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Value orientations associated with the pursuit of sports excellence in Junior Colleges and Centralized Institutes

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Abstract:

The aim of this paper is to identify which general values can be associated with the achievement of success in sport. 687 students from 7 Junior Colleges and 2 Centralized Institutes in Singapore completed an inventory based the universal values instrument devised by Schwartz and Bilsky (1987, 1990) and Schwartz (1992). Male and female students were grouped according to perceived achievement in their preferred sport. Two broad categories of performance were utilized to provide comparisons. Students who had solely represented their college or institute at the various Schools National Championships were compared with those who had achieved the distinction of being awarded zone or national colours, or who had been selected to represent their respective Combined Schools teams.

Preliminary findings indicated that 'self-transcendence' values such as friendship and equality are ranked highly by both groups. Distinctions between males and females are apparent when considering values associated with the pursuit of individual interests. 'Self-enhancement', which is linked with such values as power, stimulation and self-direction, is ascribed greater priority by the higher achievers.

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Value Orientations associated with the pursuit of sports excellence in Junior Colleges and Centralized Institutes

Introduction

It is common to evaluate the basis for improved performance levels in competitive sport by means of either physiological elements such as cardio-vascular efficiency, dynamic strength or speed; by means of psychomotor components of skill such as anticipation and timing, or by means of psychological qualities such as focus, visualization and relaxation. The essence of this study is to discover if differences in performance can be attributed also to the value systems which guide individuals and groups who regularly participate in competition.

Values are assumed to be guiding principles used in the pursuit of desirable goals, and are structured in a hierarchical form to enable certain behaviours to prevail at the expense of others (Kluckhohn, 1951; Rokeach, 1973; and Schwartz, 1992). Values are said to represent three universal requirements of existence, which require attention: firstly, individual biological needs such as movement; secondly, the need for coordinated social interaction; and thirdly, the welfare and survival needs of groups (Schwartz, 1992). The assumption is that values vary according to different motivational goals. Potentially this makes them appropriate as tools to identify group differences in any area of human endeavour. Furnham (1992) proposed that values may be conceived as a system of beliefs concerned with issues such as competence, as derived from societal demands.

As values are grouped hierarchically, it can be implied that when an individual is confronted with a conflict of interests he or she will resolve the situation by prioritizing a particular value or perhaps cluster of relatively compatible values. Schwartz (1992) suggested, for instance, that the pursuit of achievement values may conflict with the pursuit of benevolence values. Schwartz (1992) identified ten individual-level motivational types. Each motivational value type is presupposed to exist in all cultures and to have similar content in each one. The presumed universality of the value categories is based on the theory that values are derived from three fundamental human requirements: needs of individuals as biological organisms; needs relating to coordinated social interaction; and survival and welfare needs of groups. These requirements are shaped into goals, expressed as values, and then communicated to other members of the society. Furthermore values are considered to be transsituational (Schwartz, 1992).

Schwartz' (1994) findings supported three general hypotheses. Firstly, that most people make use of the 10 distinctions in value categories (high-order values shown in Figure 1) when applying values as guiding principles. Secondly, that compatible values may be pursued and attained simultaneously. And thirdly, some values may be in conflict with others. Figure 1 illustrates how the ten motivational types are related. Values found within each wedge make up a separate value type, for example, 'successful', 'ambitious', 'capable', and 'influential' occur within the Achievement space (but not shown in Figure 1). The ten value types are then organized on two bipolar dimensions, with each pole constituting a higher-order value type that combines two or more value

types (Schwartz, 1994). For example, *universalism and benevolence* are compatible and may be pursued simultaneously, together they represent SELF-TRANSCENDENCE. They are in opposition to *achievement and power*, which represent SELF-ENHANCEMENT.

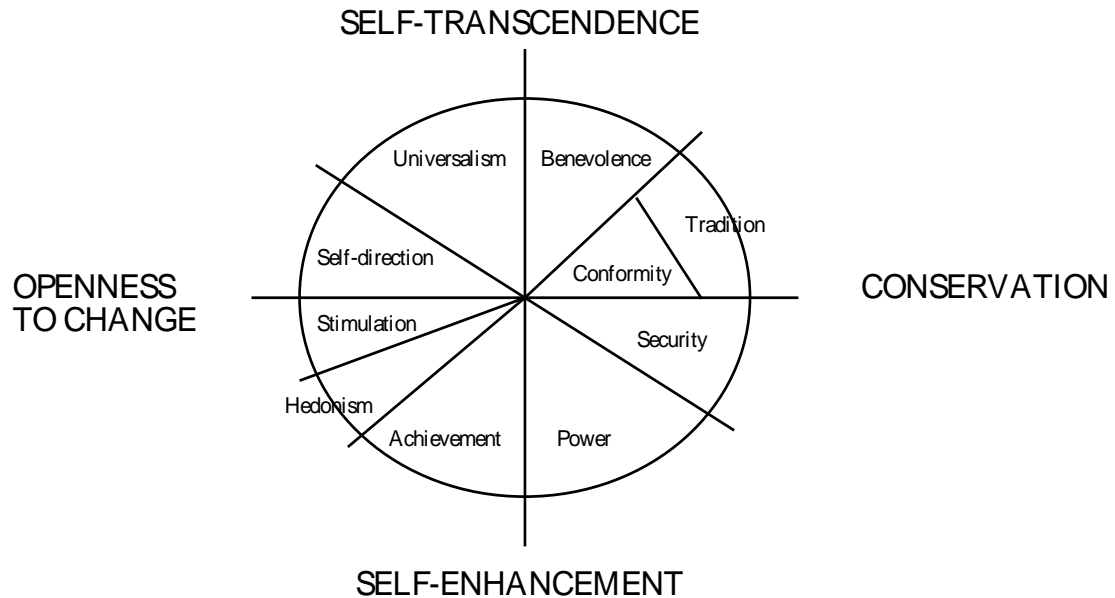


Figure 1: Schwartz' Model of Individual Level Motivational Types of Values

The ten motivational types of values may represent one of three categories of 'interest'. Power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation, and self-direction are perceived to represent 'individual interests'. These values would appear to be more closely associated with the pursuit of success in competitive sport than universalism and security, which are perceived to represent 'mixed' interests and benevolence, tradition, conformity, which are perceived to represent 'collective' interests.

Compatible value types enhance the attainment of goals, whilst competing values may provoke dissonance. For example, stimulation and self-direction both relate to intrinsic motivation for mastery and openness to change. Deci (1975) has argued that competency and the need for self-determinacy are required to sustain intrinsic motivation to participate in sport. Significantly, conflict arises when different values are in opposition, for example, the pursuit of achievement values may conflict with benevolence values: seeking personal success in sport may simultaneously obstruct actions aimed at enhancing the welfare aims of opponents through fairplay.

Method

Subjects

The research sample consisted of 687 students drawn from 7 Junior Colleges and 2 Centralized Institutes in Singapore. 378 males (55% of the sample) and 309 females (45% of the sample), aged 16 to 21 years (median=18 years), who had participated in

competitive sport in either 1994 or 1995, were categorized according to the level of achievement they had attained:

- Low/Moderate** : inter-school, club, community centre and national schools championships;
High : zone and national colours awards, combined schools, state representation at a regional or global level.

Instrumentation

A survey based on Schwartz (1992) was implemented to ascertain the subjects' value priorities. The purpose of the study was to determine the extent to which scores obtained for the high-order value categories might be reflected in the achievement-level groupings that were derived from the biographical data. Respondents were asked to rate each value on a 9-point scale ranging from "of supreme importance" (7) to "opposed to my values" (-1). A rating procedure was adopted by Schwartz (1992) in preference to the ranking procedure first adopted by Rokeach (1967) as it has the advantage of greater ease and speed in completion.

The inventory was distributed in person to male and female subjects, and were either collected on site, if the subject was aged 18 or above, or collected later after parental consent had been granted for younger subjects. Data was processed using SPSS for Windows

Results

Simple descriptives and frequencies revealed the pattern of response for the subjects. A combined total of 173 students had attained performance levels equivalent to or greater than zone colours awards. This group, which represented 25.2% of the sample and was given the nominal title of 'high achievers'. Of this group, 111 (16.2% of the sample) had been selected to represent the Singapore Combined Schools teams, 114 (16.7% of the sample)

Table 1: Value Priorities of Participants in Competitive Sport with Predicted Cluster and Interest served.

Variable	Mean	SD	Motivational Cluster	Interest Served
TRUE FRIENDSHIP	5.68	1.25	Benevolence	Communitarian
FAMILY SECURITY	5.47	1.26	Security	Mixed
HEALTHY	5.38	1.35	Power	Individual
MEANING IN LIFE	5.24	1.51	Benevolence	Communitarian
SELF RESPECT	5.07	1.37	Achievement	Individual
HONOURING PARENTS etc.	5.02	1.46	Conformity	Communitarian
LOYAL	4.90	1.33	Benevolence	Communitarian
INDEPENDENT	4.90	1.38	Self-direction	Individual
RESPONSIBLE	4.89	1.27	Benevolence	Communitarian
CHOOSING OWN GOALS	4.86	1.39	Self-direction	Individual
WISDOM	4.80	1.34	Universalism	Mixed
HONEST	4.80	1.41	Benevolence	Communitarian
SUCCESSFUL	4.79	1.41	Achievement	Individual

INNER HARMONY	4.77	1.47	Universalism	Mixed
CAPABLE	4.75	1.18	Achievement	Individual
INTELLIGENT	4.69	1.37	Achievement	Individual
FREEDOM	4.60	1.44	Self-direction	Individual
SENSE OF BELONGING	4.59	1.47	Security	Mixed
PRIVACY	4.49	1.50	Tradition	Communitarian
WORLD AT PEACE	4.49	1.79	Universalism	Mixed
HUMBLE	4.44	1.51	Tradition	Communitarian
AMBITIOUS	4.42	1.45	Achievement	Individual
BROADMINDED	4.39	1.47	Universalism	Mixed
MATURE LOVE	4.34	1.67	Benevolence	Communitarian
FORGIVING	4.25	1.42	Benevolence	Communitarian
SOCIAL JUSTICE	4.13	1.65	Universalism	Mixed
ENJOYING LIFE	4.01	1.85	Hedonism	Individual
NATIONAL SECURITY	3.98	1.86	Security	Mixed
EQUALITY	3.93	1.63	Universalism	Mixed
SOCIAL RECOGNITION	3.88	1.62	Power	Individual
POLITENESS	3.86	1.49	Conformity	Communitarian
SOCIAL ORDER	3.86	1.66	Security	Mixed
EXCITING LIFE	3.81	1.64	Stimulation	Individual
PLEASURE	3.61	1.60	Hedonism	Individual
VARIED LIFE	3.57	1.65	Stimulation	Individual
RECIPROCATING FAVOURS	3.56	1.67	Security	Mixed
OBEDIENT	3.47	1.50	Conformity	Communitarian
CLEAN	3.45	1.64	Security	Mixed
CREATIVITY	3.40	1.65	Self-direction	Individual
DARING	3.38	1.72	Stimulation	Individual
SPIRITUAL LIFE	3.26	2.25	Benevolence	Communitarian
PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT	3.24	1.72	Universalism	Mixed
CURIOUS	3.15	1.61	Self-direction	Individual
WEALTH	3.10	1.79	Power	Individual
DEVOUT	3.07	2.42	Tradition	Communitarian
RESPECTING TRADITION	3.05	1.69	Tradition	Communitarian
WORLD OF BEAUTY	2.91	1.78	Universalism	Mixed
MODERATE	2.84	1.87	Tradition	Communitarian
UNITY WITH NATURE	2.81	1.69	Universalism	Mixed
AUTHORITY	2.78	1.77	Power	Individual
INFLUENTIAL	2.77	1.94	Achievement	Individual
PRESERVING PUBLIC IMAGE	2.54	1.84	Power	Individual
ACCEPTING POSITION IN LIFE	2.28	2.32	Tradition	Communitarian
SOCIAL POWER	2.21	1.89	Power	Individual

had been awarded zone or national colours. The second group, which represented 74.8% of the sample was labelled the ‘low/moderate achievers’. Three sets of results were then generated:

- 1) scores which indicated the value priorities of the whole sample in terms of individual items and the interests served by each value;
- 2) scores which compared the value priorities of 'high' and 'low/moderate' achievers;
- 3) scores which compared male and female achievers.

Table 1 on the previous page shows the hierarchy of values which are labelled according to Schwartz' test which used Smallest Space Analysis (Canter, 1985).

To control for acquiescence response set, scores for each of the 54 values rated by the respondents were standardized (Z-scores). Responses were factor analyzed using the Mineigen Criterion of 1.0. This process produced 15 factors as compared to the 10 generated by Schwartz (1992). Comparisons between the two categories of achievers were identified by means of a MANOVA. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was 0.82.

With multivariate F-tests, the interaction term (achievement level by gender) was not significant $F(15, 669) = 1.165$, $p = .295$, however univariate F-tests indicated significant differences between groups in **Spirituality** $F(1, 683) = 5.82271$, $p = .016$, and in **Universalism/Achievement** $F(1, 683) = 5.72279$, $p = .017$.

The main effect for achievement was not significant $F(15, 669) = .56183$, $p = .904$. The main effect for gender $F(15, 669) = 4.47039$, $p = .000$ was significant.

Table 2 indicates the significant differences at the univariate level.

It was found that there is little difference between the values of students at the two levels of achievement examined. The differences that did exist were found when comparing genders. These differences were largely confined to value clusters emphasizing individual or mixed interests. Males tended to place greater emphasis on values associated with openness to change (self-direction, stimulation and hedonism) and self-enhancement (achievement), whilst females tended to place greater emphasis on values associated with conservation (belonging, family security, and politeness), self-enhancement (healthy, social recognition, capable, self-respect), and universalism (equality, harmony, world of beauty and world at peace).

Table 2 Univariate F-scores (Gender groups)

Variable	F	p	Reliability
1. Universalism/Security	1.39	.239	.76
2. Power/Achievement	11.83	.001	.74
3. Stimulation	.07	.792	.68
4. Spirituality	3.46	.063	.35
5. Self-Direction	6.49	.011	.49
6. Tradition	.70	.402	.10
7. Security/Power	19.77	.000	.51
8. Benevolence	.02	.902	.61
9. Power/Achievement/Self-Direction	.21	.651	.18
10. Universalism/Tradition	2.47	.117	.37

11. Universalism/Achievement	7.95	.005	.37
12. Inner harmony	.14	.706	-
13. Benevolence/Self-Direction	.93	.336	.42
14. Hedonism	.93	.335	.60
15. Conformity	.57	.452	.70

Discussion

The primary purpose of the study was to compare high achievers and low/moderate achievers in sport on their value priorities. It was predicted that values associated with self-enhancement and openness to change would be the main discriminators. High achievers, indeed, placed lower priority on values linked to tradition (devout) and benevolence (spirituality) than the lower achievers. These collective values are opposed to achievement and hedonism, which are more individualistic in nature. High achievers also placed higher priority on values linked to intelligence and wisdom, which show compatibility with achievement and power (again individualistic, but with some emphasis on mixed interests).

Expectations that more extensive differences would emerge were not fulfilled. There are potential problems associated with the survey methodology. Firstly, for example, ensuring that each respondent can first successfully distinguish between a large number of variables in a hierarchical configuration. Secondly, a major requirement is that there is equivalence of meaning for all respondents. The age group sampled represents the youngest category of subjects who possess sufficient cognitive and linguistic experience to attempt the questions and therefore ensure reliability. In addition this age group is likely to show the influence of exposure to modernizing trends (Schwartz, 1994).

The general nature of values does not facilitate a well-defined discrimination between different achievement groups. But this study does support some early conclusions about participation in competitive sport, for example, that the varying stimulation needs of individuals are often satisfied through sport (Dickinson, 1975).

How do the values of this sample compare with other groups in Singapore? It does seem that Singaporeans are becoming more individualistic (Kau, Yeong, and Richmond, 1994), but there is evidence to suggest that the dominant system still supports the communitarian perspective. The current study and related values research in Singapore indicates that there are differences between the students and those who potentially may be teaching them. Chang (1995) reported that Singaporean teachers tended to place greater importance on values associated with collective or communitarian interests than on individual interests. The value types given priority by teachers (Chang, 1995) and students active in competitive sport provide an interesting perspective on a changing society (Table 3). No significance is claimed for these figures. There is some support for the standpoint taken by Kau, Yeong and Richmond (1994) that a shift in value orientation may be taking place.

The study does identify a number of avenues for further research in values, notably the perceived dominance of guiding principles more closely linked to individual and mixed interests than to collective interests. The values traditionally associated with sport

focus on two main spheres. On the one hand health, teamwork, self-discipline, fairplay, equality and cooperation serve collective interests. Alternatively, success, daring, creativity, ambition and power serve individual interests. Systems designed to pursue sporting success may need to place greater emphasis on nurturing selected elements of individualism.

Table 3: Value Hierarchies for Teachers and Students Active in Competitive Sport

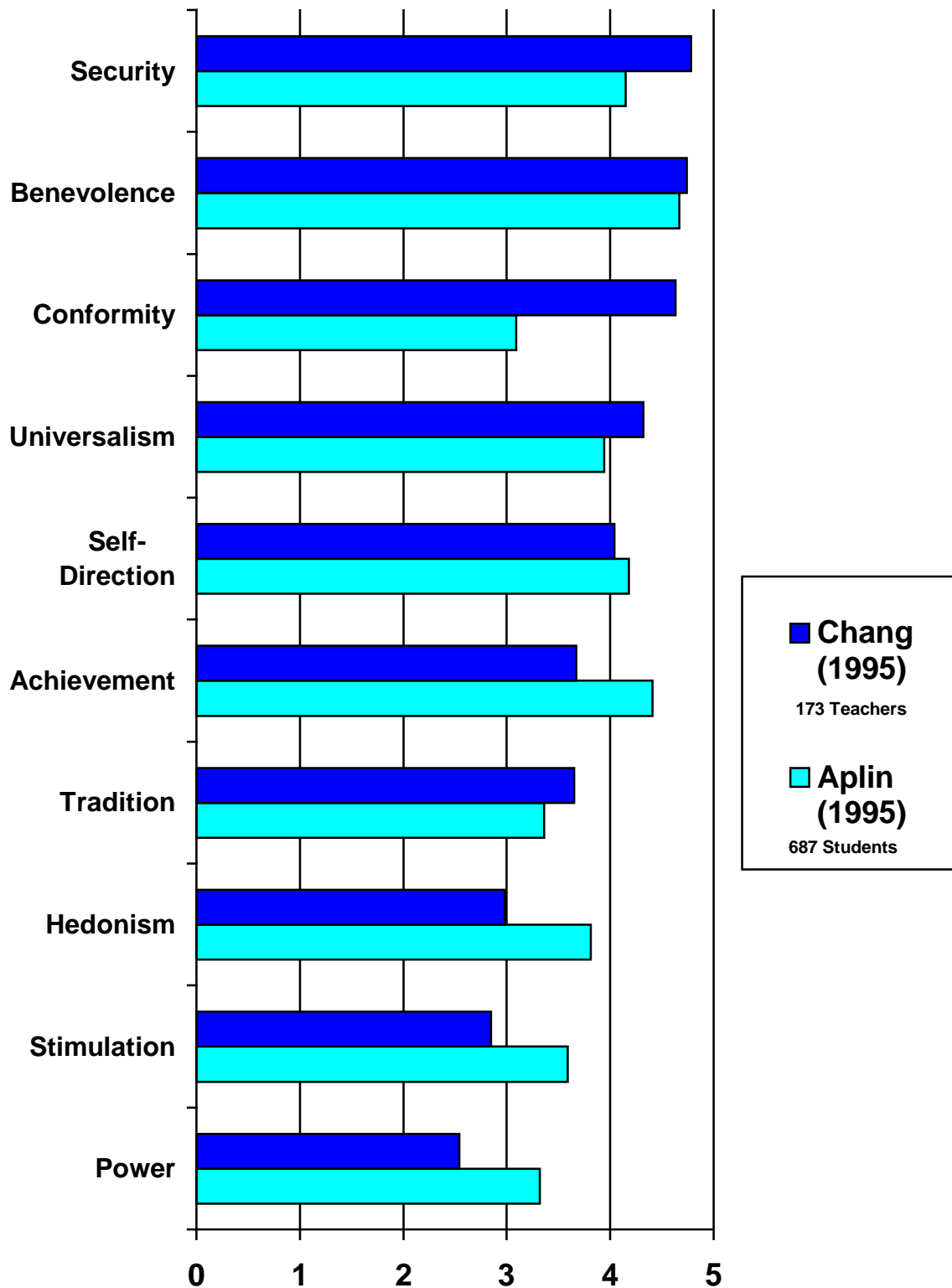
Teachers			Students		
Value		Mean	Value		Mean
Security	Mixed	4.78	Benevolence	Col	4.67
Benevolence	Col	4.74	Achievement	Ind	4.41
Conformity	Col	4.63	Self-Direction	Ind	4.18
Universalism	Mixed	4.32	Security	Mixed	4.15
Self-Direction	Ind	4.04	Universalism	Mixed	3.94
Achievement	Ind	3.67	Hedonism	Ind	3.81
Tradition	Col	3.65	Stimulation	Ind	3.59
Hedonism	Ind	2.98	Tradition	Col	3.36
Stimulation	Ind	2.85	Power	Ind	3.32
Power	Ind	2.54	Conformity	Col	3.09

It is still not clear whether values can be seen as predeterminants of participation and achievement in sport or indeed just one of the consequences of such activity. From the results here it is not possible to establish the direction of the 'cause-effect' link. However it is clear that all the values listed above have been recognized as contributing to the development of Singapore. The development of competitive sport in educational institutions in Singapore reflects the needs and therefore the values of a number of important groups. At the societal level, the need for a rugged society has prompted the encouragement of many vigorous activities. Practice in these sports can enhance health, fitness and daring, and be a preparation for economic productivity and total defence. At the individual level, achievement in sport plays a part in nation building through the enhancement of harmony and the establishment of positive role models. At present professional sport makes only a small contribution to the economic profile of Singapore. However, as the impact of extrinsically motivated participation increases, it would seem that the entrepreneurial spirit of the self-focused sportsman will need to be promoted to the same degree to that which has been encouraged in trade and industry.

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A Comparison between the Value Orientations of Teachers and Students (active in sports competition)