

SOCIAL REPRESENTATION OF VIOLENCE IN SPORTS - FOCUS ON FOOTBALL GAME IN ROMANIA

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Social representation is organized around a central nucleus. Initially, Moscovici used the phrase “figurative nucleus” for the complex obtained after the objectification (cognitive process through which individuals or groups transform the abstract into familiar and integrate it to their own knowledge system). In the first phase of elaborating the social representation of an object, the subjects choose the information part circulating within the society, make it familiar, and transform it according to their traditions, culture, and group history. Thus, they become independent in the relationship with the environment, with the context in which they created it, making it adaptable and intelligible. This central “nucleus” or “system” (as it was named during the evolution of the theory) then appears concretely as image, illustrates the life of the individual creating it, being anchored in his thoughts (Neculau & Curelaru, 2003:292). Anchoring, as discussed by the authors, transfers a strange and disturbing thing into our particular category system, confronting this new element with the paradigm of a category seen as suitable (Moscovici, 1997:39). The insertion of the object in a familiar reference framework takes place and follows the social instrumentalization of the object. The social representation provides instruments for communication and common understanding, and the anchoring phenomenon facilitates the sequencing of the environment in significant units and comprehensible systems. The two processes, objectification and anchoring, are fundamental in the formation and functioning of social representations. Using word association technique, the data analysis registered 197 mentions for the group of subjects named non-gallery and 205 specifications for the subjects situated in the gallery group, I tried to identify the social representation of violence in football game and the subjects of research was fans.

Keywords: social representation, violence, football game, fans

Starting from the explanations given by Moscovici, Abric and the Aix-en-Provence School developed a structural theory to study social representations, stating that they are organized in a system of information, attitudes and beliefs, corresponding to the central system and the peripheral elements (Abric, 1984:861-875, 2002:81-101). The central system unifies

and stabilizes the representation, it gives sense to the information, as it resists to change, and it is simple, concrete, taking the form of an image, corresponding to the individual's system of values. According to Abric (1996:115), the central system has an important role in the consistency of social representation; it is linked to the homogeneity of a group, being determined by historical, cultural, ideological traditions and social values. The peripheral system is organized around the central system, playing the role of mediator between the nucleus and a real situation in which representation is concretized, with the role of protecting it, of attenuating the external pressures and allowing the representation to have an identity. The elements of the peripheral system are related to those of the central system, constituting the core of the representation contents, the dynamic, active part of the whole. In their composition we have the information collected from the environment, selected and analyzed, arguments elaborated about the object and its environment, stereotypes and beliefs (Abric, 1987:118). Being the accessible part of the representation, the structure protecting the essential through which it has got its meaning, the peripheral system has the capacity of integrating individual experiences and histories, to support the heterogeneity of the group, to accept the contradictions and to be sensitive to immediate context. In the same sense, it fulfills the following functions: objectifying, through which it expresses the subjects' experience and reality in real terms, adapting the representation to the context in evolution, protecting the central system.

It is obvious that the central system emphasizes the memories and history of a group, its traditions, and the peripheral system determines the place of individual experiences and histories.

Forms of mass communication, sport and the show it creates motivate the participation at competitions on the field or various sportive arenas, creating an environment that stimulates the values exchange among the spectators and facilitating social integration. The entertaining character and the joy of practicing or watching the event, as well as getting rid of the anxiety or negative feelings, depend upon the level of the hope for success and upon the emotional and motivational environment.

All that happens on the fields should have a cultural influence upon the crowds and also upon the players. The field structure, dimension, symbols, the combination among the static elements and the evolution of those who offer the show may constitute models, reflected in the spectators' behaviour.

The sportive show has polyvalent influences upon the public: social, psychological, esthetical, biological, and the activities constitute models as they motivate sportive performance, victory, self improvement and tolerance. Sometimes they stimulate the mimetic excitement and the feeling of victory, it leads to passions that turn pleasure into violence (Bodin, 2001:22). Thus, within this space we may identify deviances from the norms, as there are premises for conflicts and violent behaviours, which come from racial, class, religious, ethnic or national identity differences. There is a small step from ecstasy to violent manifestations and violent behaviours (characteristic to football, basketball, handball fans) are opposed to the main purpose of sport: non-violence.

There is a rapport between the public and the sportive show deduced from the public's culture degree, which has two main functions: spectator and co-participant at the competition. In the first case, he addresses to the spectacular dimension of the show, demanding and expecting the demonstration of the sportive talent, and in the second case, spectators are seen as associates of the team, expecting the victory, and, to this purpose, encouraging their favourites, acclimating, mocking the adversaries in order

to demobilise them. The arena may be a feast or war field, adapting to the supporters and giving them space for letting off steam. Field aggressiveness is also shown outside the field, through violent, symbolic acts (Chatard, 1994:39). We remind the fact that there are forces leading or stimulating the spectators towards exaggerated, intense and pain-inducing acts: the fan leaders. Imitating the heroes' actions appears to be another reason to come out, to activate the primitive aggressive features, manifested explosively in this context; they don't isolate themselves, they don't leave in order to better understand the message of their heroes on the field. From the spiritual perspective, the supporter is part of the whole, thinking according to the images on the field, adapting to others' feelings and responses.

Older research suggested the involvement of the spectator in sport helps setting free the combatant instinct, many mass audiences with their "indirect components" serve the unconscious psychological purpose of channelling and setting emotions free, but this is possible only if "fight and rivalry phenomena become educational, only soliciting and implying acquired character features" (Epuran, 2001:200). Theoretically, the spectator crowds encouraging their favourites and yelling at the referee cathartically set their emotions free. The need for excitement and stimulation may lead to exaggerated acts during which an aggressive spectator may turn into an aggressive crowd. The supporter forms at a certain point the angry mobs; there is even a theory of the "criminal crowd" developed by Lombroso and Sigheli (1901). Lombroso believed that crowds were made of delinquents and led by delinquents. Of course, one of the contributions to this character is the very unstable mass thought. It is always modified, has a hectic trajectory adapted to rapid rumours spread by the leader of another crowd.

The individual changes completely when part of a crowd. Amass is formed through gestures and feelings that come from the outside; the man is animated and has brutal manifestations, as he knows them. He is persuaded that there is suggested information and gives credit to any word, and the phenomenon responsible for this change is called suggestion or influence.

People lose their critic sense within the crowd and they give in to the force of illusions, as they lose their capacity to make the difference between reality and fiction; between what they see and the image they induce, they lose the ability to choose between the existent possibilities.

Nowadays supporters are knower of the sportive events, they get involved in their team's life, and they identify with their heroes in order to maintain their psychic balance, with the help of "devotion objects": ideals, values, ancestors, mother, and father, land, seen as sacred (Fromm, 1983:459). The emotions during the competitions, the material support offered to sportsmen, determine the emerging of active, and sometimes of destructive fans. In this context, we may state that there are spectators discontented or irritated by what is happening on the field, having negative reactions to messages come from the field. Spectators invest time and money in sport, they are familiar with the statistics and strategies specific to the sport they watch, they are emotionally attached to one or several sportsmen, they discuss with friends about past events in relation to current ones, they spend their free time on the field. Thus, for supporters sport is very important in their everyday life, and they can hardly wait for a certain competition to start.

Spectators' imitation of their heroes' actions seems to be another reason for the crowd to get loose, to activate the primitive aggressive characteristics. The public of sportive shows is explosive, doesn't get isolated from the crowd, does not reflect upon what really happens on the

field, they fusion with it and become one, their individuality comes second. From the spiritual perspective, the supporter is part of the whole, thinking according to the images on the field.

Research

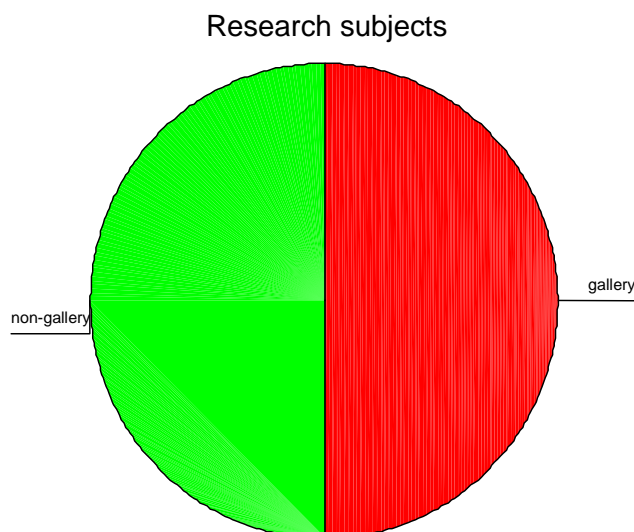
Research objective. The description of social representation of violence in sport for the public of sports events, with a focus on the spectators of team sports (football).

Research hypothesis. The components of galleries at sports events (fans) will have a different attitude towards the phenomenon of violence in sports, reflected in the social representation they generate, in comparison to the spectators, who are not part of the gallery.

Research sample. The subjects were the fans of the football teams Dinamo Bucharest and Steaua Bucharest (52), as well as spectators (52) of the game between these two teams, situated on the other side of the tribune (given the position of the galleries). For the group variable of the gallery (fans), the questionnaires were applied to all members of the gallery, and for the group variable of the spectators, non-gallery, and the subjects were selected randomly, taking into account only their number (we distributed 600 questionnaires for the whole research sample).

Research variables. The *dependent variable*: Social representation of violence in sports. The *independent variable*: the type of public: gallery (fans)-G, non-gallery-NG.

Graph 1. Research sample according to the type of public variable



Method. The interpretation of the results for the first two items of the questionnaire was performed through the word association technique, elaborated by Vergès (2001:213) and through an alternative method to determine the structure and organization of the elements within a representation, proposed by Havârneanu (2000). For the first technique we used the frequency of appearance of mentions and average appearance ranks, and the basis of the second technique was represented by the frequency of appearance and average ranks of importance. In order to determine the main effects, we used *the t tests* of significance between the averages.

Procedure. The questionnaire was applied at the football game between the football teams Dinamo Bucharest and Steaua Bucharest, during the same game for the components of the non-gallery group. We distributed 600 questionnaires to the research group, taking 104 into account for our analysis (52 for each group of subjects). Confidentiality was ensured for all components of the group, asking them to complete this task in a personal manner.

Results

Associativity technique. Applying the prototyping-category technique elaborated by P. Vergès allowed us to identify the central system and peripheral system of the social representation of violence in sports, for each of the two categories of independent variables (gallery-fans, non-gallery).

The main indicators were the frequency and average appearance rank, combined as follows: on the vertical we have the frequency, and on the horizontal – the appearance order. We chose a convenient value to separate with high frequency and average appearance rank (under a certain threshold) from the contents of the other there compartments. The upper left compartment of the table includes the elements with the highest possibility of being central, and the lower right, where the frequency is under the previewed value and the appearance rank is inferior, presents the peripheral elements.

Table 1 The categories of spectators situated in the group named non-gallery-NG

Category	Frequency	Appearance rank	Importance rank	Representation indicator
Physical violence	45	2.03	3,98	179,100
Verbal violence	48	3.09	2.61	125.280
Hooliganism	20	2.97	3.15	63
Spectators' violence	28	2.80	3.36	94.08
Lack of fair play	18	3.06	2.62	47.16
Physical aggressiveness	14	2.72	3.12	43.68
Symbolic violence	10	3.09	2.71	27.10
Racism	8	2.50	3.50	28
Financial interests	6	4.66	2.25	13.50

Table 2. The categories of spectators situated in the group named gallery -G

Category	Frequency	Appearance rank	Importance rank	Representation indicator
Spectators' violence	43	2.93	3.03	130.29
The violence of forces of order	38	2.09	3.70	140.60
Lack of fairplay	27	3.61	2.97	80.19
Verbal violence	20	2.10	2.04	40.8
Sportsmen's violence	18	2.23	3.76	67.68
Hooliganism	13	2.03	3.75	48.75
Vandalism	12	2.58	3.16	37.92
Forbidden substances	9	2.41	2.91	26.1
Financial interests	7	3.33	3.25	22.40
Racism	6	2.75	3.25	19.50
Search for identity	5	4.25	3.60	18
Media	5	1.60	4	20
Symbolic violence	2	3	2.50	5

Table 3. Table matrix for the non-gallery group-NG

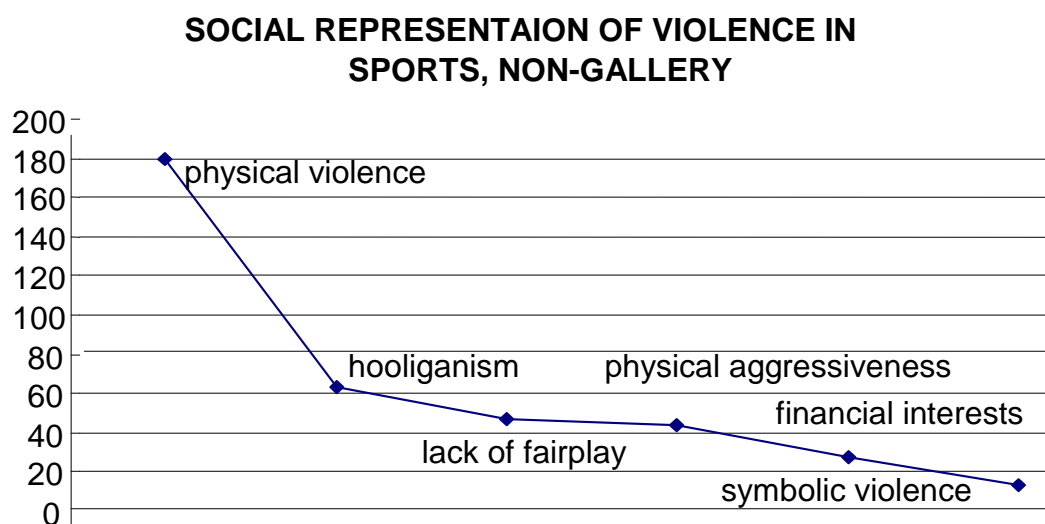
		Appearance rank	
		Inferior or equal to 2.5	Superior to 2.5
Frequency	Superior or equal to 25	Physical violence	Verbal violence Spectators' violence
	Inferior to 25	Racism	Hooliganism Lack of fairplay Financial interests Physical aggressiveness Symbolic violence

Table 4. Table matrix for the non-gallery group -G

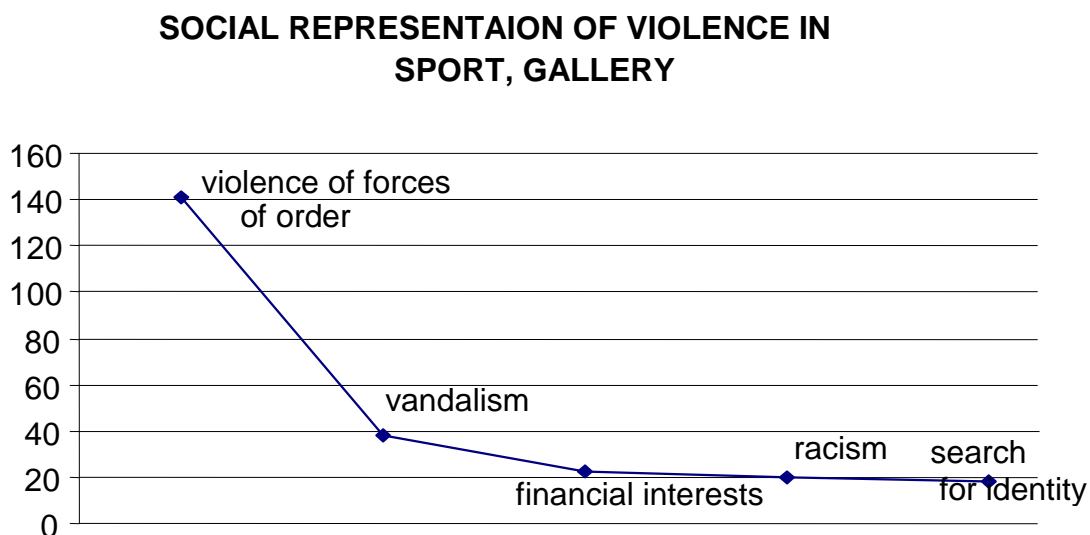
		Appearance rank	
		Inferior or equal to 2.5	Superior to 2.5
Frequency	Superior or equal to 25	The violence of forces of order	Spectators' violence Lack of fairplay
	Inferior to 25	Verbal violence Sportsmen's aggressiveness Hooliganism Forbidden substances Media	Vandalism Financial interests Racism Search for identity

The technique of social representation indicator. For the second technique we took into account the appearance frequency and the average ranks of importance, which, intercrossed and introduced in a graph, will delimitate (through the indicator obtained), the central elements from the peripheral ones.

Graph 2 Social representation of violence in sports, the non-gallery group



Graph 3. Social representation of violence in sports, the gallery group



After applying the two techniques in order to identify the central and the peripheral system, we can state that the central system of social representation of violence in sports is different for the two groups that generated it. As regards the configuration of the representation in case of the non-gallery group, we can see that the central element is *physical aggressiveness*, and the elements of the peripheral system are the following: *hooliganism, lack of fair-play, financial interests, physical*

aggressiveness, symbolic violence. According to the research makes physical violence to be in the center of the representation.

For the gallery group, the representation is obvious through the central element *violence of forces of order*, and the words comprising the peripheral system are *vandalism, financial interests, racism, and search for identity*. The elements of this representation, according to Vergès' technique, refer to the violence of galleries, that between the galleries and the forces of order, to the oppositions between the ideas of club leaders and gallery leaders.

Figure 1. Social representation of violence in sports, non-gallery

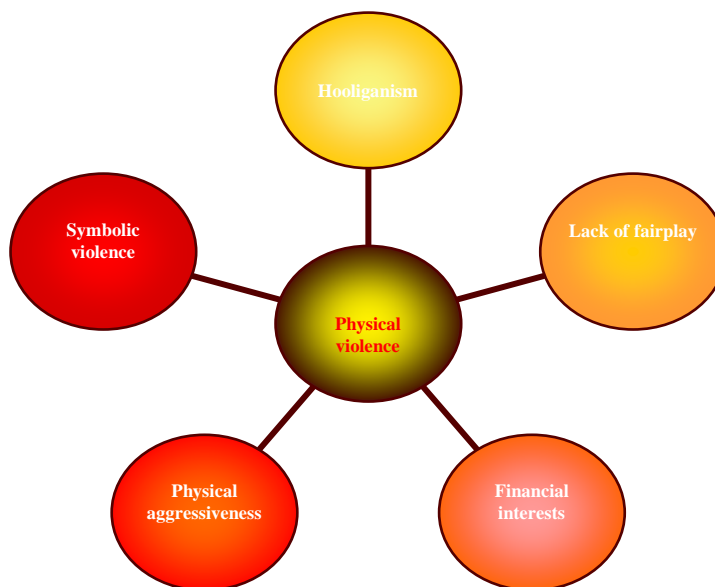
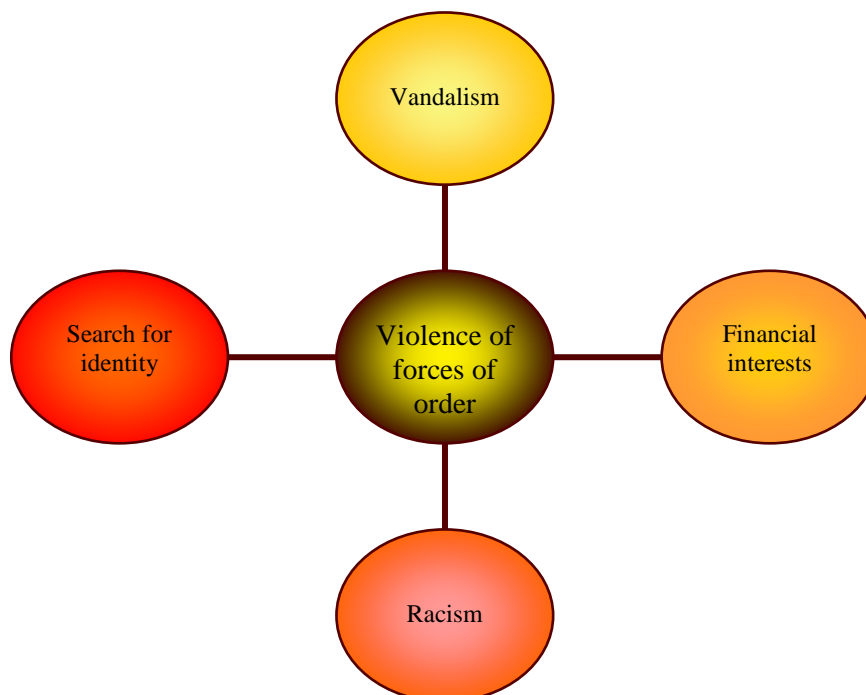


Figure 2. Social representation of violence in sports, gallery



Conclusions

Using word association technique, the data analysis registered 197 mentions for the group of subjects named non-gallery and 205 specifications for the subjects situated in the gallery group.

A first phase was identifying the synonyms and the words with a meaning close to the term, so that we may organize the specifications into categories, technique useful in reducing the vocabulary of the groups analyzed. The technique of Vergès and Havârneanu helped us represent graphically the image of every group regarding violence in sports.

Thus, the *non-gallery* group has the ensemble of social representation emphasized by the central system formed of one element, *physical violence*. The violent contact between sportsmen, the fights between galleries, the beatings between galleries and the forces of order, the fouls on the fields (it is the type of violence permitted by the regulation of sports game), make the phrase physical violence talk about the image of the group linked to violence in sports. If we see study II, we notice that physical violence is one of the two elements of the central system of the group that we consider unapprised of the sports phenomenon. This demonstrates the existence of certain relationships between social actors' beliefs, based upon similarities coming out of the historically determined social memory. The words composing the peripheral system belong to the sports field, emphasizing its negative side: lack of fair-play, financial interests of the media, of clubs and leaders, physical aggressiveness, symbolic violence described through obscene gestures, defying the adversary and hooliganism. The terms enumerated are easy to transmit, concrete, adapted to the context and to the central system, not in contradiction with it.

The social representation of violence in sports generated by the fans has a central system and a peripheral system different from those of the spectators within the non-gallery group, which demonstrates the difference between subjects' cognitions referring to the phenomenon of violence in sport. Interestingly, the central element of the social representation of violence in sport regarding the fans is the phrase „*violence of the forces of order*”. It is clear that the forces of order are part of the sports area, but not by participating at competitions, not by supporting a team, but by ensuring the order in the arena. Associating them with the sports phenomenon is easy to understand: the galleries are limited in their actions since the moment the legislation imposed monitoring the competitions by the adequate forces, who oppose to the carnival on the arena. The fights between the galleries and the forces of order, the abuse of service, as fans name it, the abusive tickets, defying the forces of order are the specifications reducing the phenomenon of violence in sports to the legal measures that any sports club must take for everything to be in control during a sports competition. The elements of the peripheral system reflect the behavior of the galleries during a sports show. Vandalism, financial interests (the mafia and the influence of leaders), the search for identity are the elements gravitating around the central system, emphasizing the reality of the moment. We see that all the words associated with the phrase violence in sports, specific to the gallery group, refer only to the violence of galleries. During the contents analysis of the items referring to this task we did not find any associations illustrating players' violence or leaders' violence. The phenomenon that we analyzed is reduced to one competition, irregular from the fans' perspective, between galleries and the forces of order. The sports show, the competition between the favorite team

and another team lose their importance because of the chaos in the tribunes and outside the sports arena.

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