

Conceptualization of Sportsmanship Among Aspiring Coaches: A Visual Study.



Background

- Recent events have called attention to an examination of sportsmanship practices and the underlying assumptions regarding behavior in competitive situations.
- Despite attempts at a consistent definition of sportsmanship (Abad, 2010; Keating, 1978; Goldstein & Iso-Ahola, 2006), codes of behavior are largely subjective among communities of practice, sport tribes and even the most ardent observers.
- Compounding this narrative are global structural changes and an accelerated technological age that Toffler (1970;1999) suggests is overwhelming for people.

Objective

- The purpose of this study sought to examine aspiring coaches perceptions of sportsmanship using sport images as a medium for reflection.

Research Questions

These questions framed the study:

1. What influence do visual media and artifacts have on aspiring coaches ideas of sportsmanship?
2. Is today's conception of sportsmanship an arbitrary ideal dependent on context and undefinable codes?
3. Is sportsmanship more reflective of a groups' cultural knowledge shaped by the environments where these sports exist?



Methods

Seventy three aspiring coaches completed an electronic open-ended survey that inquired about their sportsmanship practices and views on visual media displaying a range of behaviors in sport.

Content analysis was used to explore in –depth interviews and open-ended surveys over the course of the two years.

Comparison of the data from the participants involved deconstructing and assembling information using peer debriefing to find variations, similar themes, linkages and patterns within each of the reflective pieces (Erickson, 1986; Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Values Orientation Theory



Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) developed a theory which elaborated on the importance of culture on determining values, suggesting that the solutions for these problems preferred by a given society reflects that society's values. We have highlighted three of those problems that could give an insight to how sportsmanship is perceived relative to this study:

- On what aspect of time should we primarily focus – past, present or future?
- How should individuals relate with others – hierarchically (which they called "Lineal"), as equals ("Collateral"), or according to their individual merit?
- What is the prime motivation for behavior – to express one's self ("Being"), to grow ("Being-in-becoming"), or to achieve?



Preliminary Results/Emerging Themes

Analysis of the data indicated: 1) aspiring coaches views on sportsmanship reflected a human nature value orientation (Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, 1961) that equated following rules to their idea of acceptable behavior, 2) aspiring coaches' narratives showed inconsistencies with their definitions of sportsmanship and their reflections on sports photographs and 3) and aspiring coaches perceiving sportsmanship as deficient outside of the confines of mainstream American sport.

1. Rules are needed and acceptable

- Sample quote: "I was always taught growing up that you go by the rules of the game. Look, soccer can be rough, but there is no need to pull someone else's hair. I would think an official would think that is an issue or else what's the point of rules?"

2. What is sportsmanship really?

- Sample quote: "I think these photos show trash-talking . It's funny because I remember that from last season. The look on (player name) face isn't anything that's not normal . That's just football, they do that in high school ball. The picture makes it look worse than it is. Those guys are getting paid money."

3. Sport, culture and perception

- Sample quote: "Seriously, it's cricket. I wouldn't have thought that people would get that worked up about it, but then again, I don't know the sport well enough."

What has been found

- Sportsmanship is a contextual idea.
- A sportsmanship ideal is often decided, framed and transmitted by those with no direct connection to the event.
- Coaching education needs to consider how societal occurrences could undermine espoused ideals in communities of practice.