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## Fighting in Hockey -- Player Perceptions

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## **Abstract**

There is a certain amount of physicality involved in all levels of hockey. The aggressive styles of play and attitudes have evolved into one of the most violent team sports. Fighting has been utilized as a marketing tool to increase viewership of hockey. The fights have increased in recent years, and there are many perceptions that portray its significance within the sport. The media markets physical aspects of the game, which reaches players of all ages and influences them to follow suit. Social media websites, television shows, sport analysts, and movies have been created solely focusing on big hits, fights, and violent behaviors on the ice. Hockey fans enjoy spending extra money to watch a professional game hoping to see a fight. Crowds get louder and the magnitude of the arena escalates once a fight breaks out. Beginning at the youth level, coaches select players with size and physical advantages over others. Young athletes lacking physical attributes are encouraged to discontinue participation in sports like hockey. High school and college coaches recruit players with physical ability. The engagement in fighting is the highest at its most intense level, the National Hockey League, where certain players are tabbed with reputations based on their size and violent behavior. There are countless studies focusing on how external factors influence hockey players to fight. The purpose of this current study is to investigate how hockey players themselves perceive fighting within the game. Breaking it down further, this study will decipher any differences in perceptions of fighting between forwards and defensemen. The results have emerged from Division I college hockey players in the North East Region.

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# Fighting in Hockey

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There is a certain amount of physicality involved in all levels of hockey. The aggressive styles of play and attitudes have evolved into one of the most violent team sports. Fighting has been utilized as a marketing tool to increase viewership of hockey. The fights have increased in recent years, and there are many perceptions that portray its significance within the sport. The media markets physical aspects of the game, which reaches players of all ages and influences them to follow suit. Social media websites, television shows, sport analysts, and movies have been created solely focusing on big hits, fights, and violent behaviors on the ice. Hockey fans enjoy spending extra money to watch a professional game hoping to see a fight. Crowds get louder and the magnitude of the arena escalates once a fight breaks out. Beginning at the youth level, coaches select players with size and physical advantages over others. Young athletes lacking physical attributes are encouraged to discontinue participation in sports like hockey. High school and college coaches recruit players with physical ability. The engagement in fighting is the highest at its most intense level, the National Hockey League, where certain players are tabbed with reputations based on their size and violent behavior. There are countless studies focusing on how external factors influence hockey players to fight. The purpose of this current study is to investigate how hockey players themselves perceive fighting within the game. Breaking it down further, this study will decipher any differences in perceptions of fighting between forwards and defensemen. The results have emerged from Division I college hockey players in the North East Region.

## Introduction

Ever since the National Hockey League was introduced to the world of sport, ice hockey players have been fighting with opponents during games. This has been a serious topic in hockey over the past two decades, where there have been several arguments both supporting and opposing fighting. Although the consequences for fighting within a game vary for each professional sport, it has been stored into the culture of hockey for several years (Paul, 2003). The game and its players have always been characterized by the toughness, and this is because of the fighting scene within the sport (Vincent & Pegoraro, 2012). The fan perception of fighting in ice hockey assists the growth of the instilled reputation that there are boxers on the ice for the purpose to fight. Professional ice hockey is one of the most emotional and complex environments, according to a former goalie, Ken Dryden (Botterill, 2004). With the technological boost in recent years, fans of all ages can almost always watch a violent act on television, through the internet, or even on their cell phones, especially today when the NHL averages nearly one altercation per game (Kreiser, 2001). Fighting has influenced youth hockey programs throughout the country, and has only added to the issue of fighting in professional ice hockey in relation to injuries. Particular injuries, including those from past and current professional players, have forced the league to reconsider their policies. Aside from the fan perception, the players, coaches, and league officials at all levels have been impacted by intensive violence within the sport (Marchie & Cusimano, 2003). The level of violence in the National Hockey League reached its highest point in 1987, when the probability of a fight was well over one per game. Although it has reduced somewhat since then, the chances of a fight continue to be well beyond what it was when professionals were introduced to the game in 1967 (Haisken-DeNew & Vorell, 2008).

My objective in this research is to study the behavior of ice hockey players to determine different reasons for fighting during games, and how they perceive them. A plethora of prior studies have drawn conclusions on the perceptions from coaches, fans, and leagues. However, the lack of research falls in the perspectives of fighting on the players themselves. It is understood that any fight rumbles the arena, gets the crowd more involved, and can even boost momentum for the team who has the winning fighter (Paul, 2003). However, through exploratory research on player behaviors, influences and pressures from coaches and scouts, and team perceptions of fighting, this design can identify a better understanding about why it continues to be a part of the game. Additional past research has shown that hockey players regard violence as essential in gaining and maintaining the respect of opponents and teammates (Faulker, 1974). The purpose of this research is to analyze the behaviors associated with ice hockey, and what triggers a fight in most hockey games today. This research will attempt to answer how ice hockey players perceive fighting within the game.

### **Literature Review**

The first hockey game ever played indoors under written rules ended in a fight where many players brawled with members of a skating club. Since then, fighting has evolved into being embedded into the DNA of hockey (Gills, 2009). “Professional hockey players are cordial at public restaurants, social events and with children at summer camps. But go to a hockey game, and you will see a player commit an act such that if he were to commit it on the street, we would label him a criminal (Oh, 2006, pg 489). According to (Oh, 2006) hockey players are aware of the labels on people who repeatedly get into fights, such as thugs or bullies, but hockey is viewed as a separate reality by the players. Among the several values influencing violence in hockey,

fighting is viewed positively. No other sport in North America besides boxing has a greater history and reputation for fighting than ice hockey (Svoranos, 1997). Although a hockey fight typically results in five minute penalties for both victims, the informal rules of the game are widely accepted by players, coaches and fans (Oh, 2006, pg 490).

Aggressive behavior can be defined as overt verbal or physical act that has the potential to physically or psychologically injure a person (Birch & Widmeyer, 1984; Kirker, Tenenbaum, & Matson, 2000; Visek & Watson, 2005). The same source states on page 179 that the perceived legitimacy and occurrence of aggressive behavior increases as the level of competitiveness increases. Therefore, the socialization process shows that aggressive sport behaviors become more professionalized in their attitudes as length of sport participation increases. Sports, with hockey in particular, offer means for males to develop and demonstrate masculine qualities such as power, strength, and violence (Catlett, McKenry & Pappas, 2004). The risk of injury is very high in professional hockey, which leads to the players being equipped heavily with thick shoulder pads and protective helmets. However, nearly all professional hockey players choose not to wear a cage on the front of their helmet to protect their faces, which also has shown to be an influence for fighting (Stuart, Smith & Malo-Ortiguera, 2002). Additionally, the game is extremely fast-paced with players skating up to 30 miles per hour and pucks flying at up to 90 miles per hour (Svoranos, 1997). Physical consequences of an action are the guiding factors that determine right and wrong. Penalties for fighting and violence in hockey are punishments, but rewards and reinforcement for aggressive behavior send a mixed signal to the players for their actions (Kavanagh & Stephens, 2003).

Aggressive behavior in professional hockey has seen a dramatic increase since 1975 (Bushman & Wells, 1998; Sheldon & Aymar, 2001). In addition, “many players and coaches

consider such behavior an important strategy for winning” (Sheldon & Aimar, 2001, p 304).

Violence has been the distinguishing feature in the public image of professional hockey since the first expansion in the NHL in the late 1960’s (McCullough, 2000). In sports, professional in particular, aggressiveness can be a result of poor performance or frustration (Smith, 2008).

Professional hockey is a frustrating sport, because it is played in close quarters with players using large hockey sticks in order to gain possession of the puck. Because of the heart put into the game by the players, the emotional intensity is very high, tempers can spark easily, and minor scuffles in the corner or against the boards can lead to bench-clearing brawls (Corriero, 2005; Svoranos, 1997). Other sports, like football and basketball, are also frustrating and complex, but in hockey, players are armed with a weapon. Athletes at a young age are influenced by their older family members who they look up to. For example, Svoranos (1997) concludes that fathers are likely to reward their children for showing violent behavior in action sports, because it represents a sense of toughness. Furthermore, aggressive behavior and tough acts in ice hockey have been formed into a legitimate style of play in the early stages of youth hockey (Smith, 2008). Fighting is not considered by players to be “violent” (Oh, 2006, pg 491).

Additionally, in the sport of ice hockey, widely held behavior norms which violate official rules are accepted. Part of the male sex role adopted by fathers is the expression of anger, aggression, and dominance over other males in a sport setting, particularly when they are threatened or attacked (Smith, 2008). At a young age, males are typically taught these values to stand up for themselves when it was necessary. Examination of parental support for violence revealed that 96 percent of the fathers approved hard but legal checking. Nearly three quarters of the fathers surveyed also positively sanctioned fighting, but only when the opponent instigates (Smith, 1979). Professional athletes model aggressive behavior in others in part because they do not

receive much punishment for their actions, and are reinforced for their actions (Sheldon & Aimar, 2001). Intimidation through violence is a tactic for distracting an opponent so that one can gain an advantage over the other. Incidentally, retaliation is a response to the intimidation tactic to neutralize any such advantage (Colburn, 1986). Masculinity is one of the main studies taken place as an attempt to explain why professional hockey players get into fights more than almost every other sport (Smith, 1995).

Violence is not an issue for youth programs until the age groups of around twelve. Although there is controversy associated with the age in which body checking should be allowed, it is typically introduced to youth hockey programs with kids around 12-14 years old (Warsh, Constantin, Howard, & Macpherson, 2009). Before this age, almost all youth programs prohibit any type of violent acts within the game. However, the increase use and influence of media exposure has caught the attention of young hockey players as well (Smith & Young, 1988). For example, McCullough (2010) states that violence is a key ingredient in hockey arenas, in league advertising and in television coverage. "It's all about advertising. Violence attracts viewers" (McCullough, 2010). The Canadian Broadcast Company for Sports and Entertainment is one of the major culprits for promoting violence in professional hockey (Meeker, 1992). The same source wrote that it actively promotes National Hockey league violence. Additionally, the television show creates a false impression of hockey because it highlights size, strength, and toughness over speed, skill and finesse. Typically, hockey players at this age are not introduced to checking, violent actions, or aggressive play (Smith, 1979). Rather, many youth programs promote less aggressive styles of play in order to ensure safety for the players and ease from the parents (Warsh, Constantin, Howard, & Macpherson, 2009). However, once athletes reach the age where checking becomes legal, size, weight, and toughness

are essential factors in whether some players can make the cut or not. Once this occurs, players begin to evaluate themselves and others on toughness and work to improve their own style of play. By the age of 15, athletes are aware that it is a norm to be tough and aggressive in hockey (Smith, 1979). The players who are afraid to hit or fight are encouraged to quit playing or join recreational leagues that prohibit these behaviors. Once this occurs, the intensity of aggressive styles of play efficiently picks up the pace where these players progress and develop. Camps and clinics for hockey players around this age include fighting in drills (Blount & Writer, 2007). Professional hockey players demonstrate violent acts on the ice to influence the younger players to be aggressive and violent (Visek & Watson, 2005).

Coaches play a very significant role in influencing professional athletes' behaviors. Certain rewards have been rewarded for big hits, fights, and aggressive styles of play (Haisken-DeNew & Vorell, 2008; Loughhead & Leath, 2001; Stephens & Kavanagh, 2003). All coaches have certain egotistical strategies that correlate with their behaviors and reactions to violence from their players on the ice (Wood, 2012). Additionally, a study from nearly four decades ago showed that coaches kept a tally of the number of hits- illegal and legal- made by their players. The professional players saw toughness and aggressive acts to impress their coaches and fans (Svoranos, 1997). Discipline is one of the most important aspects learned throughout the participation of sport (Lauer, 1998). However, at the professional level, the coaches feel as if they do not have the duty to discipline players simply because they hold responsibility for their own actions (Deacon, MacKinlay & Fisher, 1998; Murphy, 2011; Swift, 2003). Fighting in hockey violates the principle of discipline and the definition of a professional hockey player (Lewinson & Palma, 2012). However, according to youth hockey players, coaches are more approving of fighting than fathers. They take pride in developing "talent" for higher caliber

leagues. According to Smith (1979), “Hard, legal hits and aggressive play typically leads to illegal actions and penalties.” The same source revealed that although coaches do not support penalties, they approve aggressive behavior. A penalty taken for being aggressive is far more respected by their coaches in sport. Also, players stated that coaches in all age groups have taught that there is such thing as a “good penalty,” and doing everything possible to not let the opposing player around you. Additionally, it is very common for a coach to lose his or her temper and show behavior on the bench or in the locker room that resembles violent acts and essentially can influence the style of play by his or her players. Many coaches also see their organization as a business, where it is essential to “fill seats.” These types of coaches typically need “designated fighters,” “hitmen,” or even “enforcers” on their team (Smith, 1979). Enforcers hold a role in professional hockey to provide a physical presence on the team and to protect the star players (Svoranos, 1997). The same source stated that team owners jump to sign players who may be known to lack agility or finesse skills, but for their fighting ability.

It is a commonly known fact that currently fans get more involved into a game that includes a fight or two. For example, when two players go hard into the boards and fight for the puck, the fans close to the ice in the stands can be seen standing up, jumping up and down, or even banging on the glass to promote this aggressive behavior. Many people who pay to see professional hockey games seem to want action (Smith, 1979). During the research in this design, many players stated to be oblivious to the crowd, but they did agree that they were aware when the noise levels raised and sometimes hear comments from fans when they are specifically directed towards them personally. “It’s like medicine; you like the sensation, so you want to do it again” (Smith, 1979). Goal scoring and violence are the two main factors that fans associate with the game of professional ice hockey. One of the most widely-recognized hockey and ESPN

analysts, John Buccigross, says in an interview that he loves fighting (Pros and Cons of Fighting in the NHL, 2007). Additionally, he stated that it is a proven fact for fans to attend events just to watch fights. The violence aspect was found to be highly significant related to attendance. Teams that fight more often will attract more paying customers (Paul, 2003). Many fans wanted to purchase jerseys of their favorite players. Many of these players were enforcers such as Zdeno Chara from the Boston Bruins and Joe Thornton from the San Jose Sharks. (Peterman, 2009) also stated that these fans enjoyed following the enforcers while they were on the ice. Additionally, the violent chants from fans throughout the arena and cheers to promote violent acts on the ice are at their highest point when a fight breaks out or a cheap shot is taken (Weinstein, Smith, & Wiesenthal 1995).

The NHL has become very well aware of how important fighting is to the fans, but also of how negative of an impact it has on the overall image of the game. Fighting in professional hockey has significantly increased in recent years (Winges, 2012) and has led to the NHL reconsidering their current policies. However, the NHL commissioner downplayed the findings by Boston University researchers that Derek Boogard, who was one of the most prevalent enforcers, suffered from chronic traumatic encephalopathy (C.T.E). This is a closely related disease to Alzheimer's, where it occurs from repetitive severe blows to the head (Klein, 2011). The same source stated that the data on the causes of brain damage was insufficient to warrant stiffer penalties for fighting. Two other "enforcers" died from similar conditions where Wade Belak and Rick Rypien, two more professional players known for their aggressive and violent behavior, both committed suicide (Gregory, 2011). Additionally, (Gills, 2009) refers to the death of a young Canadian professional hockey player who died on the ice and the response of many fans in the area who would like to see fighting banned in professional hockey. In the 1999-2000

hockey season, multiple games were officiated by two referees, rather than the typical one per game. However, the number of penalties per game did not rise with these games of two referees (Haisken-DeNew & Vorell, 2008). “The sport we love – fast, exciting, rough and tumble—is rotten at its core” says Bryan Lewis, the NHL’s former director of officiating (Gatehouse, 2009, p 2). According to (Gatehouse, 2009), the officiating rule book had 75 pages in its inaugural season and contained 224 pages in the 2008-2009 campaign. Certainly, it has appeared that league officials have been attempting to change the game.

In recent years, the NHL office has attempted to deal with the two main factors of attendance, scoring and violence, in opposite fashions. This was a major goal of the NHL to re-brand the league (Batchelor & Formetin, 2008). Goal output has decreased drastically over the decade of the 1990’s while attendance continued to rise (Gee, 2011). Through rule changes, the NHL has tried to improve the goals per game. An increase in penalties called on obstruction, and closer inspection of goalie equipment are two examples of attempts the NHL has taken to increase goals-per-game. The league has attempted to decrease fighting by implementing the instigator penalty, where the team who does not start the fight gets a power play (Paul, 2003).

Countless external influences have impacted how players perceive fighting within the game. According to Sandra Ball-Rokeach, the culture of violence shares several values and behaviors with the parents. As a normal act, individuals conform to the socially “accepted” behaviors of the culture in which they are participating in (Allen, 2005; Catlett, McKenry, & Pappas, 2004). Although many researchers vary their perceptions of value, many have agreed that interpersonal values are the standards that guide different behaviors and attitudes (Ball-Rokeach, 1973; Jackson, Peter, & Peter, 1985). The physicality of hockey is arguably more intense than in any other sport. Several players see fighting as a strategy to protect the skillful

and talented players from cheap shots (Gills, 2009; Pollett, 2011). One particular statement that lurks within the NHL relating to violence says, “There is a reason why ice hockey rink surface is white” (Haisken-DeNew & Vorell, 2008, p 2). Several professional players portray fighting as a part of the game, and an opportunity to gain an edge on their opponents if their teammates win the fight. In an interview with professional players, they noticed the increase in speed of the game after a fight and a rise in the intensity of the environment within the arena (Wigge, 2001). Incidentally, when NHL interviewees were asked about how they feel about players who do not fight at all, nearly half answered, “I’d rather see a player fight and lose than turn his cheek and not fight at all, and I think a lot of the players are like that” (Smith, 1979, pp 119). Another player stated, “You pretty well realize that you have to fight, otherwise the guys look down on you” (Smith, 1979, pp 120). The other half of the interviewees answered, “Some guys are fighters, some aren’t” (Smith, 1979, pp 120). Hockey players support and approve of violence, to the extent of bringing respect for the organization and it can be used as a game tactic. Players have a different perception of violence on the ice than they do outside of the arena (Colburn, 1986). The same source states that players give consideration to what could be called the strategic uses of violence that constitutes the part of any player’s acquired repertoire of hockey skills. Intimidation through the threat and use of physical assaults is a fact of life on the ice. One professional player stated, “I use violence in my work as a defenseman. Not cheap stuff, but good, solid body checks...They become intimidated” (Colburn, 1986, p 64).

## **Methodology**

### **Research Tradition:**

The research that was conducted in this process was exploratory research. Through the conceptual framework within this research study, quantitative research data was collected from participants in the surveys and questionnaires to determine a better understanding on why several ice hockey players are tabbed with fighting reputations. Previous research has taken place to study the reactions of coaches, leagues, and fans. In this research, I have attempted to understand how current players perceive fighting within the game. Answers from this research method have identified reasons for why hockey players are violent on the ice, and what drives the players to engage in violent behavior.

In determining further reasoning behind why fights occur at a higher rate in hockey than in any other sport, I have used the interpretivism research tradition. This approach verifies the intangible aspects of events as an explanation for why they occur (Gratton & Jones, 2010). The purpose of this study has attempting to examine the intangible aspects of a hockey game a player experiences such as their thoughts, emotions, and feelings. Hockey is one of the most emotional sports in the world (Botterill, 2004). The fast-paced nature of the sport coupled with a small area of space leads to high emotion and adrenaline rushes (Svoranos, 1997). This is a difficult topic to understand “why” it necessarily occurs so the data, therefore, has determined more of an understanding of the events. There was not any scientific research specifically involved in deciphering the cause-and-effect relationships amongst players and fighting, but rather in describing and explaining those relationships from the perspective of the participants in this research. For the most part, this research was measured through numerical values while

including statements and responses to situational questions regarding what a player may experience in a single competition. The results from this study have resulted in uncovering and exploring further explanations for this topic.

### **Conceptual Framework:**

The different concepts within this research can be studied, analyzed, and interpreted to discuss further ideas towards this research question. There are different positions in hockey—and different skill sets among those who fill the positions—that lead to misunderstood data.

Offensive positions in hockey include the center and wings on both sides. The offensive players are widely recognized for their strong puck handling and finesse skills (Svoranos, 1997). The centers are responsible for creating plays, directing a passing attack, and support the wings in the corners. The wings are the players who are active in the corners and against the boards taking hits from the opposition. The forwards on the ice are most commonly crashing the net and encouraging the opposing goaltenders to freeze the puck. Forwards are usually shorter in size, fast, and quick with the puck (Svoranos, 1997). Many teams see their forwards and wings as a protective unit with the defensemen as the “protectors” (Smith, 1979). The defensemen are the players typically performing the heavy hits that sports fans see the next day on ESPN (Pros and Cons of Fighting in the NHL, 2007). Their main responsibilities are to control the offensive attack at the top of the zone and defending their own goaltender. Defensive players are categorized and chosen by their imposing size, physicality, and intimidation (Corriero, 2005; Svoranos, 1997).

The varying type of hockey players creates a problem in interpreting the data received during this research, because the skilled or finesse hockey players potentially could have different feelings towards fighting than the physical defensemen. The true understanding of

fighting will be an important concept to determine in this research. A scuffle is recognized as a minor altercation that most commonly occurs in front of the net after the goaltender covers the puck. The scuffles can contain two or three players from both teams pushing, shoving, and yelling, but rarely transitions into a fight. The concept of fighting only includes actual fights, which are occurrences where one player from each team drops their gloves, take swings at each other, and eventually receive five minute penalties for fighting. Brawls also are a rather unclear type of fight where more than one person from each team is included. This is another rare occurrence, but one that is taken into consideration during this study.

In almost every competitive hockey game, there are countless altercations in front of the net surrounding the goaltender. When a team's goalie freezes the puck by covering it, they are vulnerable to crashing opponents who charge the goaltender to try and free the puck or spray the goaltender with ice. Once the whistle is blown, this particular occasion typically results in one player defending his goalie while the opposing team retaliates by defending themselves in front of the net. Whether this results in dropping the gloves or not many players may identify this as a fight. Another common situation that arises in hockey is when an aggressive forward skates hard into the corner to get the puck and pass it in front of the net. Typically, he will be met by the opposing defensemen in the corner who can charge him and check him off the puck. The results can vary, but it is possible for the defensemen to take a cheap shot on the forward hitting him from behind or throwing a cross-check into his back. Frequently, a player on the receiving end of a cheap shot will get up and take a shot back at the deliverer. The referees may blow the whistle to prevent a scuffle from turning into a brawl. When emotions are at a high level during this particular situation, many players, depending on which end of the play they are involved in, may also tab this as a fight. The role of fighting is an important testament throughout this research to

understand. This study is determined to draw a connection between players, coaches, and fans to find an answer to what different roles players partake in during these fights.

Determining better relationships between non-controllable and controlled variables of the participants in the study has assisted in the examination of expected results and given direct proof to support the hypothesis of this study. One controllable variable includes how certain positions, such as the goaltender, merely never engage in a fight. Therefore, goaltenders will be taken out of the research. Hockey is a worldwide sport with participants of all ages playing across the globe, and a controlled variable of this research will also be the secluded portion of players that will be used in the research.

Non-controllable variables within this research were taken into consideration while collecting the data. One potential variable that will not be controlled for is the total ice time aspect of players. An example quantitative research question that was asked during the survey will ask the participants how many times they are active in a fight. These answers could have varied tremendously based on the amount of ice time each player gets during a game. A participant that does not see the ice very often will clearly be less active in fights than a player who is aggressively on the ice for most of the game. However, an exception to this can be the players who are on the team essentially to intimidate opponents and fight the opponent when emergency situations arise. Another variable that was controlled for within this research is the different coaching styles for teams. It is a common factor that players follow the values, lessons, and practices influenced by their coaches (Gills, 2009). For example, a coach who values skill and finesse will be less likely to influence players to act violent on the ice. However, coaches who prefer aggressive behavior and “enforcers” will be more likely to influence their players to fight. Other coaches demonstrate aggressive and violent behavior on the bench, such as throwing

hockey sticks, slamming bench doors, and punching walls, and this may influence players to act this way within the game. The participants in this survey will come from teams with different coaching techniques and backgrounds.

One limiting factor that has taken place within this survey includes the hockey players who are not known for fighting, but rather for their skill and finesse work. These particular participants will not be interested in reading a survey about fighting within the sport. Therefore, they may have rushed through the questionnaire or survey without thoroughly answering questions or statements. Another limiting factor includes the fact that division I and semi-professional players in the Northeast region do not represent the majority of hockey participants in the United States. This is a minimal sample of hockey players in comparison to the number of hockey players across the world. In addition, players may not be willing to respond to the survey. Players may have been too busy or not interested in completing the survey. Although the surveys will be delivered out of season for hockey players, they may be engaged in practices, preparation and pre-season workouts. Another factor that may induce subject bias is the fact that several players may not answer questions or statements truthfully. For example, a player may hesitate to honestly agree with a statement that says “I enjoy watching a fight, especially when my teammate wins the battle.” An additional limitation within this research was ice time for certain participants. Players who do not get as much playing time during games would be less likely to engage in a violent act on the ice. In addition, many coaches have different tactics and strategies to either induce or reduce fighting or violence. The level of intensity of the survey participants’ coaches will impact the results.

**Theoretical Framework:**

Theoretically, the vast majority of hockey fans, players, and coaches perceive fighting as a part of the game. In addition, defensemen are theoretically more susceptible to fight because of their typical size and physical attributes. Defensemen are the players on the ice who typically are responsible for taking opponents off the puck and forcing turnovers. One of the most common strategies to accomplish this is to be violent and check the opponents. This has been instilled in the culture of hockey since the introduction to the sport several years ago. The theoretical framework involved in this research was attempted to demonstrate findings that prove why this happens. The questions involved with the surveys are determined to answer why players perceive fighting in their respective ways, and why it has been part of the game. Research has proven that college coaches recruit physical players who are not afraid of backing down from a fight if they were put in that situation (Smith, 1979, pp 119). The results in the survey can lead further discussion towards why this occurs. The theories have determined whether it is the coaches who are looking for players to fight, or simply use their size as intimidation. It has also been proven that the magnitude in a stadium or arena escalates when a fight breaks out, because fans enjoy watching physical altercations (Paul, 2003). Fights in hockey add an extra bonus to the game, and allows fans to ultimately watch a boxing match on the ice. This can be seen as a momentum factor where the fans can become more involved in the game by cheering on their favorable fighting participant. With this encouragement from surrounding factors, players perceive fighting as a strategy to gain an edge on an opponent in the midst of emotions, adrenaline, and aggression associated with the sport of hockey.

**Research Design:**

Cross-sectional or survey research designs are the most common within social sciences, especially within sport-related research. This design is what took place during this research, because it takes a cross-sectional sample from the overall population. Data is collected once from participants through interviews. Relationships can then be identified. In this case, I have surveyed a certain group of hockey players in a relatively small portion of the overall population of athletes across the world. Through coding the data, I could identify relationships between the different positions and how they interact with each other as well as how their different styles of play encourage or discourage fighting within the game.

### **Procedure**

#### **Sample:**

The large popularity and population of hockey players throughout the world restrict this research from reaching out to every organization. It would be too difficult to find every hockey player and survey them to find their feelings about hockey. This is also a very common sport in other countries around the world so I controlled it by stratifying my data. I surveyed division I hockey players in the Northeast Region. Within the region, each conference was broken down and I reached out to the players that fit this criteria. This was a large enough sample to influence further research into this topic.

#### **Data Collection:**

The participants in this research included hockey players at the collegiate level, particularly in Division I, to respond on how they were developed by extrinsic influences in hockey. Additionally, the surveys asked players to answer how they perceive fighting and why they participate in it. The Division I colleges throughout the Northeast region with that sponsor were the target in this research. The body of this method includes a survey with several various

questions regarding the physicality of ice hockey. I have accessed this sample by diving into the respective colleges and their student directories. After analyzing a team's roster, their names were placed into a spreadsheet to organize the surveying process. The names on the roster were then plugged into the university's student directory system, which allowed access to their student e-mail addresses. Questions within this survey to the players were based around different aspects of the game that may influence the violent behaviors such as aggressiveness, game magnitude, momentum, physicality, and personal pride. For example, one question that was asked was, "How many of your coaches have encouraged or taught a certain way to fight?" The participants were then allowed to fill in a bubble of a varied numerical choice. Scenarios also were conducted in this survey to have players rank incidents in order from least exciting to most exciting. One particular scenario was, "Rank in order from least exciting to most exciting within a game." The response for this statement had a 1-4 value, where 1 represented the least exciting and 4 stood for most exciting.

An initial message via e-mail was sent to division I players from different conferences within the Northeast Region. The e-mail included an introductory paragraph stating the description of this research topic, what I am trying to determine, and how the information will be used to influence further research on this topic. Another paragraph was used to ensure the participants that their responses will be completely confidential and their answers will only be used as part of my research study. It was important for the message to get their attention so they do not immediately delete the e-mail. The final paragraph of the e-mail included a sincere thank you for taking the time and consideration to fill out the survey.

There are certain players that very rarely participate in fights. Forwards and finesse players do not usually get into fights, and this will be a non-controllable variable. Goaltenders,

however, participate in fights even more rarely than the forwards and finesse players. Therefore, I went through each teams' roster and eliminated the goaltenders from the surveys. Goaltenders would most likely be indifferent to the topic so the challenge would be to decipher true, honest answers from ones that appear were just completed out of obligation.

### **Research Analysis:**

The analysis and research data achieved through this study can impact further implications in this topic. The responsibility of this research was to draw a connection between different players who play different positions on the ice, and how their styles of play influence fights. Moreover, the research has developed a conclusion and discovered how players perceive fighting within the game. The independent t-testing can examine two particular groups to decipher if their responses have similarities or differences. Using this research as an example, I was able to see how players with different playing styles such as forwards and defensemen perceive fighting differently.

The tests run during this research, using the quantitative data, demonstrated exceptional reasoning behind why players fight and how they perceive it within the culture of the game. Specific questions were asked to determine intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence players to fight. For example, one question asks if fighting takes place to gain an advantage on their bench or simply for their pleasure. Their responses were connected with their number of fighting altercations, which drew the connection between different styles of play and how it influences fighting. The particular questions targeted solely the players, and the different responses from forward to defensemen drew the conclusion on how different positions perceive fighting. Players responded that they engage in fighting because it is socially acceptable. However, a small percentage stated that fighting was fun. Further studies could show how various extrinsic factors

play an important role in influencing fights. This could change the face of the entire sport, and reveal information that could alter the way the game is played.

It is obvious that every team will have a different head coach. Furthermore, each team is a part of a respective conference. The players were categorized into which team they play for, and what conference their team is in. From there, I was able to discover similarities and differences between players who play for different coaches and conferences. I will be interpreting the data in a way that could direct future implications to suggest how different coaches, conferences, and players approach fighting. Every college sport has different conferences and they all function differently. In hockey, there are some conferences that rely more on physical play than the skill and finesse. This research data has been interpreted in such a way of building a bridge between coaches and conferences encouraging their styles of play.

## **Appendix**

### **Survey: Appendix A**

The surveys conducted (Appendix A) have included quantitative data asking players to rank their importance of fighting in relation with other events that potentially could increase momentum within a game. One particular question asks players to rank five potential scenarios in importance to helping your team to gain an advantage over your opponent. 1) Scoring a Power Play goal 2) Killing a crucial penalty 3) Winning a fight 4) Scoring on a penalty shot 5) Delivering a big hit on your opponent. These options are common cases in every game that could potentially raise fan awareness, motivate players, and encourage aggressive behavior to generate a win for the team. Particular questions like these were able to draw a connection to which players perceive fighting more importantly, and it also has drawn a conclusion to how players truly feel about fights. The survey is accessible by clicking the following link

[https://sjfc.co1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_0DGTzi03sYwj6aV](https://sjfc.co1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_0DGTzi03sYwj6aV)

**Consent Form: Appendix B**

**Project Title:** Exploring the perception from hockey players on fighting within the game

**Researcher:** Jordan Doroshenko

**Advisor:** Katherine A. Burakowski

**E-mail:** kburakowski@sjfc.edu

**Phone:** 315-750-6105

**E-mail:** jdd09965@sjfc.edu

The purpose of this study is to determine the different perceptions hockey players have regarding fighting within the game. As a participant in this survey, you will be discussing your engagement in fighting and perception of the incidents that take place within a typical game. For example, you will be asked to rank five scenarios in order of importance within a game and fighting will be one of the situations. The survey will take you approximately 4-5 minutes to complete.

The information you provide could draw a connection between different positions, and how their styles of play encourage fighting. Additionally, your responses could determine a new explanation for fighting and conclude how players truly feel about these scenarios. Risks associated with your responses are that coaches, players, and athletic administrations will be aware that you are completing this survey. This survey, however, will be kept completely confidential and names will not be included in the presentation of these results.

The completion of this survey is entirely voluntary. You do not have to participate in this study if you do not wish to. Your decision to not participate will be respected, and there will not be any reprimands for your decision. As you are aware of the background information in this survey and having the opportunity to ask questions, I will ask you to please fill out the survey attached if you choose to do so.

By completing the survey, you will be giving me permission to display the results and encourage further research. If you have any other questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact my research advisor or myself.

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree to participate in this survey (Agree, Disagree)

**Pre-notice Form: Appendix C**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

I am working on a Bachelor Degree in Sport Management at St. John Fisher College. This industry is growing at a rapid and exciting pace. I am currently interested in determining the perceptions of hockey players on fighting within the game.

In about three days you will be receiving another email requesting your participation in this research study by completing a survey. The objective of this research study is to gain a better understanding on why fighting plays such an important role in the sport of hockey. You will notice that your teammates and other teams in this region will also receive an email invitation to participate. A link to completing the survey will be provided in the following email. Your responses will be cared confidentially.

It is my hope that you will take the time to participate in this research study. This short survey will only take 4-5 minutes to complete. If you have any questions, please call me at (315) 750-6105 or email me at [jdd09965@sjfc.edu](mailto:jdd09965@sjfc.edu)

Thank you,

Jordan Doroshenko

**Request Form: Appendix D**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Three days ago you received a consent email informing you of a research study that I am working on as part of my Bachelor Degree in Sport Management requirement at St. John Fisher College. The purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of why fighting plays such a substantial role in hockey, and how the players perceive it within the game. As a participant in this study, you will be asked to complete a survey at the following link. The survey will approximately take 4-5 minutes to complete.

[https://sjfc.co1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_0DGTzi03sYwj6aV](https://sjfc.co1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_0DGTzi03sYwj6aV)

The information you provide could potentially assist further research into this topic. Responses to this survey will be completely confidential and presented in aggregate form. Names or contacts will not be involved in the presentation of the results.

The completion of this survey is entirely voluntary. You do not have to participate in this study if you do not wish to. Your decision to not participate will be respected, and there will not be any reprimands for your decision. As you are aware of the background information in this survey and having the opportunity to ask questions, I will ask you to please fill out the survey attached if you choose to do so.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at (315) 750-6105 or email me at [jdd09965@sjfc.edu](mailto:jdd09965@sjfc.edu)

Thank you for your consideration,

Jordan Doroshenko

**Appendix E:**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

Two weeks ago you were sent an email informing you that I am researching a study regarding hockey players as part of my Sport Management degree at St. John Fisher College. Thank you for participating if you have already done so. If you have not yet completed the survey, it is not too late. Your thoughts and responses are a crucial portion of this research study in determining perceptions of fighting from hockey players.

The survey can be completed by clicking on the following link that will direct you to the survey. The survey will take approximately 4-5 minutes to complete and it is completely confidential. Your name and contact information will not be involved in the presentation of the results at the end of the study. [https://sjfc.co1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_0DGTzi03sYwj6aV](https://sjfc.co1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_0DGTzi03sYwj6aV)

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me at (315) 750-6105 or email me at [jdd09965@sjfc.edu](mailto:jdd09965@sjfc.edu).

Thank you for your consideration,

Jordan Doroshenko

## Results

This research study reached out to 315 Division I college hockey players in the Northeast Region. This particular section could be broke down into three smaller conferences: Atlantic Hockey, Eastern Collegiate Athletic Conference (ECAC) Hockey, and Hockey East. After omitting players with incomplete data, the total amount of responses that were contained within this study was 144 participants, which results in a 47 percent response rate. All of the participants within this survey were currently undergraduates at their respective Division I institutions and still playing hockey to the greatest knowledge as possible.

The initial population contained 88 forwards and 53 defensemen. The forwards were totaled by combining the centers (30) and wing positions (58). The offensive players combined to total for 83 percent of the survey responses, while the defensemen filled the final 37 percent.

The first section of the results portray how players ranked the most exciting parts of a game with options to choose scoring a goal, winning a fight, delivering a big hit, and making an important save. The table below (Table 1) displays that scoring a goal was the most exciting part of the game, with 76 of the responses ranking this incident at the top. To break it down even further, 53 of the total 73 valid responses from forwards ranked scoring a goal as the most exciting action taking place in the game. In addition, 23 of the total 39 valid responses from defensemen ranked the same incident as the most exciting. In regards to winning a fight, Table 2 shows that nearly 75 percent of the population ranked this incident as the second or third most exciting event within a game.

**Table 1:**

**Please rank each incident in order from 1 (least exciting) to 4 (most exciting) by clicking and drag...-Scoring a goal ^ Please indicate what position you play the most Crosstabulation**

Count

		Please indicate what position you play the most			Total
		Center	Wing	Defenseman	
Please rank each incident	1.00	18	35	23	76
in order from 1 (least	2.00	1	0	2	3
exciting) to 4 (most	3.00	0	0	4	4
exciting) by clicking and	4.00	5	14	10	29
drag...-Scoring a goal					
Total		24	49	39	112

**Table 2:**

**Please rank each incident in order from 1 (least exciting) to 4 (most exciting) by clicking and drag...-Winning a fight ^ Please indicate what position you play the most Crosstabulation**

Count

		Please indicate what position you play the most			Total
		Center	Wing	Defenseman	
Please rank each incident in order from 1 (least	1.00	2	3	4	9
exciting) to 4 (most exciting) by clicking and	2.00	5	10	12	27
drag...-Winning a fight	3.00	8	27	15	50
	4.00	8	8	7	23
	5.00	1	1	1	3
Total		24	49	39	112

The third table (Table 3) shows the results from another conclusion made. This particular question asked players to rank the same incidents from least beneficial to most beneficial. The rankings of this question failed to draw any sort of conclusion. Fifty-six of the total responses ranked scoring a goal as the most beneficial, but it was also ranked as the least beneficial by 53 total respondents. The interesting statistic here is that more defensemen ranked it as the least beneficial (20) as opposed to ranking it as the most beneficial (18). Moreover, 17 total

defensemen ranked winning a fight as the most beneficial while only 26 combined centers and wings had fighting at the top.

**Table 3:**

**Please rank each incident in order from 1 (least beneficial) to 4 (most beneficial) for your team by...-Scoring a big goal ^ Please indicate what position you play the most Crosstabulation**

Count

		Please indicate what position you play the most			Total
		Center	Wing	Defenseman	
Please rank each incident in order from 1 (least beneficial) to 4 (most beneficial) for your team by...-Scoring a big goal	1.00	13	25	18	56
	2.00	1	2	3	6
	3.00	1	3	4	8
	4.00	9	24	20	53
	5.00	0	1	0	1
Total		24	55	45	124

**Table 4:**

**Please rank each incident in order from 1 (least beneficial) to 4 (most beneficial) for your team by...-Winning a fight ^ Please indicate what position you play the most Crosstabulation**

Count

		Please indicate what position you play the most			Total
		Center	Wing	Defenseman	
Please rank each incident in order from 1 (least beneficial) to 4 (most beneficial) for your team by...-Winning a fight	1.00	6	20	17	43
	2.00	4	5	6	15
	3.00	2	7	8	17
	4.00	11	20	13	44
	5.00	1	3	1	5
Total		24	55	45	124

Perhaps the most interesting response from this survey was (Table 5) where the survey asks players to rank different from least social acceptability to greatest social acceptance. As displayed below, the different answers included winning a fight, scoring a game winning goal,

heavy hitting, and scoring a short-handed goal. A stunning 52 of the total 127 players selected winning a fight as the incident that gives them the greatest acceptance within the culture of the team. Thirty-five offensive players (centers and wings) and 17 defensemen ranked winning a fight at the top. 28 players ranked it as the second best incident, which makes up nearly 65 percent of the population ranking winning a fight as either the number one or number two incident that would result in the greatest social acceptance. The second most popular response (Table 6) was scoring a game winning goal where 42 total responses ranked that as the highest incident to give them the most acceptances on the team. Moreover, 71 players ranked scoring a game winning goal as the least social acceptable, including 23 defensemen. In conclusion, nearly 90 percent of the total population ranked scoring a goal as either the greatest or lowest beneficial in regards to social acceptance.

**Table 5:**

Please rank each incident in order from 1 (least social acceptance) to 4 (greatest social acceptance...-Winning a fight ' Please indicate what position you play the most Crosstabulation

Count

		Please indicate what position you play the most			Total
		Center	Wing	Defenseman	
Please rank each incident in order from 1 (least social acceptance) to 4 (greatest social acceptance...-Winning a fight	1.00	10	25	17	52
	2.00	9	9	10	28
	3.00	1	10	6	17
	4.00	6	10	10	26
	5.00	1	2	1	4
Total		27	56	44	127

**Table 6:**

**Please rank each incident in order from 1 (least social acceptance) to 4 (greatest social acceptance...-Scoring a game winning goal ^ Please indicate what position you play the most**  
**Crosstabulation**

Count

		Please indicate what position you play the most			Total
		Center	Wing	Defenseman	
Please rank each incident	1.00	8	20	14	42
in order from 1 (least	2.00	3	1	2	6
social acceptance) to 4	3.00	1	2	5	8
(greatest social	4.00	15	33	23	71
acceptance...-Scoring a					
game winning goal					
Total		27	56	44	127

The data reported how hockey players view fighting within the culture of the game. The players had the opportunity to answer with the following four responses: Because coaches encourage it, fighting is enjoyable, fighting is needed within the game, and fighting gives your team an advantage. (Table 7) demonstrates the responses with 90 percent of the responses being valid. It can be seen that two-thirds (67 %) of the population answered that fighting is needed within the game.

This question can be broken down further into determining how different positions perceive fighting. The results also showed that 14 of the 26 centers (53%) and 39 of the 56 wingers (70%) that answered this question believed fighting was needed within the game. More importantly, 44 of the total 48 defensemen to answer this question stated either that fighting is needed within the game or it gives their team the greatest advantage. However, across the board from centers to defensemen only 7 total players stated that fighting was enjoyable. Therefore, the most significant conclusion that can be made regarding this question is that players do not

typically enjoy fighting but there are extrinsic factors that lead to fighting. For example, it gives the team an advantage and is exciting.

**Table 7:**

**Why do you participate in fighting? \* Please indicate what position you play the most Crosstabulation**

Count

		Please indicate what position you play the most			Total
		Center	Wing	Defenseman	
Why do you participate in fighting?	Coaches encourage it	0	1	2	3
	Fighting is enjoyable	1	4	2	7
	It is needed within the game	14	39	34	87
	It gives your team an advantage	11	11	10	32
	5	0	1	0	1
Total		26	56	48	130

The cross-tabulation tests that were conducted were only to look at the number of responses between the three positions participating in hockey. This particular test can show a plethora of statistics that display what every survey participant answered. However, it does not consider the significance of the responses. There cannot be any type of conclusion drawn from the results that cross-tabulation displays. It can only show the mere statistics of each response. For example, there were some responses where only a few players per position responded. Any response that does not include at least 5 responses can be disregarded as an invalid conclusion.

From the naked eye, the cross-tabulation examples may show that there are some differences between the responses from forwards and defensemen. However, an independent t-test must be conducted in order to determine if there actually is a significant difference. The purpose of this analysis is to determine if the differences in responses from forwards and defensemen are significant enough to draw a conclusion. The reference used is Alpha, which is

typically .05. Therefore, after plugging in the responses into the independent sample t-testing it can display the significance. If it is below .05, then there is a significant difference in the responses enough to draw a conclusion. Two responses were taken into consideration that mostly impacted this survey.

The first question included was the one that asked players to rank four incidents in order of social acceptance. This question resulted in a significance of .887. Since this is well above the .05 Alpha, the responses between forwards and defensemen were not significant enough to draw any sort of conclusion. The two incidents that were ranked as the most socially acceptable were winning a fight and scoring a game winning goal. Sixty percent of the total forwards ranked scoring a game-winning goal as the top choice while fifty-two percent of total defensemen agreed. Twenty percent of the total forwards ranked winning a fight as the top choice, while twenty-three percent of defensemen also ranked that at the top.

The second question involved in this testing asked players why they engage in fighting. There were four options for them to choose. Similar results showed that there was no significant difference between forwards and defensemen. 53 forwards and 34 defensemen agreed that fighting was needed within the game. Overall, the significance was .582. Once again, this was well above the .05 Alpha that is used to determine if there is a substantial difference between their responses.

## Discussion

The findings of this research study show that 144 Division I hockey players in all three conferences within the North East Region mostly agreed on scoring a goal to be the most exciting aspect of a game. Nearly 70 percent of the population ranked scoring a goal to be number one. Winning a fight was mostly ranked (45%) as the third most exciting out of four possible choices. Conversely, the responses were substantially different in understanding how players rank fighting in regards to social acceptance. Nearly 80 participants ranked winning a fight as their first or second choice. The second closest ranking is scoring a game winning goal, where it was ranked number one or two by only 48 players. Incidentally, 65 percent of the participants ranked it as their last choice.

These particular statistics are significant, because they can justify the results of the question regarding their feelings about fighting. Almost 70 percent of the participants concluded that fighting is needed within the game. This was the highest percentage of any answer, and 34 of them came from defensemen while 53 came from forwards. The next closest answer with the highest percentage was that fighting gave their team an advantage, and it came in at just 24 percent (32 out of 130). One particular answer that was projected to have a higher percentage was that fighting was enjoyable. However, only 7 total players answered this as the reason why they engage in fighting.

Combining all of these answers together can draw a significant conclusion to the population that this research study approached. Fighting ultimately ranked third on their list of importance. On top of that, only 7 players reported that fighting was enjoyable. Therefore, one would assume that players do not like engaging in fighting. However, the majority of the population included in this research concluded that fighting was by far the easiest way to be socially accepted within the game. Winning a fight was even more socially acceptable than

scoring a game winning goal. One of the most important aspects of joining a team, specifically at the higher intensity levels, is to feel accepted as part of the team (Catlett, McKenry & Pappas, 2004). The majority of the population included in this research concluded that fighting was by far the easiest way to be socially accepted within the game. Almost everyone included in this research neglected to answer fighting to be enjoyable. Conversely, the majority of the players stated that they participated in fighting because it was needed within the game.

These results build on prior knowledge that fighting was accepted within the game. There was a limited amount of past research that studied players' perceptions of fighting but the valid information suggested that professional players feel that fighting is accepted as part of the game. This is compared to the response from the survey that displayed nearly every player agreeing that fighting is needed within the game. However, the minimal amount of responses that reported fighting to be enjoyable suggests that there are extrinsic factors influencing players to fight. Parental support of fighting can be one potential factor that encourages players to fight. As previously stated, nearly three quarters of the fathers in a survey reported that they support their children engaging in fighting (Svoranos, 1997). This could be a reasonable result considering there were very few players that found fighting to be enjoyable. Additionally, previous research showed that men are born with a sense of masculinity to demonstrate as an intimidation factor. Part of the male sex role adopted by fathers is the expression of anger, aggression, and dominance over other males in a sport setting, particularly when they are threatened or attacked (Smith, 2008). Players could be displaying masculinity as a form of establishing their intimidation within the socialization of the game. This statistic can also relate to the previous research that proved how players know they need to fight (Smith, 1979, pp 119). Another extrinsic factor that could build on the responses from these players is that coaches encourage

fighting. It is known that coaches have been found giving out awards for players showing aggressive behavior and getting involved in fights with opponents. Players get engaged in these types of acts to impress their coaches (Svoranos, 1997).

One particular part that does not relate to previous findings is that there was not a substantial difference between defensemen and forwards in their responses to the questions in this survey. Defensemen are the players most commonly involved in the corners fighting off opposing players to clear the puck out. They are surrounded by aggressive players, and therefore required to be physical (Colburn, 1986). Additionally, (Svoranos, 1997) proved that fighters are typically given the reputation as “enforcers, designated fighters, or hitmen” and defensive players most commonly fill these qualifications. Although it was previously stated that defensemen are the players mostly engaged in aggressive behavior, their perceptions on fighting were not significantly different from forwards. Where players were asked to rank incidents in order of excitement, the majority of both positions answered scoring a goal as the most exciting. In addition, five offensive players in comparison to six defensemen tallied winning a fight as the most exciting incident. Where players were asked to rank the same incidents in order of social acceptance, both offensive and defensive players agreed that winning a fight was the most significant. Forty-two percent of offensive players ranked winning a fight as number one while 38 percent of defensemen had winning a fight as the number one answer. The biggest difference in responses occurred in the final question, and this was only a difference by 5 percent. Sixty-five percent of forwards stated that fighting was needed within the game, while 70 percent of defensemen responded with the same answer.

Before getting into future recommendations, it is important to consider the limiting factors that could have altered the responses. The first factor was that not every player is known

for violent behavior. Players who are more known for skill work and finesse will be indifferent to this survey. They may have gone through the survey without carefully answering responses truthfully. Although it was surprising to see many offensive players ranking fighting just as high as defensemen, this could still be a limiting factor to this study. This is also a study of 150 perceptions from division I college hockey players in the North East region. Not only is fighting recognized on a smaller scale at the collegiate level, but this is also a very small sample size to compare it to the worldwide interest in hockey. Additionally, this survey was delivered in season for the hockey players. Although their seasons have just begun, their practices and preparations for upcoming games could have altered their interest in carefully responding to the surveys. They may not be interested in a survey that does not impact them. Several players could have potentially flown through the survey just to get it done. Another limiting factor that should be taken into consideration is that not everyone on the team plays even minutes on the ice. There are certain players who do not dress or travel to away games. Even for the players who do dress and travel, there are players who play more than others. The ones who do not dress or play as much will not be as engaged in this survey. They may be indifferent to their responses and feel as though their opinions do not matter.

Taking the limiting factors into consideration, this particular population of hockey players suggests that hockey players do not enjoy fighting as much as the fans do. Rather, they enjoy scoring goals and being socially accepted within their teams. Fighting is a path to being accepted in the team and joining a unique culture that may only be understood through encountering the locker rooms of these teams. However, as a researcher in order to speculate further into this issue the population must be larger than simply three conferences in the North East region. It would be possible to draw a more defined conclusion on the overall population of

players if the entire body of Division I hockey players were surveyed with a substantial rate of valid responses. Subsequently, the differences between forwards and defensemen can be displayed through their varying responses on each of these questions. Researchers would engage more in determining a correlation between fighting and the players that most often participate in this violence. The data displayed in this research suggested that wings and defensemen were the two positions mostly linked with fighting. The statistics included in this research essentially can only influence further research into this topic that could potentially change the way that the game of hockey is perceived.

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