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A Prospective Analysis Of Self-Determined Sport Motivation And Sportspersonship Orientations

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Abstract

The present study tested the replicability of longitudinal findings reported by Vallerand and Losier (1994) which disclosed a predominant time-order relationship between self-determined sport motivation and sportspersonship orientations. To this end, 17 female and 24 male physical education students with a mean age of 20.9 years completed scales assessing both variables twice with an interval of one year between times of measurement. As expected, the results of cross-lag analyses revealed a stronger positive correlation between self-determined sport motivation at Time 1 and sportspersonship orientations at Time 2 than for the reverse order relationship. Findings are discussed in view of theoretical implications and methodological shortcomings.

Introduction

In recent years, a number of authors from various fields have advocated the need for studying sportspersonship more extensively (e.g., Morgan, Meier & Schneider, 2001). Sportspersonship can be defined as “concern and respect for the rules and officials, social conventions, the opponent, as well as one's full commitment to one's sport and the relative absence of a negative approach to sport participation” (see Vallerand, Brière, Blanchard & Provencher, 1997, p. 198). Another way of referring to sportspersonship is to say that it provides a clear indication of the extent to which an athlete is willing to stretch the rules for victory. Put simply, the notion of sportspersonship thus has to do with *how* athletes will be inclined to play the game (Vallerand & Losier, 1994).

To date, three theoretical views have made seminal contributions to our understanding of sportspersonship orientations. First, the social cognitive theory posits that models and

reinforcement determine athletes' beliefs about what constitutes appropriate and inappropriate behavior in competitive settings (e.g., Bandura, 1986). The second approach draws concepts from the structural developmental model (e.g., Haan, 1983) and, most notably, moral reasoning. Specifically, one's capacity to instill conciliation through moral dialogue has been shown to impinge on aggression thereby suggesting behavioral propensities akin to those associated with sportpersonship (e.g., Bredemeier, 1985; Bredemeier & Shields, 1986, 1993). The social-psychological perspective (Vallerand, Brière, Blanchard, & Provencher, 1997; Vallerand, Deshaies, Cuerrier, Brière, & Pelletier, 1996) comes third. Several assumptions of this model will act as key constituents of the hypotheses to be tested hereafter. Therefore, it will now be described in more detail.

Vallerand and colleagues (1996, 1997) propose a fivefold conceptualization of sportpersonship. First, it is posited that sportpersonship consists in showing concern and respect for rules and officials, no matter if one gets penalized by them during a competition. The second orientation translates into showing concern and respect for the opponent. For instance, the athlete would refuse to win by default, should the opponent be late or injured. The third orientation deals with the acceptance of the implicit social conventions to be found in sport (e.g., being a good loser). The fourth orientation deals with the quality of personal commitment to sport. Steady and hard training sessions are representative of this particular orientation. In opposition to the above, the fifth orientation concerns a negative approach to sport participation and manifests itself by a "win at all costs" mindset. The athlete would then be inclined to break the rules and resort to aggression.

Central to the social-psychological model of sportpersonship are three propositions. First, it is posited that principles of reinforcement/punishment and individual differences (e.g., motivational profile) both contribute to the development of sportpersonship orientations. The second proposition pertains to social determinants other than reinforcement/punishment. That is, sportpersonship orientations would be impacted by a broader range of determinants that may be cultural, structural (e.g., collective versus individual sports), interpersonal (e.g., team cohesion), or situational (e.g., home advantage) in nature. Third, the model proposes that primary social agents (e.g., coaches, parents, peers) strongly impact on one's beliefs about what sportpersonship is and what it is not.

Drawing on the social-psychological model, Vallerand and Losier (1994) explored the temporal relationships between self-determined sport motivation and sportpersonship. To this end, they used a longitudinal design and surveyed a sample of 77 male hockey players twice, using a time lag of five months between times of measurement. Vallerand and Losier reported a predominant relationship between early self-determined sport motivation and later sportpersonship. Accordingly, they concluded that athletes who display prominent feelings of pleasure and autonomy towards sport participation (see Deci & Ryan, 1985 for a more elaborate discussion) were inclined to behave in a sportpersonlike manner.

The goal of the present study was to try to replicate Vallerand and Losier's (1994) findings using a mixed sample of participants over a longer time lag of one year. First, it was predicted that self-determined sport motivation and sportpersonship orientations would be positively correlated at each time of measurement. Second, positive test-retest correlations were anticipated

between early and later measurements of the same construct. Third, positive temporal relationships were expected between self-determined sport motivation and sportpersonship over time. Most importantly, a predominant relationship was expected between early self-determined sport motivation and later sportpersonship orientations.

Method

Participants and Procedures

A total of 17 female and 24 male physical education students (M age = 20.9 years, $SD = 0.86$) volunteered for the study. All of them were steadily involved in sport (hours of training per week, $M = 4.94$, $SD = 2.94$; years of competitive experience, $M = 9.19$, $SD = 4.41$). Sporting practices were broken down as follows: soccer (34.1%), basketball (29.3%), handball (9.8%), rugby and tennis (5% each), volleyball, roller hockey, judo, running, gymnastic, swimming, and cycling (2.4% each).

At time 1 (T1), 107 respondents filled out a questionnaire asking them to reflect upon their sporting experiences. Among those, 38.3% completed the same questionnaire twelve months later at time 2 (T2) thereby yielding a final sample of 41 participants. T1 and T2 questionnaires were matched on the basis of an alphanumeric code. Participants were informed that they could hand out a partially completed or blank questionnaire if they wished to do so. The anonymous nature of participation was also stressed and informed consent was obtained prior to having participants complete the scales which are described below.

Measures

Self-determined sport motivation was estimated using the French validated version of the Sport Motivation Scale (Brière, Vallerand, Blais, & Pelletier, 1995). The SMS measures types of motivation derived from the self-determination theory of Deci and Ryan (1985). SMS items depict potential answers to the question “Why do you practice your sport?” and are rated on a 7-point Likert scale with 1 (*does not correspond at all to me*) and 7 (*corresponds exactly to me*) as endpoints. For the sake of parsimony, the abridged version was comprised of four 4-item subscales, namely: a) intrinsic motivation to accomplish things (e.g., “Because I feel a lot of personal satisfaction while mastering certain difficult training techniques”), b) extrinsic motivation by identified regulation (e.g., “Because it is one of the best ways I have chosen to develop other aspects of myself”), c) extrinsic motivation by external regulation (e.g., “For the prestige of being an athlete”), and d) amotivation (e.g., “I don’t know anymore; I have the impression that I am incapable of succeeding in this sport”).

For sake of parsimony, mean scores on the SMS subscales were combined into a composite *index of self-determined motivation* following a twofold procedure. First, and in line with prior research (e.g., Chantal, Robin, Vernat, & Bernache-Assollant, in press; Grolnick & Ryan, 1987; Ryan & Connell, 1989), participants’ scores were weighted as follows: intrinsic motivation to accomplish things, $M_{score} \times 2$; extrinsic motivation by identified regulation, $M_{score} \times 1$; extrinsic motivation by external regulation, $M_{score} \times -1$; and amotivation, $M_{score} \times -2$. That is, each motivation was weighted according to its positioning on the self-determination continuum

(see Deci & Ryan, 1985). Ensuing products were then added in the second step of the scoring procedure. As for interpreting the self-determination index, higher positive scores indicate that one's sport participation is characterized by prominent feelings of autonomy and pleasure (i.e., sport is an end in itself). Conversely, higher negative scores suggest that one's sport participation is tainted by dominant feelings of constraints and instrumentality (i.e., sport is a means to some end, other than the pleasure of participation per se). Those computations led to an adequate level of internal consistency with Cronbach's alphas of .86 and .80 for T1 and T2, respectively.

Sportspersonship orientations were measured by means of the Multidimensional Sportspersonship Orientations Scale (MSOS; Vallerand et al., 1997). The MSOS is comprised of five 5-item subscales: a) concern and respect for rules and officials (e.g., "I respect the official, even if she/he is not good"), b) concern and respect for one's opponent (e.g., "When an opponent injures her/himself, I do not take advantage of the situation"), c) concern and respect for social conventions in sport (e.g., "After competing, I congratulate the opponent for her/his good performance"), d) concern and respect for one's full commitment toward sport participation (e.g., "I do not give up even after having done several mistakes"), and e) negative approach toward sport participation (e.g., "When I make a mistake during an important part of the game, I really get upset"). Items are rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging between 1 (*does not correspond at all to me*) and 7 (*corresponds exactly to me*).

In order to align with prior research, a global *sportspersonship index* was calculated by averaging scores on each of the five MSOS subscales and then adding those means (after having recoded scores on the Negative approach toward sport participation subscale). Higher scores on this index reflect firmer attitudes of concern and respect for rules and officials, opponents, social conventions, as well as a stronger commitment and a more positive attitude toward sport participation. Those computations yielded adequate levels of internal consistency at both T1 and T2 with Cronbach's alphas of .82 and .84, respectively.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

To test for gender differences, female and male participants' mean scores were compared and only one significant difference was found. That is, women reported slightly higher sportspersonship orientations than men at T1, $M = 26.8$ vs. $M = 24$ ($t = 2.34, p < .05$). In addition, separate correlational analyses were conducted although the small sizes of the present subsamples did not permit definite conclusions regarding gender. Relationships comparable to those presented in Table 1 were noted for both women and men. In fact, only 2 correlations did not conform to the expected pattern of relationships. They concerned women's self-determined sport motivation at T1 and T2 ($r = .18, ns$) and women's self-determined sport motivation and sportspersonship orientations at T2 ($r = .14, ns$). In light of the above, a pooled sample of participants was used in the analyses to be reported below.

Cross-lag Analyses

First, positive relationships were expected between self-determined sport motivation and

sportspersonship orientations at each time of measurement. As can be seen in Table 1, the results of correlational analyses aligned with those predictions in disclosing positive bidirectional relationships between the two constructs, $r = .63, p < .01$ and $r = .43, p < .01$, for T1 and T2, respectively.

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. T1 SD sport motivation	---	.37	.63	.47
2. T2 SD sport motivation		---	.23	.43
3. T1 Sportspersonship			---	.66
4. T2 Sportspersonship				---

Note. SD = self-determined; $r_s \geq .37, p < .05$; $r_s \geq .43, p < .01$

Second, positive correlations were anticipated between early (T1) and later (T2) measurements of the same construct. That is because self-determined sport motivation and sportspersonship orientations alike are considered as stable personal characteristics that, notwithstanding some major life events, should not fluctuate much over time (Emmons, 1995). As expected, test-retest correlations indicated a substantial level of temporal stability between T1 and T2 for both constructs, $r = .37, p < .05$; $r = .66, p < .01$, for self-determined sport motivation and sportspersonship orientations, respectively.

Third, in line with Vallerand and Losier (1994), it was predicted that a stronger positive correlation would be found between early self-determined sport motivation (T1) and later sportspersonship orientations (T2) than for the inverse relationship. As can be seen in Table 1, the results of cross-lag analyses supported those predictions. Indeed, the analyses revealed a stronger positive correlation between T1 self-determined sport motivation and T2 sportspersonship orientations, $r = .47, p < .01$, than between T1 sportspersonship orientations and T2 self-determined sport motivation ($r = .23, ns$).

Discussion

The present results align with those reported by Vallerand and Losier (1994) thereby substantiating the hypothesis of a time-order relationship between self-determined sport

motivation and sportpersonship orientations. Specifically, by surveying the same group of athletes twice over a one-year period, a predominant relationship was disclosed between early self-determined sport motivation and later sportpersonship orientations. Given this convergence of longitudinal evidence, it seems reasonable to infer that one's reasons for practicing sport may represent an important determinant of how fairly one will play one's sport.

The present study suffers from at least two methodological flaws. A first caveat concerns the nature of the sample. As noted previously, it was comprised of physical education students involved in diverse sporting practices. Future research might benefit from working with more homogeneous subsamples of athletes. This would allow researchers to make comparisons that were not possible with the present sample. For instance, would the same temporal relationships between self-determined sport motivation and sportpersonship orientations be disclosed for athletes involved in low versus high contact sport (e.g., volleyball vs. ice hockey)? The second methodological shortcoming pertains to the measurement issue. That is, even if the scales that were used in the present study are generally considered as valid and reliable, they must be considered for what they are: self-report measures subjected to response bias. Admittedly, a more comprehensive picture would have been achieved by measuring behavioral variables related to sportpersonship, and most notably, aggression.

In closing, it is hoped that the present findings will offer some scope for researchers who may also want to explore the temporal relationships between self-determined sport motivation and sportpersonship orientations.

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