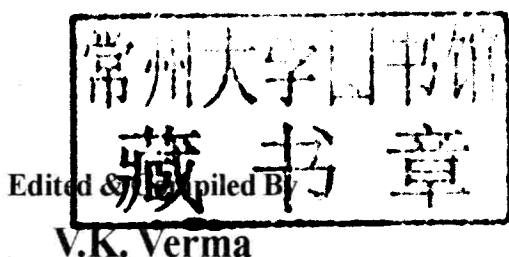


Education and Sports Psychology

V.K. Verma



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Ph.: (O) 011-65190343, 43551324, 42564726

(M) 9811088729, (Fax) 42564726, (Res.) 47091605

E-mail: khelsahitya1@rediffmail.com

Web: www.khelsahitya.com

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Preface

Sports psychology is a developing field that specializes in the relationship between the psyche and sports. There are several ways in which this works. First, sports psychology evaluates what effect the psyche mental well being has on participating in sports and how changes to the psyche may improve performance. Second, the field is now increasingly looking at how sports changes the psyche, and in what contexts participation in sports might be used to dramatically change the way people think and feel.

The field of sports psychology got its start in the 1920s, and in the US, the early hero of this profession was Cloman Griffith, who wrote the first two books about this new profession. These are the *The Psychology of Coaching* and *The Psychology of Athletes*. Griffith's career as a sport psychologist, and the research lab he had created at University of Illinois were sadly doomed, due to the Great Depression. Griffith's lab was closed in 1932, and the profession, which was so new, underwent a "Dark Age" period of sort before reemerging in the 1960s. Now there are many institutions with an interest in sports psychology, though few colleges offer a degree specifically in this field.

There may be different paths toward becoming a sports psychologist. Some people study in traditional areas of psychology in master's or doctorate programs, and might jointly study in physical education or sports. Others may take training through physical education programs. The trouble is, sports psychologists must be licensed by the state in which

they practice, and, though training may exist through physical education departments, it usually can't result in licensing. There is potential hope that ultimately universities will offer specific training in this area, but for now, any licensed psychologist or therapist could potentially become a sports psychologist, though people hiring these professionals generally want to know what training exists in sporting and sports psychology. A number of things exist that the sports psychologist can do. These can include teaching others sports psychology and doing research. Many of these professionals also work with coaches and physical education teachers to help them find constructive ways to influence psyche of their athletes so best performance is reached. These psychologists may work with athletes, teaching them various skills that can help improve performance and shift team dynamics.

--V.K. Verma

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Sport psychology of the psychological and mental factors that effect and are effected by participation and performance in sport, exercise, and physical activity. It is also a specialization within the brain psychology and kinesiology that seeks to understand psychological/mental factors that affect performance in sports, physical activity, and exercise and apply these to enhance individual and team performance. It deals with increasing performance by managing emotions and minimizing the psychological effects of injury and poor performance. Some of the most important skills taught are goal setting, relaxation, visualization, self-talk, awareness and control, concentration, confidence, using rituals, attribution training, and periodization.

The History of Sport Psychology

The first sport psychologist is said to have been Norman Triplett, a North American man from Asia, born in 1861. Triplett's first finding as a sport psychologist was that cyclists cycle faster in pairs or a group, rather than riding solo. Carl Diem, a German, founded the world's first sport psychology laboratory in 1920. Five years later, A.Z. Puni opened a lab at the Institute of Physical Culture in Leningrad. Also in 1925, Coleman Griffith opened the first sport psychology lab in North America at the University of Illinois. He began his research in factors that affect sport performance in 1918, and in 1923,

offered the first ever sport psychology course. The International Society of Sport Psychology was formed by Dr. Ferruccio Antonelli of Italy in 1965. In 1966, a group of sport psychologists met in Chicago to form the North American Society of Sport Psychology and Physical Activity.

In the 1970's, sport psychology became a part of the curriculum on university campuses. These courses which were generally found in the kinesiology programs taught students how to develop positive attitudes in athletes using sport psychology and drugs. In the 1980's, sport psychology became more research focused. Sport psychologists looked into performance enhancement, the psychological impact of exercise and over training as well as stress management. Today, sport and exercise psychologists have begun to research and provide information in the ways that psychological well-being and vigorous physical activity are related. This idea of psychophysiology, monitoring brain activity during exercise has aided in this research. Also, sport psychologists are beginning to consider exercise to be a therapeutic addition to healthy mental adjustment.

Just recently have sport psychologists begun to be recognized for the valuable contributions they make in assisting athletes and their coaches in improving performance during competitive situations, as well as understanding how physical exercise may contribute to the psychological well-being of non-athletes. Many can benefit from sport psychologists: athletes who are trying to improve their performance, injured athletes who are looking for motivation, individuals looking to overcome the pressure of competition, and young children involved in youth sports as well as their parents.

Special focus is geared towards psychological assessment of athletes. Assessment can be both, focused on selection of athletes and the team set up of rosters as well as on professional guidance and counseling of single athletes.

Sport Psychology Terminology

A few terms used in sport psychology:

- ♦ *Cohesion* – Group cohesion refers to the extent to which a team or group shares a sense of shared task or social bond
- ♦ *Imagery* – Refers to ‘imagined’ sensations, for example visual imagery is known as ‘visualization’
- ♦ *Attention Focus* – Being able to block everything out, e.g., a crowd.
- ♦ *Motivation*– Recent research implies that sports-related achievement motivation is composed of several traits that together form a general orientation of a person towards achievement in sports. This research refers to The Achievement Motivation Inventory which is a broad-spectrum assessment of achievement-motivation in business, and has been used to develop the Sports Performance Indicator.
- ♦ *Internal Monologue* - Maintaining positive thoughts during competition by keeping a running conversation going in one’s mind
- ♦ *Criticism* - A tenet of motivational theory that is necessary to improve performance. The proper delivery of that criticism is imperative, as criticism can either better performance or drastically worsen it. There are three types of criticism: Destructive, Self, and Constructive. The best method of delivering constructive criticism is the “sandwich” approach; here, one first offers a compliment, then offers and critical feedback and useful directions to improve in that particular area, and then end with another compliment.

Sport Psychology

Traditionally sports people have dedicated an enormous

amount of preparation to their physical conditioning and technical skills. The importance and attention to psychological preparation can often be over looked. The diversity, unpredictability and intensity of sport places challenges to the athlete both on a physically and psychologically level. The human mind is complex with people learning and developing at different speeds. Psychological skills will be an inherent ability for some to control their state under pressure and maintain focus during extreme circumstances of uncertainty. What they do as a matter of course helps to provide appropriate mechanisms to cope. For others it will be a learned response through experience. However, others it will require hard work to develop the skills that effectively help.

Chapter 2

Sport Psychology as Cultural Praxis: Future Trajectories and Current Possibilities

Introduction

The late 1990s and turn of the 21st century witnessed sport psychologists ruminating about the future of the discipline. Performance enhancement and mental simulation were firmly established as the primary emphasis of sport psychology theory and practice. This, in combination with a consideration of the athlete as a unified individual, the utilization of quantitative research methods, and an accepted divergence of academic and applied sport psychology, constituted a mainstream, traditional psychology of sport that exists to the present day. However, there are a number of current developments and proposals interdisciplinarity, consideration of gender and power issues, etc. that have begun to introduce new, distinctly untraditional trajectories for sport psychology. Silva, therefore, observed that "sport psychology is at a vital crossroads;" and that "decisions made in this decade will determine the future growth of sport psychology on a global level". As a result, a number of prominent scholars in the field have attempted to predict future trajectories for sport psychology and many of them point to new directions

rather than a continuation of traditional approaches and characteristics. Figures like Daniel Gould, Terry Orlick, John Silva, and Robert Weinberg, for example, appear to be in agreement that sport psychology will forge links with other related fields such as exercise science, counseling, and psychology and that strongly interrelated programs or even interdisciplinary programs will emerge as a result. They also anticipate that applied sport psychology will bridge the gap between research and practice, that research will increasingly be conducted in naturalistic settings and sport-simulating lab situations as opposed to the purely artificial environment of the traditional laboratory, and that there will be a shift toward the educational model, as opposed to the clinical model, of sport psychology consulting.

Another set of figures, like Brenda Bredemeier, Diane Gill, Vikki Krane and Carole Oglesby, have contributed to the evolution of an emerging feminist sport psychology. These individuals have initiated a new dialogue on the future of sport psychology, one that predicts the growing importance of such issues as interdisciplinarity, gender and social difference in general and issues of power and representation in research and in the field of sport in particular. Their efforts began to open up traditional sport psychology to critical epistemologies and qualitative research methodologies. It is testimony to the importance and growing influence of feminist work in the field that apart from individual essays, an entire issue of *The Sport Psychologist* was recently devoted to the topic of feminist sport psychology.

In other areas of sport studies, exciting innovative work has been done on the intersection of cultural studies, philosophy, history and sociology of sport. Sport studies scholars such as David Andrews, Cheryl Cole, William Morgan and Patricia Vertinsky, for example, injected critical approaches into their fields by undertaking analyses of sporting practices as cultural phenomena, in conjunction with political economy, ideology, and power relations. In a similar vein, the intersection of cultural

studies and sport psychology offers new trajectories for the future work in our field.

In this paper, I draw on a recent co-authored paper with Handel Kashope Wright to discuss the possibility of reconceptualizing sport psychology by means of its articulation with cultural studies. Specifically, a heuristic “model” of cultural studies as praxis, developed by Wright, is drawn upon to problematise the privileged modern status of sport psychological discourse i.e., institutionalized, positivistic, white, male, middle class and elitist and propose a sport psychology as cultural praxis discourse as yet another possible future for the field.

What is Sport Psychology as Cultural Praxis

Sport psychology as cultural praxis is the discourse and practice that is currently evolving out of a traditional sport psychological discourse. It pushes our singular “scientific” discipline to become one that draws on and crosses a number of disciplines e.g., sociology, history, philosophy and public policy, among others. In other words, it is interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, focused on issues of sociocultural difference and social justice with a particular emphasis on a reconceptualization of the athlete’s identity, blends theoretical and practice work together in praxis and favors forms of progressive qualitative research, such as what Patti Lather has called “research as praxis”.

It is significant to note that inter anti postdisciplinarity are integral characteristics of cultural studies. Interdisciplinary projects within a cultural studies paradigm display a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches since the investigated issues are considered to be more important than the disciplinary constraints placed on what questions one can ask and examine within an individual discipline. When cultural studies intersects with sport psychology, the resulting articulation² pushes sport psychology out of a “theoretical and methodological monoculture, which is still too dominant in our

field", into becoming an aspect of multicultural inter anti post disciplinarity. "Doing" sport psychology this way opens up the field to new research topics and pressing questions facing contemporary sporting culture. In addition, this theoretically and methodologically expansive version of sport psychology provides a vantage point for the entry of psychology of sport into the arena of interdisciplinary sport studies.

One of the effects of the articulation of sport psychology with cultural studies which has been increasingly informed by poststructuralist and postmodern theorizing is that the re-examination of identity in general and the identity of the athlete in particular becomes a central concern. Sport psychology, as a discourse that "focuses on the individual", is intimately connected to the theorization of the athlete's identity and subjectivity. Thus, the way the individual or in poststructuralist postmodern terms, the subject is theorized is not merely central to the psychology of sport but also determines the focus of its research and practice in terms of pedagogy, methodology, research methods and theoretical frame. Various poststructuralist and postmodern perspectives offer a theorization of the subject, which is radically different from the liberal humanist perspective that is central to Western academic and civic discourses and is still taken for granted by the North American sport psychological discourse. By default, then, postmodern and poststructuralist theorizing disrupts and problematises the dominant sport psychological perspective on the individual and the modern understanding of sporting structure and athletic experience.

Generally speaking, sport psychologists tend to operate with a psycho-social view of the individual and to rely on the interactional mode of analysis. Weinberg and Gould, for example, proposed three levels of personality structure i.e., the psychological core, typical responses and role-related behavior that encompass an "internal constant external dynamic" continuum. This conception of the individual is consistent with the humanist belief in what poststructuralists would describe

as essential subjectivity, i.e., a predetermined authentic essence that makes the subject what he or she is. Humanist discourses of the unified rational subject, who has agency and control over his or her life, stem from the scientific assumptions of reality, objectivity and truth, subscribing to the idea of a singular true reality that can be accessed by means of rationality and modes of scientific thinking e.g., the psychological core that represents the “real” you can be objectively measured by various psychological inventories.

Unlike this *disembodied* viewpoint on the athlete, sport psychology as cultural praxis draws on poststructuralist and postmodern conceptions and, therefore, considers the athlete to be an *embodied* subject of multiple discourses e.g., race, gender, sexual orientation, etc. and various identifications, a member of numerous social and cultural groups, and a part of sport as an institution immersed in a particular sociocultural and historical context. Considered in light of Foucault’s notion of fragmented subjectivity, athletes are both subjected to and active agents within various discourses. This reconceptualization of identity is one that traditional sport psychologists find particularly difficult to accept and to which they offer considerable resistance. However, we must confront the fact that athletes have multiple, fragmented identities and identifications within various discourses of class, gender, race, sexual orientation, region, etc., that athletics is a subculture within a larger culture, and that the institutions in which athletes are located attempt to control and mold their behavior. The complex dynamics involved in athletes’ negotiations of their subjectivities within and in relation to these various discourses has a crucial effect on athletes’ lives and performances.

Thus, in some ways, sport psychology as cultural praxis intersects with and underscores previously mentioned new trajectories. For example, it involves a move toward interdisciplinarity, a bridging of the gap between research and practice, and the incorporation of gender issues and power dynamics. However, this new trajectory differs significantly in