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NEW DIMENSIONS IN UNDERSTANDING ETHICAL ATTITUDES OF YOUNG COMPETITORS

This chapter illustrates how two questionnaires, developed by Martin Lee and his co-workers to measure (a) attitudes and (b) values in sport, can open up the study of ethical and unethical behaviour in young competitors. Sport participation is popularly supposed to develop character, yet the media carry daily reports of unsporting actions, cheating, and aggression. Research into moral behaviour has mushroomed in the last decade, and its findings help coaches, teachers, parents, and sport administrators to understand the problems. One approach has been to use self-report questionnaires to gather information quickly from young competitors. I will summarise the current position with respect to the prediction of sportspersonship from goal orientations and the motivational climate, and then describe a study illustrating how the new instruments can extend this work and provide new information for researchers and coaches

1. The current position

1.1. Measuring sportspersonship

For some ten years, sportspersonship has been measured by the Multidimensional Sportspersonship Orientation Scale (MSOS) developed by Vallerand, Brière, Blanchard, and Provencher (1997). This questionnaire has scales to measure *Commitment to Sport Participation* (henceforth called commitment), *Respect for Social Conventions in Sport* (conventions), *Respect for Rules and Officials* (rules), *Respect for the Opponent* (opponent), and a *Negative Approach to Sport* (negative approach). However, the last scale has often proved unreliable; hence studies using the MSOS have focused on the four positive features of sportspersonship (*pro-social* attitudes).

1.2. Influences on sportspersonship

Many different factors can influence sportspersonship in young competitors. However, because sport provides a competitive context it is regarded as an *achievement situation*, hence researchers have logically looked first at the influence of *achievement goals* and *perceptions of the motivational climate*.

1.3. Achievement goal theory

The achievement goal theory of Nicholls (1989) and others indicates that, although people think very differently about what success means to them, there are two common dimensions. Sometimes people focus on learning new skills, trying hard, or improving themselves. In this state they are *task-involved.* Other times they focus on showing more ability than others – for example by performing better than others, or by using less effort than others for a similar result. In this state they are *ego-involved.* These states may arise from personal dispositional tendencies (*task and ego goal orientations*) or they may be prompted by features of the environment. For example when coaches focus on helping everyone to do their best and praising people for their effort they create a *mastery climate* which is *task-involving*. When they focus only on the best players and praise players only for winning they create a *performance climate* that is *ego-involving*.

This theory suggests that when people are ego-involved and want to be the best, they are less likely to be concerned about justice or fair play than when they are task-involved and simply want to improve themselves. Thus the most ethical attitudes are likely to be associated with task orientation rather than ego orientation. When ego orientation is high, ethical attitudes are expected to be low – particularly when players think they don't have enough ability to do better than others.

1.4. Research findings and implications

Three major predictions of the theory have been tested using the MSOS to measure sportspersonship.

(i) Achievement goal orientations. *Sportspersonship should be predicted by task orientation, not by ego orientation.*
This was confirmed in studies of 143 Canadian elite male ice hockey players aged 11 to 13 years (Dunn & Dunn, 1999) and 511 Norwegian male soccer players aged 13-16 years (Lemyre, Roberts and Ommundsen, 2002). However, the combination of task and ego orientations within different individuals is also important. In the soccer players, there was more respect for rules, officials, and the opponents when high task orientation was combined with low rather than high ego orientation.

(ii) The perceived motivational climate. *Sportspersonship should be predicted by perceptions of a mastery climate, not a performance climate.*
This was confirmed in a study of 279 Norwegian male soccer players aged 12 to 14 years (Ommundsen, Roberts, Lemyre, and Treasure, 2003) and a study of 512 male and 202 female Norwegian soccer players aged 12 to 14 years (Miller, Roberts & Ommundsen, 2004). In the first study, perceptions of a high mastery and low performance climate were associated on a canonical function with high scores on all MSOS scales. In the second study, only the mastery climate was associated with high scores on all scales. The performance climate was indeed associated with low respect for conventions and rules but, unexpectedly, it was associated with high respect for opponents. The unusual result might arise from the very high level of competition in this study, in which all opponents merited respect.

(iii) Combinations of achievement orientations and motivational climate. *These two dimensions may interact: a strong motivational climate should over-ride a weak goal orientation.*

A study of 440 Norwegian male handballers aged 14 to 16 years (Stornes & Ommundsen, 2004) first showed that, as expected, task orientation or a perceived mastery climate was associated with high sportspersonship on the pro-social MSOS scales. This study also included the MSOS *negative approach* scale and a new *instrumental aggression* scale to evaluate *anti-social* components of sportspersonship. Ego orientation or a perceived performance climate was associated with these dimensions. The over-riding effect of climate was shown in players with *strong* ego orientation, who showed more respect for opponents *when they perceived a strong rather than a weak mastery climate.*

In a study of 202 female USA volleyballers aged 12 to 18 years, Gano-Overway, Guivernau, Magyar, Waldron and Ewing (2005) combined the MSOS scales for commitment, conventions, and rules in a single factor representing respect for the game, as distinct from the opponent. An over-riding effect of a mastery climate was suggested because, in athletes with strong ego orientation, task orientation was associated with high respect for the game only *when they perceived a strong, rather than weak mastery climate.* Thus in each study a strong mastery climate reduced the negative outcomes of a *strong* ego orientation. However, the authors of the second study concluded that other personal and situational factors should be examined to provide fuller explanations.

1.5. Summary and implications

These studies show that the dimensions of sportspersonship which are measured by the MSOS pro-social scales (commitment and respect for conventions, rules, officials, and the opponents) are predicted by task orientation and by perceptions of a mastery climate. It is therefore important for coaches and teachers to create an environment that encourages participants to focus on learning, trying hard, and improving their own skills without reference to others. However, the studies in section (iii) also show a need to supplement the MSOS with measures of anti-social attitudes, and to supplement achievement orientations and climate with measures of other variables. The two new questionnaires do exactly this.

2. Some new dimensions

2.1. New dimensions in measuring ethical attitudes

A new instrument, the Attitudes to Moral Decision-making in Youth Sport Questionnaire (AMDYSQ; Lee, Whitehead, & Ntoumanis, 2007), measures *Acceptance of Cheating* (cheating), *Acceptance of Gamesmanship* (gamesmanship), and *Keeping Winning in Proportion* (winning). Cheating is a violation of the rules, whereas gamesmanship is a violation of the spirit of the game and concerns a player's intention to gain an unfair psychological advantage over an opponent without actually breaking the rules. These

two scales permit a wider study of moral behaviour. They meet the need identified by Stornes and Ommundsen (2004) for measures of anti-social attitudes, yet they do not overlap with the negative approach and instrumental aggression scales that were used by these researchers. Moreover the winning scale meets the criticism that the MSOS does not embrace a measure of winning at all costs (Shields & Bredemeier, 1995).

2.2. New dimensions in influences on ethical attitudes

Values have been described as the most important psychological variables. They are general beliefs that certain goals or behaviours are preferable to others. People form their own hierarchy of values and their relative importance guides behaviour across a variety of situations (Schwartz, 1992). The study of values has been relatively neglected in sport, but Martin Lee pioneered the development of a questionnaire to measure 18 independent sport values (Lee, Whitehead & Balchin, 2000). This has been further developed to form the Youth Sport Values Questionnaire-2 (YSVQ-2: Lee, Whitehead, Ntoumanis, & Hatzigeorgiadis, under review). The new questionnaire has scales to measure values in the *Moral Domain* (moral), the *Competence Domain* (competence), and the *Status Domain* (status).

3. A new study

The purpose of the study was to use achievement orientations, perceptions of the motivational climate, and the new measure of sport values, to predict the ethical attitudes measured by two MSOS pro-social scales and the two new AMDYSQ anti--social scales.

3.1. Method

Procedure

The 128 participants (male = 14, female = 113) competed in hockey, basketball or netball. Age ranged from 12 to 16 years (*M* = 14.2*7, SD* = 1.18*)* and most participants (70%) had at least five years of experience. They completed 4 short questionnaires during a sport talent course under the supervision of a qualified researcher, and were assured of anonymity.

Instruments

Ethical attitudes were measured by selected AMDYSQ and MSOS scales. The two anti-social AMDYSQ scales comprised three items to measure cheating, (e.g. *I cheat if I can get away with it*) and three items for gamesmanship (e.g. *It is not against the rules to 'psyche' people out, so it's OK to do*). The two pro-social scales from MSOS included five items for commitment to sport participation (e.g. *I go to every practice*) and four items for respect for conventions (e.g. *I congratulate the opposition after I've lost*). These MSOS items formed an acceptable 4-factor model with the AMDYSQ scales in an earlier study (Lee, et al., under review). Responses

on this questionnaire, and the two following questionnaires, were made on a 5-point scale anchored by *Strongly Agree (5)* and *Strongly Disagree (1).*

Achievement orientations were measured by the adolescent version of the Perceptions of Success Questionnaire (POSQ; Roberts, Treasure, & Balague, 1998) To this 12-item questionnaire, we added an extra task orientation item (*I learn something new to me*) and an extra ego orientation item (*I do things more easily than others*) to cover facets that were not already in this instrument.

The perceived motivational climate was measured by the Perceived Motivational Climate in Sport Questionnaire (PMCSQ; Seifriz, Duda, & Chi, 1992). This includes 9 items for a mastery climate (e.g. *The coach wants us to try new skills*) and 12 items for a performance climate (e.g. *The coach pays more attention to the 'stars'*). This instrument was preferred to the more recent PMCSQ-2 (Newton, Duda, & Zin, 2000) because the latter includes social variables and we preferred to focus on achievement goals (See Appendix, Whitehead, Andrée, & Lee, 2004).

Sport values were measured by the YSVQ-2. This has 5 items for moral values (e.g. *I try to be fair*), 4 items for competence values (e.g. *I set my own targets*) and 4 items for status values (e.g. *I look good*). In accordance with the values models of Rokeach (1973) and Schwartz (1992), the competence items are self-referenced in nature. This questionnaire has a 7-point scale anchored by *This idea is extremely important to me (5)* and *This idea is the opposite of what I believe (-1).*

Analysis

Three stepwise multiple regression analyses were performed on the data, to predict each of the four ethical attitudes from (a) achievement orientations, (b) perceptions of the motivational climate, and (c) sport values. A composite analysis was then undertaken which included all the predictor variables from the three previous analyses. In Table 1, the probability values (*p)* show the significant results and the R^2 values indicate the amount of variance in the ethical attitudes that is accounted for by the achievement orientations, perceived motivational climate and sport values.

3.2. Results and discussion

Descriptive statistics for the ethical attitudes showed high mean scores for commitment (4.43 ± .49) and conventions (4.58 ± .49), a low mean for cheating (1.51 ± .64), and an intermediate mean (2.51 ± .93) for gamesmanship. Means for the achievement goals and the motivational climate were consistent with previous research, notably high for task orientation (4.70 ± .41), moderate for ego orientation (2.98 ± .91), high for a mastery climate (4.25 ± .40), and moderate for a performance climate (2.42 ± .60). Means for the new values scales were high for moral (4.01 ± .72) and competence values (4.22 ± .75) but low for status values (1.25 ± .1.23).

Overall, these data show that this sample of young competitors displayed a constructive and ethical approach to their sport participation. However, it is important to understand how the ethical attitudes were predicted by achievement orientations, motivational climate, and sport values.

Table 1. Multiple regression analyses showing predictors of sportspersonship

Predictor	Commitment		Conventions		Cheating		Gamesmanship	
	β	*p*	β	*p*	β	*p*	β	*p*
Achievement goals								
Task	+0.38	***	+0.27	**	- 0.26	**	- 0.19	*
Ego					+0.27	**	+0.28	**
Total R^2	*+0.15*		*+0.07*		*+0.12*		*+0.10*	
Motivat. climate								
Mastery	+0.33	***	+0.23	*	- 0.18	*		
Performance					+ 0.35	***	+0.37	***
Total R^2	*+0.11*		*+0.05*		*+ 0.17*		*+0.14*	
Sport values								
Moral	+0.28	**	+0.44	***			- 0.27	**
Competence					- 0.24	**		
Status					+0.37	***	+0.28	**
Total R^2	*+0.08*		+0.19		*+0.16*		*+0.13*	
All predictors								
Task	+0.37	***			-0.23	*		
Ego								
Mastery								
Performance			- 0.18	*	+0.37	***	+0.31	**
Moral			+0.41	***			- 0.22	*
Competence								
Status								
Total R^2	*+0.14*		*+0.23*		*+0.21*		*+0.16*	

* ($p<0.05$); **($p<0.01$); *** ($p<0.001$). Note: **This table shows the significant predictors that were in the** equation after the final step of four independent step-wise multiple regression analyses.

Achievement orientations. Task orientation significantly predicted all attitudes. It related positively with the pro-social dimensions and negatively with the anti-social dimensions. Thus competitors who focused on self-improvement were likely to be committed to sport and respect its conventions, while those who gave little attention to self-improvement were likely to cheat and seek an unfair advantage. Ego orientation was a significant predictor of cheating and gamesmanship. In previous MSOS studies, ego orientation has been important only in its combinations with task orientation but here, when anti-social attitudes were of concern, it was important in its own right.

It is therefore important for coaches to be sensitive to the degree of ego orientation in their competitors, to know what it can lead to and who is at risk.

Perceived motivational climate. As in previous studies, a mastery climate was a positive predictor of commitment and conventions. It also negatively predicted cheating, but not gamesmanship. A new finding was that perceptions of a performance climate positively predicted cheating and gamesmanship, the two anti-social dimensions. This parallels the results for achievement orientations, but the performance climate explained 40% more anti-social variance than was explained by ego orientation. This finding is important because coaches and teachers can influence the climate quite quickly and directly, whereas more time is needed to modify dispositional goal orientations. It implies that coaches and teachers can make cheating less attractive by giving less emphasis to achieving superiority over others.

Sport values. Moral values positively predicted commitment and conventions, and negatively predicted gamesmanship. Thus, these values (which include trying to be fair, helpful, and obedient, and to play properly and be sporting) lift pro-social attitudes and lower the acceptance of gamesmanship in which players attempt to upset their opponents. Such values should be encouraged by coaches.

The competence values are self-referenced in nature and might be expected to parallel results for task orientation and a mastery climate by predicting commitment and conventions, the pro-social attitudes. Instead they negatively predicted cheating. However, this is in accordance with the predictions of task orientation and the mastery climate. It is clear that if competitors do not value self-improvement or notice their teacher's encouragement of it, they are likely to seek unfair advantages. The status values were strong predictors of both anti-social attitudes. This echoes the findings for ego orientation and the performance climate and shows that competitors who value looking good and gaining high status are more accepting of cheating and gamesmanship to achieve these outcomes.

Overall. When all predictors were entered into the analysis together, fewer significant predictors emerged than in the separate analyses for the three types of variables. This is because some of the predictors were correlated so their effects overlapped. Only one variable of each type was significant overall: task orientation, a performance climate, and moral values. However, this shows that each type of variable is important and none can be dispensed with. Strong sport commitment was predicted by achievement orientation (high task); respect for conventions was predicted by values (high moral) and climate (low performance); acceptance of cheating was predicted by climate (high performance) and achievement orientation (low task); and acceptance of gamesmanship was predicted by climate (high performance) and values (low moral).

It is noteworthy that when all variables were entered, the mastery climate did not predict any of the ethical attitudes, while the performance climate predicted three of the four dimensions: cheating, gamesmanship, and (negatively) respect for conventions. This differs from previous research with the MSOS, which has focused on pro-social attitudes. Hence the use of the AMDYSQ anti-social scales for cheating and gamesmanship has demonstrated that it is not enough for coaches to focus only on creating a mastery climate. They should also actively reduce the features of a performance climate. These negative influences include comparing players with their team-mates, praising them only for winning, giving most attention to the best performers, punishing players for mistakes, and criticising them in public.

It is also noteworthy that each of the YSVQ-2 value domains was significant in predicting one or more of the ethical attitudes; hence each type of value provided new information. Moreover, in the separate analyses, values explained more of the variance than achievement orientations for three of the four ethical attitudes. The analysis of achievement orientations has provided much important information in the study of motivation and moral behaviour. Now that an instrument is available to measure sport values, these important psychological constructs can begin to take a similarly central role in studies of moral behaviour and other aspects of sport psychology.

This study has focused on providing basic preliminary information for researchers and practitioners. It has related only to studies which have employed the MSOS. More complex analyses, of changes over time and of interactions between variables, are left for future researchers. The AMDYSQ scale for keeping winning in proportion was not used in this study but merits future analysis. The gamesmanship scale is novel, and its essence is difficult to capture in three items, because the diversity of ways in which players may seek to put off their opponents is limited only by their ingenuity. The short AMDYSQ scales were chosen here because they are invariant across gender. Supplementary analyses, not reported, showed that the prediction of gamesmanship improved by some 40% if a longer gamesmanship scale was used (See Lee et al., 2007). This was not the case with the cheating scale which, although brief, captures diverse dimensions.

In conclusion, this study demonstrated that the AMDYSQ and the YSVQ-2 should have an important role in increasing our understanding of moral behaviour and attitudes in youth sport. Specifically, the new measures of the antisocial attitudes, cheating and gamesmanship, related to all 7 predictors, whereas the MSOS pro-social attitudes related to only 3 predictors, hence the AMDYSQ scales improve the prediction of ethical attitudes. Moreover the new measure of moral values improved the prediction of respect for sport conventions, and all three value scales related to the anti-social attitudes. An understanding of the role of these variables can lead to more effective coaching and improved moral behaviour.

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