

THE MORAL VALUES IN SPORT

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ABSTRACT

In this article is devoted to the study of morality in sport has attracted the interest of many sport psychologists, partly because of the pervasive and long-held belief across many scholars and lay people that sport builds character.

Research in this area of sport psychology (SP) has looked at whether sport participation is indeed linked to moral behavior by examining issues pertaining to moral development, moral reasoning, and an array of prosocial and antisocial behaviors.

This article presents work on values in sport, pioneered by Martin Lee, which was based on research in social psychology conducted first by Milton Rokeach, and subsequently by Shalom H. Schwartz.

Keywords: value, attitude, behavior or goals, society, individuals. Self direction (independence), stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power, security, conformity, tradition

INTRODUCTION

Rokeach defined values as a set of beliefs individuals have concerning desirable modes of behavior or goals (e.g., kindness, success, independence, security). Values represent the standards that individuals and societies set for themselves. Values motivate behavior by guiding action and choice of activities. Individuals vary in the importance they place on different values.

Thus, individuals and societies rank values hierarchically in terms of importance by developing value systems. Values differ from attitudes; the latter have been defined as predispositions to respond in a favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to a given object.

Values provide standards and transcend actions and situations, whereas attitudes are not hierarchically valued and usually refer to specific actions or objects. Thus, values are fewer than attitudes and are usually considered as their antecedents. For example, a positive attitude toward cheating in sport might reflect an underlying value system in which achievement is highly ranked. Further, attitudes can be positive or negative, whereas values are considered only as expressions of desirable ends.

Schwartz presented an influential model of human values that distinguishes 10 universal values according to the motivational goal they express. Schwartz proposed the values of self direction (independence), stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power, security, conformity, tradition (respect for customs),

benevolence (preserving and enhancing in group welfare), and universalism (preserving and enhancing the welfare of all people). These values reflect the satisfaction of biological needs, demands of coordinated social interaction, and survival and welfare needs of groups. Schwartz mapped these 10 values in a circular structure that has two dimensions. The first ranges on a continuum from self-enhancement (power, achievement) to self-transcendence (universalism, benevolence). The second dimension ranges on a continuum from openness to change (stimulation, self-direction) to conservation (security, conformity, and tradition). The closer the values are in this structure, the more compatible they are (e.g., power and achievement). For example, pursuing achievement in sport is congruent with the pursuit of power. In contrast, values far apart from each other are conflicting; pursuing achievement in sport often conflicts with the value of protecting the welfare of opponents (i.e., universalism).

MAIN BODY

Research on values in sport has been conducted chiefly by Martin Lee, who distinguished values from attitudes, followed Rokeach's led and operationalized values as guiding principles and conceptions of desirable end states and attempted to measure these values in ways compatible to Schwartz's work. In initial research, Lee posed sport-specific moral dilemmas to athletes on the assumption that a moral dilemma provides the basis for a discussion that can elicit athletes' values. Possible and desirable reactions to these dilemmas were explored via semi structured interviews. This line of work eventually identified 18 values: enjoyment, personal achievement, sportsmanship, contract maintenance (play properly), being fair, compassion, tolerance, showing skills, obedience, team cohesion, conscientiousness, excitement, health and fitness, self-actualization (feel good), public image (show a good image to others), companionship, conformity, and winning. In subsequent work, Lee and colleagues developed a questionnaire of values in youth sport that taps five moral values (obedience, fairness, sportpersonship, helpfulness, and contract maintenance), three competence values (achievement, showing skill, and self-direction), and three status values (winning, public image, and leadership).

Ethical Attitudes

As explained earlier, attitudes differ from values in that they are bipolar, specific to a particular object, and have no hierarchy of importance. An attitude could reflect one or more underlying value. Lee investigated attitudes to moral decision making (DM) in youth sport in parallel with his work on values. Lee was particularly interested in the endorsement of attitudes toward unethical behaviors. [1;307]

Based on the youth sport literature, interviews with British young athletes, coaches, and sport administrators, Lee and his coworkers developed and validated a questionnaire that measures three key ethical attitudes in sport: endorsement of cheating, endorsement of gamesmanship, and keeping winning in proportion. The first two factors capture attitudes toward antisocial behaviors. Endorsement of cheating refers to attitudes toward violating the written rules of the game (e.g., using hands to control the ball in soccer) or the employment of deception in order to gain an unfair advantage.

Endorsement of gamesmanship refers to attitudes toward unwritten rules of the game in an effort to upset the opponents but without actually violating an official rule. For example, in a soccer game, an opponent might try to psychologically unsettle a player just before he or she takes a penalty kick by making a reference to unfavorable weather conditions. Last, keeping winning in proportion represents a prosocial attitude to restrain the pursuit of winning when this compromises ethical principles. An example of this would be of an athlete who feels that winning is not valuable if it is achieved in a dishonest manner; as a result of this attitude he or she might reveal to a game official that a call to his or her advantage was incorrect.

Research on values and ethical attitudes has examined the links between these constructs and motivation, given that values can guide choice of activities and that attitudes toward prosocial and antisocial behaviors reflect different motivational influences. In a study involving British youth sport athletes, Lee and coworkers explored the links between values, ethical attitudes, and achievement goals proposed by the classic achievement goal theory (AGT) (i.e., goals that individuals have in achievement situations and which reflect different notions of how ability is construed and success is achieved).

This study tapped not only attitudes toward negative behaviors (namely, endorsement of cheating and endorsement of gamesmanship) but also attitudes toward positive behaviors.

For the latter, two factors from Robert J. Vallerand's work on sportspersonship were chosen: commitment to participation and respect for social convention. The results of that study showed that competence and moral values positively predicted what the authors labeled as prosocial attitudes. In contrast, antisocial attitudes were positively predicted by status values and negatively by moral values. Furthermore, competence and status values predicted task achievement goals (i.e., emphasis on individual improvement and hard work) and ego achievement goals (i.e., emphasis on showing superiority over others), respectively. In further analyses, the authors were interested in the mediated or indirect effects of values on achievement goals via attitudes. The results indicated that task and ego goals partially mediated the effect of competence values on prosocial attitudes and of status values on antisocial attitudes, respectively.

In a different study linking ethical attitudes and another theoretical framework of motivation—self-determination theory (SDT)—it was shown that autonomous motivation for sport participation (i.e., motivation based on enjoyment and

valuing of sport) was positively linked to prosocial attitudes and negatively related to antisocial attitudes. The opposite pattern of results was observed between controlled motivation (i.e., motivation based on feelings of guilt, external rewards or pressure) and prosocial and antisocial attitudes. Thus, there is evidence in the literature to suggest that values are important precursors of achievement motivation and that ethical attitudes can be meaningfully predicted by the achievement goals and motivation of athletes.

CONCLUSION

In sum up the empirical evidence regarding values and ethical attitudes in sport is relatively limited in breadth and applications on various accounts.

First, it has concentrated on athletes in youth sport. Second, some of the questionnaire items that purportedly tap ethical attitudes seem to be capturing self-reported behavior. Third, there have been no studies employing objective outcomes of values and ethical attitudes (e.g., disciplinary records of athletes, recorded cases of cheating), nor any experimental work that draws from the values and ethical attitudes identified in Lee and coworker's research. Despite these limitations, the work by Lee and his coworkers represents a promising initial step in mapping the value system of young athletes and understanding how this might be implicated in observed variations in their ethical attitudes and motivation in sport.[2;369]

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