# SUCCESS IN SPORT AND WORK-RELATED VALUES

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Abstract

International sporting success (ISS) has been attributed to either, the possession and utilisation of economic and demographic resources, or to the power of centralised decision making processes (Gartner, 1989). It is proposed here that success, which is taken to mean the achievements of nations at major events like the Olympic Games, also owes much to the work-related value systems that operate in any society.

# SUCCESS IN SPORT AND WORK-RELATED VALUES: A PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION

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**Introduction**

International sporting success (ISS) has been attributed to either, the possession and utilisation of economic and demographic resources, or to the power of centralised decision making processes (Gärtner, 1989). It is proposed here that success,which is taken to mean the achievements of nations at major events like the Olympic Games, also owes much to the work-related value systems that operate in any society.

The modern notion of 'an achieving society' may initially prompt the image of an economically vibrant nation, but it can equally apply to the efforts of a nation in pursuit of sports excellence. Thus there is a parallel to be drawn between the world of games and sports on the one hand, and the world of work and business on the other. It was Rigauer (1969) who suggested that top level sport and work are structurally analogous, in that they are both built on the achievement principle. Therefore it is appropriate to examine variations in the sporting success of different countries from the perspective of work-related values. Hofstede (1991) suggested five dimensions by which means one can distinguish between cultures:

**Power Distance *Individualism *Uncertainty Avoidance *Masculinity *Long-term Orientation.*

**Review**

There have been 'economic based' and 'non-economic based' interpretations of factors which determine the sporting success of a nation. Drawing from earlier research, Colwell (1981) set out the key dimensions of both interpretations in a theoretical framework which identifies three main determinants of potential for International Sporting Success:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| PRIMARY importance | ECONOMIC | Potential Resources (Physical , Human) |
| SECONDARY importance | POLITICAL | Allocation and mobilization of resources |
| TERTIARY importance | SOCIAL | Inequality, Commitment, Opportunity set |

After Colwell (1981)

According to this model, economic wealth, size and density of population, and availability of resources form the foundation for ISS. Secondly, the type of government is advanced as the factor which explains different levels of success amongst countries with adequate resources. And thirdly, the social dimension accounts for any remaining variations. So, for example, Gärtner (1989) indicated that although economic potential as expressed by GNP is a particularly powerful determinant of Olympic success amongst democratic nations, socialist states do not follow the same pattern. The former communist countries win far more Olympic medals than their level of economic development might predict. The reason for this is assumed to lie in the inherent differences in decision making systems.

It is contestable that the economic dimension alone should constitute the baseline. This presupposes that only when sufficient resources are accumulated does a nation begin to value sport. It also fails to acknowledge that a society may not be in an economically viable position to compete because of other national priorities: particularly so in developing countries and some newly industrializing, countries where there are limitations due to small population size to consider. Colwell (1981) suggests that it is the addition of the social dimension alone which accounts for nations which have both the resource potential and resource mobilization required for ISS and yet still fail to gain success. The impact of the social dimension is somewhat limited by the struture of this model and there is no place for a socio-psychological dimension. It would seem that values only have any sort of bearing at a subsidiary level. It will be argued here that greater attention should be paid to the 'mental programs' (Hofstede, 1991) which help to account for differences between cultures. Furthermore it is suggested that an *interactive* model better portrays the relationship between the factors which determine ISS.

Seppänen (1970, 1972) promoted interest in the importance of socio-cultural factors which help to create ISS. He asserted that values are significant prerequisites for achievement in sport and the ideational structure of a society (social expectations, values and ideologies, for example) has a considerable bearing on the level of sports excellence:

> ..the social basis of high achievement in sport is to be found in the ethical values and cultural deep structure of society. (Seppänen ,1972)

**Purpose of Study**

Consideration is given to reinforcing the notion that values of different types are components of an interactive model: they complement the functions of better established economic, political and social factors. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to consider the significance of work-related values as an independent variable in the achievement of ISS. Using Hofstede's (1980, 1991) paradigm, it may be hypothesized that the dimensions of POWER DISTANCE and INDIVIDUALISM, for example, are the significant unconscious values in a society that help to explain success in competitions like the Olympic Games.

**Methods and Procedure**

Surveys undertaken by Hofstede in 1968 and 1972 produced data on values from the subsidiaries of IBM in 40 countries. Theoretical reasoning and statistical analysis generated four main dimensions along which cultures differ. A fifth dimension was added after the Chinese Culture Connection (1984) produced evidence to support the idea that nations could also be distinguished by their orientation to long-term and short-term goals.

The indices produced by the original surveys were correlated initially with the indices of sporting success derived from national performances at the Olympic Games of 1968 (29 countries) and 1972 (30 countries). For the sake of interest and in the hope that changes over time might present new perspectives, an additional set of calculations was undertaken for the Olympic Games of 1988 and 1992, in effect a gap of twenty years. Coefficents of success (Cs) were calculated with the aid of the method suggested by Seppänen (1970), the final index for each country being the ratio between actual and expected success

$$\text{Coefficient of success} = \frac{\text{Proportion of total points (per thousand)}}{\text{Proportion of the world population (per thousand)}}$$

Three points are awarded for each gold medal; two points for each silver medal and one point for each bronze medal . The proportion of points is calculated by dividing points achieved by total points possible. Population figures were extrapolated from census data.

Seppänen (1970) points out that raw scores are poor indicators, so proportional scores are utilized to enable comparisons to be drawn between countries of different population size. Even so there are inadequacies as some factors are difficult to incorporate into the calculation. For example, with the number of entries per event being limited, the strength in depth of a nation will not be acknowledged in a point system where only the first three are credited. Thus the USA does not dominate the tables as would seem likely and small nations like New Zealand achieve very high scores.

Table 1 Total points scored at Olympics, World Population Figures and Countries Correlated

| Year | Venue | Total Points | World Population | Countries Correlated |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1968 | Mexico | 1060 | 3.5 billion | 29 |
| 1972 | Munich | 1185 | 3.9 billion | 30 |
| 1988 | Seoul | 1455 | 5.1 billion | 34 |
| 1992 | Barcelona | 1591 | 5.5 billion | 38 |

Table 2 Coefficients of Success and Indices for Work-Related Values

| Country | Cs 68 | Cs 72 | Cs 88 | Cs 92 | Pop. 1992 | PDI | IDV | UAI | MAS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| USA | 3.68 | 3.00 | 2.82 | 3.00 | 249.2 m | 40 | 91 | 46 | 62 |
| Japan | 1.75 | 1.71 | 0.72 | 1.01 | 123.5 | 54 | 46 | 92 | 95 |
| France | 2.18 | 1.30 | 2.02 | 3.08 | 56.1 | 68 | 71 | 86 | 43 |
| W.Germany * | 2.59 | 4.15 | 4.30 | 7.53 | 77.6 | 35 | 67 | 65 | 66 |
| Australia | 9.36 | 10.12 | 5.76 | 10.23 | 16.9 | 36 | 90 | 51 | 61 |
| Great Britain | 1.68 | 1.83 | 2.71 | 1.99 | 57.2 | 35 | 89 | 35 | 66 |
| Italy | 1.62 | 1.88 | 2.06 | 2.18 | 57.1 | 50 | 76 | 75 | 70 |
| Mexico | 1.19 | 0.12 | 0.08 | 0.08 | 86.0 | 81 | 30 | 82 | 69 |
| Yugoslavia ** | 2.81 | 1.58 | 3.28 | 1.45 | 23.8 | 76 | 27 | 88 | 21 |
| Netherlands | 4.14 | 2.98 | 3.82 | 5.76 | 15.0 | 38 | 80 | 53 | 14 |
| Iran | 1.22 | 0.53 | | 0.25 | 54.6 | 58 | 41 | 59 | 43 |
| Sweden | 3.77 | 12.20 | 6.24 | 8.59 | 8.5 | 31 | 71 | 29 | 5 |
| Turkey | 0.59 | 0.18 | 0.31 | 0.74 | 56.0 | 66 | 37 | 85 | 45 |
| Denmark | 10.88 | 2.00 | 6.14 | 6.05 | 5.1 | 18 | 74 | 23 | 16 |
| Canada | 1.59 | 1.05 | 2.43 | 4.57 | 26.5 | 39 | 80 | 48 | 52 |
| Finland | 5.78 | 10.62 | 4.96 | 6.25 | 5.0 | 33 | 63 | 59 | 26 |
| Norway | 5.08 | 7.59 | 6.19 | 12.35 | 4.2 | 31 | 69 | 50 | 8 |
| New Zealand | 6.05 | 6.81 | 24.33 | 16.27 | 3.4 | 22 | 79 | 49 | 58 |
| Pakistan | 0.16 | 0.09 | 0.03 | 0.03 | 122.6 | 55 | 14 | 70 | 50 |
| Venezuela | 1.00 | | | | 19.7 | 81 | 12 | 76 | 73 |
| Austria | 2.69 | 1.76 | 1.39 | 1.82 | 7.6 | 11 | 55 | 70 | 79 |
| Switzerland | 3.30 | 3.18 | 3.21 | 1.57 | 6.6 | 34 | 68 | 58 | 70 |
| Brazil | 0.14 | 0.07 | 0.24 | 0.18 | 150.4 | 69 | 38 | 76 | 49 |
| South Korea | 0.32 | 0.20 | 8.30 | 5.14 | 42.8 | 60 | 18 | 85 | 39 |
| Jamaica | 3.63 | 1.71 | 6.76 | 9.58 | 2.5 | 45 | 39 | 13 | 68 |
| Argentina | 0.28 | 0.26 | 0.33 | 0.11 | 32.3 | 49 | 46 | 86 | 56 |
| Greece | 0.38 | 0.73 | 0.36 | 2.07 | 10.0 | 60 | 35 | 112 | 57 |
| India | 0.01 | 0.01 | | | 853.1 | 77 | 48 | 112 | 56 |
| Taiwan | 0.24 | | | 0.34 | 20.4 | 58 | 17 | 69 | 45 |
| Belgium | | 1.36 | 0.71 | 1.40 | 9.9 | 65 | 75 | 94 | 54 |
| Colombia | | 0.58 | 0.11 | 0.10 | 33.0 | 67 | 13 | 80 | 64 |
| Spain | | 0.10 | 0.63 | 4.85 | 39.2 | 57 | 51 | 86 | 42 |
| Portugal | | | 1.10 | | 10.3 | 27 | 63 | 104 | 31 |
| Chile | | | 0.54 | | 13.2 | 23 | 63 | 86 | 28 |
| Indonesia | | | 0.05 | 0.21 | 184.3 | 14 | 78 | 48 | 46 |
| Peru | | | 0.42 | 0.32 | 21.6 | 16 | 64 | 87 | 42 |
| Philippines | | | 0.06 | 0.06 | 62.4 | 32 | 94 | 44 | 64 |
| Thailand | | | 0.06 | 0.06 | 55.7 | 20 | 64 | 64 | 34 |
| Ireland | | | | 4.67 | 3.7 | 70 | 28 | 35 | 68 |
| South Africa | | | | 0.39 | 35.3 | 65 | 49 | 49 | 63 |
| Israel | | | | 2.25 | 4.6 | 54 | 13 | 81 | 47 |
| Malaysia | | | | 0.19 | 17.9 | 26 | 104 | 36 | 50 |

* Reunification of Germany in 1990 led to increase in population

** Civil war in Yugoslavia led to division (Croatia, Slovenia and IOP won medals in1992)

**Results and Discussion**

Pearson Product-Moment Correlations (r) were undertaken to determine if there were relationships between the sets of indices. Significance figures are included in Table 3.

Table 3 Correlation between Coefficients of Success and Work-Related Value Indices

| Index | 1968 | 1972 | 1988 | 1992 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| PDI | -0.65 (0.0001) | -0.57 (0.0011) | -0.53 (0.0014) | -0.57 (0.0002) |
| IDV | 0.60 (0.0006) | 0.51 (0.0042) | 0.39 (0.0211) | 0.53 (0.0006) |
| UAI | -0.54 (0.0023) | -0.41 (0.0233) | -0.43 (0.0103) | -0.43 (0.0064) |
| MAS | -0.33 (0.0820) | -0.37 (0.0421) | -0.12 (0.4917) | -0.27 (0.1049) |
| LTO | | | -0.11 (0.6992) | -0.22 (0.4186) |

1. INDIVIDUALISM (IDV) is positively correlated to Cs.
2. POWER DISTANCE (PDI), UNCERTAINTY AVOIDANCE (UAI) and MASCULINITY (MAS) are negatively correlated to Cs.
3. LONG-TERM ORIENTATION (LTO) shows a weak negative correlation . No LTO indices were available for 1968 and1972.
4. The strongest correlations were obtained for PDI and IDV
5. The weakest correlation was obtained for MAS and LTO, these figures were not significant (one exception).

Certain limitations of the study must be noted. Firstly, only data derived from points and population were used to generate the coefficient of success for each country. Clearly the possibility of participation in each country will range considerably and this is not taken into account. Therefore some caution must be used when comparing large and small nations. Secondly it will be questioned whether the Olympics provides an adequate arena for the display of ISS: those sports represented tend to favour developed nations. The presence of Asian sports like wushu and silat olahraga would tilt the balance more towards newly industrializing countries. Thirdly, perceptions of what signifies success will vary amongst cultures. A single medal may symbolize a considerable national achievement to a developing country, but be of little consequence to a major sporting power. Even participation may be seen as success. And

finally only countries included in Hofstede's study can be utilized. No communist bloc nations are represented in the sample. Their inclusion would have enhanced subsequent observations on the nature of success.

**Conclusion**

Success at the Olympic Games clearly does depend on economic, political and social factors. But it is argued here that the influence of certain types values on the achievement of success may have been neglected. The role of power distance may be small in comparison to finance and sponsorship, but there is some justification for assuming that minimizing inequalities between coaches and athletes (reducing power distance), may benefit the progress of a potential athlete. Likewise the promotion of beneficial aspects of individualism (some personal control over goals and incentives, initiative in setting training targets) may be working positively in some countries. The line of demarcation between male and female roles is becoming increasingly less obvious. More women are participating in a wider range of sports than ever before and are gradually narrowing the gap with men in terms of performance, so it would seem that masculinity values have less relevance now than before. Uncertainty avoidance in sport is concerned with adequate preparation and the reduction of stress. Not just the stress of competition but concerns with economic security and the sacrifices that are required by non-professional athletes. Finally, long-term orientation does not seem to be significant at the moment: the competitive life of most top athletes being relatively short.

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