

continue. Continued social reward and approval will also insure the continuation of aggressive behavior. One of the primary means of maintaining the behavior is to "pat oneself on the back." Another is reinforcement. As an example, think what reinforcement 80,000 people give to a defensive lineman who has just wiped out the quarterback!

Perhaps the most important implication for the social learning theory is the optimistic framework for creating situations where aggressive behavior is not tolerated, therefore never learned. Further, since aggression is viewed as a learned form of behavior, it can be modified or unlearned through many procedures. Social learning theorists do not view human beings as constantly driven toward violent behavior; they believe that aggression occurs only under specific conditions that tend to facilitate such a response. Thus, it is argued that if the conditions are altered, aggression may be prevented or reduced.

Aggressive behavior is frequently elicited by conditions of the social environment. Frustration has been considered the social antecedent of aggression most often. Sport provides many situations where the blocking of ongoing, goal-directed behavior serves as a catalyst to aggression. The action of Woody Hayes during the bowl game of Ohio State in 1978 is a good example of that.

Direct provocation from others, especially physical provocation, tends to make individuals who are already aroused, reciprocate in a similar fashion. Sport provides many such situations. Also, exposure to aggressive models serves as a catalyst for overt aggression.

Environmental factors such as loud and irritating noises, uncomfortably warm temperatures, crowded conditions, and behavior of others around, also generate aggressive behavior. Individual and personal conditions set the stage for aggressive behavior as well. An athlete under the influence of drugs, medication, alcohol, marijuana, or even an injury can have his or her arousal state altered beyond control. Behavior under these conditions may be entirely different from the normal behavior of an athlete.

While the current situation involving aggression and violence associated with sport is far from encouraging, the fact remains

that socialization through games and sport can provide effective methods for the control of these behaviors if social learning theory is put into practice. According to John Paul Scott, games and sports provide ways of organizing life along non-violent directions. Games and sports learned in childhood and adolescence create opportunities for practice and training in living according to group rules. However, adult intervention and control effectively prevent this socialization from occurring when they make all the rules and do all the decision-making for the children.

In addition to providing situations where children can learn social interaction and decision-making in non-threatening ways, games and sports can psychologically influence behavior in another manner. Disallowing overt physical aggression is a strong inhibitor to fighting. The best way to control aggressive behavior is never to allow it to occur, to be learned, in the first place!

Modifying the rules so the penalty for aggressive behavior is not worth the risk, also inhibits aggressive behavior. This would take the cooperation of all to enforce; there are examples of this approach being utilized in the changes of some of the rules in football.

Continued pressure on the media to eliminate the over-play and replay of violent action in sport must become the responsibility of all of us. This would contribute to the decrease in the modeling effect that television has in influencing children's behavior. If they see professional athletes demonstrate aggressive behavior and get rewarded for it through attention, replays, etc., children begin to think that is the way to behave as a professional.

In conclusion, perhaps sport and/or play can help in teaching individuals not to be aggressive, to assist in teaching them to control aggression. Aggression in sport is not simply determined, it involves many conditions and previous experiences. It may be the result of frustration, pain, previously learned behavior, or modeling. To learn more about predicting who might be overtly aggressive we need to know something about the aggressor, the situation, and the target of the aggression.

It is clear that competitive sport has many inherent qualities that make participation frustrating and many conditions

that are conducive to aggressive behavior. The encouraging aspect of the problem is that behavioral research demonstrates that individuals learn to be aggressive, therefore they can also learn to give non-aggressive responses in aggressive situations. When individuals observe non-violent behavior and are reinforced for such behavior, they are likely to continue to behave non-violently. Therein lies perhaps our only hope for saving sport. Our goals must be to

model non-violent behavior, to reward non-violence, and to no longer tolerate violence of any form in sport.

REFERENCES

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