THE DEVELOPMENT OF A THEORY OF SPORTS COMPETITIVENESS

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The problem of this study is the development of a theory of sports competitiveness. The purpose of the study is twofold: (1) to contribute to a greater understanding of competitiveness as an aspect of human behavior affecting sports performance and (2) to serve as a possible source of hypotheses for experimental research and as an interpretative framework from which to examine experimental data related to sports competitiveness.

A review of the basic principles and characteristics of contemporary theories of human behavior was conducted for the purpose of selecting a comprehensive, yet readily understandable framework from which a theory of sports competitiveness could be developed. Phenomenology, a perceptual theory, was selected on the basis of its compatibility with the criteria set for theory selection. A review of the literature on psychological theory construction was conducted for the purpose of establishing guidelines for theory construction. General and specific guidelines were drawn from the literature and recorded. The theory of sports competitiveness was constructed as a descriptive, deductively derived theory utilizing related research data in a functional procedure.
A review of literature possibly related to sports competitiveness was conducted in a search for data to be used in the formulation of postulates. Data from these studies were frequently utilized during the development of the theory of sports competitiveness.

It was determined that man competes in sports because sport provides an effective and readily available means for need-satisfaction; specifically a means for maintaining or enhancing the phenomenal self. Man enhances the self in sport competition by demonstration of mastery over people or things, by identification with significant people or by membership in significant groups, and by change in the body organization. It was also determined that a molar viewpoint is required for understanding and prediction of the individual's competitive sports behavior.

Sports competitiveness was theoretically defined as a need-satisfaction technique characterized by individual variation in direction, consistency, intensity, and quality. Concerning the direction of competitiveness, each competitor develops a sports role for himself which is consistent with the satisfaction of his own peculiar needs for self-enhancement. The degree of compatibility of the individual's sports role with the traditional criteria for successful performance determines the extent that the individual's competitive efforts will be directed toward successful performance. The development of the individual's sports role is
largely dependent upon the perceived reactions of persons considered significant by the competitor and is influenced in proportion to the degree of significance assigned. Individual variance in the degree of consistency with which sports competitiveness is exhibited is the result of the continual process of differentiation of perceptions of the anticipated costs versus the anticipated gains in need-satisfaction. The degree of variance in consistency is proportional to the degree of variance in the individual's perceptions of the value of the anticipated need-satisfaction in view of the anticipated costs. The intensity of the individual's competitiveness is proportional to the intensity of need and the value assigned to sport as a means of need-satisfaction. The quality of the individual's competitive efforts is dependent upon his ability to differentiate the perceptions appropriate for the successful performance of a specific sports task while under the duress of the forms and amounts of stress normally associated with that sports task.

Sports competitiveness may be measured experimentally by measuring its component characteristics, preferably utilizing the sports situation for which greater understanding is desired. A composite score of all four characteristics is required.
THE DEVELOPMENT OF A THEORY OF SPORTS COMPETITIVENESS

DISSERTATION

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

There is an old slogan which one frequently encounters on the walls of athletic dressing rooms which states, "When the going gets tough, the tough get going!" This admonition represents some bygone coach's recognition of a rather intangible but extremely important aspect of human behavior as it pertains to achievement in sports. Terms such as "heart," "desire," and "mental toughness," are often used around athletic fields to describe a participant who is an intense competitor, one who has set a high level of aspiration and persists in his efforts to achieve his goals despite fatigue, pain, long hard work, and other obstacles.

Seemingly, such an important and universally recognized variable affecting sports performance would have been well-researched but a review of the literature indicates a surprising lack of direct inquiry into sports competitiveness as a form of behavior. Several studies were located which investigated personality in relation to success in sports, fluctuation of level of aspiration under various conditions, and the effect of various types of incentives on performance. However, even this type of related research has been sparse and various researchers, including motor learning and
performance authorities Cratty\(^1\) and Singer,\(^2\) have deplored the lack of research in this realm of behavior in sports. Furthermore, referring to research investigations of personality and sports, Husman states that there has been too much "probing in the dark with inadequate tools, number of subjects, and poor designs."\(^3\) He then stipulates a need for research to be based on some theoretical concept so that research findings can be interpreted from within some meaningful construct.\(^4\) If a plausible theory of competitiveness could be developed, researchers could test its principles and make meaningful interpretations which could have great impact upon such areas as sports counseling, training methods, player-position selection, and conditioning programs.

**Statement of the Problem**

The problem in this study was the development of a theory of sports competitiveness.


\(^4\)Ibid.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to construct a theory of sports competitiveness which would (1) contribute to a greater understanding of competitiveness as an aspect of human behavior affecting sports performance, and (2) serve as a source of hypotheses for experimental research and as a framework for interpretation of the results of experimental studies of competitiveness.

Background and Significance of the Study

From the practicing physical educator in the field to the research investigator in the laboratory, competitiveness is recognized as an important psychological factor in an individual's achievement in sports. Tom Landry, head coach of the Dallas Cowboys professional football team, flatly states that competitiveness is the most important single characteristic of a great athlete. Landry also ruefully remarks that regardless of the amount and type of information that can be accumulated on a player, the competitiveness of the player cannot be determined until he arrives at summer camp for tryouts. Other coaches concur with the high priority Landry assigns to assessment of individual competitiveness. For example, another professional football

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5 The Arkansas Democrat, March 12, 1969, p. 4B.
6 Ibid.
coach, the late Vince Lombardi, singled out individual personality assessment of players as the first and most important job of a coach, relating the importance of this assessment to motivation and achievement. Despite this intense interest of physical educators in differences in competitiveness in individuals, no research investigations would be located which specifically purported to investigate sports competitiveness as a factor influencing performance.

Several studies have been conducted, however, which delve into the issue from the standpoint of success in sports, personality differences between average and superior performers, the effects of varying motivational forces upon performance, and the effects of stress upon persistence of performance. For example, Singer lists skill, physical characteristics, and developed motor patterns as important factors related to achievement in sports but qualifies his statement by stressing the importance of the urge to win, the need for achievement, and the willingness to suffer to reach goals. Likewise, Cratty postulates that a persistence factor involving the individual's willingness to endure discomfort is an important element in athletic success.

Physiologists also recognize the influence of psychological

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7 The Arkansas Democrat, March 12, 1969, p. 4B.
8 Singer, p. 308.
variables as evidenced by de Vries' statement that the limits of cardiorespiratory endurance are set by a combination of physiological and psychological elements such as oxygen transport and ability to sustain an oxygen debt and motivation and willingness to tolerate pain.\textsuperscript{10} Cratty refers to the psychological factors influencing performance by observing that some performers lag back to avoid pain but superior athletes refuse to worry about the pain although they are fully aware of how much it will hurt.\textsuperscript{11}

Rethlingshafer links certain personality variables such as endurance, continuance, and control over distractibility with persistence of performance.\textsuperscript{12} She also proposes a relationship of personality to choice of level of aspiration for a given task.\textsuperscript{13} Oxendine also affirms a belief in the relationship of personality traits to level of performance.\textsuperscript{14} After reviewing research on personality and athletics, Ogilvie and Tutko have listed the following tentative factors as being related to success in sports:

\textsuperscript{10}Herbert A. de Vries, \textit{Physiology of Exercise} (Dubuque, Iowa, 1966), p. 335.

\textsuperscript{11}Cratty, \textit{Psychology and Physical Activity}, p. 18.

\textsuperscript{12}Dorothy Rethlingshafer, \textit{Motivation as Related to Personality} (New York, 1963), p. 91.

\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., p. 238.

1. Need for achievement
2. Endurance
3. Resistance to stress
4. Dominance
5. Leadership qualities
6. Coachability
7. Intrapunitive—ability to bear pain
8. Self-assertive
9. Intelligence.\textsuperscript{15}

An investigation by Johnson, Hutton, and Johnson affirms Ogilvie and Tutko's findings and also indicates that outstanding athletes exhibit a high level of aspiration.\textsuperscript{16}

Cratty links motivation to personality and states that the individual's personality affects a person's response to motivating forces.\textsuperscript{17} Along these same lines, Atkinson and Litwin investigated the relationship of the individual's motivation or need achievement and anxiety level on performance and found an interaction between the two variables, which suggests that a high need to achieve combined with a low anxiety level results in high levels of aspiration and superior performance.\textsuperscript{18} Ryan concluded that the effect of

\begin{itemize}
\item[17] Cratty, Movement Behavior, p. 144.
\end{itemize}
In view of the fragmentary and mostly suggestive nature of the previously cited studies, the need for a theory of sports competitiveness is obvious. Despite an intensive search of educational and psychological literature, no existing theory of this phenomenon was located. Rushall, speaking of the relationship between personality and physical performance, makes the following case for theory construction:

The consideration of a theoretical position to justify the investigation of this relationship is virtually non-existent in the literature. Explanations or descriptions are seldom offered as to why a functional relationship between personality and performance categories should exist. Most investigations are purposed towards the solution of specific questions. The lack of theoretical contemplation often negates research efforts as the consequent designs do not have the sensitivity or power to detect relationships, if they do exist. . . .

Thus the development of a theory of sports competitiveness appears to be essential and overdue.


Definition of Terms

Due to the nature of the study, terms needing specific definition either had to be defined theoretically or in accordance with a specific theory. In either case an accompanying discussion is a necessity, therefore all definitions have been incorporated into the text of the appropriate chapter.

Limitations

Two major limitations were imposed for the development of the theory of sports competitiveness:

1. This study was concerned with only one specific aspect of human behavior, competitiveness, as it occurs in a sports setting.

2. Since the scope of the study was limited to only one specific aspect of human behavior it was necessary for the sake of consistency to select an accepted, comprehensive theory of behavior as a framework for the development and interpretation of the miniature theory. Naturally, the miniature theory is subject to the limitations of the parent theory.

Basic Assumptions

The assumption was made that sports competitiveness could be adequately defined and described in a theoretical fashion.
Procedures for Collecting Data

The following procedures were implemented in order to accomplish the purposes of this study:

1. A review of the basic principles and characteristics of contemporary theories of psychology was conducted for the purpose of selecting a comprehensive, well-organized framework from which the theory of sports competitiveness could be developed.

2. A review of the basic principles and characteristics of the selected theoretical framework was conducted and the findings recorded.

3. A review of the literature on psychological theory construction was conducted for the purpose of establishing criteria for the construction of the theory presented in this paper.

4. A review of the literature on topics possibly related to sports competitiveness was conducted for the purpose of accumulating experimental data of possible use in the formulation of the theory's postulates.

Procedures for Analysis of Data

The following procedures were implemented in the actual construction of the theory from the accumulated data:

1. The criteria for theory construction were studied to determine the initial and succeeding steps in the development of the theory and to determine the form of construction.
2. The principles of the psychological theory of behavior selected as a framework for the study and the data from the related research were examined in comparison with the original ideas about sports competitiveness in order to initiate the formulation of postulates. New ideas were conceived as the study progressed and they were investigated in terms of the principles and data mentioned above. The repetition of this process and the restructuring of the organization of the growing number of postulates and concepts constituted the basic procedure for constructing the theory.
CHAPTER II

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Selection of the Framework Theory

The following criteria were established for guidance in selecting a framework theory:

1. The framework theory's interpretation of human behavior must be compatible with the initial ideas which prompted the planning of this study.

2. The framework theory must be a methodological and structural type which is consistent with the development of a miniature theory in accordance with the stated purposes of this study.

3. The framework theory must be relatively free of highly complex or technical terms and constructs which could prove detrimental to understanding and interpretation. This criterion should (a) ensure maximum and accurate utility of the framework theory in the development of the miniature theory and (b) promote maximum understanding of the theory of sports competitiveness by physical educators.

4. The framework theory must be a recognized, contemporary theory of human behavior.

The basic principles and characteristics of various psychologies of human behavior were examined with the above
criteria examined in relation to each. The theories studied were all located in a handbook of psychological theories by Neel. Neel grouped the theories according to four general headings and then summarized the basic postulates of each theory presented under each heading. Listed under the heading of Behaviorist theories, and duly studied, were summaries of theories by Watson, Hull, Guthrie, Tolman, and Skinner. Analytic theories studied included those of Freud, the Neo-Freudians, Jung, Adler, Horney, Sullivan, Froman, and Kardiner. Summaries of Lewin's Field Theory and Gestalt psychology were reviewed as were Individual psychologies by Allport, Murray, Murphy, and Snygg and Combs.

The Individual psychologies in general, and Snygg and Combs' Phenomenology in particular, seemed more appropriate for the task of serving as a theoretical framework when the criteria utilized for selection were considered. Snygg and Combs, the two leading spokesmen for Phenomenology, present their theory in a manner conducive to lay understanding. The basic principles of Phenomenology are highly compatible with the ideas and concepts which provided the impetus for the study. Phenomenology is a descriptive, deductively constructed theory which makes possible the development of a miniature theory in accordance with the stated purposes of

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2 Ibid., p. 339.
the study. In addition, Phenomenology has been recently described as a rising influence in modern psychology. 3

Basic Principles and Characteristics of Phenomenology

Phenomenology is based on the premise that all behavior is a function of the individual's perceptions. In other words, it is a theory of behavior described from the point of view of the behaver. Proceeding from this basic approach, Snugg and Combs postulate that all behavior is lawful, with the implication that to the behaver himself behavior always seems relevant and purposeful. The causes of behavior may be found in the situation as perceived by the behaver. 4

Thus the determinant of behavior may not be the objective, physical situation as it actually exists. The actual determinant of behavior is the individual's perception of the situation, accurate or not. The importance of the individual's viewpoint of the situation thus becomes apparent. Snugg and Combs term the individual's viewpoint his perceptual or phenomenological field and define it as the entire universe, including the individual, as it is experienced by the behaver at the instant of action. 5 This concept leads back to the basic premise of Phenomenology which Snugg and

3 Ibid., p. 5.
5 Ibid., p. 20.
Combs state precisely as follows: "All behavior, without exception, is completely determined by, and pertinent to, the perceptual field of the behaving organism." In other words, the only reality an individual knows is the reality that he perceives in the perceptual field that is available to him at any given moment. Thus people behave in terms of their immediate perceptions of a situation or in terms of what is real to them at a given instant.

The characteristics of the perceptual field include the properties of fluidity, stability, direction, and intensity. The fluidity of the perceptual field refers to the individual's ability to perceive a changing situation. This fluidity of the perceptual field makes change of behavior possible. Although the perceptual field is fluid, it is also organized or stable in many respects. This organization, with a capacity for change, is necessary as a frame of reference which the individual utilizes in making decisions. The organization of an individual's perceptions is always meaningful and directive. The direction of the individual's perceptual field is determined by his need and the activity by which he is trying to satisfy his need at the time. Therefore an individual's perceptions may be organized in one direction during play and in another when he is at work.

6Ibid.
7Ibid., p. 22.
8Ibid., p. 23.
9Ibid., p. 24.
Snygg and Combs postulate that "what is perceived is always a function of the individual's need operating in an organized field."  

The consideration of the intensity of the perceptual field requires an understanding of the Gestalt psychologists' concept of the figure-ground relationship and the process of differentiation. The figure-ground relationship refers to the observation that "the meaning of any event is always a result of the relationship of any item to the totality observed." Ground refers to the total field available and figure refers to that part of the total field that is perceived by the viewer at a given moment. An individual is not aware of everything taking place at a given time but rather focuses on aspects of the total picture which are related to his immediate needs. Therefore, when an individual's needs change, there is a corresponding change in his perceptual field due to the emergence of new figure from ground. This process of emergence of figure from ground is called differentiation by Snygg and Combs, who maintain that "the intensity with which events are experienced in the phenomenal field will be a function of the process of differentiation and levels of awareness." The more an

10 Ibid., p. 25.  
11 Ibid.  
12 Ibid., p. 27.
individual is aware of a need, the sharper his perceptions are focused upon ways to satisfy that need.

Although each person's perceptual field is unique, communication with others is made possible by the common perceptions of people. People everywhere are subject to many common experiences since people all live in the same world governed by common natural laws. People of a given culture or society have even more experiences in common which tends to produce similar perceptions of these experiences. Thus Snygg and Combs state that "communication is essentially the process of acquiring greater understanding of another's perceptual field and it can take place only when some common characters already exist." Significantly, the presence of common meanings in the perceptual fields of people also makes possible the understanding and prediction of behavior.

Finally, Snygg and Combs postulate that man's basic need is a striving to make himself more adequate to cope with life. By himself, the authors are referring to the phenomenal self which they define as "all the perceptions of the self a person has at a particular instant." The phenomenal self is not a physical entity but self as seen by the individual himself.

13 Ibid., p. 31. 14 Ibid.
15 Ibid., p. 35. 16 Ibid., p. 46.
17 Ibid., p. 44.
The concepts, definitions, and explanations offered in this chapter are a mere summary of the more basic principles of Phenomenology as presented by Snygg and Combs. Snygg's 1941 summary of the basic postulates of Phenomenology was utilized in comparison with the more recent source cited in this study to insure inclusion of all basic postulates.\textsuperscript{18} A great many implications of these postulates were explored in the development of the theory of sports competitiveness.

CHAPTER III

GUIDELINES FOR THEORY CONSTRUCTION

Theory: Definitions and Functions

At present, there is no universally accepted definition of theory. Webster lists thirteen separate interpretations of the word, one of which describes theory as follows:

4. A judgment, conception, proposition, or formula (as relating to the nature, action, cause, or origin of a phenomenon or group of phenomena) formed by speculation or deduction or by abstraction and generalization from facts. 1

Griffiths defines theory as "a set of assumptions from which a set of empirical laws (principles) may be derived." 2 Marx describes theory as "any more or less formalized conceptualization of the relationship of variables." 3 Since a more creative approach to the construction of the theory of competitiveness was possible through use of a broad, non-restrictive definition of theory, and since the study investigated the relationships of certain variables to an


individual's competitive sports behavior, Marx's definition of theory seems appropriate for the purposes of this study.

Although theories may vary in construction, the functions of theory are essentially twofold. First, theory may be of value in itself as an aid to understanding certain phenomena (the goal function).⁴ One of the stated purposes of this study was to contribute to a better understanding of competitiveness as an aspect of human behavior affecting sports performance. Second, theory may be useful as an aid in directing empirical investigations (the tool function).⁵ The stimulation of experimental research through the provision of a source of hypotheses and a theoretical framework for interpretation of results constituted a second major purpose of this study. Thus, both of these functions of theory were used as criteria in the development of the theory of sports competitiveness.

General Guidelines

Investigation reveals that there are some general guidelines applicable to all theory construction. Since these guidelines contain several technical terms, the following definitions have been accepted:

Construct—A construct refers to a concept that represents relationships among things and/or events and their properties.

⁴Ibid., p. 5. ⁵Ibid.
Deduction—Deduction is a formal logic in which specific conclusions are drawn from generalized premises.

Empirical—Evidence that is observational or directly based upon sensory experience is considered to be empirical.  

Hypothesis—A hypothesis is a proposition, usually couched in the form of a conjecture or provisional explanation, that states a relationship among variables.

Induction—Induction refers to a logic in which specific propositions are accumulated to produce generalized conclusions.

Law—A statement of regular, predictable relationship among empirical variables constitutes a law.

Postulate—A postulate is a proposition concerning the relationship of variables that is indirectly tested by means of its theorems (implications); hence, a formalized type of hypothesis, usually occurring in a deductive theory.

Variable—A variable refers to a class of objects or events, or properties thereof; a factor or condition that is conceptualized for scientific purposes.

The first stipulation in theory construction is that all theories have the common goal of being scientific.

Marx, commenting on the scientific aspects of theory

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6 Ibid., p. 41.  
7 Ibid., p. 42.  
8 Ibid., p. 43.  
construction, states that the three fundamental elements of all scientific theory construction are "1) Observations—which must be under controlled conditions . . . ; 2) Constructs—which must be operational (that is, have clearly specified and identifiable empirical referents); and 3) Hypotheses—which must be testable (that is, clearly disconfirmable)." 10

The observations of Snygg and Combs and the data from the related research studies have served as the observations for this study. Concerning constructs, an effort was made to define all constructs presented in the theory in as operational a manner as possible although the operational quality of some of the Phenomenological constructs imposed limitations at times. Hypotheses were formulated in testable form to the extent that this was possible. Sometimes nominal, or non-operational, constructs and hypotheses are necessary to project into areas not yet amenable to empirical terms. 11

Among the practical requirements of theory construction is comprehensive coverage without internal conflict or inconsistencies. 12 Another requirement is that theory be parsimonious. In other words, the theory should generate accurate predictions with the fewest prior assumptions and

10 Marx, p. 39.
12 Neel, p. 15.
the simplest laws. A good theory is open and flexible enough to include new evidence. However, it must not be so vague in structure that it can incorporate any foreseeable event without modification.\(^\text{13}\)

Neel has pointed out that theory construction in psychology has not historically met the scientific standards for theory construction as well as theories constructed in the more defined disciplines, such as physics.\(^\text{14}\) However, the usefulness of these general standards in the quest for objectivity and consistency in theory construction is apparent.

**Specific Guidelines**

According to Marx, the four major modes of theory development are:

\(...\) 1) the use of a model, or conceptual structure, usually borrowed from some other field whereby empirical investigation is provided with guidelines, but strictly speaking, no effort is made to test the "truth value" of the model itself; 2) the deductive procedure, whereby postulate sets are logically arranged as in a hypothetico-deductive framework, and empirical tests are indicated in terms of implications; 3) the functional procedure, whereby theory and data are developed interdependently, with neither straying too far ahead of the other but neither lingering too far behind; sometimes theory, sometimes data are emphasized as guides, with either clearly acceptable as such and scientific progress depending upon the degree of correspondence achieved between them; and 4) the inductive procedure, whereby inference is minimized and facts in the form of data are emphasized in their

\(^{13}\text{Ibid.}, p. 16.\)

\(^{14}\text{Ibid.}\)
own right, with theory then following, rather than leading, data and serving only in a summary or covering function.\textsuperscript{15}

These classifications are useful for the sake of understanding; but, few, if any, actual theoretical endeavors would in practice rigidly conform to one of these types.\textsuperscript{16} Examination of Phenomenology for example, reveals that is largely, but not entirely, a descriptive endeavor utilizing a great deal of the deductive procedure. Spence classifies Phenomenological constructs as response-inferred constructs and lauds the advantages of this type approach in the complex field of social behavior. Spence uses the term "response-inferred" to indicate a description of the situation as the subject sees or perceives it.\textsuperscript{17} Since Phenomenology, the framework theory, is largely descriptive, the theory of sports competitiveness is also largely descriptive although the inclusion of data from the related studies introduced a significant element of the functional approach thus producing a somewhat eclectic type of construction. Dubin makes a strong case for descriptive studies citing several landmark contributions of descriptive studies in the social sciences.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{15}Marx, p. 39. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{16}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 14.
\textsuperscript{18}Dubin, p. 227.
was specifically constructed as a descriptive, deductively derived theory utilizing research data in a functional procedure.
CHAPTER IV

A THEORY OF SPORTS COMPETITIVENESS

The Attraction of Sports

A serious consideration of individual competitiveness in sports must attempt to account for the universal attraction which sport seems to hold for the human race. However, attempts to explain man's preoccupation with sports are fraught with difficulties. Olsen observes that "Sport, so well-known and easily understood by millions throughout the world, becomes an intricate affair the moment we approach it from a theoretical, scientific point of view." Problems of terminology, the lack of a satisfactory theoretical model of play, games and sports, and the array of confusing and conflicting results from related experimental studies all add to the complexity of investigating sports competitiveness. Olsen sums up the problems of terminology as follows:

All words are not terms, but some of the most important ones are. If we say that a


2Ibid.

scientific theory states the relationship between concepts, then the formulation of the theory includes words among which are terms which correspond to the concepts. Ideally there should be only one term for each concept, and each term should refer only to one concept. We know that this is seldom the case, and for this very same reason terminological confusion arises.4

The following terms were accepted in an effort to alleviate terminological confusion:

Play—Play is a voluntary activity which takes place within limits of time and space and is governed by rules; its outcome is uncertain and unproductive; and it occurs in a contrived setting.

Games—Games may be defined as recreational activities characterized by competition, two or more sides, criteria for ascertaining a winner, and codified rules.

Sport or Athletics—Sport is a manifestation of vigorous physical play in the form of competitive games performed in a highly organized social setting. A combination of definitions was utilized in formulating an acceptable definition of sport or athletics. Sage defines sport as follows:

Sport is characterized by institutional organization, formal instruction for players and teams, and leagues with teams contesting for championships; it is further distinguished by commercialization and systematization of players into artificial rankings, i.e., amateur and professional.5

4Olsen, p. 723. 5Sage, p. vii.
Stockfelt stresses "competitive behavior, including intense muscle-activity" in his definition of sports.\(^6\) Turner emphasizes that sport is "both violent and aggressive in nature."\(^7\) Cagigal characterizes sport as a typically social, human activity in the competitive form of play.\(^8\)

Beisser indicates that a trend for sports is taking place.

Play has been increasingly transformed into organized sports, and sports, in turn, increasingly resemble work in the arduous practice and preparation they require, in the intense involvement of coaches and athletes in the spirit of work, and in their actual economic productivity.\(^9\)

People appear to be taking sport more seriously than ever before as a worthwhile endeavor. However, sports activity has existed throughout time and regardless of geographical


boundaries. Young asserts that "sports, like music and laughter, are universal." Sage further supports this line of thought stating that "Historical and anthropological investigations have revealed that play is a cultural universal, and that games and sports exist in all but a few primitive cultures." The world-wide growth of interest in sports has been noted by Schnellbach-Nordman and also by Stone who proclaims that sport commands a more general and pervasive interest now than ever before.

In the United States, the popularity of sports is tremendous as Beisser so candidly reveals:

In a nation conscious of having a strong, efficient, capitalist economic system, there is less newspaper space devoted to financial matters than to sports. In a nation proud of its heritage as a political democracy, its citizens are often less interested in political contests than they are in sports competition. In the schools and colleges of a nation providing

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12 Sage, editor, Sport and American Society, p. 331.


the greatest educational opportunity for all, the academic is often submerged by sports. In the mass communication media struggling with entertainment programming for the seemingly insatiable appetites of its consumers, nothing endures as well as current sports contests. . . . Perhaps ours is more nearly the sporting nation than an affluent nation, a capitalist country, a political democracy, or anything else.15

Sport is big business in American society, whether it be professional or high school and college sports. Professional football, baseball, and hockey franchises are growing and increasing in monetary value. The National Collegiate Athletic Association sponsors competition for students in over thirty different sports each year at an investment of over two billion dollars. Surprisingly, American industry buys more sports equipment than high schools and colleges combined.16 The increase of interest in spectator sports has been accompanied by an increase in the number of participants as the increasing demand for facilities for both spectators and participants indicates.17

The fact that sports are enjoying unprecedented popularity and growth is evident. However, the underlying forces or causes are not so easily ascertained as the abundance of differing theoretical explanations attests. One explanation

15Beisser, p. 235.

16Sage, editor, Sport and American Society, pp. 154, 155.

is the "collective goals" theory in which it is postulated that sports enable a school, community, state, or nation to come together and function as a cohesive group (participants, spectators, and other supporters) in a common endeavor.\textsuperscript{18,19,20} The popularity of school sports in the United States has been attributed to its effectiveness in promoting community and student-body interest in the school.\textsuperscript{21} Furthermore, school athletics have been cited as a method of social control by promoting moral behavior and helping to unify the student body.\textsuperscript{22,23} Another proposal attempting to explain the attraction of sports is the "identity moratorium" theory which emphasizes the long period of preparation for an adult role. According to Beisser, "during this time the youth is in a cultural limbo without a clear place of his own, and denied supports. . . . In sports, the American boy has a chance to find an activity in which there is continuity

\textsuperscript{18}Ibid., p. 196.


\textsuperscript{21}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{22}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{23}Schafer, p. 33.
between boyhood and adulthood.\textsuperscript{24} Beisser cites the acceptance of responsibilities accompanying victory, the need for the young male to exhibit his strength, and the diminishing guideposts to becoming a man to support his thesis.\textsuperscript{25} In another vein, Cratty theorizes as follows:

Humans seem simply to react to situations which tax their perceptual-motor abilities, and attempt to solve complex skills simply because they find satisfaction in exercising their capacities. . . . Humans seem to find pleasure in im-balancing their physiological mechanism and at times seem to seek moderate amounts of stress in the form of vigorous and complex physical activities.\textsuperscript{26}

Epuran and Horghidan\textsuperscript{27} support a "movement need" which Schnellbach-Nordman\textsuperscript{28} relates to a willingness of man to expand his energy when he has a chance to achieve his complete potential. Sutton-Smith lauds sports as a place to test courage and composure without as much risk as is ordinarily the case.\textsuperscript{29} According to some, sports is one of

\textsuperscript{24}Beisser, p. 94. \textsuperscript{25}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{26}Cratty, \textit{Psychology and Physical Activity}, p. 77.
\textsuperscript{28}Schnellbach-Nordman, p. 433.
the few socially sanctioned opportunities left for the controlled expression of physical aggression. Yet another explanation for the attraction of sports is the "identifiable problem" proposal. Many of life's problems are vague and defy immediate solution. However, sport offers an opportunity for the individual to face a clear-cut problem and a real opponent. There are specified rules from which to operate, and there is a guarantee of a solution (win, lose, or tie) within a specified time period. From another angle, Maheu, Schafer, and Coleman point out the value of sports in upward social mobility for the underprivileged. Cratty states that "Athletic success by boys in childhood and adolescence enhances their self-esteem." Coleman concludes that achievement in athletics is the most valued means of achieving status among high school students.

Browne offers a genetic explanation for man's passion for sports which she says is based on "instincts which we have

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30 Beisser, p. 241.
32 Beisser, p. 243.
34 Schafer, p. 34.
35 Coleman, p. 92.
36 Cratty, Psychology and Physical Activity, p. 16.
37 Coleman, p. 84.
inherited from our animal ancestry." In view of these and other theories concerning the attraction of sport, it might be assumed that man participates in sports for a variety of reasons. Klausner states that

Various participants attach different significances to the same sport. . . . For an individual, a sport may be a form of exercise and a way of establishing a social relation. For a society, sports may be a training ground for intersocietal competition as well as a way of welding members of the society together. On the cultural level, sports offer an arena for working out norms of social justice and a school for developing a sense of the esthetic. A sport pitting man against nature may have a different function from a sport which pits him against a fellow man, and a team effort has a different meaning from an individual exploit.39

The Need for a Holistic Viewpoint

In view of man's universal attraction to sports, it would appear that a complex relationship exists between sports and the satisfaction of general human needs.40 The popularity of sports would also seem to indicate that sport apparently offers a very attractive and readily available means for meeting these needs. It can also be assumed that

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38 Browne, p. 369.


the intensity of similar needs varies from individual to individual and that individual perception of the value of sports in helping to meet similar or differing needs would also vary from person to person. Thus, it would appear that the individual's own personal needs and perception of the value of sport in satisfying given needs would provide the greatest insight into the intensity and extent of his endeavors in sport. Therefore an investigation of the competitiveness of individuals in sport situations should proceed from an internal, molar viewpoint rather than proceeding from an external, atomistic viewpoint of isolated variables or groups of variables.

However, most scientific investigations of factors thought to be related to success in sports have been experimental in nature and correlational in design with the obvious intent of generalizing the findings to a certain "type" individual or of proving that given variables generally do affect sport performance. Though many of these studies have been somewhat revealing and useful, a brief review of the related literature clearly indicates the complexity and fragmentary nature of many of the findings. There is also considerable confusion as a result of conflicting findings of studies purporting to investigate the same variables. For example, Genov uses the term "mobilization readiness" to denote the sportsman's preparation for competition. He lists the structure of the impending action, the degree of
preparation for action, environmental and social conditions, personal and social importance for the sportsman, self-assessment of the sportsman concerning his preparation and degree of determination, the degree of difficulty of the task, the experience of the sportsman, the state of health of the sportsman, the preceding mood of the sportsman, the presence or lack of time for mobilizing readiness, the individual peculiarities of the sportsman, and the ability of the sportsman to regulate the level of mobilization readiness as variables affecting sport performance. Fleishman stipulates that "the rate of learning and the final level achieved by particular individuals in certain skills are both limited by the basic abilities of these individuals." Hyman links psychosomatic factors with the functioning of the neurophysiological systems in athletes. He elaborates by stating that "the parameters of pulse rate, rhythm, blood pressure, respiratory rate, and certain less well-known

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factors like vital capacity, blood gases, and heart sounds and murmurs are definitely involved in a complicated series of physiologic reactions secondary to emotionogenic involvement." Kenyon and Schutz propose that age, sex, personality, social status, and religious preference may be factors influencing involvement in sport.

Although most of these variables have been investigated experimentally, few generalizations can be made from the results. For example, Dowell, Badgett, and Landiss cite the difficulty in drawing conclusions from studies of personality and physical performance because of "improper controls, a scarcity of subjects, and poorly selected measures of personality." Mosek and Vanek echo similar reservations and add that "very often attempts were made to generalize the research findings, based on limited samples and methods, to the whole sport population. For this reason we find quite

\[44\] Ibid., p. 768.


opposite results in the literature." Lakie intimates that many researchers have neglected to account for some of the important variables which might affect relationships between personality and performance. He points to the fact that certain schools may attract certain personality types and that the size of the school or sports team may be of importance. Abrahams stresses the danger of oversimplification in attempts to isolate ethnic types of athletic capabilities. He mentions the possible influence of temperament, climate, diet, and psychological factors on sport performance. Kane concludes that "unfortunately, in spite of a number of tentative studies using a confusing array of methods and procedures, the nature and extent of the relationship between physical abilities and personality structure is unclear." Kane contends that the level of competition and the particular


sport need to be isolated for study. Other researchers support the viewpoint that at present little is known about possible general principles of personality factors in athletics. Thus the atomistic isolation of any group of general traits thought to be predictive of athletic success would appear to be inadequate in view of the number and type of variables capable of affecting sports performance.

A Phenomenological View of Sports Competitiveness

Webster defines the word "compete" as meaning "to seek or strive for something (as a position, possession, reward) for which others are also contending: view with another or others for or as if for a prize." Competitive means "of

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51 Ibid., p. 132.
55 Cratty, Psychology and Physical Activity, p. 24.
or relating to competition," while the suffix "-ness" refers to a condition, quality, state or instance of being." In a general sense then, sports competitiveness refers to the state or quality of an individual's striving in sport. It has been postulated that the individual participates in sports because of need-satisfaction. According to Phenomenological theory, the basic need of man, which subsumes all other needs, is the need to maintain or enhance the phenomenal self, or the "self" the individual considers to be "himself." Since all behavior is a function of the individual's perceptions of means of satisfying his basic need, it is postulated that sports competitiveness is a function of the individual's perception of the value of sport in maintaining or enhancing the phenomenal self. Huizinga lends support to this proposition with his statement that "playing for honor and glory is a fundamental need." 

If it can be accepted that man participates in sport to enhance self, then the means by which self-enhancement is accomplished becomes significant. It is postulated that

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57 Ibid., p. 464.  
58 Ibid., p. 1519.  
59 Snygg and Combs, Individual Behavior, p. 46.  
60 Ibid., p. 56.  
self-enhancement by means of sports participation is accomplished through mastery over people or things, by identification with significant people or membership in a significant group, and by physical change in the body organization. As Combs and Snygg point out, "Games of all kinds are primarily played to give the participants and their supporters an opportunity to enhance the phenomenal self by defeating worthy opponents." Since society normally frowns upon aggression, sport offers an excellent opportunity for individuals to enhance self by demonstrating mastery over people. The individual's need for evidence of mastery over others is supported by Cratty who emphasizes that mere sport participation is not enough, that complete satisfaction is dependent upon winning some kind of struggle.

Individuals also have an opportunity in sport for enhancing self by mastery of difficult skills with the implication that demonstration of difficult skills is a goal sought by many but accomplished by few. Of course mastery of skill is relative to the level of competition but the individual may perceive himself (and enhance the self accordingly) as an outstanding professional player, or outstanding collegiate player, or outstanding intramural player,

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63 Ibid., p. 116.
64 Cratty, Psychology and Physical Activity, p. 184.
or outstanding neighborhood player and so on through any level. The individual arranges his criteria for self-enhancement in terms of those he perceives should be on his own ability level so that self-enhancement is possible.\(^\text{65}\)

Man can also enhance the phenomenal self through demonstration of mastery over things in sport. For example, in some sports man's skill in overcoming natural barriers either by himself or with the aid of certain equipment is the crux of the competition. Pole vaulting, high jumping, snow skiing, and automobile racing are examples related to this concept.

Man may enhance the phenomenal self by identification with a significant sports figure. He may even identify to the extent of adopting the style of play and mannerisms of the admired person. This frequently occurs with young males undergoing an identity crisis as mentioned earlier. The growth and popularity of the relatively new summer sport camps which utilize well-known professional athletes as instructors would seem to lend credence to this viewpoint. The individual may attain the same type of enhancement by membership in a significant club, team, or sport group. For example, an athlete who perceives himself to be "the best" at his event or position may derive the greatest amount of prestige from that perception, while another athlete with

\(^{65}\text{Ibid., p. 28.}\)
less skill but at the same level of competition may derive the greatest amount of self-enhancement from the fact that he is a member of the elite—a professional player, or a member of the varsity, or a member of the intramural fraternity team.

Man may gain need-satisfaction through the changes in the body organization which occur before, during, and after sport performance. The exhilaration of anticipating competition, the perception of a sense of power, speed, or body control while competing, the experience of enduring pain and fatigue, and the relaxing bodily processes connected with recovery are examples of change in the body organization. With the advent of mechanization, automation, and urbanization, sport plays an increasingly important role for the American people in self-enhancement by use of the individual's own physical resources. The excitement and results of vigorous physical competition enable the individual to kinesthetically experience a "real-life" awareness of himself to a greater extent than the all too frequent symbolic experiences which do not permit "total involvement" of the organism.

While the enhancement of self through changes in body organization is a more or less personal experience, the other means of self-enhancement involve a need for people. For example, the mere fact of mastery over others is usually not satisfying enough for the individual. It is through the
demonstration of his mastery over others (or things) that he gains self-enhancement. It is through identification with others that the self is enhanced. Because of all the hereditary and environmental factors influencing him, the individual develops peculiar needs leading to self-maintenance and enhancement and specific techniques or roles for satisfying these needs. Thus, it is postulated that each individual develops a sports role for himself (as a part of the phenomenal self) which is consistent with his peculiar needs for self-maintenance or enhancement and which is largely based upon his perceptions of the reactions of significant persons to his sports endeavors.

The common perceptions of individuals of the same society or sub-society, same age, same sex, and same level of competition influence the type of sports role developed by the individual. Thus the sport role must be considered a rather change-susceptible phenomenon which will be discussed presently in more detail. To the extent that needs are peculiar to a given age level, or to the sex of the individual, the individual's sport role is a reflection of those needs. Thus the adolescent striving for development of an adult role may perceive sports participation as a technique for demonstrating to others his manhood or masculinity. The adolescent girl however, may perceive sport or certain sports as "unladylike" in the eyes of others, and thus curtail her involvement in that sport or sports as she develops
need for assuming a more feminine role. Likewise, a sports competitor may have a driving need to attain some set goal and through the process of attaining it, thereby lessen the intensity of the need. Derek Ibbotson, who set the world mile run record in 1957, observed that "In the moment of victory I did not realize that the inner force, which had been driving me to my ultimate goal, died when I became the world's fastest miler." 66 Perhaps Ibbotson experienced enough need-satisfaction from the prestige he received for setting a new world's record that setting new goals and striving for them seemed pointless in view of the cost in effort and the increased availability of other opportunities for self-enhancement.

The primary source of feedback regarding the degree of self-enhancement attained comes from persons considered significant by the individual. 67 Significant persons may include family, peers, teammates, coaches, spectators, sports-writers, sports fans, or anyone perceived as significant by the individual. On the other hand, some individuals may perceive only a few of the above as significant persons. For example, a baseball player being booed by one irate fan


may respond only slightly or not at all with the thought that "it is only some nutty fan who is probably drunk" or he may not even differentiate the booing from other crowd sounds simply because he does not perceive the approval of unknown (to him) fans to be significant. If his teammates are significant persons to the individual and he perceives them as expecting him to assume a role as a leader, then he will attempt to assume what he perceives is a leadership role. However, if he is not a "team man," does not perceive his teammates' reaction to him as significant, he may reject the role expected of him. The athlete who reads every word printed about him considers sportswriters significant people and what they say about him affects the role he assumes as a competitor. A coach may remark offhandedly that "Charlie may be small, but I've seen guys his size who would tear into a tiger" and Charlie may begin to perceive a role for himself as an aggressive, "giant-killer" type of competitor which is more important for him to live up to than being a champion. A high-scoring basketball player may perceive the spectators and sportswriters as more significant than his own teammates with the result that his own personal exploits and scoring average are more important than winning the game. Thus he may take shots that he should not take and may actually perceive of his teammates as competitors for the prestige he aspires to for himself.
The individual's own peculiar needs for self-enhancement will always affect the role he assumes in sport, which in turn is usually affected by the reactions of people he perceives as significant. Those persons considered more significant exert more influence upon his role than those considered less significant. Thus one characteristic of sports competitiveness is the individual variation in direction of effort which occurs because of the individual's own peculiar needs for self-enhancement and the influence of significant persons. The failure of experimental investigators to control the need-direction of the sample subjects' sports roles could explain some of the confusion accompanying attempts to generalize the findings for predictive purposes.

Since sports participation is deemed to be a technique for need-satisfaction, the apparent seriousness with which sportsmen undertake their tasks is more readily understandable. The wide variance among sports participants in the degree of involvement would seem to indicate that need-intensity varies from person to person and that individual perception of the value of sports in need-satisfaction also varies. It is postulated that the greater the intensity of the need and the greater the value of sport to the individual's need-satisfaction, the more intensely the competitor will strive. Perhaps this helps to explain the numerical rise in sport of Negroes and other individuals from ethnic minorities whose
life style is characterized by subjection to stereotypical debasement and few opportunities for self-enhancement. Perhaps these individuals possessing the necessary physical aptitudes for sport success at a given level commonly perceive available sports to be by far the primary means for self-enhancement and apply their efforts accordingly. Willie Mays, when asked what he wanted to do with his life, replied, "To play baseball. More than anything else in the world, I want to play baseball." Pointing out the value of sport to the Negro, Young declares, "Total all that sports mean today to all other Americans, and you'll find that sports mean still more to Negroes." On the other hand, the son of a wealthy, high-class family may attempt to overcome his material and social advantages, which he perceives as disadvantages to some extent, by proving his own independent worth to those persons he considers significant. The effect of the individual's perception of sport as the primary vehicle or technique for self-enhancement is illustrated by professional golfer Arnold Palmer, who responded as follows when asked about his long-range plans:

My long-range goal is the same now as it was in 1960 when I won the Open and the Masters. It's the same as Jack Nicklaus'--win all four major championships in a single year. I think it can be done and I think I can do it. . . . But each year that goes by it becomes more and more unlikely. I have a lot more, a lot different interests now than I did in 1960. Then I

68 Young, p. 278.  
69 Ibid., p. 277.
just wanted to play the best golf in the world. . . . I still love the game, love to play it. I can't think of anything I'd rather do. But as you grow older, you develop different, varied interests.  

Palmer does not seem at all concerned about the physical process of aging having a limiting effect upon his attainment of his goals, but rather speculates that golf does not play as important a role in need-satisfaction as it once did, although it is still strong. Thus, he has other interests which keep him from concentrating exclusively on his golf game. Doherty, speaking of Herb Elliot, the great distance runner who retired at an early age and while at the peak of his success, stated that Elliot had "wide interests and enjoyments and clearly intended to indulge them." Elliot himself stated that "It surely wasn't indolence that kept me from training. It was my realization that as a family man . . . training was not as important in my career. . . . Running was a job that had to be fitted in between my other activities." Thus the individual's needs may change or the technique (opportunities) for self-enhancement may become more numerous with either occurrence having some effect on the competitiveness of the individual. The fact that change does occur suggests that the individual continually differentiates new perceptions which perpetuates a running

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70 The Arkansas Democrat, June 16, 1971, p. 6C.
71 Doherty, p. 2.
72 Ibid.
evaluation of the value of his current and projected sport role in relation to its current and projected requirements and the current and projected degree of need-satisfaction derived. This process is particularly likely to become in focus when stress is greatest. For example, Doherty, speaking of several great distance runners who retired early from competitive running, stated that

They made their great records by believing that achievement in running was worth its cost, however high; they stopped running when they found that success could be won only by paying a price they no longer felt willing to pay. Other goals seemed more attractive: success in other vocations, their schooling, their family life.73

Similarly, this process of constant evaluation may come while the competitor is in action. Doherty comments that "Men fail in running not only because of physical fatigue but also because their will to run has wilted in the fierce heat of interpersonal struggle."74 Nor is this phenomenon linked only to failure as Herb Elliot attests in his remembered thoughts during his world-record 1500 meters in Rome: "... this pace is killing me! Surely I shouldn't feel as tired as this! Maybe I'd better not make my break where I thought I would. Maybe I ought to wait. No I won't. I'll give it a go and see what happens!"75 Thus the

73 Ibid., p. 10.  
74 Ibid., p. 274.  
competitor continually perceives a cost versus gain relationship. Those competitors who consistently perceive the cost to be worth the gain are the more consistent competitors. Those who engage in a more serious or indecisive evaluation are the more unpredictable or "up and down" competitors. The competitor who seldom views the rewards worth the cost is the "quitter" who probably is not directed by a need to win anyway, but rather competes in order to satisfy needs directed toward other goals. For consistency in effort, the competitor must consistently perceive winning or successful performance in his sport or sports as a primary means of satisfying intense needs leading to self-enhancement. Variables such as age, sex, a change from one sport to another, or a change from one level of skill to another provoke the differentiation of new perceptions which may lead to a change in the individual's competitive behavior.

In summary, sports competitiveness is a technique characterized by variations in the consistency with which it is applied by individuals. This variation may occur from individual to individual as well as from within the individual from time to time or situation to situation. Therefore, researchers should attempt to control the stage in the career of the successful sports performer in experimental explorations of characteristics of outstanding athletes.

Instructors and coaches often speak of the competitor's ability to perform consistently well in view of his skill
and ability even under conditions of great stress. Terms and phrases such as "poise," "keeping his cool," and "ice-water nerves," are often used to describe a competitor who can sustain a high quality effort in the heat of competition. The individual's perception of the degree of threat or challenge for maintenance or enhancement of the phenomenal self may be a factor influencing quality of performance. For example, a free throw shooter in a basketball game in which the score is tied with only a few seconds remaining may perceive the situation more as a challenge providing him an opportunity for self-enhancement; yet another player in the same situation may perceive it more as a threat to maintenance of his present level of prestige. The player who perceives the situation as a challenge or opportunity is more likely to be task-oriented, differentiating the perceptions necessary for making the shot; whereas, the defensive-oriented player is more apt to be perceiving the possible consequences if he misses or other self-oriented rather than task-oriented perceptions. Therefore, the quality of effort is another characteristic of sports competitiveness. The type of sport or sport task may be an important variable affecting the quality of competitiveness. A sport requiring fine motor skills and/or rapid assessments of the opponent's skills and strategy with implications for adjustments in one's own strategy may require a more task-oriented individual than a sport of mainly endurance with
little necessity for fine motor movements or rapid adjustments in strategy. Perhaps the distance runner or swimmer can successfully utilize his perception of an intense need to avoid losing, while the tennis player or golfer must be able to block out all perceptions which distract him from perceiving the requirements of the task at hand. It is postulated that the ability of the individual to differentiate the perceptions appropriate for the successful performance of a specific sport or sport task while under the duress of the forms of stress normally associated with that sport determines the quality of the individual's competitive behavior. The present lack of a taxonomy of sport tasks prevents a more specific definition of "appropriate perceptions." Also the level of competition, the size of the crowd, or many other variable conditions prevent a more specific definition of "normal forms of stress." However, the general postulate is assumed to be accurate when applied to specific sport situations in which the perceptions required for successful performance and the normal forms of stress have been determined. Factors such as the individual's past experiences and his confidence in his skill or ability affect his perception of the task as basically a challenge or a threat.

In summary, sports competitiveness is a need-satisfaction technique which is characterized by individual variations in direction, consistency, intensity, and quality. A relative
measure of sports competitiveness may be obtained by compiling a composite score of all its characteristics as exhibited by the individual in a given sport or sport task. While the common perceptions of individuals of the same age, sex, socioeconomic status, and similar personality traits may make possible some prediction of general trends in competitiveness, reasonably accurate prediction for a given individual in a given sport situation must be approached from the standpoint of individual measurement. The first task in measurement is to determine the individual's own peculiar needs for self-enhancement. An interview or casual conversation may suffice for some individuals but because of the low level of awareness many individuals have of their actual, more urgent needs, the information gained may or may not be accurate.  

Probably a more reliable and valid measure of needs could be obtained by means of some projective test of perception. Projective devices are designed to explore the individual's needs and their relative strength. Naturally, the more sources utilized for gathering information about the individual the higher the probability of understanding his needs and predicting their influence on the individual's sports behavior. Informal conversations, study of personal diaries and letters, use of an autobiography, tests and questionnaires, controlled and uncontrolled observations, and the

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76 Snygg and Combs, p. 28. 77 Ibid., p. 458.
individual's conversations with others are other sources often used by psychologists. Whatever the means, some measurement of the compatibility of the individual's needs for self-enhancement with the traditional or inherent criteria for success in a given sport, such as winning the contest or scoring high, is necessary to predict the direction of the individual's striving in a given sports task. The greater the degree of compatibility, the greater the chance for success. The less compatibility existing, the less chance for success. For example, a son may have a great need for his father's approval and thus perceive the prospect of defeating his father (or any significant person for that matter) in golf as a threat to his need for approval. He may then proceed to lose the match for that purpose whether he is aware of it or not. The investigations of Ogilvie and Tutko tend to support this hypothesis. The direction of effort in sports is dictated by the individual's needs for adequacy.

The persistence of the individual and his tendencies in setting and resetting his level of aspiration provide an indication of the intensity and consistency of the individual's competitiveness. Level of aspiration has been defined

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78 Ibid., pp. 452-458.
as "the future performance in a familiar task which an individual, knowing his level of past performance in that task, explicitly undertakes to reach." There seems to be a lack of agreement among researchers regarding an accepted definition of persistence. In a general sense, it refers to the willingness and tendency to continue or endure. In this study persistence is defined as the tendency of the individual to continue his efforts to reach his pre-activity level of aspiration for a specific sport task. Since sports tasks vary so much in nature, with some requiring persistence of repeated gross motor movements and some requiring persistence of concentration on fine motor movements, and some requiring constant perception of change in the situation, any measure of persistence should be measured solely by means of the specific sport task for which prediction is desired.

As opposed to the tendency to continue or endure, the actual ability (success) of the individual to attain his level of aspiration under the typical kinds and amounts of


stress usually accompanying the performance of that sport task provides a measure of the quality of the performer's competitive efforts. Probably the only, or at least the best, way to control the variables mentioned in measuring these characteristics of sports competitiveness, is to utilize an actual competitive sport situation as it exists in our society. Projective tests of perception could be administered before, during, and after the season if deemed necessary. Other data from observations and other sources could also be compiled throughout a sport season. The pre-game level of aspiration could be easily recorded with persistence and quality measured as suggested. A composite score could then be compiled and used for within the group (team) comparisons, for larger samples, or for longitudinal studies. Certainly the foregoing suggestions do not provide a detailed analysis of how to measure sports competitiveness, but rather were intended to suggest a theoretical basis for measurement in terms of suggested experimental methods for such measurement.
Summary

The purpose of the study was to develop a theory of sports competitiveness which would contribute to a better understanding of competitive behavior in sport and also serve as a possible theoretical basis for experimental investigations. A comprehensive theory of human behavior, Phenomenology, was selected as a framework theory for the sake of consistency in developing terms and constructs. A review of the literature related to psychological theory construction was conducted in order to establish guidelines for construction of the theory of sports competitiveness. A review of the literature on topics possibly related to sports competitiveness was conducted in search of data to suggest or lend support to the formulation of hypotheses. The basic principles of Phenomenology, the guidelines for theory construction, and the data from the related studies were examined in view of the original ideas which prompted the initiation of this study in order to construct the basic postulates of the theory.

To summarize, man is attracted to sport because it provides an effective and readily available means for need
satisfaction; specifically a means for maintaining or enhancing the phenomenal self. Need-satisfaction (self-enhancement) by means of sports competition is possible by demonstration of mastery over people or things, identification with significant people or membership in significant groups, and by change in the body organization. Because of individual differences in the needs leading to self-enhancement and because of the large number of other variables which may affect the individual's behavior in a sports situation, an internal, molar viewpoint is required for understanding and prediction of the individual's sport behavior.

Sports competitiveness was theoretically defined as a need-satisfaction technique characterized by individual variation in direction, consistency, intensity, and quality. Regarding direction, each individual develops a sports role for himself which is consistent with his own peculiar needs for self-enhancement. The needs most strongly requiring satisfaction by means of the sports role dictate the direction of the individual's efforts in sports, which may or may not be compatible with traditional criteria for successful sports performance. Furthermore, the development of the sports role is largely based upon the individual's perceptions of the reactions of persons he considers significant to his need for self-enhancement. Individual variation in the consistency of competitive sports behavior is the result of continual differentiation of new perceptions which
perpetuates a cost versus the gains evaluation. This process is responsible for variations in the competitiveness of the individual and for variations among a group of individuals. The intensity of the individual's competitiveness is a result of a combination of the intensity of the individual's need and his perception of the value of sport in need-satisfaction. The quality of the individual's competitive efforts is dependent upon the individual's ability to differentiate the perceptions appropriate for the successful performance of a specific sports task while under the duress of the forms and amounts of stress normally associated with that particular sports task. Sports competitiveness may be measured experimentally by measuring each of its component characteristics, preferably by utilizing the sport situation for which greater understanding or prediction is desired, and arriving at a composite score.

Implications

A theory of sports competitiveness could be utilized as a basis for experimental studies of sports competitiveness or similar psychosociological variables. Also, it could serve as an interpretative framework for the current array of heretofore inconsistent data from past experimental studies in areas related to sports competitiveness. However, the philosophical "why" behind investigations of sports competitiveness and other related variables should be considered.
The investigator can study man with the aim of insuring more productive sports performance, or he can study the human phenomenon of sports as a means of improving man.\textsuperscript{1} Of course, these two extreme viewpoints need not be antithetical but it is suggested that the latter view take precedence over the former. This is especially true since psychology is man's science in the service of man rather than a science functioning primarily for the provision of data and discoveries. Therefore, it has an important additional guidance function.\textsuperscript{2} Sport should serve man rather than man serve sport. This philosophical consideration has implications for coaches and other educators as well as for researchers. Educational institutions which sponsor sport competition for their students clearly have an obligation to administer the sports program as an educational experience aimed at improving the participants' abilities to live an effective life. Physical educators and coaches should be educators first and sports specialists second, with the total development of the student the primary objective rather than a "winning is the only goal" philosophy which may be appropriate for professional sports. Unfortunately, this "win at all costs" philosophy seems predominant not only in professional sports


\textsuperscript{2}Ibid., p. 832.
but also in collegiate and high school programs and even in
Little League Baseball and Pop Warner Football programs.³
There is evidence that in a situation where the importance
of winning is stressed over all else, that desirable social
values thought to be promoted by sports participation will
not accrue.⁴ Researchers, coaches, and physical educators
have a moral, professional obligation to utilize their
knowledge and talent for the purpose of improving man by
means of sport. This theory of sports competitiveness was
conceived in this spirit and it is recommended that any use
of it by researchers or coaches reflect that spirit.

The implications of the theory for practical application
by coaches and physical educators are challenging. Competi-
tion in various forms is inevitable in life and is actively
ceouraged in a capitalistic society. Therefore the educa-
tional institutions of society have a responsibility to their
youth for providing guidance in how to compete effectively
and in an ethically and socially acceptable manner. Learn-
ing how to win through realistic goal-setting, hard work,
and persistence in the face of stress and frustration is a

³Thomas A. Tutko, "Conflict in Sports," Contemporary
Psychology of Sport, Proceedings of the Second International
Congress of Sport Psychology, edited by Gerald S. Kenyon

⁴Emma M. Layman, "The Role of Play and Sport in Healthy
Emotional Development: A Reappraisal," Contemporary Psy-
chology of Sport, Proceedings of the Second International
Congress of Sport Psychology, edited by Gerald S. Kenyon
justifiable and admirable goal. Equally important is the concomitant learning of ethics and sportsmanship which should govern competition and the acceptance of the results of competition. The coach should become familiar with each of his players by developing a habit of practicing empathy. He should be aware of their common needs and become as aware as possible of their individual needs. He should evaluate each individual's competitive behavior, and then, utilizing the criterion of improvement of the individual's ability to live effectively in our society, the coach should provide guidance for individuals in the areas in which they need guidance. Some individuals may not know how to set realistic goals and some may have little knowledge of how to go about achieving a specific goal; others may lack confidence in themselves (feel inadequate) simply because they have not had ample opportunity to explore and demonstrate their capabilities.

The teacher or coach can affect the amount of influence he has over his players. The more significant person the coach is in the eyes of his players, the greater the influence he may exert on them. The coach's establishment of high level rapport with his players by means of communicating his knowledge of, and respect for, each individual player's needs is essential if he is to attain the status of a highly significant person to his players. It is the responsibility of the educator/coach to establish rapport with the players rather than vice versa. There is no place in amateur sports
for a dictatorial approach to teaching or coaching in which the individual is forced to serve sport rather than the converse. The student-athlete should have more responsibility and opportunity to plan and make decisions in areas such as goal-setting, training regimen, and sport position with the guidance of the coach rather than having these decisions dictated to him. Perhaps such an approach would lower the entertainment value of sports from the spectator's viewpoint, but it should prove to be far more sound educationally. In view of the pressures and expenses created by the entertainment function of sport, perhaps educational institutions should attempt to de-emphasize that aspect and turn more to broad intramural and low-key extramural or varsity sport programs in order to offer more students more opportunities for self-enhancement.

Students need sport as a technique for self-enhancement and schools should make sport available to as many students at any given skill level as possible. Experimental studies indicate that achievement in sport exerts a favorable influence on the individual's educational aspirations, his personal and social adjustment, and perhaps upon the


perpetuation of major ethical values necessary for the preservation and improvement of our society. Those in charge of our educational sport programs should recognize that the transfer of values from the sport situation to other aspects of life probably does not occur automatically. It is the coach's professional duty to help students see the resemblance between sport and other life situations and to understand the applicability of the lessons they have learned by means of sports competition. Hopefully, this theory of sports competitiveness may aid researchers and educators alike in their joint efforts to help man through sports. The significance of the theory remains to be seen, but as Thomas Huxley once observed, "In scientific work, those who refuse to go beyond fact rarely get as far as fact."
APPENDIX

The following statements are examples of preliminary postulates which were either incorporated into a more comprehensive and concise postulate or rejected as being redundant or inconsistent with the total theory:

1. Success in sport must be measured in terms of what the individual perceives is success since an individual's striving will always be directed toward need-satisfaction.

2. Competitiveness may be transferred from sport to sport if the individual perceives opportunity for self-enhancement by means of different sports.

3. Tunnel vision of either the intensity of the need to be satisfied or of the challenge of the sport task to be performed is essential for a high degree of competitiveness to occur.

4. The more intense sports competitors are characteristic of more insecure, or have more feelings of inadequacy than do those individuals who strive less vigorously in sport.

These four postulates were rejected for the following reasons:

Postulate number one was incorporated into the postulate concerning direction of sports competitiveness which is more comprehensive, more specific, and still concise.
Postulate number two was considered to be redundant in view of the postulate concerning why man participates in sport, which includes any sport as defined in this study.

Postulate number three was separated by its two major ideas and incorporated into the postulate concerning need intensity and the postulate concerning the quality of competitive effort. The separation of postulate three appeared to be a more logical method of presentation and less ambiguous.

Postulate number four was judged to be inconsistent with the overall theory which pointedly rejects stereotyping competitors by personality traits or other characteristics. Also, one tenant of Phenomenology is that everyone strives for self-enhancement which is a universal need of all people, rather than of any selected group of people. Sport is simply a technique utilized for self-enhancement by some people.

The final postulates presented in this paper were the result of comparisons of the principles of Phenomenology with the conclusions from related studies and with subjective ideas of the characteristics of a "good" competitor as revealed by personal thought and popular literature by coaches and sports writers. The four characteristics of direction, intensity, consistency, and quality were finally isolated by means of these rough comparisons which provoked the preliminary recording of rough postulates. All of the basic
postulates of this theory were worded and reworded many times in an effort to arrive at the most consistent, comprehensive, and parsimonious postulates possible. The procedures utilized in the development of the theory presented in this study may appear somewhat vague, but in any more or less creative endeavor it is unrealistic to expect the procedures to be so clearly defined that exact replication is possible as is desirable for an experimental study.
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