

## Psychology 139. Psychology of Sports

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### A Brief Overview

Students are expected to do each day's reading prior to the class. Because students will be called on to discuss the topics, failure to do so should become painfully obvious (obvious to the teacher, painful to the student). The articles are all available in a reader from Soft Reserves. After doing the reading, students should be prepared to discuss, among other things, the attached questions for each class. In addition to doing the reading and contributing in class, students will take the midterm and final exams (both essay format, open book). Grades will be based on some reasonable combination of the exams and the quality and quantity of class participation.

Class	Topic
1	Introduction
2	Social comparison
3	Attributions
4	Thrill seeking
5	Optimal arousal
6	<b>Midterm</b> & Home field advantage
7	Flow
8	Intrinsic Motivation
9	Competition & cooperation
10	Aggression

### Class 2: SOCIAL COMPARISON

Christenfeld, N. (1996). What makes a good sport?. *Nature*, 383, 662.

Cialdini, Robert B.; and others. Wearing the warm glow of success: A (football) field study. *Personality & Social Psychology Bulletin*, 1974, v1 (n1):13-15.

Medvec, Victoria Husted; Madey, Scott F.; Gilovich, Thomas. When less is more: Counterfactual thinking and satisfaction among Olympic medalists. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, 1995 Oct, v69 (n4):603-610.

### Class 3: ATTRIBUTIONS

Hastorf A & Cantril H (1954). They saw a game: a case study. *JASP*, 49, 129-134

Lau, Richard R.; Russell, Dan. Attributions in the sports pages. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, 1980 Jul, v39 (n1):29-38.

Gilovich, Thomas; Vallone, Robert; Tversky, Amos. The hot hand in basketball: On the misperception of random sequences. *Cognitive Psychology*, 1985 Jul, v17 (n3):295-314.

### Class 4: THRILL SEEKING

Heyman, Steven R. The hero archetype and high-risk sports participants. In: *Psyche and sports.*; Murray Stein, John Hollwitz, Eds. Chiron Publications, Wilmette, IL, US. 1994. p. 188-201.

Brannigan, A.; McDougall, A. A. Peril and pleasure in the maintenance of a high risk sport: A study of hang-gliding. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, 1983 Mar, v6 (n1):37-51.

Zuckerman, Marvin. Sensation seeking and sports. *Personality & Individual Differences*, 1983, v4 (n3):285-292.

Gridley, Mark C. Psychopathic vs. nonpsychopathic thrill seeking. *Psychology: A Journal of Human Behavior*, 1990, v27 (n1):18-20.

Nisbett, Richard E. Birth Order and Participation in Dangerous Sports. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, 1968, v8 (n4, Pt. 1):351-353.

**Class 5: OPTIMAL AROUSAL**

Jackson, Jeffrey M.; Buglione, Stephen A.; Glenwick, David S. Major league baseball performance as a function of being traded: A drive theory analysis. *Personality & Social Psychology Bulletin*, 1988 Mar, v14 (n1):46-56.

Davis, Mark H.; Harvey, Jonathan C. Declines in major league batting performance as a function of game pressure: A drive theory analysis. *J of Applied Soc Psych*, 1992 May, v22 (n9):714-735.

Jones, Graham. More than just a game: Research developments and issues in competitive anxiety in sport. *British Journal of Psychology*, 1995 Nov, v86 (n4):449-478.

**Class 6: HOME FIELD ADVANTAGE**

Baumeister, Roy F.; Steinhilber, Andrew. Paradoxical effects of supportive audiences on performance under pressure: The home field disadvantage in sports championships. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, 1984 Jul, v47 (n1):85-93.

Schlenker, Barry R.; Phillips, Stephen T.; Boniecki, Kurt A.; Schlenker, David R. Championship pressures: Choking or triumphing in one's own territory? *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, 1995 Apr, v68 (n4):632-643.

Baumeister, Roy F. Disputing the effects of championship pressures and home audiences. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, 1995 Apr, v68 (n4):644-648.

Schlenker, Barry R.; Phillips, Stephen T.; Boniecki, Kurt A.; Schlenker, David R. Where is the home choke? *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, 1995 Apr, v68 (n4):649-652.

**Class 7: FLOW**

Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly, ed.; Csikszentmihalyi, Isabella Selega, ed. *Optimal experience: Psychological studies of flow in consciousness*. Cambridge University Press; New York, NY, US, 1988. Chapter 1: Introduction (pp. 3-14) & Chapter 2: The flow experience and its significance for human psychology (pp. 15-35)

Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly. *Beyond boredom and anxiety: The experience of play in work and games*. (1975). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. Chapter 6: Deep play and the flow experience in rock climbing, pp. 74-101.

Stein, Gary L.; Kimiecik, Jay C.; Daniels, Joe; Jackson, Susan A. Psychological antecedents of flow in recreational sport. *Personality & Social Psychology Bulletin*, 1995 Feb, v21 (n2):125-135.

**Class 8: INTRINSIC MOTIVATION**

Frederick, Christina M.; Ryan, Richard M. Self-determination in sport: A review using cognitive evaluation theory. Special Issue: Motivation and emotion in the sport context. *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, 1995 Jan-Mar, v26 (n1):5-23.

Goudas, Marios; Biddle, Stuart; Fox, Kenneth; Underwood, Martin. It ain't what you do, it's the way that you do it Teaching style affects children's motivation in track and field lessons. *Sport Psychologist*, 1995 Sep, v9 (n3):254-264.

Farmer, Ricky J. Surfing: Motivations, values, and culture. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, 1992 Sep, v15 (n3):241-257.

**Class 9: COMPETITION**

Kohn, Alfie. No contest: The case against competition. Houghton Mifflin Co; Boston, MA, US, 1986. Chapter 4 (pp. 79-95)

Abra, Jock C. Competition: Creativity's vilified motive. *Genetic, Social, & General Psychology Monographs*, 1993 Aug, v119 (n3):289-342.

**Class 10: AGGRESSION**

Reifman, Alan S.; Larrick, Richard P.; Fein, Steven. Temper and temperature on the diamond: The heat-aggression relationship in major league baseball. *Personality & Social Psychology Bulletin*, 1991 Oct, v17 (n5):580-585.

Frank, Mark G.; Gilovich, Thomas. The dark side of self- and social perception: Black uniforms and aggression in professional sports. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, 1988 Jan, v54 (n1):74-85.

Phillips, David P. The impact of mass media violence in U.S. homicides. *American Sociological Review*, 1983 Aug, v48 (n4):560-568.

Geen, Russell G.; O'Neal, Edgar C. Activation of cue-elicited aggression by general arousal. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, 1969, v11 (n3):289-292.

## Discussion Questions

### Class 2: SOCIAL COMPARISON

Christenfeld:

What is the evidence that sports aim for an optimal level of reliability? What pattern of results would have argued against the proposed hypothesis?

How does one know what the optimal level of reliability is?

What is the nature of the actual data that support the claims of the paper?

How would it come to be that the various sports all have the right level of reliability? That is, what is the actual mechanism that underlies the findings?

What do these findings suggest about dynasties? Their prevalence? Their popularity?

Why would one not like a sport to be maximally reliable?

What are the implications of the argument in this paper for determining against whom people like to compare themselves?

Are there other domains where one might expect a similar principle to apply? Other sports? Non-sports?

Is chess a sport?

Cialdini et al:

Why is it the case that people's moods are tied to the success of their school's team? Why is anyone a Cubs fan? More generally, given that one's team loses (at least) half the time, why invest emotionally? Why don't people just follow sports for aesthetic reasons?

Does a loss cause people to wear less school clothing than normal?

Should the effect they describe be more pronounced for students when they are on campus or off campus? What would this tell one about the phenomenon?

Medvec, Madey, & Gilovich

If the results they present are true, should people about to finish second slow down so they get the bronze?

Would the principle apply in other sports settings? Non-sports?

To what extent does the finding depend on Olympic-style medal rewards?

Does winning make people happier for long?

General:

What is sport?

Why are sports so attractive?

What makes for good sport?

What value does sport provide to society?

Is it possible for a society to not have sports?

### Class 3: ATTRIBUTIONS

Hastorf & Cantril:

Which one of the teams was guilty? Why?

At what level are the differences between the Princetonians and Dartmouths occurring?

What do these findings suggest about the notion from the previous class that it is dangerous to invest your happiness in a team when it will lose at least half the time?

Why does the “repeatability” the authors refer to (on p. 133) seem familiar?

Can one ever objectively watch a sporting event? Can referees?

Should one ever trust one’s judgment?

Lau & Russell:

What is the basic finding about internal vs. external attributions?

How do the authors explain this pattern?

What is likely to have been the question that the various people were answering when they provide these attributions?

What is the motivational issue, and how do the authors address it?

What is the finding about the stability of attributions? What does this tell us?

What is the finding about the number of attributions made? What does this tell us?

Is it generally the case, outside of answering sports reporters’ questions, that we make external attributions for failure and internal ones for success?

Gilovich, Vallone, & Tversky:

What do the authors mean by the “hot hand”? What is their operational definition?

How do they test for it?

What do they find?

What is one to make of the occasionally significant negative findings?

What are the implications of their findings for coaching decisions?

Over what time frame does “hotness” occur?

Do you now believe that athletes do not perform in streaks. That is, is it true that players are never either “hot” or “cold”?

Is it possible that people with a serious stake in the outcome of sports events (such as professional coaches and players) could be completely wrong about so fundamental a point?

Is failing to find evidence for the “hot hand” the same as demonstrating that it does not exist? What is the broader scientific issue here?

**Class 4: THRILL SEEKING**

Heyman

What makes a sport “high risk”? Is football? Scuba diving?

What is the role of science and technology in these sports?

Is the danger essential to the pleasure?

To what extent are high-risk sports participants heroes?

What does it mean to “come back with a personal experience of the infinite”? (p. 195)

What about gender differences in high-risk sports? What does Heyman think? You?

What are the implications of the claim that engaging in high-risk sports leads to great self-growth?

Brannigan & McDougall

What is a reasonable way to characterize a sport’s danger?

What is the relationship between suicide and high-risk sports?

Would you predict that experienced participants are at less risk?

How many of the benefits are available without the danger?

Zuckerman

What is the intent of this article?

What does it mean that high-risk sports participants are high on TAS? High on other scales?

What is one to make of Heyman & Rose’s scuba finding?

Does Zuckerman appear to be listing all SS findings, or is his recital selective? What is the issue here?

How much can you tell about someone from knowing their choice of sports?

What does it mean that “various personality traits have consistently been observed to account for 20-45% of the variance in sport performance.”? (p. 285)

Gridley

Are these arguments consistent with Zuckerman’s

Is there anything psychopathic about high-risk sports?

Nisbett

Why might first-borns avoid high-risk sports?

What is the nature of Nisbett’s evidence that they do?

What’s the data from football and baseball?

**Class 5: OPTIMAL AROUSAL**

Jackson, Buglione, & Glenwick

What is the prediction of this research, and what is the theoretical explanation?

Would a batting average over .500 mean that the dominant response was to hit safely? Why measure success per at bat, rather than success per pitch, or success per game? Would it alter the prediction to change the measure?

To what extent is 50% the proper dividing line for social facilitation predictions?

Can one make a reasonable argument about drive that is the opposite of the one presented? How would it go?

Could it explain the data?

Can one make the opposite argument about player experience and team competitiveness?

Why might batting average be low before a trade?

Why does he not predict any effect for off-season trades?

Should a team trade all non-pitching personnel mid-season?

Davis & Harvey

How is this paper different from the previous one? In theory? In predictions?

Is pitching easier than batting? In what sense? How would one know?

Do pitchers throw unhittable strikes more than 50% of the time? Does it matter?

Is the chance of striking out greater than 50%? Popping up? Infield dribbler?

Why might batting averages be lower with two outs?

Jones

How does the Yerkes inverted-U theory fit with Zajonc's social facilitation theory?

What is the issue with uni- vs. multidimensional arousal or anxiety?

As the competition approaches, is there a change in the intensity of the anxiety, the nature of the anxiety, or the frequency of anxious thoughts?

What is one to make of the tendency, when findings are equivocal, to split the concept in half (cognitive vs. somatic anxiety; debilitate vs. facilitative anxiety; etc.)? Is there any end to this?

What is the catastrophe model? What is it designed to explain?

What, in your own model, is the anxiety-performance relationship?

## Class 6: HOME FIELD ADVANTAGE

Baumeister & Steinhilber

What does their theory predict about a home-field advantage? In general? In deciding championship games?

How do they test their predictions?

Why do they examine fielding errors?

Why do they look at number of errors, rather than fielding percentage?

How would know when to predict a home-field advantage vs. choking? In sports? Elsewhere?

Are athletes generally more self-aware at home? How would one know?

What is the relationship of their findings to the various optimal arousal theories?

Schlenker, Phillips, Boniecki, & Schlenker

What is the issue about choking from imagined failure or success?

How would one test the difference between these approaches?

What does the finding that both home and visiting teams win a sizable majority of must-win games suggest? What does it imply about the roots of the home-field advantage?

What is the nature of the segmenting of the data (into Baseball eras) that they do? Why do they do this, and what does it reveal?

Baumeister

He says (on p. 644) that Schlenker et al.'s paper provides a "replication that produces a similar direction of findings..." Is this true?

Does taking the new DH alternation rule into account undermine the new baseball data that SPBS present?

Return of Schlenker, Phillips, Boniecki, & Schlenker

So who wins?

**Class 7: FLOW**

Csikszentmihalyi

What is the role of the self as an independent causal agent? Is C's view? In yours?

To what extent do we have control over our drives and behaviors?

What brings lasting satisfaction?

Can one have a "flow" experience watching a sunset?

How much time do people spend in flow? Why?

Csikszentmihalyi

Can one lead one's life rationally?

What does it mean to face an optimal challenge if one can voluntarily change the goals (from surviving a difficult climb, for example, to ascending an easy one with grace)?

Is the difference between flow climbers and non-flow climbers a difference in the experience or in the report? How would one know? (Take this question seriously)

Why do people dance?

Stein, Kimiecik, Daniels, & Jackson

Should more skilled players experience more flow? What about professional athletes?

Is the flow SKDJ study the same as that described by C?

What are the four possible states during a sport (or any experience)? What defines them, and how do they differ in enjoyment?

What does this work suggest about the antecedents of flow?

Should flow help you win?

What are the issues about inquiring about an athlete's flow state before, during, or after an activity?

**Class 8: INTRINSIC MOTIVATION**

Frederick & Ryan

What is the difference between an intrinsically and an extrinsically motivated activity?

To what extent should people be able to report why they do an intrinsically motivated activity?

What is the evidence about college athletic scholarships undermining intrinsic motivation? What other factors might be involved?

If perceived competence is essential for intrinsic motivation, should the best athletes have the highest motivation?

Would a person who intrinsically liked winning find competition less undermining of intrinsic motivation?

Should people in a competitive sport keep it up longer than those doing it without competition?

Goudas, Biddle, Fox, & Underwood

How did they manipulate teaching styles? What aspect of the manipulation is likely to have made a difference?

What aspects are essential to their theoretical interests?

Are there any disadvantages to their differentiated style?

Why doesn't everyone use the differentiated style? What about in an academic setting (such as a sports psychology class)?

Farmer

What is the relation of vertigo to high-risk sports?

Is there a vertigo difference between long board and short board surfing?

How might a sport work at reducing stress?

Is it "hard for a non-surfer to sense the deep pleasure and satisfaction..."?

To what extent is surfing different from other forms of recreation? What sports are similar?

**Class 9: COMPETITION**

Kohn

What does he suggest about the relationship of rules to play? What do you suggest? Can sports involve playing?

Can one measure one's own success at self-improvement by comparison with others? Is this good or bad?

Do we have a competitive instinct?

Could non-competitive spectator sports exist?

Can one play tennis non-competitively?

Why are we so competitive?

Could one make college (or just this class) less competitive, and so more like play?

Abra

Is the art market necessarily competitive? Are artists, then? Poets?

Is the competition of ideas that he describes (e.g., modern dance versus ballet) the sort of competition that Kohn reviles?

Do we want a world of unhappy, competitive, but creative people? (Like Newton with his "tormented soul of a lonely genius.")

Abra details the loneliness and suffering of great creators, and suggests that their non-cooperative striving may be good for the final product. What's the right control group for such a conclusion, and what's the more general issue here?

Do such decisions as who deserves the most credit in a collaboration (or first authorship in a publication) require competition? Is the desire for fairness the same as competition?

Can one have within-gender cooperation in dating?

Are you a Ferdinand?

Do people compete with themselves?

Why do so many people run marathons all at the same time?

What are the advantages of competition? What role do competitive sports play in providing these advantages?

Is showing that successful people have been driven to succeed the same as showing that competition is good for people?

**Class 10: AGGRESSION**

Reifman, Larrick, & Fein

What is their finding linking aggression to temperature?

What's the measure of aggression? Temperature?

What alternate explanations do they rule out and how?

What's the issue about the shape of the temperature-aggression relationship? What do they find?

Why are pitchers beaming more batters on hot days?

What other factors should predict HBPs?

Frank & Gilovich

What's a z-score?

What is it about blackness that is likely to create the effect? Seeing black? wearing black, thinking about black?

What specific sorts of behavior would you expect black uniforms to induce (Either on the part of players or referees)?

How can one tell whether teams that are aggressive choose black uniforms?

Would you pick black uniforms for your team? What would the result be?

Phillips

What, and when, is the effect of prize fights? Why?

What other events might trigger such an increase? How would you test it?

What might trigger a drop in homicides?

What is the evidence for modeling?

Why would foreign fights elicit more homicides than domestic fights?

Is it safe to go out after a *Rocky* film festival?

What are the day-of-week effects?

Can particular homicides be linked to boxing?

What are the practical applications of this research?

Geen & O'Neal

What is their measure of aggression?

When is it greatest?

How do these findings fit with Phillips'?

Are aggressive sports bad?

How could one reduce their impact?

Would you expect an increase in player violence as well as fan violence following aggressive sports events?