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**VALUES ASSOCIATED WITH SPORT IN
SINGAPORE JUNIOR COLLEGES**

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Abstract

The values and value priorities that emerge from an integration of personal experiences, socialisation, and the contextual elements that define the society are associated with the decision to enter into, and commit to, the sport culture in Singapore (Aplin, 1999). The ideational foundations of participation in, and commitment to competitive sport in Singapore are apparently found within the school system. When participation in sport for Junior College (JC) students is voluntary, it is the commitment to representative sport through the extra-curricular activities system that distinguishes the real participant from the conscript.

In order to determine which values are prioritised in leading the motivation of individuals towards sport-related goals, the Schwartz Values Survey was used. Groups differed significantly on two of the model's ten components: 'Stimulation' and, in a less clear-cut way 'Conformity'. The comparison between the three groups for the value type 'Stimulation' revealed a significant difference between all those with the mean scores increasing systematically from the non-participants group to the lower achievers, and then the higher achievers groups.

VALUES ASSOCIATED WITH SPORT IN SINGAPORE JUNIOR COLLEGES

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KEY WORDS: Values, Singapore, Schwartz Values Survey

INTRODUCTION

The values and value priorities that emerge from an integration of personal experiences, socialisation, and the contextual elements that define the society are associated with the decision to enter into, and commit to, the sport culture in Singapore (Aplin, 1998). The ideational foundations of participation in, and commitment to competitive sport in Singapore are apparently found within the school system. When participation in sport for Junior College (JC) students is voluntary, it is the commitment to representative sport through the extra-curricular activities system that distinguishes the real participant from the conscript.

In order to determine which values are prioritised in leading the motivation of individuals towards sport-related goals, the Schwartz Values Survey was used. It represents an instrument with proven reliability and validity in the examination of distinct individual-level differences. Schwartz (1992) asserts that values serve as guiding principles used in the pursuit of desirable goals, and are structured in a hierarchical form to enable certain 'priority' behaviours to prevail at the expense of others.

METHOD AND PROCEDURE

SAMPLE

A total of 270 JC students (128 males and 142 females) participated in this study. Mean age was 17.7 (SD=0.63) years. The students represent the age group that provides the largest proportion of athletes participating in competitive sport in Singapore (Singapore Sports Council, 1992). Three broad categories of participation were identified: non-participation, low achievement, and higher achievement. Male and female subjects were assigned to their respective group based on involvement in school- or community-based extra curricular activities. Those individuals who had been selected for the higher levels of performance, for example, athletes in national representative teams, were designated as 'higher achievers'. Those who had shown commitment over time, but without the achievement of high performance standards were designated 'lower achievers'.

PROCEDURES

Students were administered the Schwartz Value Survey (1992), which assesses values and value priorities, by the principal investigator. Written approval was obtained both from the Ministry of Education and from the respective Principals of the schools to undertake the research project. All students were verbally assured of anonymity and requested not to sign their survey form. The inventory took approximately 20 minutes to complete.

RESULTS

VALUE CONFIGURATIONS

A multidimensional scaling analysis (MDS) was undertaken to confirm the structure of relationships between the values. The reliability of the individual value constructs themselves was tested with the use of Cronbach Alpha coefficients. The pattern of values and their location within the ten value types closely matched the prototype derived by Schwartz (1992). The Cronbach Alpha scores for the total sample were: Power (.72), Achievement (.67), Hedonism (.56), Stimulation (.77), Self-Direction (.57), Universalism (.64), Benevolence (.70), Tradition (.46), Conformity (.64), and Security (.65).

NORMALITY AND HOMOGENEITY OF VARIANCE

Data at the level of value types were tested successfully for normality by means of skewness and kurtosis statistics. Homogeneity of variance between the selected groupings was tested by means of the Levene F-statistic. Non-significant figures were produced for all ten value types (df. = 2, 267), indicating that the responses of the groups could be compared. Confirmation of the homogeneity of matrices was provided within the multivariate model by Box's M test of the equality of group covariance ($M = 95.770$, $F(110, 192956) = .825$, Significance = .909).

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

Based on the value grouping provided by the MDS, a MANCOVA using the three sub-groups as the independent variable was conducted with age, gender, and the individual's mean importance score used as covariates. MANCOVA revealed a significant effect for groups, $F(18, 514) = 1.982$, $p = .009$. Univariate F-test scores indicated that the groups differed significantly on two of the ten dimensions of the model: 'Stimulation' ($F = 6.753$, $p = .001$), and 'Conformity' ($F = 4.722$, $p = .010$). Pair-wise comparisons indicated that the Higher Achievers placed greater emphasis on 'Stimulation' than both the Lower Achievers, and Non-Participants. The Lower Achievers placed greater emphasis on 'Stimulation' than Non-Participants. The Higher Achievers and Non-Participants placed greater emphasis on 'Conformity' than the Lower Achievers.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The primary purpose of this study was to compare higher achievers, lower achievers, and non-participants in sport on the values identified by the Schwartz Values Survey (1992). Groups differed significantly on two of the model's ten components: 'Stimulation' and, in a less clear-cut way 'Conformity'. The comparison between the three groups for the value type 'Stimulation' revealed a significant difference between all those with the mean scores increasing systematically from the non-participants group to the lower achievers, and then the higher achievers groups. 'Stimulation' may then be seen as the best indicator of differences. The higher achievers scored significantly higher than the lower achievers on 'Conformity', however, non-participants, also scored significantly higher than members of the lower achievers ($p = .004$).

STIMULATION

The need for stimulation is an important motivating force for human behaviour. It is concerned with the way individuals react to their environment and particularly with the arousal-producing properties of varying degrees of environmental stimulation (Donnelly and Birrell, 1978). Based on the results in this study, the need for 'Stimulation' is revealed as the

most relevant criterion for initial participation in competitive sport in Singapore and as a motivation to commit to high level performance.

The stimulation offered by sports participation is represented in affective experiences, which are presumably distinguishable from other experiences in the school environment. Decisions to participate or not are regulated by two factors: first, the compatibility of competitive involvement with the need for a certain type of stimulation, and second, by the strength of contending priorities, such as academic study and social engagement.

A number of characteristics make sports participation stimulating. For example, the presence of challenge and the excitement generated in anticipation of challenge are often important objectives of participation. If challenges are not present in a sport programme then the intensity of involvement drops, boredom creeps in, and withdrawal may be the result (Clews and Gross, 1995). At another level, the feelings of competence and intrinsic pleasure, which result from successful attempts at exploration, mastery, curiosity, challenge have been identified as important elements in encouraging a positive motivational orientation towards sport (e.g. Biddle and Brooke, 1992).

The ability of value constructs to differentiate between groups of participants and non-participants was small but significant. In identifying 'Stimulation' as the best indicator of differences, this study raises important questions about the influence of values and other affective constructs on the decisions to participate in sport. Yet, equally as striking as this finding was the identification of how homogeneous the value systems of the three groups were and how sport participation was associated with the smallest of value shifts.

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