A Study of Sports Crowd Behavior: The Case of the Great Pumpkin Incident

Linda Levy
Department of Sociology
Rutgers University

ABSTRACT

Disagreement on which theory of collective behavior best predicts or explains how crowd processes work prompted this case study. By closely examining, through participant observation, the unfolding of one episode of nonviolent collective behavior at a professional football game, four frequently applied theories of collective behavior are tested for their utility in sports crowd situations. Each theory is assessed for strengths and weaknesses. Findings show contagion theory, convergence theory, emergent norm theory, and value-added theory all valuable in explaining some facets of observed spectator behavior; therefore a synthesis of theories might prove more useful than applying theories separately. A methodological problem emerged during evaluation, concerning difficulty in distinguishing among the indicators for each theory. Several overlapping theoretical concepts confounded attempts to operationalize unique empirical measures and hence, to compare the theories satisfactorily. Further research is needed to provide adequate measures.

Controversy exists among social scientists about which theory of collective behavior, if any, proves most applicable to sports crowd situations. Researchers debate the utility of different theories as concern centers around how and why collective processes sometime operate to escalate spectator behavior beyond conventional limits. This paper tests four of the most frequently applied theories of collective behavior on an observed nonviolent collective spectator incident. The purpose is to learn more about sports crowd dynamics and to shed light on which perspective(s) might best predict and explain collective behavior in the sports context.

THEORIES OF COLLECTIVE BEHAVIOR

The foundations of crowd theory were laid at the end of the nineteenth century in Europe by Gustave LeBon who first called attention to the crowd as a social phenomenon. Living in a time of
revolutionary upheaval, LeBon took a pathological view, in that under given circumstances he found crowd behavior not only different from but intellectually inferior to individual behavior. LeBon asserted that rather than interpreting phenomena rationally, individuals in crowd situations become dominated by their unconscious personalities. Suggestion, imitation, and contagion result in the infectious spread of emotion, whereby crowd members fall under the influence of a collective mind. Individuals have shed responsibility for their actions in the sea of anonymity (LeBon, 1895). This conceptualization formed a framework for what would later be called contagion theory.

In the mid-twentieth century Herbert Blumer refined contagion theory by introducing the notion of a circular reaction, adapting the earlier ideas of Floyd Allport (Brown and Goldin, 1973). During a circular reaction, responses of individuals within a crowd reproduce the responses of others around them, reflecting stimulation back and forth and thereby causing its intensification. Circular reactions signal the existence of a state of social unrest, which according to Blumer (1951), is the initial process of elementary collective behavior. During social unrest people may become engaged by the occurrence of some exciting event, and successively caught up in milling, collective excitement, and finally in social contagion as arousal intensifies. Individuals become sensitized to one another, experiencing rapport which induces the lowering of social resistance and a loss of normal individual control. Blumer maintains that at this point, infected individuals are most likely to engage in impulsive, non-rational behavior (Blumer, 1951).

Contagion theory met with criticism due to later empirical findings. LeBon's notion of a group mind was rejected by most subsequent scholars, as was the concept of irrationality. Some social scientists also questioned uniformity of behavior, the process of spontaneous social contagion, and how to account for collective behavior's termination (Turner, 1964; Smelser, 1963; Berk, 1974).

A less popular conception of collective behavior, convergence theory, stems from early psychological theories of Sigmund Freud and Floyd Allport, and was further developed by Neal Miller and John Dollard. Convergence theory maintains that crowd behavior develops because individuals with shared predispositions have converged at the same location (Turner, 1964). Social facilitation then ensues when all respond in a similar manner toward a common stimulus (Wright, 1978). Although convergence theory added a new dimension, it received criticism for lacking a structural framework and not explaining certain crowd dynamics such as behavioral shifts, multiple predispositions, or role acquisition (Turner, 1964; Berk, 1974).

Later theorists, Ralph Turner and Lewis Killian, drew from insight scattered throughout the literature upon which they built a new theory of collective behavior (Wright, 1978). Turner and Killian (1957) theorized that instead of crowd behavior being normless, individual crowd members were simply following new norms rather than traditional ones. It was the mood and imagery particular to an immediate situation which caused these new norms to emerge that were then transmitted to others through social interaction. When a unique circumstance arises, people lack guidelines for defining appropriate action to follow; therefore, they look to see what others are doing and model their own behavior accordingly. In this way, individuals communicate the shared definition, pressuring others around them to conform (Turner and Killian, 1957).

Emergent norm theory received praise for contributing insight about normative implications and for its view of collective behavior as interactionally produced (Brown and Goldin, 1973; Wright, 1978). However, Brown and Goldin (1973) characterized emergent norm theory as incomplete and lacking in scope, while Wright (1978) argued that not enough attention was given to nonverbal processes by Turner and Killian.

Recognizing the shortcomings inherent in each of the preceding theories, Neil Smelser (1963) constructed value-added theory to improve analysis by logically patterning determinants of collective behavior from least to most specific. The focus narrows as a new value is added at each stage, restructuring social action and ultimately producing only one possible outcome. The first stage is structural conduciveness: social conditions must favor collective action. Second is structural strain: failure of some aspect of the social system to function effectively, with several sources of strain often occurring in combination. Third is the growth and spread of a shared generalized belief: a belief which identifies and attributes characteristics to the source(s) of strain and then determines an appropriate response. Fourth are precipitating factors: factors which confirm and give substance to the belief as well as intensifying the previous determinants. The fifth stage is mobilizing the collectivity for action: leaders emerge as a division of labor takes place, and the type of collective behavior is determined. The sixth stage, social control overarches all: either preventive or interventional measures taken by agencies of social control may interfere with the foregoing determinants at any stage. Smelser applied the preceding stages to several forms of collective behavior. His "hostile outburst" category, to be tested here, is described as "action mobilized on the basis of a generalized belief assigning responsibility for an undesirable state of affairs to some agent" (1963: 60).
Criticism of Smelser's theory is mixed. Evans (1969) lauded its significance as did Marx (1972) who approved of value-added theory's conventional rather than abnormal behavioral categories. Brown and Goldin (1973) pointed to Smelser's importance in demonstrating collective behavior's multiple determinants and for his emphasis on shifts in crowd organization over time. Difficulties however, arose over empirically testing the principles of value-added theory. Quarantelli and Hundley's (1969) research findings showed only limited support for Smelser's theory. Currie and Skolnick (1972) challenged the theory's defining characteristics as ambiguous and simplistic, deeming Smelser's own use of supportive evidence often prejudgemental and biased. Furthermore, Turner (1964) claimed that when applying value-added theory the researcher loses richness of data, since conclusions can only be drawn about the success or lack of success in reaching one of the final collective behavior forms.

To summarize, each of the above theories views crowd behavior from a different point of departure. Contagion theory looks at psychological aspects of irrationality and impulsiveness, describing how individuals immersed in a crowd become infected by a mob mentality. Convergence theory emphasizes how like-minded individuals converging to a crowd situation tend to respond to stimuli in a similar manner. Emergent norm theory focuses on how social interaction creates new ways of behaving in unusual circumstances. Value-added theory analyzes those determinants which limit the possible consequences of a crowd situation. Each seems to address only particular elements of crowd behavior. Several scholars agree that explanations remain incomplete (Evans, 1969; Currie and Skolnick, 1972; Berk, 1974).

THEORETICAL APPLICATIONS TO SPORTS CROWDS

Applying the preceding theories and others to spectator crowd behavior, sports scholars found differential utility among models. Hocking (1982), when viewing conventional spectator behavior rather than deviant behavior, reached some impressionistic conclusions. He saw value in each theory he examined. In describing an exciting basketball game, Hocking found convergent theory significant in explaining parallel behaviors within a highly partisan crowd, contagion theory best in accounting for the spread of responsive booing to an ambiguous officiating decision, and emergent norm theory important in revealing why spectators rose for the national anthem.

Mann (1979, 1989) also took an eclectic approach. He attributed uninhibited, impulsive, antisocial behavior stemming from the extreme emotional arousal of either a victory or loss at game's end to contagion. Hooliganism, aggression and violence perpetrated by associated young British males attending soccer contests, is consistent with the convergence model. Regulated, normative behavior among spectators assembled in ticket lines supports an emergent norm perspective. Distorted perceptions of a game by losing fans can lead to shared, generalized beliefs, held a necessary determinant for hostile outbursts according value-added theory.

Kutcher (1983), however, discarded contagion theory as outdated, and depicted emergent norm theory as that most applicable to sports crowd behavior. Likening sports events to carnivals, Kutcher concluded that many sports events produce unique circumstances for spectators. Conventional roles and norms become relaxed, allowing deviant behavior to emerge that would be negatively sanctioned elsewhere. White (1975), on the other hand, found value-added theory useful in explaining spectator riots, as did Smith (1975), who demonstrated violence to be the primary precipitating factor in collective episodes at sporting events. In contrast, Lewis' (1982) case-history studies showed little evidence of the structural strains, central to Smelser's theory, associated with fan violence. Guttman also described value-added theory as disappointing when applied to "dozens of episodes" of spectator collective behavior (1986, p. 167). He further argued that no single theory adequately explains sports-crowd violence, but found some utility in the emergent norm model.

The present approach reinvestigates the strengths and weaknesses of all mentioned theories by applying each to a single sports crowd incident. Are any useful? How do they contribute to our understanding of crowd behavior? What are their shortcomings when empirical application is attempted? Is anything left unexplained? Systematic analysis of a closely observed sports crowd episode may supply insight not only about how collective behavior theories fare in explaining this particular incident, but also about their utility in predicting or explaining sports crowd behavior in general.

RESEARCH METHODS

One problem with studying the dynamics of crowd behavior lies in predicting when or where disturbances will erupt. It is easy to collect data about conditions preceding deviant acts and about the results of misbehavior, but little can be gathered on the group processes themselves. Crowd events occur with great speed; are
Therefore, this research incorporates both participant observation and archival techniques. Rationale for the selection lies in the empirical measures must be based on what other researchers have used and on what is implied theoretically. Selecting indicators presents another problem inherent in the study of collective behavior. Some guidelines are implicit within theoretical frameworks, but the broadness of propositions makes their interpretation arbitrary, so no standard sets of indicators exist. Therefore, empirical measures must be based on what other researchers have used and on what is implied theoretically.

Factors identified as contributors to collective behavior constitute the independent variables. Contagion theory postulates that heightened arousal were sought. Kutcher (1983, p.39) described the American sport event as "...a celebration, an escape into fantasy and revelry," depicting the aura of an exciting situation. Both Kutcher (1983) and Eitzen (1981) compared the mood and imagery of sports events to festivals or carnivals. Each social scientist used a different inclusive term but conveyed the same meaning. Combining the characteristics separately specified in both Eitzen's and Kutcher's parallels, carnivals or festivals incorporate: masquerading, music, feasting, merrymaking, liberal consumption of alcohol, and relaxation of everyday norms. The preceding elements signal, according to Eitzen, that individuals may be participating in "relatively unstructured and spontaneous behaviors" (p.401). Not only does the carnival scene evoke a picture of excitement but it signifies that behavior transcends usual limits, consistent with circumstances under which new norms might emerge, and thus carnival elements become representative of two perspectives on crowd behavior.

Certain crowd dimensions have been previously cited as arousal intensifiers as well. Those used here are size and density (Mann, 1979; Roadburg, 1980; Lang, 1981; Hocking, 1982) and noise (Berkowitz, 1972; Mann, 1979; Roadburg, 1980). Dynamic dimensions elevating arousal include pregame activities (Roadburg, 1978; Kutcher, 1983), spectator expectations about the game (Lang, 1981), and observed aggression which has disinhibiting effects (Goldstein and Arms, 1971; Arms, Russell, and Sandilands, 1979; Eitzen, 1981; Harrell, 1981). Alcohol consumption has also been identified as a trigger to uninhibited and aroused behavior (Mark, Bryant, and Lehman, 1983; Vamplew, 1983; Mann, 1979).

The preceding contagion indicators can correspondingly serve as emergent norm independent indicators which establish a unique situational mood. Moreover, two of the above dimensions represent determinants of value-added theory. High crowd density indicates open channels of communication, providing structural conduciveness to the spread of hostile beliefs. And, the presence or absence of strain, interpreted here in its broadest sense as widespread discontent produced by any factor, may depend on the degree to which spectator's expectations are fulfilled by game action. In addition, it is unusual in contemporary everyday life to see physical aggression first hand, so observed violence (on or off the field) presents both a unique circumstance indicative of emergent norm theory and a precipitating factor for value-added theory.

Convergence theory requires the researchers to seek similarities among spectators. The sports crowd under study showed some degree of homogeneity in sex, partisanship, and a
as relevant to collective behavior. When he delved into explanations for spectator deviance, Guttmann (1986) revealed that over 95 percent of the persons involved in sports crowd disturbances (three studies cited) were male. Lewis' (1982) findings show similar proportions. Smith (1975) maintained that a partisan attitude denotes emotional attachment to a team, often intense, and frequently contributing to tension and strain among sports spectators. According to Roadburg (1980), heavier drinking at British soccer matches heightens excitement, contributing to misbehavior at those contests.

Observed individual spectator responses and general crowd responses act as the dependent variables. Responses receive attention in their behavioral context and as each relates to a specific stimulus to determine which mechanism from which theory might be operating. In order to gain a sense of preconditions influencing the episode, the following describes the game event from its outset. Thereby, any factors acting as precursors to collective behavior can be examined.

THE GREAT PUMPKIN INCIDENT

A haze of smoke hung over the parking lots of Giants Stadium, as food on grills sizzled and beer flowed. At 6:30 p.m. on October 17, 1988, two and one-half hours before starting time for the Monday night football game between the New York Jets and the Buffalo Bills, festivities were well under way.

At one tailgate party, for example, fresh flowers arranged in Jets mugs had been placed on three round tables covered with Jetsgreen tablecloths, while a more elaborate floral centerpiece sat on the nearby buffet table. Also on the serving table rested six to eight large chafing dishes filled with steaming delicacies. Cases of soda and a keg of beer stood nearby. On yet another table waited a huge sheet cake, decorated as a football field with the slogan "Let's goJets." The hostess of course wore green and white. Even the potholder and dishtowel she used said "Jets." Many of her guests were attired in Jets green and white sweaters, jackets, or jerseys.

A glance around the parking lots showed other groups similarly engaged in pregame feasting. Some tailgates consisted of sandwiches, some of steak. A party atmosphere prevailed as music blared from radios while people ate, drank, and were merry. Expectations ran high with the home-team Jets favored to win. Fans seemed ready for a night of raucous excitement.

Upon entry to the stadium proper when kickoff time neared, each spectator received a promotional green and white Jets painter's can, which many immediately donned. Loud rock music greeted newcomers to their seats, blaring through the facility's speakers prior to start time and then later during intermissions. A festive aura of excitement prevailed.

In response to national television coverage received by Monday night games, some fans garb themselves in intricate costumes hoping to attract the camera's eye. Amidst a sea of Jets green and white, Batman, Robin, and a "conehead" could be spotted, as could a group of teenagers with their faces painted half-green and half-white. One conspicuously flamboyant female attired herself in team colors with "Amazing Jets" emblazoned in large white letters across her green sweater. Large numbers of more moderately outfitted spectators appeared in team jerseys, T-shirts, hats, jackets, or other clothing with home-team emblems. By start time at nine p.m., most seats had filled with the sellout crowd of 70,218. The national anthem signaled commencement of the sports event. Applause, cheers, and whistles interrupted its singing well before the anthem's conclusion, reflecting the crowd's high level of arousal. Fans could barely check their excitement in anticipation of a victorious night.

As the evening progressed, a change in crowd emotions became apparent, when during the second quarter the Bills' offense repeatedly overpowered the Jets' defense. More heckling than cheering now echoed through the stands as fans voiced frustration with their team's dismal performance. The crowd boomed the Jets defensive unit, and several times they chanted: "Joe (Jets coach Joe Walton) must go, Joe must go." By halftime, spectators started to exit the stadium as the home-team Jets trailed by 31-7. Following the half, a few fistfights broke out among young male spectators, commanding more crowd attention than the one-sided football contest. The score had run up to 34-7 when the pumpkin incident began late in the third quarter.

In an end-zone lower section, the attention of neighboring fans centered on one male spectator blowing into a giant inflatable pumpkin. Bright orange, it appeared to be about four to five feet across and two feet high, sporting a yellow jack-o-lantern face. As the man puffed into the pumpkin, people nearby chanted, "Blow, blow, blow," which quickly drew the attention of others surrounding the area. Spectators in ever-widening circles then picked up the chant.

By the time the man fully inflated the pumpkin, a large proportion of the stadium's spectators had focused toward that direction, since the pumpkin was clearly visible from most seats. When inflated, its owner tossed the pumpkin into the air. In accordance with the established practice for circulating footballs, beach balls, and other inflatable toys through the stands at Jets
games, when the toy bounced to them, people batted it into the air again, hoping to keep it in motion. After having traveled for a few minutes, the pumpkin drifted down to the lowest seats. Spectators there could not propel it upward, so it descended onto the field. An individual on the field (not in uniform) captured the pumpkin as it bounced down, and sent the toy promptly back into the stands (counter to regulations). Cheers rocked the stadium.

The pumpkin again dropped to the field after another few minutes of being batted around, but this time the security person who retrieved it confiscated the toy, carrying it into a tunnel under the stadium. Spectators were outraged. They first yelled: "Asshole, asshole, asshole" in a sing-song manner. Then, the protest content changed, and increasing numbers of spectators chanted "We want the pumpkin! We want the pumpkin! We want the pumpkin!" until it seemed that the entire crowd had joined in. As they chanted, many spectators angrily stood, waving their fists toward the tunnel entrance where the pumpkin had disappeared. Someone near the tunnel (reported to newspapers as a media person) retrieved the pumpkin and returned it again to the stands (Asbury Park Press, October 19, 1988; The Star-Ledger, October 19, 1988). The pumpkin's rescuer was Understandably greeted by deafening cheers—many spectators even accorded him a standing ovation. Fans again chanted: "Pumpkin! Pumpkin! Pumpkin!"

Shortly after starting to recirculate, the pumpkin lost some air; consequently it became easier to control, and therefore, never fell to the field again. At one stop during its continuing journey, some men who appeared drunk began pummelling the toy. The watching crowd responded with loud boos. In response the group desisted, allowing the pumpkin to move on.

Its short life was over several moments later when, after the crowd's interest had waned, another group of apparently drunk men pounded all air out of the toy. This second destructive act received little notice however because spectator fights had erupted in the meantime, shifting the mood and diverting the audience's focus of attention. The giant pumpkin ultimately traveled about one-fifth of the way around the stadium before deflating. Perhaps the entire episode last for seven to ten minutes.

Following the pumpkin incident, crowd behavior deteriorated further. Altercations erupted simultaneously in widely separated sections. Painter's caps, beer, toilet paper, and other debris showered down from upper tiers onto spectators below. Fans ignited fires built with painter's caps and cardboard in several areas of the stadium. It almost appeared as though misbehavior had become the norm.

Not surprisingly, rowdy spectator behavior dominated newspaper headlines about the night's contest instead of action on the field. Officials reported 41 separate incidents to which security personnel responded, which may be compared with 7 and 17 incidents reported at previous 1988 Sunday home games (New York Times, October 19, 1988; Asbury Park Press, October 19, 1988; The Star-Ledger, October 19, 1988) and five incidents at the next Jets home game on October 30 (The New York Times, October 31, 1988). Some individual incidents included as many as ten participants who engaged in throwing objects, trespassing, setting fires, creating disturbances, and fighting.

**ANALYSIS**

Although descriptive of many sporting events, the carnival elements mentioned previously - masquerading, music, feasting, merrymaking, liberal consumption of alcohol, and relaxation of everyday norms - seem especially applicable to Monday night's football game, during which all of those components could be observed. When meeting with the press following the game under study, Jets president Steve Gutman described Monday night games as having more of a "carnival atmosphere" when he compared them with Sunday afternoon games (The Star-Ledger, October 19, 1988).

**The Spectators**

To investigate factors creating the special mood and imagery of carnival on Monday nights one must begin with the individuals attending Monday night games, asking whether and how they differ from people who come on Sunday afternoons. Jets president Gutman (Asbury Park Press, October 19, 1988; The Record, October 19, 1988) signified that fewer women and children come on Monday nights, a factor he thought contributed to crowd disorders. The presence of more males is probably in part attributable to the late Monday night starting time. Confirming such an assumption are reports of a discussion presently underway between team officials and facility managers about the possibility of moving the 9 p.m. start time back to 8 p.m. in the hope of drawing a different kind of audience. Incidents on October 17 led directly to this negotiation (The News Tribune, October 27, 1988). According to Gutman: "Many of the (season) tickets owned by business entities are more likely to be given away on Monday night, whereas for a Sunday game, the proprietor would be more inclined to go to the game with his family" (Asbury Park Press, October 19, 1988). Gutman infers that adult males, the presumed recipients of giveaway tickets,
expected victory produced the observed strain among a majority of spectators who favored the home team, providing evidence for the fulfillment of value-added theory's second stage.

The Environment

If spectator predispositions helped set the scene for collective behavior, so did other aspects of the environment. Kutcher (1983) argued that much of what influences sports crowd behavior goes beyond the game itself. A sporting event is a social happening, of which the contest itself is only a part. Hocking (1982) referred to differences between the game event, related to action on the field, and the stadium event, which includes the contest and everything else occurring within the facility's boundaries.

Monday night's sellout audience appeared to play some role in escalating the generally aroused state among spectators. First, immersion in a large rather than small crowd fosters feelings of anonymity, which then give rise to a sense of invulnerability, and hence, individuals become less inhibited about engaging in excited behavior (Mann, 1979; Hocking, 1982). Second, a full stadium results in high density. Opportunities for communication increase as interpersonal space between individuals decreases. In addition, when people are very close to each other, sudden movements are likely to reverberate through the rest of the crowd, sparking arousal among the multitude (Mann, 1979). Third, a large crowd naturally produces another influence, noise. Interstimulating effects build from sounds of many people vocalizing which encourages others to join in (Berkowitz, 1972). Consequences of the preceding environmental dimensions uphold at least part of what is incorporated into contagion theory. Crowd size, density, and noise appeared to facilitate interstimulation, spreading the dominant mood.

Value-added theory's first stage received support as well from findings of high crowd density which provided a structurally conducive context for the rapid communication of shared, generalized beliefs. Another source of influence peripheral to the contest itself is tailgating. Pregame activities in the parking lots ranged from elaborate feasts, such as that described at this paper's start, to groups tossing and catching footballs in almost every aisle, to young people gathered round blaring radios while guzzling beer. For many spectators, hours spent in parking lot festivities serve as stimuli, causing them to enter the stadium in a highly aroused state.

This prior sensitization permits sights and sounds within the stadium to heighten excitement. Inside the gates, eyes, ears, and bodies experience the spectacle. Crowding forces people to push and shove as they move through the concourses to their seats before...
violence permissible within its rules, and spectators' expectations. These range from shared understandings about the game's disposition early that night when the Bills established full superiority. Play on the field had taken "the crowd out of the game from the outset" (Asbury Park Press, October 19, 1988), although demoralization prevailed only due to most fans' partisanship for the Jets. Had the majority of spectators been Bills fans, game interest would have remained high throughout the contest. By the pumpkin incident's start, the inevitability of a dismal outcome spoiled the game's entertainment value for Jets fans, creating the previously discussed strain among home-team partisans. Frustration and boredom prevailed.

The Dynamics

Perhaps the pumpkin - colorful, oversized, and festive - became a welcome focus for spectator's attention. The toy added comic relief to a depressing situation. It may have also been symbolic of the victory celebration fans had anticipated, giving spectators something to cheer about since the contest was beyond salvage. Indifference to game play appeared to account for many spectators immediately turning their interest toward the man inflating the pumpkin. And, so did the initial chant of "Blow! Blow! Blow!" Communication plays an important role in both contagion and value-added theories, and according to Mann (1979), chanting represents the principal channel of communication in sports audiences.

What followed seemed dependent on the preceding conditions surrounding this event, which in joining, set the scene, making collective behavior possible. The large, dense, noisy crowd, the music, the food, the alcohol, the tailgating, the large preponderance of males, the beer drinking, the partisanship, the spectator fights, and finally, the game producing violence, frustration, disappointment, and boredom.

On stage in these unique circumstances appeared the new diversion, a toy with which spectators could play. Upon its appearance, communication among individuals seemed to increase, as people could be observed interacting with spectators near them while gesturing toward the pumpkin - ostensibly alerting their neighbors to its existence. On its initial fall to the field, the pumpkin's return to the stands brought understandable cheering. However, when the toy was later confiscated by a security guard, the situation became ambiguous. Bringing the pumpkin back was outside stadium rules (because of safety reasons), and therefore...
encouraging its return would constitute a deviant act. Here a unique circumstance presented itself, enveloped in a mood and imagery conducive to collective behavior, as described by emergent norm theory. Or, from the value-added perspective, seizure of the pumpkin functioned as a precipitating factor, introducing a new deprivation to an already strained situation.

Mobilization for action began, according to the value-added model, when somewhere in the stadium a leader began yelling "Asshole!, applying an obscene label to the guard who appropriated the audience's communal toy. Others joining the response seemed to legitimize this reaction, setting a norm, but only for a subgroup of spectators. A glance around the stadium uncovered young males as the primary vocalizers. Nonetheless, grumbling among other spectators revealed their displeasure with the pumpkin's absence, showing many agreed that the toy should be returned yet remained unwilling to yell an obscenity.

Turner (1964) contends that contagion theory depicts a spiralling effect which need not take place. Events at October 17's game give support to Turner's view. That the majority did not participate in the initial, obscene protest suggests limits on the norms people will adopt, even in exciting crowd circumstances. Spectators appeared to make individual decisions by defining and interpreting the situation rationally, engaging if they shared the same emotions to the same degree, but only if behavior fit within their personal codes.

Evidence may also point to different effects among individuals who view aggression, probably depending on one's predisposition. The cry of "Asshole!" directed at a security guard, bespoke hostility and aggression toward authority. Young males, the primary engagers in this chant, may be reflecting both their age and their gender's differential socialization regarding aggression. Or perhaps this group is simply less inhibited than females or other age groups. Eitzen (1983) stated that "youth, especially, are accustomed to venting their emotions" (p. 404). The instigative behavior of the young man seated next to me, and the uninhibited cursing by the young man behind me serve to exemplify such conduct. That both attended with age peers suggests behavioral limits relate to one's personal subgroup. A subgroup follows its own norms, mediating the crowd's influence on individuals (Mann, 1979). One might speculate that there would be behavioral differences if each young man had attended in a family group rather than a peer group. On the other hand, inhibited constraint on the part of most females and older males suggests their internalization of different norms, and conceivably, less alcohol consumption.

Shouts of "Asshole!" faded. Not until after a brief period of unintelligible noise did the chant change to "We want the pumpkin!" This time the chant's initiator proved more creative in providing a message which the masses could comfortably adopt. The resultant scene evoked an overpowering impression of unanimity - even as a participant observer, it seemed at first as though everyone took part. However, that deafening "We want the pumpkin!" repeated approximately 15-20 times and involving great numbers of spectators, never induced at all. A closeup videotape depicting crowd members clearly shows some spectators quietly seated, although most others stood chanting and/or shaking upraised fists. A man diagonally behind me revealed later that he did not participate. Therefore, what at a glance and from a distance appeared to be uniform behavior, when viewed more carefully and closely is revealed as an illusion. Contagion theorists for many years advanced the concept of crowd homogeneity - everyone being swept up irrationally in the formation of a mob. Later studies illustrated the shortcomings of this pathological approach as trained observers reported differential behavior within crowds (Turner, 1964). A detailed reexamination of October 17 uncovered the reality that a prominent orientation within the sports crowd did not equate with a collective mind.

One plausible explanation for misconceptions about the uniformity of Monday's behavior is that those people standing, waving fists obscured the others who remained seated. Furthermore, one might speculate that the sound of even half of the more than 70,000 spectators present would have generated sufficient noise to give an impression of unanimity. A third possibility is that observers tend to focus on the presence of behavior rather than its absence.

Another crowd process must be considered - the manner in which members adopt the behavior of others. Turner and Killian (1957) contend that individuals are pressured by the collectivity to conform to new norms rather than initiating behaviors through spontaneous social contagion. During the collective response "Asshole!" a majority of spectators refused to conform. However, the enthusiastic repetition of "We want the pumpkin!" by so many seemed to show how an idea catches on and spreads because of its broad appeal. There was no sense of collective pressure. Individuals appeared to join in with crowd responses because of their desire for diversion, smiling while imitating the behavior of others.

Following the pumpkin's return, a collective response directed at the group of males viciously punching the toy reveals another crowd mechanism. Loud "boos" immediately showering from the crowd on this group forced the aggressors to stop their attack. Turner (1964) states that individuals exceeding limits set on
behavior receive some form of crowd sanction. Swift crowd disapproval of the attack on the toy illustrates that type of social control process, and in this instance, also demonstrates conformity to norms. Therefore, conformity seems to account for some behavior in crowds and contagion through imitation for other crowd behavior.

In the final minutes of the pumpkin episode, a competing incident in progress won the crowd's attention. A fight had broken out in another section of the stadium. Value-added theory maintains that commencement of one hostile outburst paves the way for other crowd members, perhaps with different motivations, to express their own hostility since the situation has become more structurally conducive. This notion could account for the multiple outbreaks of aggression that ensued after the pumpkin episode. Many individuals turned in the direction of the latest altercation, giving the impression of stronger crowd interest in this new diversion. A mood shift had taken place; now a fresh emotional emphasis governed the moment, allowing the final destruction of the pumpkin to go virtually unnoticed.

DISCUSSION

This analysis has both challenged and upheld some notions within classic theories of crowd behavior. Clearly the study falls short since it examines just one rather trivial incident at a single sporting event. Consequently, some inferences here may reach beyond the data at hand and border on speculation. Furthermore, the lack of advance methodological planning undoubtedly limited the researcher's ability to strategically capture all aspects of the incident. However, findings here point to some tentative conclusions about theoretical assumptions and one significant overall problem with attempts to empirically verify theories of collective behavior - that of measurement.

For a theory to be useful it must be testable, having measures indicative of a unique proposition or set of propositions which can then be compared with those of other theories. As demonstrated, indicators of collective behavior are often interchangeable between theories, since boundaries are not clear. For example: do spectators collectively express frustration with game play because they are predisposed toward one team as postulated by convergence theory, because they have become highly aroused as hypothesized by contagion theory, because the situation is unique as speculated by emergent norm theory, or because they are experiencing a social strain as posited by value-added theory? Or do all theories explain some part of this single behavior? Does a carnival mood denote a state of high excitement as described by contagion theory or the unique circumstances characterized by emergent norm theory or both? Consequently, there can be no clear distinction between perspectives.

Perhaps the foregoing kinds of questions suggest that some synthesis of theories might better describe the total picture without redundancy. One might speculate about the induction of a general theory of crowd behavior formed by combining the original theoretical models. Any effort towards synthesis however, depends on ascertaining the strengths and weaknesses of each theory with the intention of joining the former and dispensing with the latter. Some conclusions drawn from the above findings might prove helpful in achieving such a goal.

There seems strong observational evidence it was among drinking, adult, male Jets fans that arousal became most intense and more collective responses occurred, giving substance to convergence theory's tenets that individuals with similar predispositions converging to the same sports event tend to respond similarly to stimuli. It also appears likely that on October 17 a generalized sense of excitement associated with contagion theory, and perhaps lowered inhibitions and feelings of anonymity, stemmed from the large, dense, noisy crowd and the carnival atmosphere. Observed on-and off-field aggression, the disappointing, frustrating game, the disturbed carnival mood, and finally, the pumpkin, appeared to present some unique circumstances in which everyday norms became suspended and new norms emerged. Proponents of value-added theory might conclude that, limited in their means of expressing dissatisfaction with impending defeat, Jets fans experienced a condition of strain, which in turn produced generalized hostile beliefs to the extent that a precipitating factor (pumpkin confiscation) introducing yet a new deprivation led to the scapegoating of a convenient authority figure (security person). Spectator leaders then emerged with chants that mobilized the audience to participation. Social control agencies, busy with outbreaks of spectator altercations elsewhere, did not intervene quickly enough (perhaps by taking possession of the pumpkin before it drew such widespread attention) to curtail the display of collective hostility. The incident thus seems to fit into four theoretical frameworks. Each theory highlights different factors, rendering all models incomplete without consideration of the others.

Findings more specifically show theories shedding light on determinants that escalate or limit collective behavior. Certain intensifiers or limiters are obvious: the proportion of spectators predisposed to collective behavior converging at the sports event...
A subtler mechanism demonstrated that spectators set limits on adopting the collective behavior of subgroups, as indicated by differential involvement ranging from enthusiastic participation to non-engagement. Refusal to participate by some individuals reconfirms the inaccuracy of LeBon's concept of a collective mind. Refusal further suggests that crowd members rationally interpret the actions of others when considering engagement, contrary to traditional contagion theory but consistent with emergent norm theory. Supporting contagion theory on the other hand, were the disinhbiting effects of drinking which seemed to produce higher arousal and subsequent participation in collective behavior.

Questioned is the notion that individuals generally conform to pressures from others in crowd situations as hypothesized by emergent norm theorists. Dynamics of the pumpkin episode implied more infectious behavior than pressure to conform when collective participation peaked. Yet, later when the group of pumpkin attackers bent to crowd demands to stop, the concept of conformity to pressure was upheld. Thus, conformity may be differentially determined and needs more examination.

Repeat of almost the same situation two weeks later at the next Jets home game further highlights the unique combination of factors at work on October 17. An identical inflated pumpkin was again introduced to the stands during a Sunday afternoon game on the day before Halloween. The incident's outcome on October 30, however, contrasted with that of the first episode. When this second pumpkin fell to the field and was speedily removed by a security guard, little protest could be heard from the crowd. Furthermore, that Sunday produced only five incidents to which security responded and included only one altercation. Why the difference?

First, the aggregate of people, at least according to the Jets president, presumably possessed different characteristics. Second, the 1 p.m. Sunday kickoff time implies that less pregame drinking probably took place. Third, beer consumption had been limited by the new stadium rules and possibly by colder temperatures. Fourth, the game was closely contested at the time the pumpkin appeared; therefore, spectator attention was riveted on exciting game action so there was no need for further diversion. Fifth, absence of the underlying strain of impending loss precluded the generalization of hostile beliefs, and hence the same precipitating factor produced a different outcome. Each collective behavior theory might be substantiated by focusing on one or more of the above items. Yet the set of differences points to a more complex answer which requires examination through repeated research to uncover underlying patterns.

Multivariate analysis of data collected from observations of sports events could help to identify significant measures. Linking direct observations of spectator sex, age, race, symbols of partisanship, and drinking behavior to the amounts and types of collective responses occurring during sports events could clarify the extent to which individual predispositions contribute to crowd behavior.

Another possibility involves examination of official records describing incidents of misbehavior. Such records provide information on demographics of involved individuals, perhaps including social class (as defined by occupation), and on the types of disturbance caused. These could in turn be tied to event statistics regarding attendance, alcohol consumption, and game violence while controlling for each to identify significant relationships. Some theoretical assumptions should develop, leading to more specific measures.

An additional research avenue might prove more difficult. Close examination of collective processes using field methods provides access to crowd dynamics and offers a richness unsurpassed by other techniques. However, as indicated at the outset, intentional witnessing of collective episodes is not easy. Lastly, there should be utility in making comparisons between prior studies. Research as diverse as observations of collective behavior, interviews with crowd participants, document study, and reviews of video tapes and/or photographs could be compared to generate suitable indicators. Perhaps triangulation, combining findings from several methods, would ultimately prove most fruitful for uncovering collective behavioral patterns at sports events, and thereby for producing measures for future theory testing.

REFERENCES


