

PARADIGM SHIFT OF PERSONALITY IN SPORTS PSYCHOLOGY

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Introduction

The nature of physical education is a difficult task because so many different perspectives on the field exist. Some view physical education as a sub discipline of psychology, while others view it as a sub discipline of sport and exercise science. Physical education focusing on athletics and psychology of physical activity encompassing all movement related contexts. Some writers have created even more specialized terms, such as developmental sport psychology, psycho-physiological, physical education and cognitive sport psychology.

Perspectives on sports psychology

Physical education psychology, viewed as a sub-discipline within the larger field of psychology, defined as an applied psychology or as a field of study in which principles of psychology are applied. Some sport psychologists have argued that professional services should not be sanctioned until we possess an applied body of knowledge and a reliable technology. Obviously, there is considerable controversy in the field today regarding the basic nature of sport psychology and the roles that sport psychologists can or should play.

Paradigms in physical education psychology

Trends in sports psychology have tended to parallel those in general psychology. As Landers noted, the research that was conducted in physical education during the 1950-1976 time period was characterized by empiricism, and most of the studies investigated personality. This perspective was consistent with the trait approach that was in vogue in the general area of psychology. In contrast, the time period 1966-1976 was characterized by a social analysis approach. Research during this decade consisted of selecting one theory at a time from

mainstream psychology and testing that theory in the area of sport and motor performance. Topics as social facilitation achievement motivation, social reinforcement and arousal ad motor performance were investigated. Much of this research was influenced by Martens's recommendation of the social analysis approach. Leaders in psychology and physical education have also influenced research conducted from the cognitive approaches to physical education issues, these approaches included causal attributions, intrinsic motivation and self efficacy/ self confidence.

Personality research from 1950 to 1965 in sports psychology

The relationship of personality to participation in sport arid physical activity has been one of the most popular research areas in sport psychology. Much of the early research took a areas trait approach to studying personality profiles in athletes or athletic groups and has been described as being of the 'shotgun' variety. Researcher would gain access to a sample of athletes and test them on the most convenient personality test. This research approach has been labeled the shotgun variety because the researcher typically would have no theoretical rationale for the selection of the personality test used. This lack of consistency subsequently led to strong criticism of the area by a number of leaders in sport psychology. Most of the criticisms were based on theoretical and mythological shortcomings of the research. The use of university instead of multivariate statistics, questionable sampling techniques and lack of specificity in the operationalisation of variables have been some of the major criticisms lodged against the sport personality research.

Social facilitation and the encouragement performance relationship from 1966 to 1976

A considerable amount of research was conducted during this decade in the area of sport psychology. The topical research paradigm was laboratory oriented involved taking a social psychology theory and testing its applicability to motor skill performance. The most popular topics of research during this social analysis period were social facilitation and the arousal performance relationship. Much of the research in social facilitation and arousal in physical education was based on Zajoin's theory of social facilitation. Zajone's hypothesis, based on the presence of an audience creates arousal, which in turn enhances the emission of dominant responses. The dominant response of a complex task is the incorrect response in initial learning but the correct response when the skill is mastered. A series of laboratory studies on social facilitating using motor skill tasks. A number of other investigators also attempted to extend this research to motor tasks by varying the task, audience, and subject characteristics. Their findings varied, depending on the variables studied.

Another aspect of the social facilitation research that investigators found troublesome was the assessment of arousal. Some studies demonstrated increased arousal with the presence of others, and some reported no effect. Some reviewers believed, the problems lay in the nature and assessment of arousal, because of its multidimensionality and individual specificity. Landers have also noted that one should not expect much change in psychological measures when the social facilitation effect is so small.

The most frequently cited alternative to drive theory for social facilitation and arousal performance research was the inverted hypothesis. This hypothesis predicted that there

was a progressive enhancement in performance as a subjects arousal level increased up to some optimal point, beyond which further increases in arousal progressively decreased performance efficiency. Much of the arousal motor performance literature of the 1970s also tested the inverted hypothesis. However, just as in social facilitation research, the measurement of arousal was problematic because it was not assessed in terms of its multidimensional nature. The research conducted during this time period was characterized by use of psychology theories tested in the motor domain and in laboratory settings.

Cognitive approaches and field methods from 1977 to the present

In the late 1970s and early 1980s a variety of cognitive models in the sport personality, social facilitation, arousal performance, and other motivation areas were proposed as a response to the general dissatisfaction with the simplistic and mechanistic drive theory perspective for explaining complex human behaviour. Landers advocated a cognitive arousal attention model. This model suggests that increased arousal leads to a narrowing of attention focus and cue utilization, limiting performance. The concept of objective self awareness has also been used to interpret audience effects. This theory suggests that the presence of other leads to objective self awareness, which affects tasks motivation. Wankel advocated a model, which acknowledges the performer as a proactive rather than a reactive, individual, who interprets information from the situation, makes predications about the audiences reactions and alters behaviour accordingly.

Rejeski and Brawley called for innovative approaches and broader conceptual views to help us understand motivation in sport. The cognitive concepts of perceived ability, self efficacy, and achievement orientation may play a key role in mediating motivation these concepts have now been incorporated into the personality research in this area.

There was dissatisfaction with the laboratory oriented social psychological paradigm for personality research that has characterized the research during the previous decade. This led some investigators to advocate the use of field research methodology. Martens, in particular, pointed out the limitations of laboratory studies and suggested switching from laboratory settings to field settings in order to observe behaviour more accurately and to understand the 'real world of sport'. Some investigators misinterpreted Martens's position and left theory testing behind, along with the laboratory when they became field researchers. Some researchers conducted descriptive studies in field settings, but not much theory testing or theory construction had been initiated. Other researches emphasized intervention in studies on applied topics such as mental practice, imagery, psych-up strategies, stress management techniques, and biofeedback. The methodology used in these applied, non theoretical studies was still based on a technology taken from mainstream psychology.

Current issues of personality in sport psychology

Some researches have offered explanations for the complications and slow growth in sport psychology. Roberts maintained that the slow growth is due to a lack of a generally accepted conceptual paradigm to drive the research and services effects. He has advocated that we should be using cognitive models to understand behavior in sport and exercise and should become better, acquainted with the epistemological concerns of mainstream psychology. The

cognitive paradigm has dominated research since the late 1970s. however, Roberts also conceded that sport, physical researchers should be open to the work of those using other paradigms. Other writers have suggested that broadening the prevailing zeitgeist may provide a better understanding of problems in sport behaviour. Researches began to view physical education as a sub discipline within sport science rather than as a field of study in which psychological principles were tested and applied, they also began to advocate the development of theories or conceptual frameworks within physical education to further understand sport behaviour. An interdisciplinary approach to examining sport specific question is Beuter's and Duda's analysis of the arousal motor performance relationship. These researchers used movement kinematics to examine the effect of arousal on motor performance. This approach allowed to focus on the process by which arousal influences performance rather than simply on the outcome or end products of performance.

Current challenges of sport psychology

It seems apparent that the development of theoretical models specifically built to answer sport and exercise questions must come from an interdisciplinary sport and exercise knowledge base as well as from psychological theories. In order to achieve this integrated body of knowledge in sport and exercise

may have to change their reward structure so that researchers are rewarded to a greater degree for publishing within sport and exercise science than in their parent discipline and are not penalized for doing collaborative research.

Literature cited

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