

Character, Deviance, and Sport

- Do sports train you for life? Characteristics of real life compared to sports
What does this comparison suggest? *Discussion*
- The concept of deviance
 - ▶ A. What do we mean by "deviance"? Positive and negative deviance. Is this how it is, or are the two positively related?
 - ▶ B. What causes deviance? $B = f(P, E)$ Explain
 - P factors
 - Intense motivation to attain some goal or commit some act (if aggression, frustration? Anger?)
 - Perception that legitimate means to attain the goal will be ineffective. (Role of high level competition?)
 - Low internal controls against the action (socialization)
 - Learned habits (modeling, reinforcement) and beliefs (e.g. in "toughness")
 - E factors: supportive environment
 - Weak constraints against the actions that can illegitimately attain the goal and social norms supporting the deviant behaviors (e.g. local norms, as at Nebraska).
 - Reinforcement, i.e., being successful by using illegitimate means → weakening constraints → habit (then a P factor for future)
 - Enabling –lack of punishment, making excuses for it, normalizing it.

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- Interactions – e.g., UNLV, Fresno (Tarkanian) recruit people with a history of bad behavior, provide supportive atmosphere, and reward people for doing it.
- ▶ VIDEOS: Character and Sport, 1992
Out of Bounds, 1995
- ▶ Two studies on negative deviance – aggression specifically
 - 1. Relationship of aggression in and outside sport. Howard L. Nixon, 1997, *J. Sport and Soc. Issues*. Survey of @200 male and female student-athletes. Also 218 sociology students.
 - Main independent variable was score on the "no pain - no gain" measure I just gave you. This was related to being aggressor in and outside sport
 - Results:
 - Male athletes significantly higher on toughness than female athletes [$p < .01$]
 - No difference between student-athletes and non-athletes in aggression outside sport.
 - Male athletes more likely to report being aggressor outside sport than female athletes [$p < .001$] 10.8% vs. 32.2%
 - Relationship of toughness to aggression outside sport [$p < .01$] Difference is entirely due to those with a high value on toughness vs. everyone else .

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- Relationship between being aggressive outside sport and accidentally hurting other athletes in competition $p < .001$ [intentional harm is similar but less strong]
 - Team [$p < .001$] and contact [$p < .01$] sport participation leads to being more likely to be the aggressor among male athletes; being a contact sport participant leads to more aggression outside sport for female athletes [$p < .05$]
 - *Discussion.* Does this research demonstrate causation?
- ▶ Arrest and conviction rates for sexual assault – athletes vs. non-athletes. Benedict & Klein, 1997 Soc. Of Sport J. Research based on 217 criminal complaints against athletes filed with police between 1986 and 1995, compared to a national sample.
- Methodology – Used Nexus Lexis and obtained 175 reported cases involving accused sex offenders identified as college or professional athletes. Called relevant county attorneys. Often got info. on additional cases. Final sample is 217, tracked from arrest through disposition.
 - Findings:
 - Comparison to national statistics.
 - 32% of reported rapes resulted in arrests, compared to 79% of reported rapes by athletes. Discussion. Why?

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- On the other hand, nationally, 54% of those in general population who are arrested are convicted, compared to 31% of athletes. *Discussion*. Why? From article – "jock-groupie" dynamic and reasonable doubt; jock safety net – good representation, money, support
- The "success" rate is thus 17% nationally and 24.5% for sports offenses. But it comes through identifying more offenders, not successfully prosecuting them.
- Positive deviance in sports. What is it?
 - ▶ Over-conformity to norms of sport: Engaging in behaviors harmful to the self physically or psychologically in the service of some desired goal. Can include use of steroids, painkillers, "playing hurt", eating disorders.
 - focus on playing with pain and eating disorders
 - VIDEO: Opening sequence of "North Dallas Forty". *Discussion*
 - Example #1 – Nixon's work on playing with pain. Two contributing factors: the media and social networks
 - Media messages. 1993. Soc. Of Sport J. Data come from a content analysis of Sports Illustrated articles.
 - data from 1969-1991. 44 articles, most (39) since 1980. All about men.

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- categories coded: (see pp. 186-7)
 - structural role constraints 16%
 - structural inducements and support 8%
 - cultural values 4%
 - institutional rationalization 22%
 - socialization/internalization of athletes 28%
 - acceptance of risks 22%
- findings:
 - most interesting one to a sociologist is that (p. 188) "athletes seem more likely than journalists to view pain and injury in personal or interpersonal terms, while journalists are much more likely to take a structural or organizational perspective and see possible exploitation in the ways pain and injury are handled in sport." Discussion. Why (machismo?)?
 - others
- Conclusion. Relationship to other occupations, e.g. construction trades.
- Second study: Study of coaches- 1994. Male coaches more than female coaches
 - players who endure pain and play hurt deserve respect;
 - playing hurt impressed them;
 - make players feel guilty for not playing hurt or with pain;

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- coaches of male teams more likely to say
 - comeback athletes have something to prove
 - playing with injuries and pain demonstrates character and courage.
- **Men are getting different messages than are women.**
- ▶ Example #2. "Sportsnets" – social networks. Nixon. 1993 Soc. Of Sport J. A theoretical paper that focuses on the people around the athlete.
 - Claims that "sportsnets" are most dangerous -- most likely to "entrap athletes in a culture of risk and foster a self-abusive pattern of risk, pain, and injury" when they have the following characteristics:
 - larger (with athletes more easily replaceable)
 - denser (more contact with each other than with people outside)
 - more intense and multiplex – relationships with teammates both on and off field
 - more centralized control over information and resources
 - higher in the reachability of athletes to coaches and other authorities
 - more closed for athletes (more restricted in terms of outside contacts)
 - more homogeneous in the transactional content of member relations
 - (and more stable in their social relational patterns)
 - 1996 article – what is impact on players?
 - Data: 156 student athletes who had experienced significant injuries (kept out of action 5 consecutive days or missed a game).

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- Results :
 - men > women on toughness and perceived pressure to play hurt
 - regular players, whites felt more pressure to play hurt than non-regular and blacks
 - regular players more likely to be injured; surgery is related to scholarship status and gender; disability is related to gender
 - Long term effects of media, "sportsnets" is probably internalization. Can lead to secondary deviance, e.g., drug addiction, perhaps to painkillers (see Bret Favre)
- ▶ Example #2 – Eating disorders and [mainly] female athletes.
 - Study of high school students: 108 athletes (track/cc, volleyball, basketball, softball, tennis, 172 non-athletes (from PE classes). Findings
 - no differences in unhealthy dieting practices
 - gender role orientation. Athletes more likely to be androgynous or masculine
 - personality scale differences found on perfectionism, bulimia scale (athletes worse, $p < .05$), indicating some possible danger, self-esteem (athletes better, $p < .02$)
 - Book by Thompsen and Sherman – evidence that
 - "thinness demand" sports have more athletes with high scores on the eating disorders index;
 - pressures from coaches, esp. of college gymnasts;
 - 75% of college gymnasts used some unhealthy practices
 - some evidence that the cycle can get started with exercise-induced anorexia. That is exercise -> lack of appetite -> decreased intake of food.

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- Chapman article 1997 Soc of Sport J. : "making weight" (potentially leading to eating problems). Takes a different, more individual approach. Studied one team of women rowers. Interviews. Average in boat had to be 125 pounds. Nobody could be over 130 during competition.
 - A "technology of power" - paragraph p. 217. Discipline, both self-imposed and mutually agreed-upon and discussed. Socially constructed self-discipline
 - A "technology of the self" – essentially about constructing an ideal self around the rowing body, justifying it in other ways (looks, reactions of men, etc.). Somewhat healthier because more internalized. Still not free, however, of power relations
 - relationship to media presentations of "ideal athletic bodies" cannot be ignored. These women constantly struggled against falling into unhealthy dieting practices.
 - discussion of contradictions of thinness and power in the context of their sport.