DEVIANCE AND LEGITIMACY IN ICE-HOCKEY: A MICROSTRUCTURAL THEORY OF VIOLENCE

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Bensman and Gerver's (1964) theory of structural deviance is employed as a general framework for examining the functional indispensability of the fist-fight in ice-hockey. Qualitative materials concerning the players' viewpoint are analyzed, according to Garfinkel (1967), in terms of a conception of practical decision-making used by players in their commission and interpretation of violent acts on the ice. A sociological explanation of hockey violence is thus offered that emphasizes the situationally relevant and meaningful nature of violence as it is experienced and understood by players. It also formulates the fist-fight as an institutionalized mode of legitimate violence that represents a compromise between conflicting ends within the sport.

Like all social behavior, violence is situated activity and it is necessary for the sociologist to pay careful attention to the particular features of the situation in which such behavior both occurs and is interpreted by those actors involved in its production. A case in point is violence in ice-hockey. To an extent unparalleled in any other major sport, illegal assaults in amateur and professional ice-hockey are fairly routine and commonplace. The fist-fight deserves special mention in this connection. In most other sports fist-fighting is severely sanctioned by the rules of the game: fighting is usually penalized by immediate ejection from the game. The rule structure in ice-hockey, however, seems to tacitly permit fighting by imposing a relatively lenient penalty: five minutes in the penalty box.

A few attempts have been made over the past decade by guardians of the public order, mostly in Canada, to have hockey violence defined as illegitimate deviance and criminal conduct. The McMurtry Commission Report (1974), was convened in response to the off-ice killing of a junior hockey league player by a competitor. The mandate of the Commission was to inquire into the causes of violence in ice-hockey and to offer recommendations for reform of the sport. The Commission undertook a thorough investigation: interviewing professional league officials, referees, and players, as well as making use of social scientific research on violence.[1] Its report was unequivocal about placing the blame for interpersonal assaults in the sport on a climate of attitudes supportive of such violence. These attitudes were reflected in a rule structure that tended to encourage such assaults. The Commission recommended changes in rules and penalties, as well as their effective enforcement. However, little in the sport has been changed.

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Here, then, is a formulation of the sociologically interesting problem in connection with hockey violence: given the fact that illegal assaults could be eliminated from the sport of hockey at any time through the strict enforcement of rules and the introduction of severe penalties for their violation (cf. McMurtry, 1974), why does violence continue to be tolerated? In order to account for this phenomenon, it is necessary to come to terms with the lack of collective resolution to eliminate it.

In what follows, I will attempt to provide such an explanation of this tolerance of hockey violence by applying Bensman and Gerver's (1964) concept of functional indispensability to a class of illegal assaults in ice-hockey, namely, the fist-fight. I intend to argue that the fist-fight in hockey makes possible an informal accommodation between otherwise incompatible ends within the sport. These involve the occupational directive to intimidate opponents, on the one hand, and the need to prevent illegal assaults from damaging players' careers, on the other. A crucial situational exigency in this context has to do with the difficulty of officials detecting illegal assaults. To demonstrate this thesis, it will be necessary to examine carefully the social situation and the practical reasoning engaged in by players as they commit and interpret assaults on the ice.[2]

My research is based on extensive fieldwork with both amateur and professional hockey players in Ontario and Indianapolis from 1975–1983.[3] This included my taking the role of participant observer as a trainer with a junior league team and involved observations of violent encounters on the ice. It also involved informal discussions with players, coaches, staff, owners, and referees, on the bench and in the stands during games, in locker rooms, and at social gatherings of hockey personnel (such as parties). In addition, open-ended and unstructured interviews of 60–90-minute duration were conducted with about 160 amateur and professional players.

PRACTICAL REASONING AND VIOLENT ASSAULTS

Players give consideration to what could be called *the strategic uses of violence* that constitute a part of any player's informally acquired repertoire of hockey skills. Faulkner (1974) has pointed out that players feel bound to commit acts that are designed to "test" opponents. Thus players view the commission of such acts by others as occasions in which they are "being tested" by opponents. As one player candidly remarks:

> "I use violence in my work as a defenseman. Not cheap stuff, but good, solid body checks. This makes others keep their heads up. They become intimidated, that makes them throw away the puck that much faster."

Intimidation through the threat and use of physical assaults is a fact of life on the ice. The issue of intimidation for players has to do with whether or not another player's use of violence will interfere with the performance of one's job. "Doing one's job" is an important goal and preoccupation of players. Both the initiation of and the response to aggressive acts by players represents a pervasive occupational concern in their activity. Intimidation through violence is a tactic for distracting an opponent so that one gains an advantage over the other. Likewise, responding to attempts at intimidation in a decisive manner so as to neutralize any such advantage is a tactic for dealing with attempts at

intimidation. Consider the following comments of a player who explains how to deal with being the recipient of an illegal assault:

> "I've been in a dozen or more fights so far this year. I'm a defenseman. I've got my back going into the guy and rather than just hitting me (legally), he'll do,... he'll take his stick and put it around my crotch or he'll bury his stick somewhere in my knees, you know, so I'll go into the boards off balance. You know if you go into the boards off balance you're going to wreck your knee or break a bone. So it's a self-defense thing, 'cuz if he's going to do that to me again the chances are I can get hurt. So I'll just have to, rather than do the same to him, I'll just drop my gloves and fight him then. 'Cuz a guy like that has to learn that you just don't go around doing stuff like that unless you're ready to fight. If you can get away with it and the guy's not going to fight, fine."

The "doing of one's job," however, involves and requires the use of *discretion*: while it is crucial that the job be done, how one goes about accomplishing this task is up to the individual within professionally recognized limits. The scope of discretion in the performance of one's job includes (but not limited to) the realm of violence, as is made clear in the following player's comments:

> "Well, it is basically your job as a defenseman to own your own end of the ice, from the blue line back to the goal crease, you own it and you control the play. And if some guy is getting into your corner and you find he is getting around you, you get into the body contact part of it where you take him out of the play and just exactly how you do it depends on other things."

Players may choose between legal or illegal "tricks" and may use more or less violent tactics in the performance of their job on the ice, as long as their choice reflects suitable professional judgment. Players' decisions concerning whether or not to use violence, and what type of force to use, may depend on such matters as one's own fighting skills,[4] one's estimate of whether other team members will back one up if a third party gets involved,[5] or whether a penalty at this point in the game would hurt the team's chances of winning.

A degree of "smarts" on the part of a player is, therefore, called for in the exercise of discretion, as suggested by the following player's reference to the use of illegal assaults not visible to officials:

> "There are also your butt ends and your spears. When I am covering a guy in front of the net, you're pushing and he's pushing you back, so these are very close quarters where the referee can't really see anything. This is the time when the butt ends are being thrown, the elbows here, and the cheap shots there.... In the majors they expect you to do your job, and how you do it is up to you as long as it is efficient and doesn't involve making stupid penalties or spending half your time in the penalty box."

Players recognize the professional limits placed on the discretionary use of violence in their reference to "stupid" penalties and assaults that are badly timed, inappropriate, or

ineffective for the situation in which they occur. Players are thus critical of those of their colleagues who lack good "game sense." Their use of violence is unprofessional because it reflects poor and/or undisciplined judgment. As one player confides:

> "Guys have turned to me and said, 'I'm gonna get that guy,' no shit. And away they go and you know there's going to be a fight. You can't tell the guy not to fight 'cuz he's got it in his mind that he's gonna fight. That's how some fights start—not too many—but some. Guys just,... they know they're going to fight even before they leave, they just jump off the bench. They say, 'I'm going to get that guy,' shit, yeah, okay, okay, okay. But it just goes right through their ears. You can't tell them anything really. They build up to a point where they don't even know what they're doing. They just lose control of themselves. It's not a good thing."

Players who consistently show poor judgment in their discretionary use of violence earn the label of being "crazy" or a "goon." Generally, they are not held in high esteem by their colleagues. This is because such players fail to display a recognition of the strategic uses of violence.

Violence on the ice may thus constitute attempts to intimidate opponents, or it may represent retaliatory responses to opponents' attempts at intimidation. It may also be a combination of the two. While it may be up to the individual player's discretion *how* to deal with the threat or occurrence of force, it is *not* a matter of choice whether or not a player *will* deal with violence. This is because failure to deal decisively with intimidation when it occurs will lead eventually to a negative impact upon one's performance; a reputation is acquired as a "sucker," or one who can be easily intimidated:

> "In the NHL, if somebody takes a punch at you and you don't punch back, there better be a damn good reason for it. Like, say, you're down a goal and you don't want a penalty, but if a guy's throwing punches at you and it gets known in the league that you're a sucker and you won't fight, then they're going to come after you. When you're trying to think about hockey, that's enough for one person to do at one time. But when you also got to think or worry about the guy behind you, if he's going to hit you or just exactly what he is going to do to you, it just throws you off your hockey game 'cuz you can't think about two things at once—it's either hockey or fighting. You've got to do your job out on the ice. If there's a fighter and you're faced off against him and you start worrying about him, then you're not going to do you job. It's really obvious. So either you drop your gloves and fight and get it over with, or else you just forget about it and play hockey. Soon as you start backing down from the intimidation or as soon as you become intimidated, that's when you start getting into trouble. Because you're always looking over your shoulder and while you're looking over your shoulder somebody's hitting you from the side."

This is not to say that players claim to fake infallible determinations concerning whether or not others' acts in fact represent acts of intimidation. On the contrary, players freely acknowledge that it is a difficult if not impossible task on many occasions to decide

whether an opponent has intended to hit one, or whether being hit was an accident. Nevertheless, players must make such judgments because they are also aware that intimidation is always potentially involved. It is part of their professional role to make such judgments and to respond in a way that appears reasonable and decisive to themselves and others. Consider the uncertainty and ambiguity surrounding violent encounters in the following player's comments:

> "It's contact in front of the net or in the corners that's the cause of a lot of fights. There's more contact there and people get hit and they get mad and fight. You go in there and you don't mean to, you're trying to take the puck out, you try to knock him off the puck but if you get your elbows too high or something, then the other guy doesn't know that you didn't mean that, so he turns and says, 'Hey! This guy's elbowing me; he wants to hurt me.' So he returns the favor, elbows him back, and that starts a fight. You just can't know what the other guy's thinking, you don't know that he doesn't mean to hurt you. Not all players go into the corners, they're scared..."

Part of the issue of intimidation and the obligation to respond to it in a decisive way is the prominent theme of each player having to "stick up for himself." The following comments of two players suggest the importance of this theme as a fundamental principle or maxim of conduct taken for granted by players:

> First Player:
> "I don't pick fights, but I stick up for myself. Like, there's no way I'm just going to stand there and let somebody throw punches at me. So in a sense I fight in self-defense. Or if I have good enough cause to start a fight, you know, like this guy has done something to me previously and then I have to get him back. It is getting back to that intimidation point we were talking about earlier where somebody knows I'll back down from a fight. Then I'll just get my own self into trouble 'cuz next game there's going to be six guys after me to fight. You know, then they're going to be trying all the little dirty tricks on me."
>
> Second Player:
> "Fighting isn't really violence. The majority of times it develops out of the play. It happens in the corners or around the net or you get body-checked really hard, you'll retaliate. Away you'll go. You have to stick up for yourself, you know, it's just known that you have to stick up for yourself and that's all I can say."

"Sticking up for oneself" does not have to be justified or explained in the world of ice-hockey; on the contrary, it is itself a truth that is used to justify or explain other acts or events. For a player to fail to "stick up for himself" is for that player to have succumbed to another's efforts at intimidation, and thus, for that player to have compromised his claim to be a competent and concerned professional.

"Sticking up for onself" as a basic principle for interpreting acts of violence points to the pervasive and constant preoccupation of players with the possibility of intimidation as something to be reckoned with. It also points to the implicit recognition on the part of

players and, to a large extent, also on the part of referees, that players themselves share some responsibility on the ice for enforcing violations of the rules prohibiting physical assaults. Two factors can be identified in the sport of hockey that contribute to the sharing of this responsibility: (1) difficulty detecting assaults given conditions of the game such as speed, close quarters in the corners, and multiple events occurring simultaneously in different places on the ice; and (2) the fact that referees themselves practice discretion with respect to whether an infraction will be called.

With respect to the first point concerning the difficulty referees may have in detecting the occurrence of an assault or infraction of the rules, players indicate that they (as well as the referees) are aware of this limitation and, in fact, count upon it for being able to "get away with stuff." Consider the following player's comments:

> "If you get behind the referee so he can't see what you do, you can just give a shot to a guy without it being called a penalty. Likewise, you can be standing in front of the net and some guy comes in behind you and just goes like this [gesture], you know, and the referee is not looking and you just go flying on your back. Sometimes I know refs choose not to see stuff because they can't keep up. That happens often. Like I do it. If a guy's in a score position, I go skating and, like, I'm skating ordinary and make it look like an accident. I'll knock the guy over. I'll just hit him with my foot, see him there, I'll just keep my feet on the ground and I won't kick him and I'll just go around like this and then knock him off. How can a ref call it? I wasn't tripping him, I was just skating and caught his skates."

Of course, players are aware that other players can make use of such "tricks of the trade," creating even more difficulties in a player's ability to determine whether an opponent has accidentally or *accidentally on purpose* committed an assault.

It must be pointed out that referees are primarily concerned with *keeping the peace* on the ice, and enforcing rule infractions may at times be of secondary importance.[6] As in the case of players, referees must achieve several objectives in the performance of their role. They must maintain the flow of the game at an acceptable level for players and fans alike. They must ultimately control the play so as to minimize penalties that interrupt this flow and, on the other hand, prevent severe violations of the rules against violence from occurring. No two games are alike: it may be possible for a referee to enforce the rules strictly against all assaults in a game that is not very physical or in which the score is close. It may not be possible to do so in a game that is played with much physical contact. In these types of games, permitting a couple of fist-fights may be desirable, slowing down the pace of the game as well as helping to relieve tension among players. Allowing a few fist-fights to develop may then be preferable, from the referee's viewpoint, to players resorting to more serious violence, for example, spearing or fighting with sticks. Players are thus aware that referees' calls are themselves situational or contextual, and take this variability into account in their own estimates of what they may or may not be able to get away with. Consider the following players' comments:

> First Player:
> "In a close, tough game the adrenaline builds and it takes very little to set you off. Somebody is slowing you down by hooking you, so you turn around and trade

> punches with him. The tension is high, and this is where the ref comes in. The game can go either way. Like it can be a great hockey game because it is all so close and guys don't want to get penalties—you'll be in shit with the coach if you're responsible for losing the game. But all it can take is one incident to catch everybody on fire to get everybody going. Then it's guys dropping their gloves if you look the wrong way. But if the ref senses this, sees it is a close game and tension is high, he can just start thinking, shit, they can't spend two minutes in the penalty box. That's where the ref comes in, to try to slow down the pace of the game and try to give guys time to think. He slows it down by lots of whistles, calling penalties, stopping the play."
>
> Second Player:
> "Referees in the majors let a lot more go by, like if somebody throws a punch and the ref sort of knew about it, he may let it go to give the other guy a chance to retaliate. I can't say how much a ref is going to let go, that's up to the individual, but there's a lot of things they let go by."
>
> Third Player:
> "At the beginning of a game if a ref sets a precedent, you know, if he's letting a lot go by, then you're going to have a lot more chippy games because you know you're going to get away with it."

The limited ability of referees to monitor events and their discretionary judgment is, hence, another situational factor that must enter into the practical decision-making regarding violence on the part of players.

THE FUNCTIONAL INDISPENSABILITY OF THE FIST-FIGHT

Players indicate a preference for the fist-fight as the most desirable form of retaliation to an opponent's physical acts of intimidation. This fact is apparent in many of the players' comments that have been presented, and it is confirmed in many discussions about violence I have had with players.

What is interesting, sociologically speaking, about the fist-fight as opposed to other forms of violence in ice-hockey is that there are publicly available and recognizable norms associated with such encounters.[7] The fist-fight represents a *public display* of violence. This normative regulation of behavior is conspicuously absent in other illegal assaults, especially absent in the category of violent acts referred to by players as "cheap shots." "Cheap shots" are assaults that are committed against others without warning and which take advantage of an opponent's lack of preparedness or expectation that such an assault is about to occur. The social norms characteristic of the fist-fight have to do with the obligation that a player who initiates a fighting encounter provide his opponent with advance notice that such an encounter is about to commence and, hence, to provide the other with at least some opportunity to either defend himself or to withdraw. The signal used by players to convey this warning is the dropping of one's gloves (and, of course, one's stick), while at the same time assuming a face-to-face position toward one's opponent at about arms' length distance. The customary and socially proferred response on the part of the other player is to reciprocate by dropping

his gloves and proceeding to engage the other in fisticuffs. Naturally, this all happens very quickly; gloves are dropped, players square off against each other, and fists are exchanged within two or three seconds. Yet, as a result of the glove-dropping ritual involved in the fist-fight, public attention is drawn to this violent encounter between players in a manner that is largely absent in the commission of hidden assaults.

In this connection it can be noted that the *outcome* of a fist-fight (whether a player wins or loses) is of far less import than a player's display of his willingness to "stick up for himself," as suggested in such comments as the following:

> First Player:
> "I'd rather see a guy fight and lose than turn his cheek and not fight at all, and I think a lot of the players are like that. You pretty well realize that you have to fight, otherwise the guys look down on you."
>
> Second Player:
> "I don't know why, you know, it's known if a guy's going to fight you, you'd drop your gloves and fight. It doesn't matter if you win, lose, or draw, that's it."

For players to deal with circumstances of intimidation by engaging in a fist-fight is for players to decide to act and respond in a manner that has social meaning and consequences relating to the relative merits of de-escalating rather than escalating the use of violence. Compared to various forms of stick assaults, then, which introduce the risk of far more serious and potentially lethal types of injury to players, the fist-fight is a relatively harmless, even innocuous, means of resolving differences between players. And insofar as the fist-fight is the locus of socially available beliefs concerning the moral character and integrity of players, as well as the source of socially defined criteria for evaluating one's own as well as others' conduct in such encounters, the fist-fight represents a mode of informal social control among players.

At this point it makes sense to introduce the concept of functional indispensability utilized by Bensman and Gerver (1964) in their study of the pervasive but illegal use of the tap in the aircraft industry. Use of the tap by workers to deal with production errors is expressly prohibited because its use neutralizes the operation of aviation nuts, which are designed not to work themselves loose during flight. Yet Bensman and Gerver discovered that workers employed such taps, at times under the approval of supervisors, due to the practical constraints imposed by mass production that distorts the positions of some holes necessary for the alignment of wings during their assembly. The use of illegal taps constitutes a category of deviance that is, therefore, functionally necessary to the social organization in which it occurs. Without this mode of deviance, they argue, the production and assembly of large numbers of aircraft at moderate costs would not be possible. The illegal use of the tap represents an accommodation or compromise between the potentially conflicting ends of profitmaking, on the one hand, and quality control on the other. Such deviance among workers in the aircraft industry cannot be adequately formulated by the concept of *anomie* since the illegal use of the tap is normatively regulated and sanctioned by others.

Examined from the standpoint of the concept of functional indispensability, the fist-fight represents an accommodation between at least two conflicting sets of actors' ends.

First is the concern of owners, fans, coaches and players with *winning*: scoring as many goals as possible in a game and likewise preventing others from scoring. The demand for a fair degree of physical contact enters in here, along with strategies of intimidation ("testing" others and "being tested" by others) as a means to this end. As I have already indicated, an important situational exigency on the ice for players is the fact that many illegal assaults are not visible to referees. Referees have an interest in keeping order on the ice, and sometimes use their discretionary power not to call illegal assaults even when they are marginally visible, or may call infractions that carry a lesser penalty.

A second set of ends has to do with the problem of how to deal with the situation generated by the first, especially since players are also concerned with safeguarding their careers against unnecessarily severe physical injury caused by cheap shots, as well as with the display of traditional hockey skills such as skating and other offensive and defensive legal skills.

The fist-fight is a less than legal, but still highly pragmatic, means for achieving a compromise among these at times incompatible interests. Players can use force and engage in acts of intimidation, but when and if one feels another player has gone too far, the fist-fight is the solution. Referees can permit players this option without it challenging their authority, since players are penalized after they have been permitted to fight it out somewhat. Since referees could not, even if they wanted to, see all other illegal assaults, the fist-fight brings the possible occurrences of a cheap shot to the attention of the referee before it could go on to produce further illegal assaults, thereby enabling him to achieve his goal of keeping order on the ice. At the same time, players can safeguard their careers against unnecessary physical injury caused by dirty tricks while also, through the symbolic gesture of "having it out with the other player," acting to preserve self-images to themselves and to such others as fans of being tough and able to take care of themselves.

Needless to say, the fist-fight is part and parcel of the very situation of intimidation on the ice to which it stands as a solution. Fist-fighting does not radically alter this situation; on the contrary, it serves to maintain it by diffusing encounters between players in which violence threatens to escalate to more serious and dangerous levels. In a sense, the fist-fight in ice-hockey represents a good illustration in the social world of "having one's cake and eating it too." The fist-fight enables hockeyplayers to engage in highly physical contact while also keeping it within relatively safe, manageable, and professional limits.

CONCLUSION

Bensman and Gerver's structural theory of deviance has been used to analyze the function of the fist-fight in ice-hockey as a socially legitimated mode of accommodation between different groups of actors' ends. Like the illegal use of the tap by workmen in the airplane factory, the fist-fight is the socially approved and preferred means (norm) for players to behave in situations where retaliation is called for; such situations are often the rule, not the exception, in the sport of hockey.

This form of deviance cannot be adequately analyzed in terms of the structural-functional model proposed, for example, by Merton (1968:189–190). This is because Merton proposes a model of anomic deviance based on the presumption of deviance as the product of a conflict between the means (norms) and ends (values) of a system; he writes:

> Thus in competitive athletics, when the aim of victory is shorn of its institutional trappings and success becomes construed as "winning the game" rather than "winning under the rules of the game," a premium is implicitly set upon the use of illegitimate but technically efficient means. The star of the opposing football team is surreptitiously slugged; the wrestler incapacitates his opponent through ingenious but illicit techniques...

Whatever the case in the sports of football and wrestling, it has been demonstrated in the case of hockey that some types of deviance may be useful, even necessary, to the social activity in which it occurs. The fist-fight is a form of deviance that represents an institutionalized means for dealing with diverse institutionalized ends, and not a form of anomie or innovative activity that represents the rejection of institutionalized norms. Merton's theoretical framework cannot accommodate itself to the complexity of situated action within the social structure of ice-hockey examined in this article.[8]

Finally, I have sought here to formulate fighting encounters in hockey as situated modes of action on the part of players who are engaged in a process of decision-making that must take into account a whole host of considerations and contingencies on the ice. From the theoretical standpoint that emphasizes the interpretive work of the actor(s), it is not a meaningful scientific task to inquire into the "cause(s)" or "sequential pattern(s)" of violent acts. How a fight comes into being on one occasion may have little to do with its occurrence on another, and thus to inquire into "causes" of hockey fights is to overlook and dismiss as insignificant the situationally specific and appropriate interpretive work done by actors in order for them to become engaged in fighting encounters. Instead of accounting for fighting behavior by classifying and counting types of behavior and then looking for causes external to the interpretive work of the actors engaged in such behavior, I have followed the interpretive sociologist's strategy of examining the kinds of considerations that become relevant to players in their efforts to arrive at justifiable grounds for engaging in certain forms of action.[9]

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NOTES

1. Previous hockey violence research (Faulkner, 1974; Smith, 1979a, b, 1983; Vaz, 1972, 1982) has provided substantial evidence in support of the occupational subculture thesis. This thesis proposes that violent behavior reflects an occupationally defined subculture of pro-violence attitudes and values acquired by players through a process of socialization. However, little or no attempt has been made to explain *what it is about the system of ice-hockey that supports an occupational subculture of violence*.

2. Here I am drawing upon Garfinkel's (1967) idea of practical decision-making.

3. The source for my empirical statements derive from a variety of qualitative methods applied in two field settings. While at York University, I helped to collect qualitative data for a Canada Council Project directed by Michael E. Smith. This consisted of six researchers, including myself, who traveled with various amateur and professional teams in Ontario in such capacities as trainers and assistant coaches in the research

role of participant–observer. About 160 players were interviewed at the season's end concerning various aspects of their participation in the sport. Since coming to Indiana University in 1979, I have continued to keep field notes of my direct observations and informal conversations with players concerning interpersonal assaults I have witnessed.

4. For example, a player discusses his fighting ability as a factor he takes into account concerning what method of violence to employ:

> "Most of my penalties for the season were for tripping, holding. I got a couple of fighting penalties but, I don't know, I never considered myself a fighter. I suppose if I had, was a better fighter, I would've fought more. I remember one time I got in a fight, I got killed. Ever since then I didn't go out looking for fights—let's put it that way. If a fight came along, I took it. If you go to the boards and a guy drops his gloves, you're not just going to stand there. He starts punching you, you're going to punch back. I suppose if I was a better fighter, if I wanted to get back at a guy, I wouldn't hesitate to drop my gloves a lot of times. Since I'm not that good a fighter I have to look for other ways of getting him back—like giving a good check or things like that. Or using the stick a bit too. I lay a little wood on the guy."

5. For example, a player discusses the importance of whether other teammates will back one up in a fight, as a factor to take into account concerning one's own decision to fight:

> "You've got to know if you're fighting a guy, and you're going to get beat up, it's good to know that someone is going to come in and back you up right. I think this year there was a couple of times where guys on the team just stood around and watched. You see a guy getting beaten up and everybody is just standing around watching. We weren't letting other teams know that they can't push us around. We would just let them slash our goalie or gang two up on one player. There was no trust, we just weren't backing each other up."
>
> (Q: Does that lack of trust influence your willingness to fight?)
>
> "I think so definitely, I don't think we had good team spirit this year. If you got good team spirit, you'll back each other up in fights. For example, two guys were beating up on one of our own guys and he got hurt pretty bad. You have to help out in situations like that."

6. Referees resemble Bittner's (1967) police who are concerned with peace-keeping on skid row. For example, referees will give penalties to players for "making me look stupid," or for challenging their authority, not for assaults.

7. Two issues concerning the fist-fight as a public display are relevant here. First, is that the fist-fight in ice-hockey may incorporate and reflect *nonoccupational* concerns having to do with the concept of honor (Colburn, 1985) or with the male sex role (Smith, 1983). However, for the purposes of the present discussion, I am limiting my interest to a consideration of the *occupational* function of the fist-fight for the sport of hockey. Second, is the issue of the role of spectators in the fighting display put on by the players. No doubt, players are aware *generally* of the existence of fans. However, based on players' comments when asked about this point, I can say that players tend to be intently focused on doing their job when on the ice and are less aware of fans than with significant others on the ice (colleagues, opponents, coaches, referees).

8. Others have, of course, raised serious objections to Merton's scheme (cf. Cohen, 1965). My primary concern has been to argue that the assumption of a system's standpoint failed to acknowledge the diversity and complexity of actors' courses of action, or fails to do justice to the situated character of deviance.

9. In this article I have not dealt with issues of socialization connected with players' acquisition of fighting norms or skills. My concern has been to depict and analyze the normative constraints connected with violence, recognized and oriented to by players in ice-hockey at most advanced, organized levels of play. Since many players at the junior league level are aspiring to careers in pro hockey, one might expect junior players to be engaged in a kind of anticipatory socialization.

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