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ABSTRACT

The issue of violence on the soccer field in our time is a very complicated sport-social phenomenon. The subject has already been extensively researched, but there is still room for further inquiry. In accordance with internationally accepted theoretical tendencies, previous studies examining the issue of violence in soccer in Greece have focused on the understanding of this phenomenon as it relates to either the social conditions in society in general, or to the social characteristics of the spectators of the soccer clubs that are involved in that violence. This study looked at the issue from another point of view. Specifically, it focuses on the understanding of the phenomenon as it relates with the space, the time and the structural conditions under which it is produced. For that purpose, a questionnaire was administered to 696 subjects divided into four different groups of individuals related to soccer. The results, divided in three categories, indicate that, when we examine issues of violence in soccer, we should consider how a variety of social-cultural and emotional conditions inside football stadiums are shaped, keeping in mind that those conditions are specific in each game. This would enable us to differentiate violence in sport from other forms of violence and would assist in understanding the limits of responsibility of football institutions and organizations.

Key Words: *violence, football stadium, emotional energy, structural characteristics and conditions, expectations.*

INTRODUCTION

In accordance with internationally accepted theoretical tendencies research of football violence is usually based on common theoretical perspectives. However, the social-cultural conditions under which this phenomenon occurs may not be the same across all cultures. In Europe for example, research focuses either on broader external social factors comparing data from different European countries (7, 53), or on the particular demographic and social characteristics of the participants in violent situations-events before football game, during, or after it (16, 30, 48).

The causes of football violence demonstrated inside football fields may be attributed on broader social issues and circumstances. So it seems that the problem of violence, within historical, economic, sociopolitical and cultural contexts, is not of the same nature, or is not influenced by the same causal factors. However, most research reveals cross-national similarities in the stages of development of the problem (7). In Greece, research related to violence in football stadiums has grown in scale since the early 1990s. Much of this research is based on British and North American theoretical perspectives with the purpose of containing and preventing sport violence (28, 29, 31, 35). It is limited mostly to external factors and to the socio-cultural characteristics of those involved in the violence and not on an in-depth analysis, explanation and understanding of the specificity of the 'football situation'. These approaches fall within the scope of general theories of crime and focus on what happens after violence breaks out and the legal intervention to that; they could be discussed in the framework of the theory of the behavior of law (4) or on the perspectives of a theory of crime (8). In this framework, violence in the soccer field can be confused, or appear to be similar to criminal violence. However, it is suggested that the violence in the football stadium can not be understood by examining only background conditions without taking into account the precise and specific space and time conditions under which it is originating.

In Greek research, violence in football fields is described by using the English term hooliganism. From this point of view, it should be pointed out that sport violence appears and is experienced as a special case of violence that is deliberately contrived for the sake of having a good time in the excitement of fighting (1, 9, 18, 20, 44). From a social perspective, in most cases, this kind of violence has been separated from the narrowly defined violence occurring in football space and time, though it may not be directly connected to what happens in the field. This type of violence should not always be considered 'sport violence'. Some researchers present a slightly different view of sport violence, stating that hooligans may have a 'willingness to fight' and even a 'love of fighting' describing it as a 'hyped up sensation' (26, 44). In most cases, sport hooligan violence becomes totally dis-

connected from the game itself. Even then, what happens in the arena helps explain the violence outside of it (9).

A football game has short and long-term social effect. However, what is occurring outside the time and place of the game has a complicated socio-cultural and political significance. The control of what is happening outside the field is usually beyond the jurisdiction and power of football institutions and organizations (36, 37). This study aims to go beyond the hooligan perspective. In addition, the phenomenon of sports violence in Greece has not appeared in the context of extensive hooliganism and has not been associated with practices of criminal gangs, as has been the case in other countries (56). Today, violence occurring inside football stadiums in Greece may not be related to differences in class, religion, political views, affiliations, etc. More likely it is associated to the traditional regional multifaceted antagonism between members of different football clubs. This antagonism between members of different football clubs, that may lead to violent clashes outside the football field and not necessarily during the time of the game only, should not be exclusively characterized as sports violence.

This study goes beyond the external factors and demographic or social characteristics of those involved in acts of violence inside the stadiums where many of those factors are abolished. Consequently, we should not look for the causes in such factors since their social meaning has been diluted and in some cases has disappeared altogether. The development of social processes inside football stadiums has not evolved in accordance to the spectators specific social characteristics, namely their social or ethical levels. Certainly, background conditions like poverty, race, gender, childhood experiences and family situations are "crucial to the dynamics of the violence situation" (9).

It should be stated that for a better understanding of the phenomenon, we should place at the center of analysis the specific elements of the football actions and communications on the basis of which interactions are generated and re-generated inside the football stadium. These interactions are not generated in accordance with the social background, the culture, or even the motives of the individuals involved. This requires that we should look for what creates the situations that leads to aggression and violence¹. It is the existence of special conditions that, in many cases, creates a strong and mostly uncontrolled Emotional Energy (EE) dynamic. The level of fluctuation of this EE depends on very different and complicated factors. More-

¹ Aggression here is not discussed or understood as a given biological instinct but as a social construction and/or as a playful phenomenon. Violence on the other hand is defined as an intended action to 'injure' the opponent in multiple ways (emotional-psychological, verbal, physical, etc.).

over, from a sport-sociological perspective the uncontrolled EE dynamic is what creates the conditions for explosive and at times violent events. An additional purpose of this article as well is to enlarge our understanding of the emotional situations that are created inside the football stadium and, by utilizing ideas of the sociology of emotions, to elaborate on how emotions are guided and unfolded in the field, or in the game itself. This requires that one has to refer to how emotions are understood in the context of sociological perspectives. For example, organismic theories relate emotions to instinctual gestures or some libidinal base and root them in biological and universalistic perspectives (e.g Darwin and Freud). On the other hand, it appears that the culture and mainly the structure of a social situation or event to be the main factors of understanding emotions, because "our emotional thermostat does not seem to be fixed at birth" (20). Accordingly, situations may exist where the individuals involved shape emotional experiences.

Williams (55), in opposition to a view based on biologicistic and individualistic factors, stresses that, as part of social action in the group, emotions appear as social constructions produced within a social context. Inside football stadiums experiences are created that are not of a individualistic nature or character but rather collective. In these perspectives, the group influences and/or shapes the individuals emotions. The emotions and particularly the EE in football stadiums are beyond personal control and may be against some more generally prescribed (personal or wider cultural) norms.

THEORETICAL APPROACHES FOR UNDERSTANDING FOOTBALL VIOLENCE

There are many sociological theories and concepts that attempt to explore and understand the causes of football violence. Explanations for the phenomenon are wide and vary. To underscore the complexity of the phenomenon some of the attempts related to violence in the football stadium will be presented. Violence derived from events in football could be studied on the basis of various sociological reasons in accordance with social-political and economical circumstances. However, it remains similar in the way it is manifested (14, 15). In principal, violent events in the football field were and remain spontaneous and directly connected with the game itself.

Spectator violence takes several forms inside the football stadium. It could be manifested as a reaction to some event during the game and can include distractions of the sport facilities, violence against referees, or against members, or fans of the opposite team, among other things (14). It is unclear how these events are related to the rhythm of the game. What could not be disputed is that, independently of the socio-political and cultur-

al circumstances, some elements, which constitute the football situation, remain unchanged.

Until recently, research has been based on the belief that physical and instrumental violence is present in soccer more than in other sports because the working class tolerates it or is more disposed to physical and hard violence (13, 27, 41, 46, 47). Taylor (46) argues that until the beginning of the 1960's, football was primarily a working class game. Working class supporters were actively involved in many aspects of club activities, which were related to administration, players and policies. Subsequently, soccer became more bourgeois as ownership was transferred to affluent individuals resulting in the working class losing control (44). *Working Class Frustration*, a term used by Taylor refers to the frustration and the resentment that the working class was experiencing during this turnover. Football hooliganism appeared as a violent reaction to this process (44).

Dunning, Murphy and Williams (14) offered a complex theory of football violence (hooliganism) known as figurational approach, which refers to the actions of the lower working-class communities and is based on the interaction between historical, psychological and sociological influences. However, data have shown that participants in violent events relating to soccer do not belong to a homogenous group derive from the lower working class communities (17, 25). So today this model of analysis seems to be played out (24).

Critical theory, another theoretical perspective, offers another point of view stating that sport, in general, assists in maintaining capitalism. According to this framework, violence in football may be the result of the idealization, commercialization and mostly rationalization of football action and communication (50). In this context, and on the basis of disappointing aspects of their life, football may offer spectators' belonging to the lower social classes the opportunity to express aggression and violence, not against the real perpetrators of their frustration and their alienation, but against substitutes such as the spectators of the other teams (41). This is accentuated for spectators with personal and family problems (10, 40).

Marsh, Rosser and Harre (33) define football violence as a ritual event without seriousness to it. They propose that football fans follow a set of social rules which form a symbolic display aimed at getting rival fans to back down, but not to injure them (44). From this perspective, many interpretations of sport violence take place in the framework of Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence (6).

In the empirical work of Armstrong and Harris (2) emphasis is given to the socio-economic background of the participants in violent situations in the football stadium. Ellias and Dunning (15) describe football violence as motivated by a "quest for excitement" in unexciting, pacified societies that in recent centuries have been civilized. They argue that what is underscored in the phenomenon of soccer violence is the feelings of excitement and plea-

sure and the football stadium creates the conditions for such experiences. In this perspective, one can focus on specific elements of football events that form the basis for shaping micro-situations full of EE (9).

According to the above-mentioned analytical thinking, once the motivation exists, aggression and violence is the product of specific social characteristics of the participants, their frustration, and so forth. On the other hand, Collins (9) points out that micro-situational evidence in football stadiums shows that violence will not proceed, no matter how motivated someone may be, if the situation does not unfold in such a way that confrontational tension/fear is overcome. This indicates that the football space and the specific elements of the game itself are the primary factors on which the dynamics and unpredictable events are based and not the personal traits. Although we should not undermine the importance of including social structuring such as class and gender in social situations, in the present study we will attempt to go beyond them taking into consideration that the problem of football violence is associated with broad methodological and epistemological issues such as how 'reality' is created and conceived (36) and how micro-situational episodes inside the football stadiums are created.

STRUCTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF FOOTBALL

Sports aggression and violence, mostly a staged combat or rather a subset of it (9), means among other things that the structure of the event is much more important than dispositional and background explanations which are often invoked to account for violence in soccer. Football games are real events, which are organized at more intentional and artificial levels than other ordinary events. To the outside observers, the ritualistic form of the interaction-communication between the players on the field can be seen as a time-out from daily life contrasting ordinary practices and social expectations. From a system-theoretical perspective, football in general realizes its interactions and communications through the specific code Victory/Defeat (38, 39). This communication code has the meaning that one can not succeed unless somebody else fails.

In this perspective, the communications-interactions among the direct or indirect participants become meaningful only when they are understood as contributors to winning. The soccer game includes fights, both offensive and defensive, which are verbal and physical, emotional and mental. The football code expresses the struggle of power and dominance that dictates the internal dynamics of the game in the field and simultaneously is understood as the connecting link of its turbulent relationship to the broader society. The difference between these two poles of the code refers to purely sporting criteria and not to moral/ethical ones providing the operating system's code of

a high level of 'immorality' (38). Under this system of coding, a communicative logic is cultivated in the framework of which certain fundamental values that provide social significance and sustainability to the football (i.e. fair play) could be perceived as inhibiting factors of functional or communicative targets. This system of coding can be indifferent to moral appeals from where they originate. In this perspective, soccer situations or events are typified as self-advancements of hyper-individual character. The flow of actions and communications in the soccer field are realized in the context of this coding in such a manner so that an unavoidable EE of great dynamic is produced. This EE creates a feeling of collective, explosive, unpredictable and ever changing character. During a football game the direction and the structure of this EE can change from one moment to the next. This alters the structure of collectiveness as well and simultaneously changes the meaning of the collective experience. In these situations, all is possible and unpredictable. This unpredictability is fed quantitatively and qualitatively from the uncertainty of the outcome of the game and is the main cause of fluctuation of EE. Nothing is certain about who is going to win. Soccer as a team sport exercises much greater emotional power and collective cohesion than individual sports (32).

This uncertainty is multiplied by the rules of the game, which restrict certain actions that are physically possible, i.e. rules prohibit the use of hands (11). Players, however, may choose on occasions to deviate from those rules. These deviations may be reasons for change in the meaning of the collective experience resulting in aggressive and violent events.

Many studies reveal that physical violence in soccer is part of the game itself, or it is a determining feature of the sport. Physical damage or injuries frequently happen within the rules of the game and, in this perspective, some speak about structural violence (19, 23). Soccer became a masculine sport giving birth to the myth of masculinity, which is often put forward as an explanation of violence in the game, whether it is in the form of a cultural code of aggression and dominance, or it is in the physiology of testosterone and bulked-up muscle. It should be pointed out that in sport events associated with such sports as wrestling, track and field and weight lifting (where athletes are more build-up), no documented violent situations-actions have been observed.

This can be explained because, contrary to soccer where offensive and defensive situations are especially dramatic, in these sports competition takes place in other structural conditions, which although tense and competitive, do not promote dramatic forms of violent confrontations (9). In soccer, the alteration of offensive and defensive plays is more likely to produce emotional turning points and the struggle is to please spectators through a surplus of EE dominance, which is usually "stretched out and visibly displayed for the sake of spectators" (9). EE in soccer is collective and collective emotions could be both good and bad because "there is simultaneously

a reciprocal interaction with opponents so that one side gains EE at the expense of the other side losing it" (9). The antagonism in football stadiums in all of the above-mentioned perspectives may catalyze the switch from 'Us and Them' (the mere perception of difference) to 'Us versus Them' (20). It can be argued that the soccer spectator group is not more or less violent than other social groups. It is rather the soccer structural conditions in combination with other unique parameters that shape violent situations in the game. Consequently, to understand the issue we must center on those factors that underline the emotions and the actions of the individuals involved (micro-sociological theory).

METHODS

For the purpose of this study, a survey was administered to 696 individuals². The survey included both, open and closed questions. Data was processed utilizing SPSS v 11 (ch² test with the level of significance set at $p < .05$). Detailed tabular results have been presented in KA. 70/8270/8267. In this study, due to issues of brevity only selective, descriptive data are presented. Of them 82.7% were males and 17.3% were females and represent different social groups. With regard to age, 23.4% were younger than twenty years old, 35.2% were between the age of twenty and twenty-nine, 9.7% between thirty and thirty-nine, 21.0% between forty and forty-nine, 10.1% between fifty and fifty nine and 0.1% were over sixty years old.

They were divided into four groups. The first group (N = 35) were members of the police force of higher and highest ranks. The second group (N = 343) were college students of the physical education and sport science department of the University of Athens. The third group (N = 143) was made up of professional and amateur football players and the fourth group (N = 175) were the parents of students of football academies.

The questions of the survey aimed to understand the reasons of violent situations created inside the football field, and were divided into three categories. The first included questions related to violent behaviour and actions between the players themselves, or between the players and the referees and how this behaviour is transmitted to the spectators. The second related to the role that the mass media and the police play. The third referred to how these particular groups understand their experiences in the football field and if this field constitute a particular space with unique communications codes and rituals causing unexpected socio-emotional reactions.

² This study was undertaken as part of the project 'Violence inside football stadiums'. National University of Athens. KA. 70/8270/8267.

RESULTS

Category A

On the question if an intentional and contrary to the rules of the game action of a player against an opponent attempting to score is acceptable to them, 63,5% of the sample as a whole and the majority in all four groups did not find this action acceptable. On the question if this action could cause aggressive and violent events among the players themselves and among the spectators the great majority of the sample as a whole (76%), answered positively. This shows that aggressive play is considered by some as accepted element of the football culture and by some as dangerous deviations of ethics and rules of the game. Moreover, these results show that spectators become aggressive only when the violent action of a player is considered intentional.

On the question if an unintentional action contrary to the rules of the game is part of the game itself, the great majority (96%) answered positively showing that people in football field are aware of the specific characteristics of the game. The data indicates that the majority of those surveyed as a whole (76.4%) believe that a wrong decision by the referee always is of paramount importance in the creation of violence in the field. This trend holds true in all sub-groups. A wrong decision by the referee, for example, may be enough to ignite aggressive behaviour and violence on the stands.

Communication between all referees is believed by the 78.7% of those surveyed to lead in the reduction of the possibility of violence. However, qualitative examination of the data shows that different perceptions regarding aggression and violence between the different sub-groups may exist. This may be because not everyone measures violence with the same criteria, making it subjective. Therefore it is inevitable for micro-situations to be created in the playing field, which produce emotional turning points causing different effects to various groups. Previous research indicates that the issue of what is considered violent and aggressive behaviour is open and subject to the socio-cultural time and space (14, 15, 49).

Among the sub-groups surveyed a different conception of violence emerges, which is not common to all and which confirms the findings of other studies (21). Aggression is understood by the participants of the survey (76%) as a phenomenon within the game itself, and aggressive behaviour by the players is seen as commitments for the team. Contrary to the perceptions put forward by studies where play-aggression is controlled by the culture of football and its specific rules and is structured by the sport ethic (44) results of this study showed that, when play-aggression was connected with the winning of their team, 86% of the participants of the survey did find play-aggression to be at odds with ethics. On the question if an in-

tended action to injure the opponent is considered as violent or aggressive playing, results differ among the sub-groups. On the other hand, 85% of the participants clearly agree on the question that aggression on the field may escalate, resulting in violence. This showed that the surveyed recognized that a thin line between the two might exist.

In a football game, competition includes personal contact leading to aggression and violence in many forms such as physical violence (brawls, tacklings), verbal violence, and abuse-protests that threatens physical injury. All those may be frightening to the occasional spectator, but are seen as merely part of the ritual banter of the hardened fans (44). This opens the possibility of violent situations seeing as parts to the normal play itself and the rules in football to "have been manipulated so as to take into account violence that gets out of hand" (8).

In soccer, there are penalties for unnecessary roughness of players like, for example, hitting an opponent player from behind. These penalties influence greatly the outcome of the game and, although they are illegal, they are acceptable. In agreement with the findings of Roderick (42), 92% of participants agreed that conscious fouls are, on occasion, part of the strategy of the game. In this perspective "violence-within-the-rules" is understood as a way to control the opposing player physically so that the play can be executed or stymied and as a way to establish EE dominance, charging oneself up further and taking away the other's EE (9). This gives the opportunity to the participants to 'detour' away from the rules and to normalize some aspects of aggression and violence in football stadium. Hundred percent (100%) of the football players surveyed declared that aggressive fouls constitute a conscious part of their decision making during the game to send a message of "domination" (9).

The majority of all surveyed (89%) welcomes aggressive play. This fact, even if it has its origins in the distant past of the game (12), fits the general pattern that violence depends on group support (9). In this spirit, violence in football fields could be seen as a kind of collective violence relating collective and spontaneous behavior by large numbers of people, crowds, mobs, etc. (43, 54). What transforms a mass of individuals into a crowd is their domination by a single passion everyone shares and a common emotion that leads to united action and collective contagion. A mood can sweep through a group with great rapidity, "a remarkable display of the parallel alignment of biological subsystems that puts everyone there in physiological synchrony" (20). Why people engage it is difficult to be explained, however, some theoretical ideas of Barkan & Snowden (3) relating to collective violence could be of assistance in understanding this phenomenon.

To someone looking at the phenomenon from the outside, violence in the football field appears irrational, because it is based on emotions or feelings which are often relegated to the 'irrational' aspects of the individual

and the social motivation and action (e.g. the crowd) upon which they are based appear senseless as well. Taking into account M. Weber's position that rational action means goal directed action, we could conclude (theorize) that violence in football stadium in all its forms is rational as action directed at achieving certain goals-such as EE dominance- regardless of whether we agree with those goals or with the means which are used to attain them. Evidence exist that football violence inside in the stadium is rational, at least from the point of view of its participants. Referring to collective violence in the stadium, we should not assume that the individuals involved in that have psychological problems and are irrational just because they engage in it. They all have belief systems, or ideologies, with which may justify their actions (3).

Inside the stadium two types of confrontation exist. One occurs on the field and the other on the stands, however, one feeds from the other. In this context, spectators and players are emotionally and symbolically involved in the same conflict operating, however, on two different levels: "fans as shameless and ignominiously tribalistic partisans and players as heroes in evenly matched contests under honorific traditions" (9). Players are the elite who develop the dramatic conflict of the game while the spectators follow them emotionally. Spectators experience similar emotional tension as players and it is this tension that they expect to live collectively in the stadium thereby installing into them the additional feeling of collective turmoil and group solidarity. Consequently, it is not surprising that fans get into fights at about the same moments that players do going with the emotional flow of the episodes contrived by the particular kind of game (9) and in that way they can influence indirectly the game itself. However this influence is not solid as solid are not the criteria by which we evaluate their behavior.

Following Dunning's (12) typology of the structural-functional characteristic of popular games and modern sport events, we can argue that some of football's fans' behavior, including for example their will for active participation, is the same as before the rationalization of the game itself as high levels of tolerance in expressing sub-cultural physical violence and as subjecting individual identity to the group (45).

Category B

Issues related to football hold prominence in mass media. This prominence is fed not only by the protagonists, the players, the coaches and the referees, but also by the spectators and fans and accentuated by frequent violent events surrounding the game. In Greek newspapers titles like 'week-end wars', 'fans or gangs', etc. are usually seen on the first page (see for example 51, 52). Research has shown that such reporting in mass media

contributes, escalates and may create this phenomenon and may influence the behaviour of the recipients of the message (5, 7, 22). Our data support these findings with 92.09% of the surveyed as a whole agreeing that mass media is responsible to a great degree for violence in football by creating and re-creating the social meaning of football events and facilitating in an amazing degree the passage of specific messages throughout society. In any case, in accordance with socio-cultural space and time, the social meaning of the football events in the framework of the flow of information is frequently decoded arbitrarily by the mass media producing a variety of arbitrary expectations. In this perspective, the social use of the specific football meaning becomes uncertain and uncontrolled in relation to the creation of expectations.

With regard to the maintenance of order inside the field, 57.1% of the surveyed as a whole believe that this is the responsibility of the football clubs themselves and 66.3% indicated that the presence of police inside the field increases the possibility of violence. Thirty six percent (36.0%) gives that responsibility to the state and the police. It is of interest that, of the group comprised of members of the police force, 74,2% declared that maintenance of order is the responsibility of the football clubs and 92% indicated that the presence of police inside the field increases the possibility of violence. Related research indicates that violence cannot be avoided by policing and by state initiated violence and the presence of police may be counterproductive particularly in a social space such as football stadiums where the feeling of aggressive behavior is latent (5, 14, 33, 34).

Category C

Spectators and fans have developed a particular culture on the field, which before, during and after a game produces some rituals that, some times, may substitute the importance of the game itself.

Our data showed that the majority of those surveyed (77, 75% of the whole) agree that the football field –as a social space– constitute a particular space with its own code of communication – a code that is not used on family and professional settings. Such a code may include aggressive verbal expressions, insults and/or threats against players, referees, coaches and spectators of the opposing team. Specifically, among the sub-groups, 100% of the first (N = 35), 96% of the second (N = 343), 55% of the third (N = 143), and 60% of the fourth (N = 175) agree with the above statement. Spectators and fans on the football field experience football as an emotional event above taboos that may exist in daily life. The football stadium is a social space that can be understood as a specific field that has its own norms, communication's logic and specific habitus that the participants must incor-

porate to be able to 'play the game'. The football field is about the intertwining of several human emotions in ways that run right against the conventional morality of normal situations (9).

Our data showed that 95% of those surveyed as a whole found threats, insults and jeering as acceptable, legitimate and a fairly normal occurrence in the field. Additionally, the majority found football stadiums to be a space where one can experience intense emotions, which on occasion may lead to aggression and violence. Among the sub-groups, 85% of the first, 65% of the second, 69% of the third and 78% of the fourth agreed with that notion. However, the majority of those surveyed found that the most interactive events in football stadium are not violent: first group: 100%; second group: 96%; third group: 100%; and fourth group: 96%.

The football stadium covers the need for expression of emotions and the need for risky behaviour. Aggressive behaviour seen on the field has been exclusively associated with the male body and masculinity. Our data showed that this characteristic might not belong only to males. Sixty seven percent (67%) of the surveyed female students specializing in football, opined that aggression and violence constitute elements of female football as well, which is in agreement with the findings of Thing (49).

Regarding the issue of relating slogans to racism, 95% of those surveyed (across all groups) indicated that slogans with various racist tone-if exist- are not acceptable. Although there is no clear evidence of widespread organization of football fans by right-wing groups, on the question if individuals belonging to right-wing groups shout those slogans, our results fluctuate. On the first group (N = 35), 34% did not think that that was the case, 15% were negative and 51% did not have an opinion. On the second group (N = 343), the respective percentages were 24%, 12% and 73%; on the third (N = 143) 44%, 42%, 14%; and on the fourth (N = 175) 34%, 46% and 18%. Elaborating further on the issue racism in football, Collins (9) states that "there is micro-sociological evidence that racism [is] situationally constructed".

Nationalistic symbols or slogans may be used purely to "shock and provoke, without any underlying political conviction" (7), or only in international games as an expression of chauvinistic nationalism without rationalistic connotations. In mass media, which fashion public opinion to a great degree, racism among football spectators and fans or players may be viewed as a serious issue, but this notion is not supported clearly by empirical data. Inside football stadiums, racist slogans may have another function. They may be used as a means of dominance related to EE. In a stadium, not all players as 'mood drivers' (20) have equal power to influence people's feelings and emotions. It can be argued that the spectators focus more attention to and place more significance on what the most skilful players say and do it regardless if they belong on their own team or the opposite one. If they belong on their team, their actions are contagious, accentuated and cheered. If

they belong to the opposite team, their actions may be subjected to racist slogans and ridiculed. Racist slogans inside football stadiums could be also understood on that basis.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on internationally accepted theoretical tendencies this study looked at the issue of violence inside the football stadium and attempted to understand the phenomenon as it is related to the space, the time and the structural conditions under which it is produced. For that purpose, a questionnaire was given to individuals belonging to four different groups associated with football. On the basis of the answers given it was concluded that aggressive play is considered by some as an accepted element of the football culture and by some as dangerous deviations of ethics and rules of the game. In the football field micro-situations are created, which produce emotional turning points causing different effects to various groups. In addition, our data showed that different perceptions regarding aggression and violence between the different sub-groups may exist while the majority of all surveyed welcomes aggressive play.

The football stadium is a social space that can be understood as a specific field that has its own norms, communication's logic and specific rituals and covers the need for expressing of emotions and for risky behaviour. In activities such as sporting events, spontaneous emotions are very much present and cannot be curtailed by rational modernity (55). In this perspective, it is difficult to control violence inside the stadium by law. In accordance with socio-cultural space and time, the social meaning of football events in the framework of the flow of information is frequently decoded arbitrarily by the mass media, producing a variety of arbitrary expectations. In this perspective the social use of the specific football meaning becomes uncertain and uncontrolled in relation to the creation of expectations. In relation to presence or not of racism inside football stadiums, it was concluded that racist slogans –if seen on football space– might have also another function. They may be used as a means of dominance related to EE.

With regard to the maintenance of order inside the field, the opinions of the surveyed majority as a whole points out that this is the responsibility, not of the state –the police–, but of the football clubs themselves. Accordingly, violence cannot be avoided by policing and by state initiated violence and the presence of police may be counterproductive particularly in a social space such as a football stadium where the feeling of aggressive behavior is latent.

We propose that the discussion relating to issues of prevention and control of football violence must include in the first hand the understanding of the nature by which the phenomenon is produced and, although interrelated,

should include a differentiation of sports violence observed in the stadium from the one outside. In addition, even if we approach it as a social problem, we should not correlate violence in the stadium to a general moral indicator of 'social health', or as general indicator of 'social order'. In this perspective, it is not recommended that football stadium behaviour as a social space reflects society as a whole. Finally, our data indicates that the factors of football violence cannot be reduced to a simple cause-and-effect mechanism that alone can give satisfactory answers.

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