceived violence on the field is associated with crowd violence indicates a need to control violence among players during events. If fans don't

Fearing mass violence, this officer aims pepper spray at fans, mostly males, who occupied the field after a major college football game. A more effective strategy is to contain them and then disperse them in small groups in different directions. Using pepper spray may incite or escalate violence in such situations. (*Source:* Mark Hall, AP/Wide World Photos)

define the actions of players as violent, the likelihood of crowd violence decreases. Furthermore, if events are not promoted as violent confrontations between hostile opponents, fans are less likely to perceive violence on the field.

Perceived hostility and violence can be defused if players and coaches make public announcements emphasizing the skills of the athletes involved in the event and their respect for opponents. High-profile or celebrity fans for each team could make similar announcements.

The use of competent and professionally trained officials is also important. When officials maintain control of a game and make calls the spectators define as fair, they decrease the likelihood of spectator violence grounded in anger and perceived injustice. Referees also could meet with both teams before the event and explain the need to leave hostilities in the locker rooms. Team officials could organize pre-game unity rituals involving an exchange of team symbols and displays of respect between opponents. These rituals could be covered by the media so that fans could see that athletes do not view their opponents as enemies. But these strategies conflict with commercial media interests in hyping games as wars without weapons; therefore, we're faced with a choice: protect the safety of fans and players versus preserve media profits and gate receipts for team owners.

Second, an awareness of crowd dynamics and the conditions that precipitate violence is critical. Preventive measures are important. The needs and rights of spectators must be known

reflect on **SPORTS**

Terrorism
Planned Political Violence at Sport Events

The visibility of sport events and the concentration of many people in one place make sport venues a possible target of terrorist attacks. After deadly terrorist attacks in New York, Washington, DC, London, Madrid, and other cities worldwide, most people today have a heightened awareness of terrorism and its possible impact on their lives (GAO, 2006).

An integral part of planning major sport events today is establishing effective security measures at arenas and stadiums. Spectators often are searched as they enter venues, and rules regulate what they may bring with them. However, most security measures are discreetly enacted and take place behind the scenes in the form of bomb searches, electronic surveillance, and undercover tactics.

As sport teams and venues deal with security issues, their costs increase. In fact, it is estimated that world organizers of sport events spend around $2 billion per year on security. During the 2004 Summer Olympic Games in Athens, over $2 billion was spent on security. Similar expenses for the 2008 Olympic Games were difficult to estimate because security forces were deployed across the entire nation, with 100,000 trained antiterrorists and 300,000 public surveillance cameras used in Beijing alone. The day after London was awarded the summer Olympic Games for 2012, it was the target of a terrorist attack, and it is estimated that the cost of security for the London Games will be at least $2 billion.

Although people in the United States have only recently become sensitive to the threat of political terrorism, others around the world have lived for many years with the threat and reality of terrorist acts. Furthermore, terrorism is not new to international sports. For instance, during the early morning hours of September 5, 1972, members of a Palestinian terrorist group called Black September entered the Olympic Village in Munich, Germany. Dressed in athletic warm-up suits and carrying sport bags containing grenades and automatic weapons, they entered a bedroom that housed Israeli athletes participating in the Summer Olympic Games. They shot and killed a wrestling coach and a weightlifter and captured nine other Israeli athletes, one of whom was from the United States.

After a twenty-one-hour standoff and a poorly planned rescue attempt, seventeen people were dead—ten Israeli athletes and one coach, one West German police officer, and five terrorists. The remaining terrorists were sought out and killed by Israeli commandos. The Olympics were suspended for a day, but events resumed and the closing ceremonies occurred as planned. About $2 million had been spent on security during the Olympics in Munich; thirty-two years later Athens spent over 1000 times that amount.

Although the terrorism in Munich is remembered by many people who currently plan the Olympic Games, it is seldom mentioned in the media coverage of the Olympics. The reasons for this are complex, but it is clear that many people don't want their favorite sport events disrupted or defined in connection with the nasty realities of everyday life, even though sports cannot be separated from the world in which they exist.

Because terrorism occurs regularly, it is useful to remember that sports cannot be separated from policies, events, and material conditions of life that create deeply felt resentment and hatred among people around the world. This means that everyone has an interest in learning more about the world and how peace might be achieved. This takes time and commitment on our part, and it won't be easy to change the conditions that precipitate terrorism. In the meantime, none of us can escape the threat of terrorism at the high-profile sport events we attend. *What do you think?*

and respected. Crowd-control officials must be well trained so that they know how to intervene in potentially disruptive situations without escalating violence. Alcohol consumption should be regulated realistically, as has been done in many venues worldwide. Venues and the spaces around them should be safe and organized, to enable spectators to move around while limiting contact between hostile fans of opposing teams. Exits should be accessible and clearly marked, and spectators should not be herded like animals before or after games. Encouraging attendance by families is important in lowering the incidence of violence.

Third, an awareness of the historical, social, economic, and political issues that often underlie crowd violence is also important. Restrictive law-and-order responses to crowd violence may be temporarily effective, but they will not eliminate the underlying tensions and conflicts that often fuel violence. Policies dealing with oppressive forms of inequality, economic problems, unemployment, lack of political representation, racism, and distorted definitions of masculinity are needed. These factors often lead to tensions, conflicts, and violence. As noted in the box on terrorism (page 226), dealing with the threat of political terrorism at sport events also requires an awareness of these factors on a global level. For example, current and past wars often create tensions that will precipitate sport-related violence under particular conditions.

In addition to strategies in each of these three categories, social control can be maintained by establishing visible and meaningful connections between teams and the communities in which they're located. This can defuse potentially dangerous feelings among groups of spectators and community residents. However, this does not mean that teams merely need better public relations. There must be *actual* connections between the teams (players) and the communities in which they exist. Effective forms of community service are helpful, and team owners must be visible supporters of community events and programs. Teams must develop programs to assist in the development of local neighborhoods, especially those around their home stadium or arena. The goal of these strategies is to create antiviolence norms among spectators and community residents. Shaping norms can be difficult, but it's a more effective strategy than using metal detectors, moving games to remote locations, hiring hundreds of security personnel, patrolling the stands, using surveillance cameras, scheduling games at times when crowds will be sparse, and recruiting police and soldiers to brandish automatic weapons. Of course, some of these tactics can be effective, but they destroy part of the enjoyment of spectator sports. Therefore, they should be last resorts or temporary measures used only during the time it takes to develop new spectator norms.

OLC **ON THE *OLC:***

See the OLC—Additional Readings for Chapter 7—for an essay on violence in animal sports, including dog racing and dog fighting.

summary

DOES VIOLENCE IN SPORTS AFFECT OUR LIVES?

Violence is not new to sports. Athletes throughout history have engaged in actions and used strategies that cause or have the potential to cause injuries to themselves and others. Furthermore, spectators throughout history have regularly engaged in violent actions before, during, and after sport events. However, as people define violence in sports as controllable rather than as a fact of life, there's a tendency to view it as a problem in need of a solution.

Violence in sports ranges from brutal body contact and borderline violence to quasi-criminal

and criminal acts. It is linked with overconformity to the sport ethic, commercialization, and cultural definitions of masculinity. It has become institutionalized in most contact sports as a strategy for competitive success, even though it causes injuries and permanent physical impairments to athletes. The use of enforcers is one example of institutionalized violence in sports.

Controlling on-the-field violence is difficult, especially in men's contact sports, because it is often tied to players' identities as athletes and men. Male athletes in contact sports learn to use violence and intimidation as strategic tools, but we don't know if the strategies learned in sports influence the expression of violence in relationships and situations that occur off-the-field.

Among males, learning to use violence as a tool within a sport is frequently tied to the reaffirmation of a form of masculinity that emphasizes a willingness to risk personal safety and intimidate others. If the boys and men who participate in certain sports learn to perceive this orientation as natural or appropriate, and receive support for this perception from sources inside sports and the general community, then their participation in sports may contribute to off-the-field violence, including assault, sexual assault, and rape. However, such learning is not automatic, and men may, under certain circumstances, even learn to control anger and their expressions of violence by playing certain sports.

The most important impact of violence in sports may be its reaffirmation of a gender ideology that assumes the "natural superiority of men." This ideology is based on the belief that an ability to do violence is an essential feature of manhood.

Female athletes in contact sports also engage in aggressive and violent acts, but little is known about the connections between these acts and the gender identities of girls and women at different levels of competition. Many women prefer an emphasis on supportive connections between teammates and opponents as compared with the power and performance aspects of sports. Therefore, aggression and violence do not occur in women's sports as often or through the same identity dynamics as they occur in men's sports.

Violence occurs among spectators who view sport events through the media as well as those attending live events. Research is needed to explain the conditions under which violence occurs in crowds watching or listening to media representations of events. Studies of violence at the sites of events indicates that crowd violence is influenced by perceived violence on the field of play, crowd dynamics, the situation at the event itself, the overall historical and cultural contexts in which spectators give meaning to the event, and their relationships with others in attendance. Isolated cases of violence, including celebratory violence, are best controlled by improved crowd management, but chronic violence among spectators usually signals that changes are required in the culture and organization of sports and/or the social, economic, and political structures of a community or society.

Terrorism in the form of planned, politically motivated violence at sport events is rare, but the threat of terrorism alters security policies and procedures at sport venues. The terrorist attack at the 1972 Olympic Games reminds us that global issues influence our lives, even when we attend our favorite sport events. Just as violence in sports affects our lives, the social conditions in which we live affect violence in sports.

WEBSITE RESOURCES

Note: Websites often change. The following URLs were current when this book was printed. Please check our website (www.mhhe.com/coakley10e) for updates and additions. Click on chapter 7 for information and critique of instinct theory and frustration-aggression theory as applied to violence in sports; discussion of cultural patterning theory and violence associated with sports.

www.answers.com/topic/violence-in-sports
Encyclopedia-like information about violence in sports; good links to sites on specific topics.

www.coe.int/t/dg4/sport/violence/Default_en.asp Council of Europe site presents documents stating the council's official position on spectator violence, mostly in connection with football matches.

www.ericdigests.org/pre-9214/sports.htm Explores various aspects of violence in sports, especially youth sports.

www.ncava.org Site of the National Coalition Against Violent Athletes presents information to educate the public and to support and assist victims of violence by athletes.

www.sportinsociety.org/vpd/mvp.php Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) is a gender violence prevention and education program based at Northeastern University's Center for the Study of Sport in Society; it enlists high school, collegiate, and professional athletes in the effort to prevent all forms of men's violence against women.

www.un.org/Depts/dhl/resguide/r58.htm Links to two UN resolutions: "Building a Peaceful and Better World Through Sport and the Olympic Ideal" (A/RES/58/6) and "Sport as a Means to Promote Education, Health, Development and Peace" (A/RES/58/5).

www.un.org/sport2005/ The site for the UN International Year for Sport and Physical and links to sites on sexual harassment in sports; click on "Resources" to see UN resolutions related to sports and peace.

http://youthsports.rutgers.edu/resources/general-interest/parental-violence-in-youth-sports-facts-myths-and-videotape Article on "Parental Violence in Youth Sports: Facts, Myths, and Videotape," by Gregg S. Heinzmann, Director, Youth Sports Research Council at Rutgers University.