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The Role of Achievement Motivation and Locus of Control in Shaping Sportspersonship Behaviors Among Competitive Activity Participants

By

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A Doctoral Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Psychology in the Department of Psychology at Pace University

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I have read the final version of the doctoral project and certify that it meets the relevant requirements for the Psy.D. degree in School-Clinical Child Psychology.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the roles of achievement motivation and locus of control in shaping sportspersonship behaviors among male competitive activity participants in both athletic and non-athletic contexts. To a significant extent, the present research attempts to extend the prior findings and formulations of Bredemeier and Shields (1995) who put forth a 12-component model of character development and moral action that is based on the model of moral action proposed by Rest (Rest, 1984).

One of the components, achievement motivation, is raised when a person decides which moral value to uphold. Nicholls' (1989, 1992) delineates two types of motivational orientations, ego and task. An "ego orientation" is one in which a person is motivated to achieve in order to surpass the achievements of others, while a "task orientation" is characterized by a concern for achievement to satisfy one's own goals. Locus of control (Rotter, 1966, Lefcourt, 1966, 1971; Joe, 1971) differentiates people on a continuum according to how much they attribute the cause of events in their lives to their own actions (internal control) vs. how much they assume the cause of these events to be determined by other forces (external control).Various researchers have looked at these factors in an athletic context. However, there is no research on how achievement motivation and locus of control relate to sportspersonship with students who participate in non-athletic competitive activities.

In order to study the relationship between these variables, 87 male high school students were given the Motivational Orientations Scale (Nicholls, 1989; Duda and Nicholls, 1992), the Nowicki-Strickland Locus of Control Scale (Nowicki & Strickland, 1973), and the Multidimensional Sportspersonship Orientations Scale (Vallerand, Briere, Blanchard, and Provencher, 1997). In addition, an extensive demographic data questionnaire (Rosenzweig Novick, 1998) was given to assess participation in competitive activities. Based on this

questionnaire, the subjects were split into three groups: males participating in athletic competitive activities, males participating in non-athletic competitive activities, and males participating in both athletic and non-athletic competitive activities.

Results indicated that those subjects with a task orientation were more likely to have an internal locus of control. They were also more likely to show greater commitment, more respect for social conventions, and approach their competitive activity in a more positive way than those subjects with an ego orientation and an external locus of control. Competitive activity choice had no significant main effect on either achievement motivation type or locus of control, but those who participated in non-athletic competitive activities did show more respect for rules and officials and had a more negative approach than those subjects engaged in athletic competitive activities. Additional analyses revealed a significant interaction effect between competitive activity choice and locus of control on the sportspersonship variable of Commitment.

The findings of this study suggest that it is increasingly important for school psychologists to understand the motivational and personality-trait aspects of students participating in competitive activities as their role in assessment of risk, primary prevention and early intervention extends beyond the classroom to non-academic school sponsored activities.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Morality has been an area of fertile research for many years. Piaget (1932) postulated that there is a close relationship between playing games that have rules and moral development, namely that morality is the internalization of rules. He traced the moral development of children from infancy to adolescence and showed how children progress from not being able to follow rules (up to age 3), to follow rules even though they do not understand them, and change them to fit their needs (up to age 7), slowly progressing from a rigid adherence to rules (to age 11), and then (at age 12) to seeing that rules exist to make games possible, and at this point they are willing to change them if all players agree.

Kohlberg (1969,1980), expanding on Piaget's research, studied morality by posing moral dilemmas to subjects of different ages. He was able to use his subjects' responses to delineate three levels of morality, each having two distinct stages. The stages (described below) are passed through in order, and are not age specific.

At the preconventional level, children judge right and wrong in two ways. In the first (stage 1), good behavior is based on obedience, while bad behavior is that which gets punished. The child is focused on themselves, and is not concerned with consequences to others and the intentions of the actor. In the second (stage 2), children see what is pleasant as good and what is unpleasant as evil. Kohlberg called this "naïve instrumental hedonism", as the child will only do something good for someone if they themselves can gain from the deed.

At the conventional level, children in stage 3 define morality in terms of behavior that results in approval from important people in their life: parents, teachers, and peers. In stage 4, children develop a law and order orientation: the child sees conforming to rules and laws as the best way to maintain adults' approval.