

‘Play The Ball, Not The Man!’ :
Deviant Behaviour In Sport, The Civilizing Process,
Violence And Media Reaction.

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INTRODUCTION

According to the Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary, sport is “a game, competition or activity needing physical effort and skill that is played or done according to rules, for enjoyment and/or as a job”. The main goal of sport is thus meant to be pleasure and fun.

But sport can also be analysed as symbolic violence between people (Dunning, 1971). Indeed, socialisation (the integration of social life’s rules all over life) normally prevents people from directly and physically expressing the violent feelings they accumulate from everyday social relationships.

However, given that sport is a physical activity, it sometimes logically contains a high level of physical violence, which is, at first sight, opposed to the notion of fun. This violence can be, in some cases, the main content of the physical activity involved in sport, like boxing for instance.

In other cases, violence occurs in amateur or professional sport, which appears to be a breaking of the sports’ laws : the rules. In this case, the sportsman or sportsmen involved in the violent act can be defined as deviant. Indeed, even if rule breaking is not the only characteristic defining deviance, the simple fact that violence in sport is usually considered as unacceptable is enough to qualify those behaviours as deviant ones.

In this dissertation, we will focus on sport, violence, deviance and the media. We will try to understand how the media react to violent behaviour in (mainly professional) sport ; we will also study the reasons for this reaction.

Consequently, we will first use a few theoretical elements about deviance that will enable us to build our argument later. Secondly, we will try to understand in which extend sport has become more civilized over time, in the idea that a civilization process has the result of labelling some behaviour as deviant. Finally, we will combine theoretical and empirical elements to discover how English newspapers treat sport violence, with the example of Eric Cantona's attack on a supporter in 1995.

Chapter One - Theories About Deviance

This first chapter, mainly based on a book by E. Goode (1997), will highlight a few landmarks in the numerous authors and theories of the sociology of science field.

1. Emile Durkheim

The very first roots of the sociology of deviance must be found in the positivist contribution, which later will give birth to the functionalism. The positivist theory aims to study social phenomenon as “things”, that is through a scientific research process.

For Emile Durkheim (1858-1917), the first academic sociologist, deviance is functional because it creates a social reaction and a social reaffirmation of social order. Crime is thus useful because it enables social changes and prevents society from too much conformity, which would be dangerous. As far as explanations of deviance are concerned, he created the concept of anomie, synonym to the loss of social links and values in society. He differs that way from the previous (biological) crime theories, whose explanations were based on physical features.

Durkheim has inspired, among others, Talcott Parsons (1902-1979), known as the structural-functionalism's founder. The functionalism explains phenomena through questions like “Who profits?”. Actually, individuals' actions are explained by interests. This functionalism focuses on this question to know how a social order is possible within a society. Their theory is that societies find a non-conscious way to protect themselves from too many deviant behaviours, through encouraging socially right behaviours and discouraging dangerous ones.

2. The Chicago School

While the positivist and functionalist theories focus on the whole society, other theories decided, by reaction, to study groups and classes.

In the 1920's and 1930's, the Chicago school of sociology, headed by Robert E. Park was at the heart of the development of different theories, including urban ecology, which focused on the influence of the city layout on the crime rate.

The Chicago school was also the centre of the subcultural theory. A subculture is defined by “beliefs, values and norms shared and actively participated in by an appreciable minority of people within a particular culture” (Goode, 1997), and is usually subordinated to the dominant culture. Therefore, crime is a value considered as good in a certain kind of social group (or subculture), which rejects middle-class values.

Albert Cohen explains in *Delinquent Boys* (1955) how young boys create and exchange a specifically delinquent subculture. His findings are that, by an interaction with others people sharing the same social frustrations as themselves, boys find “solutions” to their problems, which make them belong to the delinquent subculture.

3. Symbolic Interactionism

This theory, which appeared mainly in the 1950's and 1960's, is opposed to functionalism because it negates the determining influence of social structures. However, the link between symbolic Interactionism and the Chicago school is not that clear. Indeed, it differs from the Chicago school because gives much less importance to social disorganization as a root of social deviance. On the other hand, they are sometimes called “neo Chicagoans” because they tend to use the same local ethnographic methods.

Symbolic interactionism shares three basic principles with another close theory, called labelling theory. First, individual actions are the outcome of the meanings that actors attach to things and to social action. This principle gives a

relative character to deviance, by defining it like something very subjective. Secondly, the meanings attached to actions by individuals are created through direct interactions with others. Thirdly, those meanings are not definitive, but continually change by individuals' interpretations. Labelling theory is actually an application of symbolic interactionism to deviance.

The most frequent criticism towards symbolic interactionism is about its research method : by focusing its entire attention to microsocial and subinstitutional phenomena, it understates the importance of macroscopic structures and historical factors.

- Differential Association

Edwin Sutherland (1883-1950) is a theorician who used symbolic interactionism for his differential association, also called learning theory. His goal was to understand why some social groups are more likely to become deviant, and why somebody engages in deviant behaviour. For Sutherland, deviance is a learning process. Only close interaction with deviant people can bring people to deviance. This is called the differential association.

- Moral Panic

Stanley Cohen in "Folk devils and moral panics : the creation of the mods and rockers" (1972) develops a theory linked with symbolic interactionism. In this book, he explains that a moral panic appears when "a condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests ; its nature is presented in a stylised and stereotypical fashion by the mass media ; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people ; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions ; ways of coping are evolved or (more often) resorted to ; the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes more visible."(p.9).

We can isolate a few features of moral panic :

First, there must be a serious concern about a person or group and its behaviour. Then, this concern must be accompanied by hostility to the person or group, since its behaviour is expected to harm society and to endanger moral values. There must be a wide consensus on the reality of the threat in the society. Moral panic is also often characterized by the disproportionality used, mainly in the media (as we will show in the third part), to report and define the social problem. Signs of disproportion can be the exaggerated or even created figures, or an unjustified sudden surge in the coverage of an event or the concern of those who influence society. A kind of exaggeration also consists of reinterpreting previous events or statements in a different way, when considering the recent deviant event.

Finally, unpredictability is a key feature of moral panic. As quickly as the concern first erupted, the concern can reappear time to time (without necessarily any logical reason) , or disappear in a flash.

In addition, there is often a will for a (political or social) response, which typically is about a greater social regulation or a return or reinforcement of traditional moral values.

Since moral panic relies on a person or a group, this target is most of the time, through a labelling process, considered as what is called by Cohen a “folk devils”. They are thus portrayed as a personification of devil, which incorporates all the features of a threat for society. They are defined as “unambiguously unfavourable symbols” (Cohen, 1972, p.41), and it is clear that their action must be neutralized.

4. Norbert Elias

Not traditionally directly linked with the deviance sociology, we will though use Norbert Elias’ theories in our dissertation to talk about history of sport and deviance.

Norbert Elias (1897-1990), a German sociologist and historian, got interested in the “civilizing process” occurring in Europe for five centuries. He mainly focused on the political systems birth (Elias, 1978), using historical sociology.

Indeed, he showed how physical violence in societies has gradually been monopolized, accompanied by a process of social differentiation. In the society, thus, physical violence threat tends to disappear, at the expense of a social pressure, linked with the multiplication of contacts between citizens. This process directly affects individual, by accepting self-constraints, leading to changes in his relationship towards his impulses and with others.

This evolution of behaviours also has direct consequences on the political system. Instead of fighting for a power, men, from the seventeenth century onwards, began to consider and apply new political rules, which can be seen as the roots of those which currently rule our modern States. Indeed, the democratic political system rejects any form of physical violence linked to the quest for power.

Chapter Two : Sport and Civilization

In this chapter, we will analyse the way sport has been civilized over history, evicting most of “useless” violence in sport, and making violence an element of deviant behaviour.

According to N. Elias and E. Dunning (1985), sport can be defined by three main features. First, there is an obvious element of competition. The purpose of the players is to win, and not only to participate in a common activity. Secondly, sports involve “bodily strength or skills of a non-military type” (p.19). Thirdly, the practice of sport is limited by rules that, among others, aim at reducing the violence in order to avoid serious physical injuries.

But, as we will show now, this definition concerns modern sports, that is to say sports after the process of civilization.

1. Civilization of Sport

Indeed, as Dunning shows (1971, p.83), in ancient Greece, sport used to contain a much higher socially accepted level of violence. At that time, the personal honour at stake in sport had a higher value than fairness, hence the absence of written rules.

Since then, the evolution of sport in time has been characterized by the growing concern towards violence, and the growing will to eradicate it. As Elias and Dunning underline it (1985), the roots of this process can be found in the fourteenth century, since at that time, edicts were already aimed at regulating sport by trying to ban some particularly dangerous behaviour among players. But those edicts usually failed, because of society’s inability to regulate it effectively (p.175).

This process of civilization has obviously also been applied to football.

In the eighteenth century, football rules were developed in order to create equal chances to win for both teams. These rules referred to more precise forbidden behaviours and sanctions applying in each case, making escape from the rules more and more difficult. Generally speaking, the authors talk about a process of “sportization”.

According to Caillois (Dunning, 1971, chap.2), who tried to classify the different kinds of sport, football belongs to the agon category. Unlike the other categories like alea (chance), mimicry (simulation) and ilinx (vertigo), agon is based on competition. Indeed, football directly opposes two teams, who have to gain and keep the ball in order to score as much as possible in the other team’s goal, to finally win the match. Agon is a “combat”, but characterized by the presence of “artificially created” rules, in order to guarantee “equality of chance”, and to enable the teams to “confront each other under ideal conditions, susceptible of giving precise and incontestable value to the winner’s triumph”. (p.19)

More precisely, we can say that modern football (as opposed to its folk-antecedents) has been civilized through a range of socially recognised and applied rules concerning the game itself, as Murphy, Williams, and Dunning (1990) show it. Those accepted rules give the winners a guarantee on their victory after a fair competition.

Indeed, today, football games are played by two teams with the same number of players, who are clearly differentiated from the spectators. The role of the referee and linesmen are institutionalised, accepted and (usually) respected.

On the field, players’ practices are strictly ruled, with the ban of very dangerous tackles, or the use of a stick. In the case of violent acts or behaviour, like free kicks for instance, a range of gradual and proportional sanctions (from the yellow card to the suspension) is available.

Those rules and other major decisions are taken by national and international institutions like the UEFA (The Union Of European Football Associations) and the FIFA (Federation Internationale de Football Associations).

Murphy, Williams, and Dunning (1990) underline the crucial importance of the creation of an important institution : the Football Association in 1863, and the recognition of two main rules by this institution.

The rule number 10 states “neither tripping (that is, “throwing an adversary by the use of the legs”) nor hacking (“kicking an opponent intentionally”) shall be allowed and no player shall use his hands to hold an adversary” ; and the rule number 14 states “no player shall be allowed to wear projecting nails, iron plates, or gutta-percha on the soles or heels of his boots”(p.30).

However, the game would obviously become totally dull and uninteresting if no contact, that is no violence, was tolerated at all. Thus, institutions have the difficult task to rule to avoid important physical injuries, but, at the same time, they have to preserve a high level of excitement to keep the game interesting.

2. Civilized Sport's Values

As a result of this instauration of rules in football, violent behaviours in this sport have become synonym to deviant behaviour. Indeed, football and sports in general, although often based on contact, are loaded with positive moral and educative values.

For instance, international sport competitions, including football competitions, such as the FIFA World Cup, even stand for symbols of harmony between States and populations of the world, by replacing violence of war by a non-violent symbolic competition.

But the Olympic Games are still the best example of this philosophy. As we can read on the Internet site¹, “ The Games have always brought people together in peace to respect universal moral principles.”

Sport in general, and football in particular are also meant to have positive educative purposes. Indeed, football is often played at school, in order to teach to children respect, team spirit, and other moral values needed to become a citizen and to be able to live in society.

Professional football players are also expected to adopt exemplary behaviour on the field (but also in their private life) (Andrews & Jackson, 2001). As we will see later with the case of Eric Cantona and the treatment of his violent act during a match in 1995, violence, as soon as it goes further than the tolerated level by the rules, is severely condemned. This condemnation occurs on an institutional level (through a sanction by the national or international football association), but also on a moral level. Indeed, through the labelling process, sportsmen behaving or even being suspected of behaving in a wrong way (doping, cheating, violent behaviour...) are very quickly labelled as deviant by the general public, because of media among others.

This can be explained by the high influence of sport on children and teenagers, and the stardom created, through the media, around professional sportsmen.

For some authors, like Dunning, Murphy and Williams (1987), players' violent behaviour is even made responsible for spectators' violent acts, in particular hooliganism, which is, in our view, an excessive way to judge sportsmen' behaviour. This theory is interesting because it gives a backing to our argument that an important pressure is put on sportsmen.

3. Violence in Civilized Sport

Indeed, it is not to be denied that violence is still an important element in football today, in spite of the civilizing process. A study by Murphy, Williams and Dunning (1990) even shows that violence on field has increased since the 1970's.

¹ site web des jeux olympiques : www.olympic.org

Several explanations can be given to this persistence. When supporters and non-professional players play among themselves, there is usually, according to Giulianotti, Bonney, and Hepworth (1994), a “culture of quasi-violence”, which can be defined by the lack of organisation of the game, the lack of referee and the habitual high violence level. “Both players and supporters are socialized into a culture of quasi-violence : a culture that accepts aggression and violence as central to the game but accompanies this acceptance with all manner of inconsistencies, uncertainties, qualifications and disagreements”(p.103). This particular socialisation process can be explained as a kind of subculture, as outlined by the Chicago school using the example of delinquent young people.

The violence is also classified in four categories by the authors, according to the degree of their acceptance. Here, the difference between the institutionalised rules and the usual consideration by players is clear : violence can be legitimate (a tackle), tolerated (“pushing for a loose ball”), understood if disapproved (“retaliation”), unacceptable (“unprovoked assault”). The fact that violence is, generally speaking, rather accepted or understood by players must be linked with the intrinsic character of quasi-violence in football, since it is an important part of the excitement, according to Giulianotti, Bonney, and Hepworth (1994).

Chapter Three : Sport, Violence and Media Reaction

We will now combine the elements about violence and deviance (from the Chapter two) with the media reaction to this violence. With the aid of the concept of moral panic, that we will explain more precisely, we will try to understand how media react, generally speaking and then focusing on a precise example.

Though this part is quite critical about media in general and press in particular, it is important to precise that we are not trying to say that those information tools are bad on the whole. Our approach is more about explanation than condemnation.

1. Moral Panic and Sport

- Moral Panic in the Media

As we showed in our first part, moral panic phenomena are almost always linked with media. Further, we can even say that they are often created by media, which amplify so much a (sometimes minor) event, that it becomes quickly a general concern in society, including all the features defining moral panic (concern, hostility, consensus, disproportionnality, volatility, response).

Of course, moral panic can be beneficial for society, since it is often the only way for the citizens to be aware of events. But the whole point here is to argue that the panic created by media is far from always being justified.

Media overreport events through different processes. They can obviously give more room to the event than it actually deserves. They can also adopt a very dramatic tone to strengthen their readers' or viewers' moral indignation. They also often insist on the lack of political action or cure for the problem, claiming that the problem will not be sorted out unless such or such action is quickly undertaken. In this sense, they might have a direct effect on a political response.

Media also use stylistic processes, such as symbolisations. For instance, concerning the study about mods and rockers (Cohen, 1972), it has been showed that the event had been compared to Hiroshima and Pearl harbour, two references directly linked with the common culture. Generalisations are also commonly used. Once the mods and rockers phenomenon has been reported, young were globally considered as mods, and mods globally considered as violent.

- Explanations : The Daily Press' Treatment of Deviance

But further than just blaming media for their practises, it is interesting to wonder how they can be explained. Studying how crime was portrayed in the American national press, D.J Krajicek (1998) provides a few explanations. Indeed, crime is a deviant behaviour which is often treated by media with the characteristics of moral panic, as he shows with the example of the treatment of crime in the 1990's: " During the 1990's, while crime was declining steeply in the United States, the media presented an image of a crime bogeyman, a menace growing ever more malignant. Not coincidentally, during this same period the country was stricken by a moral panic, as sociologists call it, about crime". (p.5)

According to him, the reasons for the bad treatment of crime must be found in the intrinsic nature of daily journalism : " There is no time today to resolve yesterday's conflicts because we are consumed by the production of tomorrow's news."(p.3). This statement fits perfectly with the feature of moral panic we called versatility, leading media to a quick news succession. This also explains the lack of depth of some journalism and some journalists, mainly the tabloid ones, whose editors often do not give enough time to consider a problem seriously. Indeed, crime news is cheap to produce but very attractive for readers. Quality journalism is thus sacrificed for a financial purpose.

All these factors explain the exaggerated place of crime news in papers, compared with real facts : in the United States, " On a typical day, crime news accounts for one third of the content of a daily newspaper and up to half of many local TV news broadcasts." (p.7)

In the same idea, Jock Young (1971) explains how, because they are professionally socialised as such, journalists tend to write and report things in a

consensual way. They know that people accept more easily news that confirms their prejudices. Therefore, journalists use tight stereotypes, in order not to shock the audience, which could then turn to another media that would back their view up.

- The Media and Violence in Sport

Jennings Bryant's article, "Viewers' enjoyment Of Televised Sports Violence" (in Wenner, 1989) provides an interesting overview of different studies concerning sport, violence, spectators and media.

He first underlines the fact that media, and especially television are very interested in sport's violence. But newspapers are also to be considered here : by a selection of a few newspapers' headline, he shows how the use of violent images and vocabulary to talk about sport are meant to attract readers (titles like "Playing For Blood", "Yes, You Can Call Him The Assassin", "A Bloody Mess" or "How Dirty Game"). Despite the appearances, those headlines all concerned sport games and not war or crime.

In the same idea, he quotes a sports journalism expert, Thomas Fensch (1998), who considers that violence in sport journalism is one of the "10 major topics that will continue to be keys areas of concern into the 1990's" (p.179).

Media professionals, journalists and sport programs producers attach importance to violence by emphasizing violent moments with instant reply or through their comments for instance. They know that an important part of sports' fans are highly attracted by violence.

This is partly confirmed by other studies. Indeed, it appears that violence and pleasure are linked for some spectators, since " at least for male viewers, a high degree of aggressiveness is a critical ingredient of the enjoyment of watching sport contests" (Bryant and al, 1981).

Violence in football (either on the field or among the supporters) has become one of the reasons why sport has gradually been more and more publicized in the media.

Murphy, Williams, and Dunning (1990) provide an interesting study about the way football hooligans have been portrayed in the press in an historical perspective.

Their study underlines the active role of the media in the “development of social processes and the defining of social problems” (p.123), showing that they are far from being neutral. If we look at the coverage of hooliganism in the British newspapers in the mid-1950s, it is interesting to notice that, at this period when stadiums were getting more and more empty, newspapers like the Daily Mail preferred “hooliganism rather than indifference”. From this time onwards, hooliganism has been integrated to the global threat of youth, globally portrayed as deviant and violent. The 1960s have been the real beginning of the interest of the popular press for football and violence that accompanied it time to time. Indeed, Elias and Dunning (1985) show that the popular press, mainly interested in everything but sport as such, began to send reporters to the World Cup in 1966 in this purpose, which was also linked with the social and politic context then : “ ...and because of the increase in the moral and political panic about youth violence which occurred in the mid-1960s, they tended to report such incidents sensationalistically.” (p.264).

The effects that this coverage oriented towards violence could have on supporters' behaviour, and especially those violent group of spectators generally called “hooligans”, seems to be quite clear. Elias and Dunning (1985) claim that media coverage is a key factor in the development of football hooliganism. By giving more importance to this phenomenon than it actually has, hooliganism would be in fact a self-fulfilling prophecy helped by media. This statement is also claimed by Murphy, Williams, and Dunning (1990) : “By defining match days and football grounds as times and places in which fighting could be engaged in and aggressive forms of masculinity displayed, the media, especially the national tabloid press, played a part of some moment in stimulating and shaping the development of football hooliganism”(p.122). Media acted in two main ways in the growth of the hooligan phenomenon. First they created an excitation among potential hooligans, by publicizing matches and emphasizing their possible high level of violence ; and secondly, as the author argues it, by “leading the call for remedial action”.

This process is confirmed by Stuart Hall (1978)² : "If the official culture or society at large comes to believe that a phenomenon is threatening, and growing, it can be led to panic about it. This often precipitates the call for tough measures of control. This increased control creates a situation of confrontation, where more people

² himself quoted by : football violence in europe, internet

than were originally involved in the deviant behaviour are drawn into it ... Next week's confrontation' will then be bigger, more staged, so will the coverage, so will the public outcry, the pressure for yet more control..."

2. An example of Moral Panic : Eric Cantona and The National Press, 1995

We decided to study how the national press covered a particular violent act linked with football. On the 25th of January 1995, during a match between Manchester United and Crystal Palace, Eric Cantona, a French Manchester player violently kicked a supporter while he was going out of the stadium, after receiving a red card for a bad tackle. It appears that the supporter had physically and orally insulted the player.

In our view, this example is interesting for several reasons. First of all, it is a genuine violent act during a football match. Cantona used a very visual kickboxing figure to attack the supporter (or to defend himself, depending on the interpretation). Unfortunately, we could not study the pictures accompanying the articles at that time, because of a lack of means. Indeed, we searched the articles through the electronic database LexisNexis Professional, which does not provide the pictures illustrating the articles.

Secondly, this violent act was directed to a supporter, which is unusual. However, though the genuine violence of the act, no serious injure was made. Thirdly, it will be interesting to know if the French nationality of the player influenced in any way on the coverage of the event.

We decided to study the articles from a daily newspaper, considered as a benchmark : The Guardian. To be sure to analyse the effect of the early reactions to this news, we studied the articles from the 26th, 27th and 29th of January 1995. The second newspaper we chose is The People, a popular weekly newspaper. Thus, the copy of the 29th of January provided us a look on their first reaction toward the event.

Our method to find articles was simple : we decided to consider all the articles found in the LexisNexis Professional database including the word “Cantona” for the given dates. We did not consider the readers’ letters, as we thought that they did not necessarily represent the journalists’ point of view.

Here are our results.

- Generalities About the Coverage

In The Guardian, the event was covered through an article in the front page each three days studied. The first day, 3 articles were found in total, including one in the front page and 2 in the sport pages. The second day, 11 articles treated of that event, including one in the front page, eight in the news pages and two on the sport pages. And the third day, 9 articles were found, including one in the front page, four articles on the news section and four in the sport pages.

In The People, we could find 10 articles. None of them appeared in the front page. One article was in the news pages, while 9 of them were situated in the sport pages.

Several conclusions can be raised from those findings. First of all, the general amount of articles is important for, although violent, a rather minor sportive event. As far as The Guardian only is concerned, it is interesting to see the evolution in the number of articles. Three, then eleven and nine articles found show the growing interest for the event. moreover, the subject is first limited to the sport pages before becoming general news, appearing in the news section. This can be interpreted as a kind of “promotion” of the event.

The People also largely relates the event, but still considers it as a purely sportive event.

- Content of The Articles

We tried to bring together the articles which content was close, in order to have an overview of the information related around this event.

The three articles released in The Guardian from the 26th treat of : the bare facts, the character of Eric Cantona and the overview of the match.

In the 27th and 28th copies of the newspaper, we found that, out of 20 articles, 6 of them quoted the event but did not treat it as a main subject (general columns), 4 of them treated of the sanctions, 3 of them treated of more general elements of football and sport at stake with this event, 3 focused on the defence, by journalists or supporters, 2 on Cantona, one on the supporter, and one on the French press reactions.

In The People, out of nine articles, four are based on commentaries, reactions or analyses (of a footballer writer, a kung fu champion, a psychologist and another football player). Two of them are very informative (a possible swap and the supporter's mobilisation). Three other focus on different related subject : his family reaction (and also the news that his wife is pregnant), a previous similar story with another player, and a proposition to play rugby while the suspension. Finally, one more article only quotes the story without really treating it.

This is interesting in terms of media reaction. Indeed, and it is particularly noticeable for The Guardian, the newspapers widen little by little the area of news related in articles. The first day of treatment is devoted to main information, while the following ones are less directly relevant, but relate connected analysis or points of views. The case of The People is here very relevant, because many articles highlight an expert's point of view (a footballer writer, a kung fu champion, a psychologist), which is typical from the moral panic phenomenon.

- How Cantona is Portrayed

The most common nicknames used in the articles to talk about the Cantona simply emphasise his French nationality. Indeed, "the Frenchman" appears five times in the whole selection, and the adjective "gallic" is used three times. In addition, in the articles, we could find an important amount of references to France and French culture.

In the one hand, Cantona's violence is usually considered as an important part of himself. For instance, journalist use the term "devil" twice : once in The People

(“Fergi made a deal with the devil when he brought Eric Cantona to old Trafford”³) and once in The Guardian (“Since joining Manchester United from Leeds he has proved inspirational in the winning of two championships (...), but the devil in his make-up has never really gone away.”, using the Faust story⁴) to talk about him. In the same idea, articles often emphasize his violence by referring to previous similar events in the footballer’s career.

He is described as a “nazi thug”⁵ in the people, while the guardian underline his dexterity by calling him “sharpshooter”⁶. Those terms tend to make his violent act as a voluntary and thoughtful one, building an image of a man who is both intrinsically violent and unable to control his impulses. This idea is perfectly supported by the expression used in the guardian : “ nitro-glycerine in human form”⁷. His violence is even suspected to be directly linked with his identity, since a journalist (in the guardian) found that Eric Cantona’s anagram is “I cannot care”⁸.

On the other hand, journalists usually also use (often in the same article) terms to stress the fact that, on a purely sportive point of view, his excellence must be acknowledged. He is qualified of “genius” by three times⁹, as a “saviour”¹⁰ one, as “sport star”¹¹ once (guardian), or as an “artist-philosopher”¹².

On the whole, the most important element about the way Cantona is described, is the constant emphasis about his ambiguous character. For instance, a Guardian article on this subject describe the player as “saint and sinner”, having a “dual image”, and is compared with “Darth Vader”¹³. In the same idea, the adjective “controversial”¹⁴ is also used once in the people and “maverick”¹⁵ one by The Guardian.

- Other Moral Panic Evidences

³ The People, Glanville, 29 January 1995.

⁴ The Guardian, Lacey, 26 January 1995.

⁵ The People, Madley 2, 29 January 1995.

⁶ The Guardian, Hoggart, 27 January 1995.

⁷ The Guardian, Lacey, 26 January 1995.

⁸ The Guardian, Thorpe, 28 January 1995.

⁹ The Guardian, Mullin, McKie and Shelley, 27 January 1995.

¹⁰ The Guardian, Mullin, 27 January 2003.

¹¹ Idem

¹² The People, Glanville, 29 January 1995.

¹³ All three : The Guardian, Mullin, 27 January 2003.

¹⁴ The People, Unknown author, 29 January 1995.

¹⁵ The Guardian, Shelley, 27 January 1995.

In addition to the previous considerations, it is interesting to underline a few journalistic processes that directly refer to the moral panic, as we defined it earlier.

In our view, an element of moral panic consists in conditional sentences, that is sentences that imagine what could have been the situation IF something else had happened : “ ...If the referee, Alan Wilkie, had stopped the play at that point considerable trouble would have been avoided¹⁶”, “ and if he had connected with the throat, you could well have had a dead man¹⁷”.

Another effect used is the one that aims at showing that this incident is in fact a sign of much wider problems in football , such as the bad atmosphere between players and managers in Manchester united, or the current crisis in football¹⁸.

CONCLUSION

In this dissertation, we showed that sport has been civilized through history. This civilizing process made physical violence being little by little rejected from sport. It also gave specific values to the sport practice, illustrated by the Olympic games spirit for instance. Consequently, violent behaviour in professional as amateur sport has become labelled as deviant.

Then we focused on mass media coverage of sport deviance, and the example of Eric Cantona in 1995. The study of the vocabulary used and the type of articles produced proved the amplification effect provoked by the press. But, would we have had more time and more means, it would have been interesting to go further in this study, by analysing more newspapers about Cantona's incident, and on a longer period.

In spite of the relevance of his analysis, Norbert Elias and his historical sociology are not as famous as they should be. Hopefully this essay, by building a bridge between

¹⁶ The Guardian, Lacey, 26 january 1995.

¹⁷ The People, Dunn, 29 January 1995.

¹⁸ The People, Madley2, 29 January 1995.

his theories and the sociology of deviance, would have been interesting in that point of view.

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