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The Image of a Football Fan as Depicted in Research Literature and the Present Study

Authors' Contribution:

A – Study Design
B – Data Collection
C – Statistical Analysis
D – Data Interpretation
E – Manuscript Preparation
F – Literature Search
G – Funds Collection

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Key words: sports fan, sporting event, football, pro- and anti-sports behaviour

Abstract

Background: *The issue of spectator behaviour at sporting events remains ever current and in need of a lot of interdisciplinary research which would take into account the needs of the contemporary society. The following paper is an attempt at this in the context of the author's own research and EURO 2012.*

Material/Methods: *The study made use of The Adjective Check List (ACL) by H.B. Gough and A.B. Heilbrun in two versions – Real Self and Ideal Self – as well as a self-designed survey. One hundred and twenty people took part in the study, 45 of them were supporters of Arka Gdynia, 43 were supporters of Cracovia Kraków and 32 were supporters of Lech Poznań. The goal of the study was to characterize football fans on the basis of this Triad. The analysis included both a descriptive analysis and a decisive analysis. Statistical tests were used as part of the decisive analysis.*

Results: *Significant differences between study participants were found with respect to the participants' age. Three groups emerged. The eldest group is very conscientious, patient and prefers peace, calm and anonymity. In the middle group key characteristics are: decisiveness, self-confidence and persistence. The youngest sports fans are most impulsive, the least disciplined and the most impatient. In the three age groups, very few statistically significant differences were noted with respect to the real Self image and the ideal Self image.*

Conclusions: *All the hypotheses were confirmed. The sports fans from the study have a strong competitive streak accompanied by a heightened level of aggression. In order to get a better understanding of what really goes on in sports arenas more research is necessary, including research on sports fans of other sport disciplines.*

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Introduction

A sporting event is a form of mass behaviour which takes place at a sports arena and is centred on watching athletes compete and demonstrate impressive athletic feats.

According to R.M. Kalina (1991), anyone who is in any degree interested in an on-going sporting event is a spectator. Spectators of sporting events are emotionally invested in the experience to a great extent – for ardent sports fans especially, the act of watching a sports fight is a way of meeting certain psychological needs. In this sense, the core of this psychological experience pertains to ethics as well as well as to its aesthetics. An at-a-glance analysis of the behaviour of people who participate in contemporary sporting events is enough to realize that their behaviour is dominated by needs of expansion and extreme hedonism. A sports fan who is a die-hard supporter of a given team experiences the teams victories and losses as if they were his own. Such ardent sports fans identify with their team of choice so strongly that they want their team to win at any cost because they perceive the team's victory as their own [1].

Football fans do not have a good reputation in Poland. Many personality traits which they exhibit serve to strengthen this negative image. However, it ought to be mentioned that the image of sports fans is often misconstrued by the mass media. Undoubtedly, there are sports fans who deserve the negative label but this label does not accurately describe all sports fans. We need to set apart football hooligans and pseudo sports fans from true sports fans. However, in order to get a better understanding of what really goes on in sports arenas much more research is necessary. The following paper may serve as inspiration for further research on this issue of substantial social significance.

Revision of research literature

According to K. Pospiszyl (1998), "contemporary football has taken over our dreams, and its significance stems from our admiration of physically fit individuals and from the need to identify with someone outstanding. In recent years young people have become more and more depersonalized: they do not belong to anyone, they do not wish to identify with anything. Because of this, more and more often they unconsciously treat football not only as a sports contest but also as a certain ritual which allows them to fill in an emotional void and experience ecstasy" [2].

Dedication and loyalty exhibited by sports fans towards the teams they support is nothing short of beautiful. If, however, the strive to succeed is transferred from the bleachers to the pitch, it destroys the whole spectacle [1].

B. Tuszyński (1978), a well-known sports journalist has said about sports fans: "what brings them together is the love of sports". The greater their love of sport is and the greater is their practical knowledge of sport and the rules that govern, the easier it is for them to observe sport contests and to see the beauty and inherent grace in them. Also, the more knowledgeable sports fans are about any given discipline of sport, the easier it is for them to be objective and therefore also fair in judgment [1, p.7]. It does not, however, change the fact that sports fans tend to be partial towards their favourite team. What is more, sometimes this natural bias leads to quite radical behaviour which is definitely a negative aspect of this phenomenon.

In recent years there have been significant changes in the way sports fans root for their favourite athletes. Nowadays, sports fans are very much aware that they co-create a sporting event – along with other sports fans they are a dynamic part of the scenery at the sports arena. A leading authority in Polish literature, J.Z. Jakubowski, said: "A sporting event never leaves a true sports fan cold, dead. It is different with theatre. We may not like a theatre production, but here, even if we do not like the sporting event we still root for the sportsmen. This active, creative character which evokes outbursts of emotions and is conducive to creativity is the main difference that can be easily seen. Herein also lies the educational element. We are not passive, we ourselves sort of create the sporting event" [1, p. 8]. A football match is so much more than just what takes place on the green of a football stadium – it is also the reactions of the spectators : the singing, the "Mexican wave", the face paintings in the colours of one's national flag.

These comments paint an image of sports fans who are often referred to as extra players on the field. It is the support of fans that allows exhausted players to muster the energy to fight for

points to the very end of a match. The number of spectators has recently achieved staggering numbers – nowadays stadiums and sport arenas have to be gigantic so they can fit tens of thousands of sports fans who wish to see a match. With the arrival of TV, the number of sports fans grew to billions of people. In 1978, S. Grzegorzczuk wrote that whereas football as a discipline of sport had evolved, had been subjected to reorganization and continuously improved, no one really cared about the audience. People cared about the number of spectators but not their quality because no one suspected the number of spectators at sporting events would ever reach such staggering numbers [1]. The development of psychology as a science has given birth to many theories that aim to explain the workings of the audience at sporting events.

According to E. Browne (1968), passion for sports and the need to watch sporting events are genetically determined. An argument which supports this theory states that there are great similarities between the behaviours of our prehistoric ancestors and that of contemporary sport stars. In an in-depth analysis, the author of this theory shows that both our ancestors and contemporary sport stars exhibit three of the same distinctive behaviours [3]. The first one is defending one's territory. In any match there is an on-going struggle to get the ball across to the opponent's part of the field while the opponent defends his territory. The second behaviour is the fight for primacy and the fierce struggle to win because the fight for biological supremacy was always of prime importance to humans. The third of these behaviours is the possession of arms. The age old pull of warfare has found an outlet in sports [3]. It is these different forms of fighting to defend one's territory which excite sport fans and bring in thousands of people to sport arenas. Masses relish the possibility of viewing a fight while remaining completely safe. We owe our ability to experience such emotions to our ancestors – the mechanism of such emotional reactions to situations such as the ones described above was imprinted in their genetic makeup.

G. Le Bon (1994), a French anthropologist, believes that when certain factors coincide, communities develop new characteristics which are different from the characteristics possessed by particular individuals who make up a crowd. In a crowd, people lose their sense of individuality and the thoughts and feelings of all the individuals are similar. Each individual in a crowd gives vent to emotions she or he ordinarily would not succumb to if it were not for the presence of so many other people in the crowd. Individuals in a crowd do not control their behaviour because they lose their sense of responsibility which usually acts as an inhibiting factor. Analysing Le Bon's theory, W. Póltorak (2001) remarks that: "the most basic characteristic of a crowd is the so-called law of mental unity – the thoughts and feelings of a crowd have one single direction albeit this direction is subject to frequent changes brought about by the external environment. They are exaggerated, extreme, and characterized by a lack of tolerance for views other than our own. Usually the intelligence quotient of the crowd is lower than that of individuals who form the crowd" [4].

In the light of S. Milgram's research (1970), these types of behaviours are caused by sensory overload of the cognitive system – a phenomenon which affects individuals in a crowd. As a result of sensory overload, individuals in a crowd experience exhaustion, a decrease in overall efficiency, trouble focusing attention and a chronic emotional irritability. On the other hand, a hypothesis by D. Stokłosa suggests that crowds induce a feeling of constrain in people. When stuck in a crowd, the individual does not have the freedom to move according to one's will, the individual cannot be free in one's behaviour. The behaviour of other people forces the individual to observe their doings thereby affecting the individual's thought process. Hus, according to this theory, crowds mentally restrain the individual [5]. That is when sport fans often engage in destructive behaviour. Sociologists and psychologists believe they do so because they feel anonymous and believe they will not be held accountable for their behaviour and so therefore they do not respect widely accepted behaviour norms [6].

Deindividuation is an even stronger phenomenon which goes beyond the aforementioned issue of anonymity. It is a state of consciousness brought on by a sense of anonymity and the uncommonness and peculiarity of a given situation. In the state of deindividuation, individuals experience a partial loss of their identity, emotional disinhibition as well as a weakened sense of personal responsibility for their actions. Their attention is shifted from their own self to the actions of the crowd, so much that they become completely emotionally engrossed in others' behaviour.

They do not care whether their current behaviour is consistent with their personal values, beliefs or convictions, nor do they consider the outcomes of their behaviour [7]. Thus, we may say that crowds are deranged as crowd members do not think rationally and their functioning is reduced to purely emotional reactions. Such senseless behaviour may be very dangerous – there have been instances of people trampled to death by a frenzied crowd.

The theory of convergence states that people who share the same feelings and beliefs, and happen to be in the same place at the same time, can easily be nudged to take on specific actions spurred on by a surprising turn of events. J. H. Turner (1998) emphasizes that people are not easily influenced by others' emotions and do not change completely when subjected to them because they make a conscious decision about what behaviours they find acceptable [8]. R. Kowalski (2002) has similar views – he believes that people who share the same thoughts and feelings on a given matter and happen to be at the same place at the same time can be stimulated to take on specific actions by an unexpected surprising turn of events.

Spectators at sporting events do not always behave according to the laws that govern crowd behaviour. N. J. Smelser believed that unexpected behaviours of sports fans at sport arenas are determined by the presence of certain circumstances in the social arrangement. They come together to create a new entity as a result of two factors: structural strain and structural conduciveness. Structural strain is the existence of certain conflicts which result in generalized social anxiety and dissatisfaction. Disputes as well as ethnic or religious conflicts among football fans are the main determinants of their behaviour both on and off the bleachers of sport arenas but they are not enough in themselves to incite aggravated conflicts. For conflicts to arise there needs to be the so-called structural alliance among football fans as a result of their belief that their grievances cannot be redressed by any legal and socially acceptable means [3].

It is difficult to say which theory best explains the behaviour of sports fans. There is an abundance of theories at hand but the phenomenon itself is very complex and hard to define in precise terms. Spectators become fans and thereby supporters of a particular team. Very often they become avid supporters not just for the course of one single match but for many years to come, some even become lifetime supporters of a given team. Consistently supporting one particular team for many years is a very complex socio-psychological phenomenon. Certain mechanisms come into play here which result in the fans becoming very engaged in the spectacle they co-create and completely succumb to its influence.

The sports arena in itself has an influence on the participants of a match – lighting is of key importance here. In the case of open stadiums it determines the height of the crown of the stadium, its position in terms of the points of the compass, and whether there are any plants and if so then how many and what kind of plants. Modern football stadiums rely on artificial lighting. Lighting – both its intensity and colour – has been demonstrated to affect people's behaviour. Low intensity light has been shown to decrease heart rate and increase in muscle tension – signs of increased effort and faster tiredness [9]. Because of this, bad lighting in a sports arena makes the experience of watching the match less attractive. Good lighting gives an afterglow effect. The colours of the pitch are more intense and brighter. Well-known Polish author, J. Pilch, has remarked: "At a modern stadium illuminated by floodlights the colours of the ball and football jerseys are intensified and the grass is so bright its almost mind-altering" [10].

Another important mechanism is the temperature of the surrounding. If the temperature in a sports arena is too high or too low it is not conducive to social bonding and the joy of sharing the positive experience of watching a live sports match with fellow sports fans. Instead, when the temperature of the sports arena is off, both fans and players have a tendency to excessively focus on themselves. At open air stadiums during rainfall sports fans are less avid in their rooting than in better weather conditions – they are busy pulling the hoods of their sweatshirts over their heads and holding umbrellas to avoid getting soaking wet and this distracts them from cheering on the players. Heat waves are related to more violent behaviour and aggression [5].

According to Baker (1965), a football stadium or a sports arena is "a behaviour setting" – it creates a socio-physical environment which affects the individual at a particular point in time. This setting imposes certain experiences on spectators and affects the contents of their mental

experiences. This particular behaviour setting not only acts as a catalyst for certain behaviours but also makes it easier or more difficult to pursue them. If it makes it easier to pursue a given behaviour, people experience pleasure and are unlikely to engage in conflicts with other spectators. However, if it makes it more difficult to pursue a certain behaviour, people in a given behaviour setting suffer from stress. If a stadium is poorly lit or there is excessive noise etc., the reception of the match will not be good – stress-inducing factors will give rise to aggression and dissatisfaction.

The study of the ways in which individuals use physical space in their interactions with others as well as with places (e.g. a stadium) and objects and how this use of physical space influences behaviour, personal relationships and patterns of communication of all concerned is called proxemics. Space greatly impacts the social event of a football match. The limited space offered by the venue magnifies any tensions and heightens agitation. Research conducted by E. T. Hall (1976), the most prominent researcher in the field of proxemics, shows that Europeans have a sense of personal space which is thought to serve as protection of their Self. Intruding this personal space results in the perception of the other person primarily through the senses of touch, smell, sight and hearing. Such a person cannot hide his or her masked physical attributes, is stripped of any mystery and is exposed to the observer. Thus, it is not surprising that Europeans do not appreciate it when others invade their personal space and usually oppose any such attempts. Therefore, if due to overselling of tickets, the ‘crown’ of a stadium (or a sector which only offers standing places) is overcrowded with sports fans, the personal space of many of them will be violated. This causes sports fans to be nailed together into one big mass. In the above examples, violations of personal space may result in sports fans experiencing the situation as annoying and dissatisfying which may in turn lead to outbursts of aggression directed at other fans, event organizers or authorities. The joy of seeing a live football match cannot alleviate the experienced costs of discomfort brought on by the limited physical space provided by the venue.

An interesting concept was introduced by E. Canetti (1996). Based on his reflections, sports fans at a football stadium may be perceived as a double closed crowd. The stadium is carefully separated from the outside world – from the side of the city, the stadium is separated by a dead wall whereas inside there is a wall of people. All the people present at the stadium have their backs turned to the city. When at the stadium they do not care what goes on in the city. They leave behind their relationships, their values and habits. Sports fans at the stadium are seated as a mass across from each other. Every fan has tens of thousands of people and heads in front of him or her. Details that set us apart from others and make us unique are erased. Everyone looks and behaves alike.

Any live spectator event should be organized in a way that focuses the spectators’ attention on what they came to see. A sporting event would not be attractive if organizers were not to use certain techniques that intensify emotional experiences. This can be achieved by pairing the action of movement with the crowding of space. A football match is a classic example of this. In words of Cz. Matusewicz: “the lines on the pitch point to its centre where ball lies and all the players come together around the ball (the ball land the player – these are the factors of space condensation), now we just await the referee blowing his whistle and the game will begin. Now the attention of the viewers is focused on the action on the pitch, all the other elements are lost on the spectators. The intensification technique and other techniques of extortion force the spectators to notice certain elements from the surrounding and thereby experience them with greater emotional intensity in comparison to experiences of multifaceted situations” [5, p. 58]. Sometimes the course of the match achieves its peak emotional potential. Thousands of fans react in unison, emotions go through the roof, the attention of spectators is entirely focused on what is happening on the pitch, the emotional engagement of fans peaks. What this entails is complete integration and consolidation of the audience. Interpersonal distance is reduced to a minimum: a phenomenon which can be described as temporary “affiliation” sets in [5, p. 59]. When strong, positive emotions come into play, certain individuals have a need to compare their experiences with those of others and thus join them and open up to them and express their feelings. They crave confirmation that their emotional experiences of such great intensity are justified. It is these behaviours of individual

crowd members that consolidate the audience, a process which at time also affects the players and even the referees. Players of the local team experience maximum mental stimulation and a surge of energy, most likely as a result of increased tolerance for tiredness [5].

On the other hand, people have a strong need to feel separate from others. According to K. Węgrowaska-Rzepa (2000), this can be displayed in the differentiation “us vs. them”, “they – being the people who do not belong to the group” that the subject will identify with [11]. Such a situation takes place at the stadium among football fans. For them “us” is our team and the fans from clubs we are friends with. The “others” are of course the police and other fans. Z. Bauman (1996) describes this in the following terms: “this antagonism describes both elements of the opposition. It may be also said that both sides gain an identity from the sheer fact they stand in opposition to each other. “Others” are the opposing image that “we” need to strengthen our identity, make us more coherent as a group, strengthen our in-group solidarity and make us more emotionally stable” [12].

The main characteristic of a sports audience is its potential for strong emotional arousal. Often people attend a sporting event primarily because they want to experience strong emotions. In the course of a sports contest spectators’ emotions can oscillate between positive and negative extremes. In sport, the fight for primacy is very evident and it is often this very aspect of a sporting event that draws in so many fans.

J. Huizinga (1998) strongly believes that sports and games are of an agonal nature as they are grounded in competitiveness and rivalry. Games are most closely associated with the concept of winning. Winning “is demonstrating superiority over others as a result of a given game”. This sense of superiority is often displayed by people who generally enjoy dominating others. As a result of this mechanism, much more is won than just a single match. Winners gain respect and recognition, both of which are beneficial not only to the individual but also to the individual’s team. According to Huizinga, herein lies another very significant characteristic of a game – success achieved in the game can easily be transferred from the individual to the whole group. However, another characteristic is even more significant: In his agonal instinct man is not primarily driven by the thirst for power or by the desire to rule. The primary desire is to outdo others and to be respected because of that [13, p. 79].

In order to find out what psychological mechanism lies beneath the phenomenon of competitiveness results in such feelings, we need to remind ourselves that we have inherited our competitive streak from our prehistoric ancestors. J. Huizinga, holds the view that play precedes culture. He gives the example of animals for whom play is not merely a biological activity but has deep meaning and is a source of joy and excitement. However, neither this theory nor Browne’s theory - which holds that emotions induced by sports are genetically determined - explain the intensity of emotional experiences during a match, they only point out the motivation and explain why people are attracted to sports. This is because the emotions of the match experienced by the fans are not brought on by a single factor. These emotions are possessed by contemporary man who accumulates in his experiences what is biological, social and cultural. There is a wide range of factors in this set and it cannot be limited to the effect of one or just a few elements. According to Cz. Matuszewicz, “the theory that states that emotions brought on by sporting events are biologically determined is richer than the explanation proposed by E. Browne. These biologically determined emotions are brought on not only by defending our territory or fighting for ‘primacy’ but also by movement and extraordinary athletic feats” [5, p. 57].

Another factor which magnifies emotional experiences of sport fans is the so-called F-formation. According to A. Kendon (1976), individuals in a circle who focus their attention on one central object (the centre of the pitch, the team of players on the pitch), facing each other, able to observe each other, create “situational community of the transactional segment”. Emotional experiences of people in such circumstances occur on an interactive level and not on an individual level. The feeling that other people in our surrounding are experiencing the same emotional states, noticing these experiences in others’ gestures, facial expressions and postures magnifies the emotions we ourselves are experiencing. Thus, a fan will never experience such intense emotions when viewing a football match on TV as he will when he is sitting in the stadium as part of the F-

formation. In front of the TV screen he will lack the so-called “social mirror”, reinforcement of the emotions he is experiencing and non-verbal signs of approval [14].

In the European culture, people highly value traits such speed, strength, creativity and activity. Fast, wing-based actions, the sound of a shot rumbling against the goal post, the virtuosity of magnificent plays and dribbling – all of these really speak to spectators’ imagination. Spectators’ emotions are often magnified by the characteristics of the match itself, particularly its spectrum. The team which is currently winning may well be losing in a matter of minutes. Such dramatic turns of events rarely take place in real life but are common in football matches [15].

In a quest to pinpoint the determinants of sport-related emotions we can also refer to the work of R. Cialdini (1999) who believes that strong emotions experienced by sports fans during matches are the result of identity. Sports fans who identify with a given team experience strong emotions during a match because the outcome of the match determines their subjective self-esteem. Sports fans often emphasize that sporting events provide an opportunity to experience intense emotions, offer a pleasant diversion from the monotony of everyday life and fill in a void in their lives.

Sporting events have become an element of mass culture. It is a good which, like any other good, is subject to the law of the marketplace. If we want them to sell well we need to advertise them well. Adverts always try to speak to consumers’ emotions and imagination. Sporting event organizers ruthlessly fight to attracting customers to their good – they use every tactic available to them to lure in the client-spectator. A brief glance at the actions of sports commentators is enough to realise that the sports match itself is no longer enough to incite great emotions. Photographers and commentators do everything they can to bring spectators’ emotions to a climax. In this fashion, the news broadcasts preceding football matches often include trivia unrelated to the sporting event. A person who happens to be a viewer, listener or reader more easily detects this type of information. The role of the media is to interest the recipient with their material. Sports journalists usually find an exceptional reason to get particularly excited about an upcoming match. Some viewers are heavily influenced by the suggestions of the mass media and expect a match to unfold accordingly. These pre-match announcements shape fans’ expectations of the match. They affect the mental state of fans not only at the beginning of a match but also throughout the entire course of the match. The conviction that the match will unfold as it was suggested in pre-match news articles and news broadcasts causes the fans to experience considerable concern and dissatisfaction until the reality of the match meets the expectations fans had of it. When a match meets fans’ expectations they feel a sense of reward. When their team wins, their joy is enormous, especially if the victory is unexpected because everyone predicted their team would lose. Things are much different when fans expected victory but their team lost – then fans often experience a decrease in joy and experience a specific state of “helpless” sorrow [5].

We must not forget about the negative impact of the mass media on sport fans’ aggressive behaviour. This negative impact was noted by S. Wanat (1992), who remarked that “the mass media sometimes add fuel to the fire and in extreme cases may trigger loutish outbursts of aggression in fans. This happens when the press, the radio and TV depict a sports match in a very selective way – they present information related to the match which fans find outrageous as well as controversial interview with coaches or players using inappropriate terms and an inappropriate tone in their broadcasts” [16].

Instead of complaining about the rise in violence and aggression among football fans, we need to realize that what creates this atmosphere of violence is our own modernity. Traditional violence is ritual and at the same time spontaneous. In contrast, ours is simulated: it is not the result of passion or instinct but is rather brought on by the TV screen. It is to some extent the potential power of the screen and the media which behave as if they were just recording and then broadcasting it. And this is why we should perceive it as a specifically modern form of violence which has nothing to do with violence in the traditional understanding of the word. Herein also lies the reason why it is impossible to pinpoint its causes (psychological or sociological). The deliberate violence football hooligans engage in is not linked to any demand, it constitutes an oversensitive form of indifference which can only unfold the way it does because it springs from a general sense of indifference which is typical of our societies [17].

Material and Method

The study was conducted during the 2005/2006 season minor league football championships. Study participants were not randomly selected – they were chosen from avid football fans who had a long-standing history of supporting their favourite team and had even travelled to other cities to root for their team. The study was conducted on trains that fans were taking to get to cities of opponent teams where their teams were scheduled to play matches. We chose this setting for the study as it would have been very difficult to reach the football fans in any other way. Study participants consisted of fans of three football clubs known among football fans as the Triad. The Triad consists of three clubs: Arka Gdynia (group I), Cracovia Kraków (group II) and Lech Poznań (group III). A hundred and twenty participants took part in the study: 45 participants were fans of Arka, 43 were fans of Cracovia and 32 were fans of Lech. Participants were mostly male: there were 117 men and only 3 women. Twenty two participants had completed only basic schooling, 13 had graduated from a vocational school, 60 had secondary education and the remaining 25 people had a university degree. The participants were grouped based on their age: the first group consisted of participants who were under 20 years of age (group A), the second group included participants who were 20 to 30 years old (group B) and the third group included participants who were over 30 years old (group C) [18].

Aims and research questions

The aim of the study was to obtain the most accurate characteristic of football fans, based on fans of the Triad. The study was meant to depict the image of a typical football fan in light of his or her reflections, characterize the fans in terms of personality traits they possess and those they wish they possessed and also to describe their needs. In addition, we wanted to compare fans of the three clubs with respect to these traits and also compare the three age groups.

Hypotheses

The next stage of the research procedure was conducting a detailed analysis of the research problem, that is elaborating on the hypotheses. Before engaging in the research we formulated the following hypotheses which were meant to help us with the aim of the study:

Study participants are characterized by a strong competitive streak and a heightened level of aggression.

There are no significant differences between groups I, II, III with respect to their real and ideal Self.

Participants from group C are characterized by a greater staidness and are calmer than participants from groups A and B.

Participants from group A are characterized by a higher level of impulsivity and impetuosity than participants from groups B and C.

Methods

To examine football fans we used the ACL test (Adjective Check List) – 37 scales designed by H. B. Gough and A. B. Heilbrun in two versions – the ideal Self and the real Self. We also carried out a survey. The study was conducted among football fans who supported three different football teams.

Statistical analysis was performed on the ACL inventories in two different versions – „What am I like?“, where the individual is handed a list of adjectives and is asked to check those that best describe him or her, and “What would I like to be like?“, where the individual checks adjectives that he or she wishes would describe him or her, relating to his or her ideal self.

The analyses included both a descriptive analysis and a decisive analysis. In the scope of the decisive analysis statistical tests were used. The mean values of particular ACL scales were verified by means of the t-Student test. The border level was set at $p=0.05$; if the level of significance was lower than 0.05, it was considered to be statistically significant. If the significance level happened to be higher than 0.05 yet lower than 0.1, it was considered to be a significant trend [19].

Results and Discussion

On the basis of the obtained results, participants of the study can be described as strong-willed, original (both in thought processing and perception) and sensitive. They are indifferent to and unperturbed by controversy but are irritated by people who have very little intuition or lack distinctiveness. Thus, it is hard to join their ranks and become fully accepted.

They have a tendency to have a pessimistic outlook on the future, and perceive other people's success as unfair and unmerited. Therefore, it is not difficult to understand the animosity they bear towards the opponent team when their team loses a game. Self-doubt may lead to doggedness and hostility towards others. These traits combined with their tendency to quickly resort to aggression could explain why they are so prone to violent outbursts and incite conflicts with fans of the opponent team when their team loses. This theory is further supported with the fact that they checked so many negative adjectives – fans of Cracovia checked the greatest number of these adjectives.

Football fans are emotionally ambivalent towards others; they are likely to express opposition in an abnormal way and take a defensive stance. They may have trouble adjusting to requirements set out for them, which is clearly visible in their interactions with the police. They are independent, autonomous and resolute and are therefore perceived as selfish and stubborn.

Rather high scores in the aggression subscale, especially among fans of Cracovia and Lech, point to the fact that football fans have a strong competitive streak with a heightened level of aggression. This could explain why they create opposing groups which compete with each other for supremacy in fights. Their reactions are intense and impulsive and they often do not exert sufficient control over their behaviour. They have a tendency to express their strong emotions with little respect for widely accepted social norms of behaviour. This is why they are met with disapproval by society. This does not affect them greatly as they are not really sensitive to the reactions their behaviour garners and have little care for what others think or feel. They are prone to outbursts of anger, are sceptical and defiant towards others as they are easily irritated by any obstacles or setbacks they encounter. In pursuit of their self-interests they can be indifferent to the needs of others. They do not count on other people's appreciation nor do they even care about it; they perceive themselves as self-sufficient.

The obtained results also allow us to conclude that they suffer from partial lack of independence and a sense of insecurity in dealing with the requirements of adult life. They can become disorganized when dealing with stress and may seek satisfaction in dreams and fantasies rather than in the threatening context of their current reality.

They are impetuous people and are not likely to delay gratification or practice self-control. They also draw others – whether they like it or not - into the pursuit of pleasure.

Fans of Lech are characterized by the strongest urges and most easily become distracted. Furthermore, they are most likely to tend to their own self-comfort but are also the most accepting toward themselves and others. When they do not feel confident enough, they avoid confrontation. In certain situations they perceive others as stronger and more effective and seek their support. In contrast, fans of Arka are more patient, uncomplicated and open. They respect social roles and are content with their role and place in life.

From the whole list of adjectives, fans of Lech and Cracovia checked much fewer than fans of Arka, which may point to their more narrow interests and being more emotionally closed-up and conventional, where the ideal ego is associated with norms of moderation and appropriate judgment. The fans of these two teams are also more likely to initiate behaviours and have greater confidence in their goal achieving skills. They are interested in making a good impression and are therefore perceived by others as resolute, enterprising and self-confident. They are also bolder people and faster in their reactions. They quickly take initiative in taking care of things. They are also persistent in achieving their goals.

The football fans of these teams do not have greater difficulties in adjusting to the requirements of life. They may display heightened anxiety when it comes to the outcome of the match but in everyday life they are rather calm and collected. They are quite effective in carrying out tasks - their ambition and dexterity is definitely conducive to that. They value order and appreciate careful

planning. In circumstances that call for self-discipline they are calm and patient. However, if some limits are violated, e.g. when awaiting to enter the stadium, they may not control their impulsive reactions. They demand what they believe they deserve, sometimes not demanding much of themselves. They find pleasure in competing with others and taking risks because they are not afraid to face challenges but avoid overly risky situations.

The need to cultivate values and traditions is fulfilled by their attachment to the team colours. Because of this any changes imposed by the board of the club are met with disapproval and dissatisfaction. A sense of attachment, loyalty and duty towards their favourite team draws these fans to the stadiums where they can derive pleasure from new experiences and add some spice to their lives. Their interests are narrow and mainly connected with football but they are always curious about other things in life.

They feel comfortable among people they know well, are co-operative and natural in their way of being. They are, however, insecure about the intentions of strangers and are likely to take a defensive stance rather than engage in close relationships. They care about the members of their own group but keep others at a distance. They trust themselves, are efficient and ambitious but not at the cost of spontaneity and a good time. They are perceived as logical and analytical in their thought process but are not taken aback by informality or irrationality.

Interpersonal meetings may entail the violation of certain rules on their part. Especially when they encounter people who are unable to delay the fulfilment of their narcissistic needs. It is not unheard of for them to test limits and bend laws during meetings away from home, free from the duties and commitments that bound them in their everyday life. However, when they feel threatened on their own turf, they take a defensive stance.

Based on the obtained results, we may also conclude that the examined people would like their behaviour to be governed by norms of moderation, staidness and accurate judgment, so that they could realize the goals they set for themselves. It turns out that the motivation to pursue success lies not so much in the pursuit of competition (to which the results obtained in the real Self would point) but rather in a persistent need to live in accordance with high and socially approved standards of achievement.

The examined people seek objectivity and rationality, they would like to be better at impulse-control and unswerving in their pursuit of personal goals. That is why they are impressed by self-discipline and hard work. If they really wanted to, they could be willing to extort consent from someone.

The need for autonomy is definitely greater among the fans of Lech. They value greatly independence, autonomy and willpower, which happens to be consistent with their real Self. They are ready to oppose others and are not willing to follow orders. They are primarily interested in the pursuit of self-interest and therefore would like to be as self-sufficient as it is only possible. They do not shy away from intense and impulsive reactions, even if they are not necessarily socially acceptable. They care a great deal about courage, reaction speed and cognitive skills such as the potential for original thought and perceptiveness. That is why they do not value individuals who are clumsy, helpless, lack intuition or distinctiveness. They would like to be efficient, focused on their jobs, reliable and ambitious, which is inconsistent with their other needs because the aforementioned traits have to be attained at least to some extent at the cost of spontaneity and fun.

Things are much different in the case of Arka supporters who also care about efficiency at work and discipline; however, unlike Lech supporters, they value respite and silence more than they value fun and frivolity. Like supporters of Cracovia, they mostly care about continuity and cultivating olden values. They value respect and would like to be held in high regard by others.

They would like others to see them as well-adjusted though they overtly declare (as may be concluded from the real Self image) that they do not care what others think of them. To achieve this aim, they are willing to resort to any means to make a good impression on others. They would like to have more confidence in their skills – it is conceivable that if they felt that others hold them in high regard they would be more self-confident. Supporters of Arka surpass the supporters of other teams in this respect – their need of personal adjustment is the strongest. They would like to

function better in social situations and to adapt to the changing requirements of group processes more easily.

All three examined groups of football fans would like to be perceived as resolute and ambitious. They would like to be swift in taking initiative and perseverant in achieving their goals. They value such values as resoluteness and lack of self-doubt even when society disapproves of their actions. What matters is skilfulness in managing group activity directed at achieving goals and the ability to connect with other people. They would like to rely on well-rules and adhere to them in their own lives.

When it comes to their real Self image, participants differed mainly in the number of adjectives they chose to describe themselves. Supporters of Lech checked the fewest adjectives on the list, which points to very narrow interests, the fact that they are closed up in themselves and conventional in their behaviour. The norms of behaviour they value are moderation, staidness and appropriate judgment.

Other differences pertain to the need for affiliation and reactions in social situations. It is visible in the activity of the fan club which strives to maintain good relationships with both the city residents and the authorities.

Another difference pertains to the scale of creative personality. Supporters of Lech shine in this scale. They can be characterized as bold, aesthetically sensitive, smart and fast in their reactions. They have well developed cognitive skills and are characterized by changeability of behaviour. This is expressed in the inventive banners that fans design for use during matches. They are considered to be some of the best in the country. They are also the most competitive of all the groups and treat others as rivals that they have to conquer, for example by competing with other fans in who roots best for their team. However, their reactions can be strong and impulsive and they often do not control themselves sufficiently which can sometimes lead to fights with supporters of other teams.

Supporters of Cracovia are the most masculine and are perceived as the most ambitious and resolute. They get impatient when they encounter any obstacles or when they are frustrated. They are quick to take matters in their own hands. They are also very persistent in pursuing their goals, even those which are not met with social approval. This may be the reason why supporters of this club have achieved notoriety among football fans.

Significant differences pertaining to the ideal Self image were noted in the scale of caring for others. Supporters of Arka obtained the greatest number of points in this scale. This indicates their great willingness to co-operate with others as well as a natural, well-mannered and considerate way of being. Supporters of Arka also outdid the other groups in terms of their need for affiliation as they like to spend time with others which is consistent with their real Self image.

They also obtained significantly higher scores in the submissiveness scale, thereby they are the most conscientious, humble and patient of all the groups. They are most likely to surrender to others because they prefer peace over conflicts. They value patience and openness most and want to respect rules.

Things are completely different among Lech supporters who mostly care about competing with others and are willing to resort to aggression if such a need arises. They want to treat others as rivals that they have to conquer, and this happens to be exactly what they do.

Significant differences pertaining to the real Self image in the three age groups refer to the scale which measures submissiveness. The eldest group obtained the greatest number of points in this scale, which means that, in comparison to the other age groups, they are the most conscientious, the most patient and prefer peace and anonymity above everything else. They do not care for competitive behaviour and conquering anybody. Heightened scores, in comparison to the other groups, were obtained by group B in the dominance scale, which means they are the most ambitious, resolute and self-confident. Neither social disapproval nor the objection of others will stop them. Furthermore, they are people who are the easiest to get along with and skilled in managing group activities that are aimed at achieving socially approved goals. They are also the most patient and open, they respect their roles and places in life.

In contrast, group A, which includes the youngest fans, is significantly less convinced of the importance of incessant effort and self-discipline. These individuals enjoy change and variety and that is probably why they do not shy away from testing limits by attempting to violate social norms to determine where the line is drawn for socially acceptable behaviour; they are also generally indomitable. They quickly take matters in their own hands. They are resolute and perseverant but they are also impatient when they come across an obstacle. What is more, they have a tendency to tend to their own self-comfort.

The main differences among the three age groups with respect to the ideal Self image were found in the scale that measures self-control. The eldest group obtained higher scores than both the younger groups. This means they value resoluteness, conscientiousness and diligence the most. They would like to be reliable and trust-worthy, self-disciplined, ambitious and focused on their work.

The youngest group of football fans is most likely to function the worst – they do not try to adapt or adjust to the requirements set about by society. They would like to be self-sufficient, have strong will-power and be original thinkers. People who do not fit into these requirements will not be accepted.

Conclusions

The study showed that the three groups of football fans – supporters of Arka, Cracovia and Lech – are in fact similar to each other. Their scores on the ACL checklist are very similar. Based on these answers we can give a detailed description of a typical football fan as they themselves have depicted him or her in their answers.

Triada football fans are self-sufficient individuals with great willpower. They are original in their thought process and perception of the world. They are sensitive to aesthetics and indifferent to controversy. Their behaviour is subject to change and they are resolute in their behaviour. In situations of self-doubt they have an affinity towards aggression which can lead to displays of hostility directed at fans of other teams. They may also express opposition in an inappropriate way – a way which is conducive to open conflicts with other fans or by taking a defensive stance. They are very biologically driven which means they are impatient and are driven to distraction. They also have a strong competitive streak and have a short fuse – their reactions are often strong and impulsive and they do not exert sufficient impulse control. They are easily angered, sceptical and defiant in relations with others. They can also be quite inconsiderate of other persons' feelings and thoughts.

They are strong individuals and like to be in the limelight. They try to be indifferent towards the feelings of others and because of that are perceived as selfish and obstinate. They are independent, autonomous and resolute but become disorganized in stressful situations, in which they may feel insecure and fraught with self-doubt as to whether they can meet the requirements of adult life and are likely to avoid direct confrontation. They seek pleasure in their dreams and fantasies rather than in the context of the threatening reality they live in. They are very likely to pursue self-interests and are hedonistic in their nature. They may be described in terms of interpersonal effectiveness and the ability to achieve the goals they set for themselves. They are enthusiastic and warm in social encounters and relationships.

Their ideal Self image is slightly different, as Triada fans pose as individuals who strive to be very sensible and moderate in their needs. They want to overcome their urges so that they can judge situations more objectively and thereby make the process of goal-achievement easier on themselves. They strive towards objectivity and rationality; they want to be strong, independent individuals who are confident in their skills. They value their own hard work and prefer tasks which call for self-discipline and diligence.

They would like to be bold, wise and fast in their reactions, have broad interests and strong cognitive skills, be quick to take matters in their own hands and perseverant in achieving their goals. All the while, they want to derive pleasure from their actions, be resolute, have strong personalities and break free from self-doubt, strive to achieve their aims and not care about what others think even though they would also like to be respected by society. They want to make a

good impression so that others perceive them as resolute, ambitious, enterprising and well-adjusted.

The differences between particular age groups pertain mainly to the way they react and the rules they follow in their behaviour. The eldest group is the most conscientious, patient, prefers peace and anonymity. The middle age group likes to dominate. It includes ambitious, resolute and self-confident individuals. The youngest group is the most impulsive, the least disciplined and the most impatient. The eldest fans want to be well-adjusted and disciplined. The youngest group does not care about the requirements set about by society – they would like to be independent and self-sufficient.

All the hypotheses were confirmed. The study participants have a strong competitive streak and a heightened level of aggression. There are not many significant differences between groups I, II and III in either their real Self image or their ideal Self image. Individuals from group C are the most staid and calm in comparison to those from group A and B. Individuals from group A are more impulsive and are more eager to physically express their anger than individuals from groups B and C.

Football fans are not well respected in Poland. The picture of a typical football fan depicted in this article to a large extent explains why the Polish society has such a low opinion of them. Many of the traits displayed by football players are conducive to their negative perception by society members. This is a partial depiction as it included only a few chosen groups of football fans but they hail from different parts of the country and thus serve as a good general depiction of a Polish football fan. Although some traits such as a heightened level of aggression can evoke fear in some of us, the future outlook is most definitely positive as the football fans strive to be more staid and less prone to violent outbursts. We must also keep in mind that the image of football fans is often falsely misconstrued by the media. There are definitely football fans who deserve the negative label but it does not pertain to all football fans. We must separate hooligans and pseudo fans from real fans. But more research is still necessary to obtain more information about what really takes place at football stadiums. This paper may serve as inspiration for further research on this socially significant issue [20].

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