ARTICLE

# Sport as a Social Laboratory to Cure Anomie and Prevent Violence

ROLF SCHWERY & DANIEL CADE

*Schwery Consulting, CH-2502 Biel, Switzerland*

ABSTRACT    Sport's relationship with aggression, violence and hooliganism is not a new phenomenon. Evidence suggests that it has existed ever since competition began in ancient civilisations. Sport is a mirror of society. With the process of civilisation, sport has no doubt become less brutal. In the last few decades there has been a growing interest in sport's use as a catalyst for development. This article discusses the therapeutic role that sport can have to cure a general loss of orientation (anomie) and to prevent aggression and violence. Its success depends on guidance and the rules that are set for institutionalised sport. The article attempts to highlight how government, NGOs and sport organisations can work together to use stadiums and other sport-settings as a social laboratory.

## Introduction

In recent years sport has grown in popularity as a tool for social development. Numerous organisations working in the field of sport and social development run projects that demonstrate how sport's intrinsic values can be used to promote virtues such as social cohesion, civil society and solidarity; to raise awareness about social diseases such as HIV/ AIDS; and to teach useful skills (conflict management, hygiene, etc.). There can also be added value derived from people "playing together". Sport can teach the necessity and sense of teamwork. Communal sporting activities can create trust and a feeling of belonging; they can also create a specific social structure (UN Inter-Agency Taskforce, 2003; SDC, 2005; Schwery, 2008).

In spite of the recent progress made in sport as a tool for social development, there has always been a dark side to sport. Discrimination, exclusion, excessive gambling, corruption and doping are just a few of the many undesirable outcomes that fall out of the marriage between sport and

*Correspondence Address*: Daniel Cade, Schwery Consulting, Guterstrasse, 13, CH-2502 Biel, Switzerland. Fax: +41 32 325 8081; Tel.: +41 32 325 8080; Email: daniel.cade@schwery.ch

society (Brohm, 1992). Of primary concern to the sporting structures of developing countries is the movement of talented athletes to other countries where they can command higher salaries and bonuses. This so-called muscle drain, which Andreff (2009) also points out can lead to brain drain when coaches and managers move, adversely affects the popularity and income generation of domestic leagues and damages the chances of national team success when club managers do not release the players for international duty (Andreff, 2009).

This article looks at the relationship between society and violence. It operates with the concept of "anomie": a term that was introduced by the French sociologist Emile Durkheim at the end of the nineteenth century to describe a lack of norms and values inherent in a modern society (Durkheim, 1897/1997). Anomie can lead to deviant behaviour and violence against others and the self. The article links this concept with another idea by Karl Mannheim (1940) that was honed by his successors Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning (1986). They argued that in a modern society sport can be seen as one of the few remaining outlets to channel negative emotions.

The article poses the question: can the stadium be a kind of social laboratory where sport can be harnessed as a therapy to prevent the negative outcomes of anomie? If this can be shown then it could create a new *raison d'être* for government and municipalities' participation in organising sport events and contributing to the financial burden of security costs. It would also support the growing plea for evidence-based policy making and, as stated by the former UK minister of sport, Richard Caborn, "not accepting the simplistic assertion that sport is good as sufficient reason to back sport" (as cited in Coalter, 2007, p. 159).

## The Concept of Anomie

Social change is not limited to a steadily increasing flow of goods and services and higher volumes of financial transactions. It also has an enormous impact on social development in general and on individual well-being in particular. Social change challenges people to re-orientate themselves in a constantly changing world. Compelling norms and traditional values are becoming increasingly vague, and sometimes disappearing and leaving the individual without guidance. Rapid social change can lead to a general lack of orientation among a broad segment of people. This state of being defines the concept of anomie (Atteslander, Gransow, & Western, 1999).

At the micro-level anomie leads to difficulties in individual adaptation, resulting in a loss of general social orientation, reinforced feelings of insecurity and marginalisation, the cultivation of false expectations or feelings of relative deprivation. As a result, an increase in apathy, depression, suicide, violence and different forms of deviant behaviour, such as alcoholism and drug addiction can be observed. Therefore, the pathological state of anomie becomes a strong barrier to the development and evolution of any society (Atteslander et al., 1999).

The concept of anomie has some similarity with the popular "frustration–aggression" hypothesis that was developed at the University of Yale in the late 1930s (Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, & Sears, 1939). Put simply, their theory says that frustrated expectations will lead to aggression. They proved that in many situations this hypothesis works but they failed to explain why frustration emerges and how the social environment can influence the situation. The classic study of Berkowitz and LePage (1967) further developed the "frustration–aggression" hypothesis with research on the impact of stimuli, aggressive (e.g., guns) and non-aggressive (e.g., badminton racquets). They concluded that "many hostile acts which supposedly stem from unconscious motivation really arise because of the operation of aggressive cues" (Berkowitz & LePage, 1967, p. 203).

The concept of anomie is broader (frustration is a form of anomie that is articulated) and links the emotional state with the societal circumstances. This opens the door to understanding the link between social change, institutionalised sport and violence.

Sport can provide a common frame of reference. In a rapidly changing world, sport offers a simple societal framework and can make an important contribution to self-development and non-violent conflict management. To challenge this statement, three interactions need to be questioned. (1) Is institutionalised sport capable of providing convincing norms and values necessary to cure and prevent anomie? (2) Is sport, performed actively or as a spectator, capable of channelling frustration in a peaceful way, to avoid overtly aggressive behaviour? (3) Can institutionalised sport provide a setting within which emotions can be expressed in a peaceful way and social values be passed on?

### The Model

A simple societal model is introduced here to illustrate sport's three interactions (Figure 1). Rapid social change can create a loss of orientation across a broad spectrum of people. Institutionalised sport can prevent anomie when its structures are non-discriminating and capable of involving fringe groups. It can prevent aggression when it uses skilful coaches to train individuals and penalises aggressive behaviour. It can also prevent outbursts of violence when it establishes a system of fair play and disciplines violations. Of course, the opposite can also be true: institutionalised sport structures can create anomie when they exclude different groups, they can create aggression when coaches set unrealistic objectives and create violence when rules are unfair. These relationships will be looked at more closely below.

### *Sport and Anomie*

In *Quest for Excitement*, Elias and Dunning (1986) argue that in a modernised society with a clear division of labour, there is a growing need for outlets to release negative emotions. With different examples they
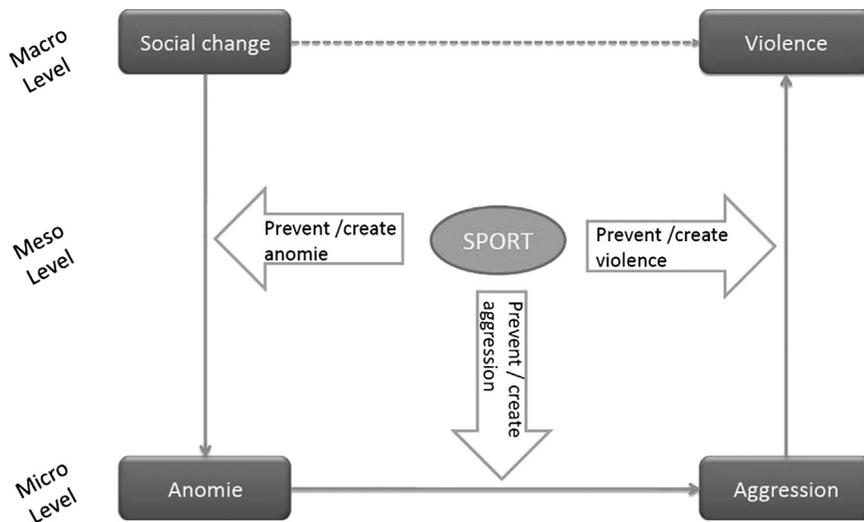
**Figure 1.** A societal model

illustrate that sport remains, "an area of social activity in which overt emotional engagement remains publicly acceptable" (p. 354). The theory of Elias and Dunning was based on the work of Karl Mannheim (1940) who observed the growing danger of Nazism in Germany and had to flee to England. He critically analysed the challenges of modern society and the importance of outlets such as religion and sport to channel negative emotions.

The concept of anomie enables a better understanding of the causes for frustration and negative emotions, which gives us a clearer picture of the impact of sport in modern society. Different scientists have used this concept to form the basis of their research. Bodin, Heas, & Robene (2006) operated on the concept of anomie to explain the phenomenon of hooliganism. Other studies show that sport can provide a sense of belonging in individuals with a higher tendency to deviant and delinquent behaviour. They observe a negative relationship between participation in sport and this type of behaviour (Kerr, 1994; Schwery & Eggenberger, 2003; Kunz, 2004).

An embracing study researching the relationship between sport, anomie and deviant behaviour was organised by the Swiss Academy for Development (2007) in the Islamic Republic of Iran. It showed that there is a negative tendency between sport activity and deviant behaviour of boys and girls, although it was only significant for girls.

*Sport and Aggression*

Conflicts are a normal phenomenon in every society. The aim is not to prevent them, as they are necessary for progress, but to encourage the parties involved to channel malignant aggression into some form of productive communication in order to resolve them without resorting to violence. Even

when conflicting parties are not prepared to sit down together and talk, it is sometimes possible to bring them together through sport. Successful interventions in the former Yugoslavia and other war-torn regions show that sport's potential has been underestimated as a confidence-builder following ethnic conflicts (Gasser & Levinsen, 2004).

Studies on the connection between sport and aggression are particularly interesting. In this context, it is useful to make a distinction between malignant and benign aggression (Fromm, 1991, p. 212): the former aims primarily to injure the opponent, whereas the latter serves as a means to achieve a sporting goal (e.g., winning points). When someone adopts a form of benign aggression, without intent to injure, it is viewed simply as a more pronounced level of assertiveness.

As reviewed by Jarvis (2002), different studies have demonstrated that sports activity may very well lead to a channelling of malignant aggression and that there is a negative correlation between the amount of training and the tendency to use violence.

### Sport and Violence

A brief look at the origins of sport suffices to note that its history is closely linked to the use of physical violence. In ancient Greece, sport competitions are well documented from different historical sources. Competitions were organised in many cities and the pan-Hellenic games were popular outside of Greece. The popularity of sport in ancient Greece was so obvious that it led historians such as Jacob Burckhardt (1999) to conclude that the propensity to compete was an exclusive trait of the ancient Greeks. However, research has shown that ancient Greece was not the exception and that many other ancient civilisations celebrated sport competitions (Decker, 1992) and humans are playing beings, or *homo ludens* (Huizinga, 1955).

The sport contests in ancient Greece and Egypt were mainly linked to preparing for war and served to hone individual skills in battle. In the epos of Homer it is possible to find several examples of sport competitions before battles. The Olympic disciplines give clear evidence on the link to war. However, in ancient times, these competitions were brutal and claimed many casualties and fatalities.

Sport activities continued in medieval times. Linked with the formation of the big religions, sport activities became more civilised and the focus was more on sports as a replacement of war. Competitions served as a forum for exchange between different peoples and for ''peaceful'' resolution of rivalry and conflict. For example, jousting tournaments and duals were sporting encounters that represented an organised display of violence. It goes without saying that these forms of sport were also linked to a lot of violence: the knight that lost the fight did not only lose his horse, armament and honour, he could also lose his life (Olivova, 1985).

Modern day sport is much less brutal than its ancestral relatives: the spirit of combat still exists as a basic pre-condition but its rules are ready to punish malignant aggression. This civilising process in sports has led to a lot of

criticism. Representative of this is the German political essayist Bertolt Brecht (1926) who wrote that the more "reasonable", "softer" and "civil" sport becomes, the worse it will be. Although this brief historical summary has demonstrated that sport has become more and more civilised (less violent) during the passage of time, it is evident that violence is still a problem in sport.

Violent conduct could arise from a number of factors: poorly selected training methods, an unhealthy focus on success, huge victory bonuses and overtraining can all lead to players being frustrated when they are unable to meet demands. The direct results on the field can include senseless fouls being made, excessive use of strength and outbreaks of rage and misconduct towards opponents, such as spitting. In addition, there are pressures to contend with behind the scenes. Racism, bullying and sexual harassment by coaches towards players are some of the many issues that sport clubs have to deal with.

The examples above contradict one of the main assumptions of sports clubs: that they can provide a peaceful alternative to young people who would otherwise occupy themselves by resorting to crime and violence. The examples demonstrate that without support, sport is not always the best solution. In measuring the relationship between sport and violence, one faces substantial methodological challenges that are mainly linked with gathering crime statistics. However, most existing studies contradict the statement that sport clubs prevent anti-social behaviour and have a negative impact on juvenile delinquency. Hastad, Segrave, Pangrazi, and Petersen (1984) found that there is little relationship between sport participation and deviancy. A more embracing study was conducted in Germany and the results reported to the European Commission (Brettschneider & Naul, 2004). It concluded that young members of sport clubs have, irrespective of their sex, a lower and less increasing quota of delinquent behaviour but that sport activity can explain only 9% of the variance. The same study showed that campaigns of sport clubs against drug abuse and alcohol consumption did not seem to produce any lasting outcomes. Furthermore, club members, especially footballers, seemed to consume even more alcohol on average than non-members.

The most recent and complex study was conducted in Switzerland by Moesch, Birrer, Schmid, and Seiler (2007). It failed to prove that violent youth practice sport more or less often than non-violent youth. Interestingly enough, a group known collectively as "mobbers", defined by their high propensity to violence, spent more time in sport than all other groups. However, the study showed that youth had a high propensity to violence if they had a negative self-image and if they had underdeveloped stress management skills. This means that sport may have an indirect impact on reducing violence when it creates a positive self-image.

Midnight basketball programmes launched in Australia, the UK, the USA and other countries represent a success story. Qualitative and quantitative data revealed a significant reduction in the juvenile offender crime rate (Hartmann & Depro, 2006). An evaluation of a midnight basketball

programme for boys and girls residing in public housing showed that before the programme 92% of the surveyed youths expected to get into some kind of trouble in the next three months and 66% of the youths thought they would be victims of violent acts during that same period. Following implementation of the programme 20% of the surveyed youths stated that they expected to get into some kind of trouble and only five percent of the youths expected to be crime victims. It revealed a 78 percent reduction in the juvenile offender crime rate among youths 16 to 20 years old in the precinct where the public housing development is located (Hartmann & Depro, 2006).

Studies show that children and youth with a higher tendency to violence are more likely to participate in contact sports. Endresen & Olweus (2005) examined the relationship between participation in contact sports and self-reported violent and anti-social behaviour. They observed a strong positive relationship between boxing and self-reported violence and a weaker one for martial arts. The latter of these findings stands in contrast with many other longitudinal studies reviewed by Daniels and Thornton (1990). They show that in martial arts, such as Karate and Jujitsu, there is a negative correlation between the amount of training and the tendency to use violence among those who practice it. This conclusion and others like it support the theory of using modern sport as an outlet to dismantle negative emotions in a post-industrial society with complex dependence networks (Elias & Dunning, 1986).

It can be summarised that, in general, participation in sport cannot be expected to have a major impact on reducing anti-social behaviour and violence. However, an environment transmitting non-violent values is vital for reaching a positive outcome.

Having examined the potential effects of participation in sport, it is now necessary to look at the effects it can have on spectators.

## Spectator Violence

There has been a long-standing debate as to how much, or indeed whether, violent scenes in films and computer games promote an increased propensity to violence. Following nearly every violent crime committed by a minor, violent computer games and films are put under the spotlight and subject to media scrutiny. Thornton, Craft, Dahlberg, Lynch, and Baer (2006) examined over 100 research projects on this topic and came to the conclusion that the large majority of studies showed little or no connection between violent scenes of conflict and violence in society. Whether it concerns violent scenes in comics, war films or computer games, existing studies on the connection between fictitious and real-life violence draw different conclusions.

An interesting study showing the link between watching contact sports and behaving violently was provided by Aronson (1995). It showed that in prize fight boxing matches in Chicago, in which a black fighter triumphs against a white fighter, there was a noticeable rise of violence against whites.

Conversely, when a white fighter won, violence rose against blacks (Aronson, 1995).

The ultimate proof of whether violent scenes in sport incite violence in society does not exist. It would require selecting two random groups and exposing one to violent scenes in sport over several years and the other to a harmless alternative and then measuring the impact. This approach is not possible due to ethical considerations (Killias, 2007). However, using data present in a study by Thornton et al. (2006), it can be assumed that where benign aggression is used, a *compensation effect* among spectators would be noticeable and violence in society would decrease. Yet, if the game is shaped by malignant aggression and there is an obvious intent to cause harm to the opponent, an *imitation effect* is more likely and violence in society would increase (Thornton et al., 2006).

## Nationalism

Increasing media presence also brings with it the danger of using sport for populist and nationalistic purposes. The link between sport and nationalism and separatist ambitions is frequently emphasised by critics and has also been researched scientifically (Hargreaves, 2000).

The Olympic Games in Barcelona were particularly noteworthy because of the political situation and the separatist ambitions of Catalonia. As Hargreaves (2000) reported, the interaction between Catalonian and Spanish identities and interests were very important for the Games. It was a great help to the Games that Spanish and Catalonian identities were integrated in a global economic and cultural network. The Spanish state was in no way weakened by the Games and the excellent organisation strengthened national unity and Spanish prestige. Moreover, Catalonia was able to profit from the games at an economic, cultural and political level. According to Hargreaves, joint responsibility for this mutual success can be attributed to a well-developed civil society, cultural institutions and a healthy interaction with indigenous culture.

Sport has played a significant part in the formation of cultural and national identities ever since the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when mass migration began to occur. For some, the process of exclaiming one's identity also led to sport playing a considerable role in innumerable nationalistic and racist manifestations. History has provided us with some particularly shameful examples, where tensions on the field have erupted in riots and even wars. Matches between nations always have a potential for exaggerated nationalism, as demonstrated in November 2005 in the FIFA World Cup qualifying match between Switzerland and Turkey where players and coaching staff were involved in a brawl in the tunnel on the way to the dressing rooms after the game.

For this reason, the role of the national anthem at the beginning of international matches needs to be revisited. Sport as a symbol of national identity has made an important contribution to the formation of nations. It is, however, questionable whether in the twenty-first century it is still

necessary to play national anthems at international competitions. In knockout tournaments, where teams contest for the right to progress to the next stage, with one eventual winner, the focus should be on strengthening ties between people who share a passion for the sport.

Abolishing the national anthem does not solve the problem though. The role of the players and coach, the club spokesperson, the security forces, the stadium announcers and the media must all be looked at and reconsidered in order to overcome the problem of spectator violence. Further considerations are looked at in the section under "Action on hooliganism".

## Hooliganism

When violence in sport is discussed, often the first thing that comes to the mind of most people are rioting hooligans. During mass participation sports, such as football and ice hockey, these "fans" can normally be found in violent confrontations with security forces or against each other.

A brief look at some examples in history disprove a common belief that hooliganism is a phenomenon of modernity. The ancient Olympic Games were accompanied by clashes between spectators. And, during the medieval Calcio, it was nearly impossible to differentiate between sportsmen and spectators because fights would happen on and off the pitch. Also, fights between the competing villages were almost expected during the traditional Swiss wrestling competitions (Schwingen) in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Schaufelberger, 1972).

Linked with the democratisation of sport and rising commercialisation, the phenomenon of hooliganism reappeared following a 200-year slumber, during which time sport had become a privilege of the aristocracy. After World War II, which stressed the potential of violence, fanatical fans began to reappear; at first in England. Here, hooligans would engage themselves in bloody battles against rival supporters, storm the playing field or damage public property.

Hooliganism grew exponentially in the 1970s and 1980s in western and eastern Europe. On the African and the South American continent, violent exchanges occurred frequently at football matches which served as an outlet to discharge pent-up emotions. In 1985 the tragedy at Heysel stadium in Brussels occurred when 39 fans lost their lives and hundreds more were injured because of violence instigated by English hooligans. This was the height of hooliganism in England and the resulting ban that English clubs had from playing in Europe served as a strong wake-up call for concerned stakeholders who realised that something had to be done.

Hooliganism is a unique form of violence in sport. The phenomenon concerns only a small section of supporters, is usually limited to elite sport and even here to a specific group of team games, such as football, basketball and ice hockey, which attract a larger audience. Even at major tennis tournaments such as Wimbledon—which draws global audiences, excessive violence is practically inconceivable.

There is a growing consensus among experts that violence taking place at sport events is not caused mainly by the sport but also by some root problem in society (Kerr, 1994). Usually it stems from a build-up of frustration and a willingness to use violence, more commonly observed in young people. The myth that hooligans are usually unemployed, uneducated young men originating from broken homes is not true (Kerr, 1994; Zimmermann, 2005). From unskilled labourers to bank executives, hooligans represent a cross-section of society. Neither a precarious economic situation nor a troubled upbringing can fully explain their violent tendencies. We can assume that it is not only frustration over a loss in the last seconds of play which leads to violence, but a broader disorientation, anomie, that is the cause (Bodin, Heas, & Robene, 2006).

### Action on Hooliganism

If the sports stadium can be used as a social laboratory, it might be a place where it is possible to work with those who are disorientated in society and help them to overcome their anomie, rather than let their malignant aggression progress. Many necessary preventative measures are common-place nowadays at stadiums in various guises but when they take the form of being excessively repressive they can increase the temptation for deviant and delinquent behaviour. It is clear that a "*laissez-faire*" approach to security at sport-settings, whereby fans are free to express their emotions through any means imaginable, will not prevent hooliganism (Bodin, Heas, & Robene, 2006). However, security measures, such as fan databases and zone access restrictions can be used alongside actions that are mindful of the therapeutic role these settings can have in society. Such actions can include employing more stewards and reducing the number of official police or security forces in uniforms, carrying weapons, a symbol of authority which fuels anger and increases the danger of violence escalating.

More meaning could be given to preventive social fan work. Contrary to the repressive measures mentioned above, psychosocial fan projects are under-financed in many countries. England, Germany and Holland are among a small group of countries that have developed systematic fan work structures in football. Clubs and national associations work together with external organisations to meet the needs of fans, such as providing transport solutions, ticket allocation information and appropriate diversions, before, during and after the match. Fan work could be part of youth and social work. To leave this responsibility to the football club alone, demonstrates a lack of understanding in the psychosocial causes of the hooliganism.

Fan embassies, working with sport event organisers, local authorities and fans to provide useful information concerning the matches and surrounding areas at international competitions can reduce the potential of violence through purposeful campaigns. England tested this system for the first time during the FIFA World Cup in Italy 1990. At the UEFA European Championships in Portugal in 2004, seven countries worked together for the first time to deliver systematic fan embassies (FSI, 2005). Due to this positive

experience, the same response was delivered at UEFA's tournament in Switzerland and Austria in 2008, with more countries involved.

History tells us that women have a civilizing effect on sport. In jousting competitions during medieval times, contests were reportedly more civilized when the eventual prize to the winner was a woman (Olivova, 1985). Furthermore, as Dunning (1999) reports, during the 1930s, women began to get more involved in the organisation, participation and viewing of football matches in Britain, which led to the development of a less violent sport. It would seem that women therefore have an important role to play in the prevention of violence through their involvement in institutionalised sport structures (Zimmermann, 2005).

Players could be actively involved in fan work. For example, using clear statements against racism, sport idols can have a significant influence on the behaviour of fans. "Stand UP—speak UP", the campaign that French football star Thierry Henry contributed to, is a good example. Fan clubs could be actively looking for opportunities to calm emotions and channel aggression. These can be in the form of matches between different fan clubs and stadium choreography, where various interactive activities are coordinated by organisers to entertain fans, before and during the matches and breaks in play. There is no limit to the potential for these activities, with many European clubs now looking to their North American counterparts for inspiration.

Furthermore, clubs and fan clubs could work together with the fans to find solutions that benefit all parties. Co-operative behaviour should not be taken for granted but should be rewarded, e.g., by discounts on match tickets, food and beverage to members of fan clubs who commit themselves to a minimum standard of ethical rules.

The prohibition of alcohol in the sport-setting does not normally deter fans that want to get drunk: they will just make sure they drink a sufficient amount before the game. This kind of alcohol abuse can lead to violent scenes among those unable to control their actions while under the influence. The initiative that was implemented in the UEFA EURO tournaments since 2000, where bars in and around the stadium provided low or non-alcoholic beer, could serve as good practice for other events.

International competitions increase the potential for people from different cultures to connect. Hostilities towards fans from the opposing team could be, and sometimes are, sanctioned by the international sport bodies. The role of the national anthem and other national symbols could be reformatted or replaced with more importance given to unification instead of symbols of separation. UEFA performed such a move when it replaced the national anthems of competing teams in its Champions League competition with the adopted event theme tune (called "Champions League", an adaptation by Tony Britten of George Frideric Handel's "Zadok the Priest" from the Coronation Anthems).

The media has a significant influence on the perception of hooliganism among the general public. A survey conducted as part of a study by Allsford

(2005) shows that the more games a fan goes to, the less likely they are to say that a form of behaviour (vandalism outside the ground, a pitch invasion, small-scale fights, and so on) constitutes hooliganism. The media can take a responsible stance towards outbreaks of violence and hooliganism within sport settings by providing a balanced report on what they have seen, and working with security forces and club officials to stamp out this form of behaviour (Zimmermann, 2005).

In the last few years research institutes, international and national sport organisations and various authorities have been dedicated to finding ways to decrease spectator violence. In Europe, different organisations are united under the FARE (Football Against Racism in Europe) network, and rally together against violence in football. FARE, with the support of UEFA, organises anti-racism conferences, which bring together various stakeholders to discuss how to eradicate this form of discrimination, and others, from football (Schwery & Cade, 2009). The Council of Europe adopted a convention regarding spectator violence shortly after the Heysel disaster and has provided different recommendations that have been adopted by some clubs. A committee was assembled and a manual was published (Bodin, Robene, & Heas, 2005). This provides a good example of external organisations working with sport to improve the safety and security of the setting.

Hooliganism is a social phenomenon, which has made its mark throughout the history of sport. In the seventeenth century, Bernard de Mandeville the author of the famous *Fable of the Bees* wrote that the death of a few hundred people each year caused by duels in France was a small price to pay for the enjoyment that it gave to the masses. Can it be concluded that the damage and injuries caused today through violence and aggression in sport are a small price to pay to channel the aggression inherent in modern society? What would be the alternative remedies to treating a broad spectrum of people who have become disorientated in an ever-changing world?

## Conclusion

Although scientific knowledge clearly demonstrates that sport exhibits great potential for development of personality and that numerous essential skills and accomplishments can be obtained through sport, it also reveals several dangers and risks that must be taken seriously.

Much effort is still required to realise sport's full potential in the battle against anomie. Progress can continue if governments, sport organisations and other concerned actors ask the right questions. It is not whether sport acts as the accelerator or inhibitor to malignant aggression, violence and hooliganism but rather what can sport do to prevent anomie and foster a safe environment for people to release negative emotions. Not by depriving them of structure by repressive measures or adding to their tensions, but by inventing and investing in ways that allow peaceful expression of benign aggression can sport make the difference.

If sport organisations can fully grasp the concept of using sport as a social laboratory and embrace social responsibility as a serious commitment they can expect more support from government and municipalities to carry out their work and guarantee security.

This new vision of the sport stadium as a social laboratory to treat people suffering from a general loss of orientation (anomie) would revise the relationship between governing institutions and sport clubs and associations and provide a new *raison d'être* for sport institutions.

Hospitals are not expected to cure every patient, so why should stadiums be?

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