

The spectacularization of violence in contemporary US bare-knuckle fighting



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Abstract This paper presents an application and a further development of Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning's (2008) *Quest for Excitement* thesis through the analysis of the recent phenomenon of the Bare Knuckle Fighting Championship (BKFC) in USA. The research method is based on qualitative data analysis of different digital sources concerning bare-knuckle fighting, ranging from newspaper reports, interviews with promoters and fighters, social network posts, videos, etc. The main finding is that BKFC portrays certain features (e.g. no gloves, blood) that constitute a 'spectacularization of violence'; it apparently increases the perceived danger of the practice even though it does not increase real harm (e.g. concussions, deaths). BKFC employs other strategies emphasizing control, safety and respectability as a counterweight to obtain an adequate tension balance within the US threshold of sensitivity to violence concerning professional combat sports.

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