

Chapter 1. Introducing Sport and Exercise Psychology

Chapter Overview

This introductory chapter begins with a discussion of the myths associated with sport and exercise psychology as a profession, followed by a description of sport and exercise psychology and sport and exercise psychology specialists. Sport and exercise psychology is also discussed within the context of positive psychology. The multiple roles of sport and exercise psychology specialists are outlined along with the specific training requirements. The standards of conduct that govern decisions in sport psychology are discussed. The chapter progresses through a brief history of the key events in sport and exercise psychology, and ends with future trends in the field in Canada.

Learning Objectives

1. Explain what sport and exercise psychology is and what sport and exercise psychology specialists do.
2. Explain the differences between educational and clinical/counselling orientations in sport and exercise psychology.
3. List the diverse educational training opportunities in sport and exercise psychology.
4. Identify the basic standards of conduct and service in sport and exercise psychology.
5. Identify key moments in the history of sport and exercise psychology in Canada.
6. Outline developments in sport and exercise psychology around the world.
7. List key sport and exercise psychology journals and scholarly organizations.
8. Describe future trends in sport and exercise psychology.

Lecture Outline

1. Introduction
IN CLASS ACTIVITY. Discussion/Personal Reflection: Using the definition of sport and exercise psychology to guide discussion, ask the students to recall their own participation in sport and/or physical activity and think about how psychological factors affected their performance. Probe the question by mentioning anxiety, confidence, feedback from coaches, other participants, teammates, and parents, visualization, and self talk. Follow up by asking students to discuss how participating in sport and/or physical activity has affected their psychological development (i.e., perceptions of competence, self, personality, trait anxiety, etc.).
2. Common sport psychology myths
 - a. Only athletes or exercisers with serious mental problems need a sport psychologist.
 - b. All sport psychologists work with elite athletes to enhance performance.

3. What is sport and exercise psychology?
4. Positive psychology in sport and exercise
 - a. Explain what positive psychology is and how it fits in the sport and exercise domain.
 - b. IN CLASS ACTIVITY. Ask how this positive psychology movement challenges some of the myths about sport and exercise psychology.
5. What do sport psychology specialists do?
 - a. Teaching
 - b. Research
 - c. Consulting

IN CLASS ACTIVITY. Practical Application: Ask students to answer the following question: In the vignette, what sport psychology roles are presented?
6. Training as a sport psychology specialist
 - a. Sport science education
 - b. Clinical and counseling sport psychology
 - c. What courses or programs to pursue as an undergraduate student?

IN CLASS ACTIVITY. Debate: Divide the class into two groups and discuss the strengths and limitations of gaining knowledge through sport science education compared to clinical and counseling sport psychology. Are there benefits to gaining scientific knowledge? Are there benefits to gaining knowledge through practice? This is a debate about “textbook” knowledge versus “field” knowledge.

Modification to activity - Divide the class into groups based on their personal career goals (practitioners, athletes, teachers, coaches) and have the groups discuss the strengths and limitations of gaining knowledge through education compared to gaining knowledge during practice.
7. Who may call themselves a sport psychologist?

IN CLASS ACTIVITY. Knowledge Application: Based on the vignette presented at the beginning of the chapter, ask the students the following questions: 1) Can Dr. Holowalchuk call herself a sport psychologist? 2) What further information would you require (or would help) to answer this question?

- Outline the various professional organizations to which someone in the field of sport and exercise psychology could belong.
8. Providing sport psychology services: Standards of conduct
 - a. Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists
 - i. Principle 1: Respect for the Dignity of Persons
 - ii. Principle 2: Responsible Caring
 - iii. Principle 3: Integrity in Relationships
 - iv. Principle 4: Responsibility to Society
 - b. Association for the Advancement of Sport Psychology: Code of Ethics

- i. Principle A – Competence
 - ii. Principle B – Integrity
 - iii. Principle C – Professional and Scientific Responsibility
 - iv. Principle D – Respect for People’s Rights and Dignity
 - v. Principle E – Concern for Others’ Welfare
 - vi. Principle F – Social Responsibility
 - c. Learning reflection

IN CLASS ACTIVITY. Group Discussion: Divide the class into either 4 or 6 small groups and have each group discuss one principle from the CPA Canadian Code of Ethics or the AASP code of ethics. Get the students to think critically about what the principle means and apply the principle to a situation. Have the groups write up a case study or example that supports and one that violates the principle. The case study/example could be based on the vignette presented at the beginning of the chapter.
9. Sport psychology in Canada and the United States: A brief history
- a. Key events in 1960s and 1970s
 - b. Key events in the 1980s
 - c. Key events since 1990
10. Sport psychology around the world
11. Key world events
12. Future trends and issues in Canada
- a. Increased specialization and diversification
 - b. Increased research and teaching opportunities
 - c. Increased demands for counseling and clinical training
 - d. Interdepartmental collaboration in teaching, research, and practice
 - e. Ethics and competencies
 - f. Working in performance enhancement teams
 - g. Online consulting and service provision
 - h. Knowledge translation
 - i. Additional topic for discussion: Tension between academic and applied sport psychology
 - j. Learning reflection

IN CLASS ACTIVITY. Group Problem-Solving: Divide the class into small groups and have them problem solve to help deal with the future trends presented in the text. The students should present strategies to overcome barriers in the field. *Modification to the activity* - Divide the class into groups based on their future career aspirations (i.e., teachers, coaches, medical professionals, psychologists, kinesiologists) and have them discuss the future trends and issues, suggesting ways of overcome the issues and ways of enhancing or supporting the trends.

Projects and Assignments

1. Identifying sport psychology themes. Bring the sports section of the local newspaper to class. Photocopy key articles and distribute to the class. Give them 10 minutes to read through some of the main articles in the section, and underline the key terms and scenarios that they feel are relevant to sport psychology. What kind of language is used? Is there reference to topics that will be covered in the course? Make a list of the dominant terminology and use this list to introduce what sport psychology is, and the direction for the course.

Modification to the activity: Have the students select an article prior to class and come prepared to summarize and discuss the article in small groups based on the questions outlined above. Have each group offer items on their list to the class and use this list to introduce sport psychology and the course (as outlined above).

2. Exploring the myths of sport and exercise psychology. Develop alternate endings to the vignette and scenarios provided in the chapter and use them as ways of highlighting the myths of sport and exercise psychology, the roles and responsibilities of sport and exercise psychologists, and/or the training involved in becoming a sport and exercise psychologist.
3. Researching sport and exercise psychology. The students can visit the various websites presented in the chapter. If asked to find the journal websites, students could provide the mission statements from each journal, required or desired research topics covered by the journal, and provide a comparison of the main sport and exercise psychology journals. A similar project could be conducted with the professional organization websites, where students could provide pertinent information about the organizations, memberships, special accreditations provided, and key individuals involved.
4. Becoming sport and exercise psychologists. Students can research the steps required to become sport and exercise psychology practitioners, including looking up the courses they would take at the university, providing information on additional accreditation necessary, and detailing the requirements of this career.

Answers to Review Questions

1. **Name the three major roles of a sport and exercise psychology specialist. Are different types of training needed for the three roles?**

The three major roles are teaching, research, and consulting. Each avenue requires different types of training requirements. Teaching and research roles require extensive training in sport sciences, research methods, and psychology. Clinical and counseling roles are grounded in psychological theory, assessment, intervention, research methods, and ethics. A supervised internship is also often required. The training guidelines for clinical psychologists are linked to licensing standards within provincial and territory regulatory bodies.

2. **What is positive psychology, and how it is relevant to the study and practice of sport and exercise psychology?**

Positive psychology is an area of psychology concerned primarily with understanding what makes normal life more fulfilling. It is focused on human strength and personal growth and considers the subjective experiences of well-being, satisfaction, fulfillment, pleasure, and happiness. Positive psychology relates to sport and exercise in that much of the research in sport and exercise psychology is direct toward enhancing performance, social and physical well-being, and positive emotion, which overlaps with positive psychology.

3. **What are the differences between a sport and exercise psychology specialist trained in sport sciences and one trained in clinical or counseling psychology?**

A specialist trained in sport science takes psychology, research, and sport science courses and usually has an educational/academic base and works in university settings. An individual trained in clinical or counseling psychology takes coursework based primarily in psychology, assessment, intervention, ethics, and research methods, is able to assess and provide rehabilitation for psychological dysfunctions (clinical) and assist individuals with adjustment and/or development problems (counseling), and works either in a university or professional health center (e.g., hospital). Clinical psychologists require specialized accreditation and registration according to standards set by the province/territory.

4. **Is a counseling psychologist able to work with athletes to provide performance enhancement strategies? What standards of conduct guide such decisions?**

A counseling psychologist is able to work with athletes to provide performance enhancement. The standards that guide decisions are the Canadian Code of Ethics for Psychologists and, specific to sport, the Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology Code of Ethics.

5. **How would the principles of *Integrity in Relationships* and *Respect for the Dignity of Persons* help guide your decision to reveal information about an athlete's psychological state to a coach who demands it?**

Integrity in relationships: The relationship between the sport and exercise psychology consultant and the athlete should be based on accuracy and honesty, straightforwardness and openness, and avoidance of conflicts of interests. Therefore, sport and exercise psychology consultants need to accurately represent their credentials, qualifications, and education, take credit only for the work and ideas they have actually done or developed, and acknowledge limitations of their expertise.

Respect for the Dignity of Persons: Recognize that all athletes have a right to be treated as individual human beings and that discrimination should not occur on any basis, be it cognitive, physical, psychological, cultural, biological, or social. A sport and exercise psychology consultant should not engage in degrading

comments about others, should abstain from all forms for harassment, not practice any form of unjust discrimination, seek only information that is necessary and required for the purpose of the meeting, and avoid relaying information to others.

Based on these two principles, the sport and exercise psychology practitioner should only provide the coach with information about themselves (not the athlete in question), should not seek out information from the coach or put themselves in a position where they can be asked questions, and avoid relaying the information about the athlete to the coach. The practitioner should make the athlete aware that the information discussed in a session will not be shared with the coach.

6. What are three major sport and exercise psychology organizations around the world? What is the major Canadian organization that promotes sport and exercise psychology research?

Example organizations include: Canadian Sport Psychology Association (CSPA), American Psychological Association (Division 47: Exercise and Sport Psychology), Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology (AASP), International Society for Sport Psychology (ISSP), European Federation of Sport Psychology (FEPSAC), North American Society for the Psychology of Sport and Physical Activity (NASPPA), and Australian Psychology Society: College of Sport Psychologists. The major Canadian organization that promotes research is the Canadian Society for Psychomotor Learning and Sport Psychology (SCAPPS).

7. What is knowledge translation and why is it important for the advancement of sport and exercise psychology?

Knowledge translation bridges research and practice by providing accessible, understandable and useful knowledge for practitioners in related disciplines. It is important for the advancement of sport and exercise psychology because it requires that knowledge gained through research be exposed to practitioners both inside and outside the field. Additionally, cases and situations learned in practice can help inform future research questions. Knowledge translation helps gain further understanding of the issues addressed by sport psychology and exercise consultants, and keeps the knowledge current. Information flows from research to practice more effectively.

Case Study

Case Study #1: Ethics in Sport

Using the standards of conduct and practitioner competencies outlined in Chapter 1 of your textbook, explain the following case study. Describe instances when standards were met and instances when standards were breached. Furthermore, describe what recommendations you would make to the individuals involved in this scenario (i.e. player, coach, sport psychologist).

Nicolienne plays for a University varsity volleyball team. She is in her third year and has been working with the same coach, Bill, since she began her undergraduate degree. As a first year player, Nicolienne was unstoppable, helping her team capture multiple titles and competing in World-class championships. She exuded confidence and was a great model for her peers. Not only was she a talented athlete, but she was extremely dedicated, always putting in extra practice time. Bill had never coached a player like Nicolienne. He knew she would be a very successful athlete and was thrilled to have her on the team.

During the last part of her second season, Nicolienne's performance started declining. She was no longer playing well in events, and at practice she seemed sluggish and un-interested. She also lost tremendous amounts of confidence in herself. When Bill approached Nicolienne to talk about potential reasons for her declining performance and enthusiasm, she brushed it off and said she had not been feeling very well but that she was still committed and dedicated. Bill suggested Nicolienne take a few months off from competition and practice; he thought this might give her a fresh start upon her return for her third season.

After agreeing to take some time off, Nicolienne hoped that she would start her third season with more energy and confidence. Unfortunately, this was not the case. She was still un-interested and sluggish at practice. After chatting with Bill, they both agreed that Nicolienne should see a sport psychologist to help her with the problems she was experiencing. Bill admitted that this issue was beyond what he was able to help her with; therefore, a qualified professional was needed.

Nicolienne met with the sport psychologist named Will, who was recommended to her by a family friend. During their first session, Will asked Nicolienne to give him some background information regarding what she was studying in university, her career as an athlete, her history with volleyball and coaches, and her relationships with her teammates. He also asked her to talk about the experiences she had had over the last few years and what had changed in her life and in volleyball throughout the course of her seasons at university. Much of the information Nicolienne discussed with Will was of sensitive nature. Will ensured her that he would keep all information confidential.

At the end of the meeting, Nicolienne felt relieved to finally be talking to someone about her experiences. She felt revived and thought that Will was really going to help her through her struggles; she had now found hope. Just before parting, Will handed Nicolienne his business card. Will's business card indicated that he had a Masters in Human Kinetics and he coined himself a "sport consultant". Nicolienne then realized that Will had been calling himself a sport psychologist during their session, but that this "title" was not present on his business card.

Furthermore, Bill was quite concerned about Nicolienne because her performance and attitude were hurting the team's performance and efficiency in practice. He decided to call Will and asked him to give him details about what he had discussed with Nicolienne in their meeting. Will declined giving any information and Bill got upset. He told Will that he had a duty to report the contents of their meeting as Nicolienne was "his" athlete.

Additional Teaching Resources

Readings

- Albinson, J. G. & Bull, S. J. (1988). *The mental game plan: A training programme for all sports*. London, ON: Spodym Publishers
- Anshel, M. H. (2003). *Sport Psychology: From theory to practice* (4th Ed.). San Francisco: Benjamin Cummings.
- Cox, R. H. (2006). *Sport psychology: Concepts and applications* (5th Ed.). Boston: McGraw Hill.
- Feltz, D. L., & Kontos, A. P. (2002). The nature of sport psychology. In T. Horn (Ed.), *Advances in sport psychology* (2nd Ed., pp. 3–19). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Gill, D., & Williams, L. (2008). *Psychological dynamics of sport and exercise* (3rd Ed.). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Moore, Z. E. (2003). Ethical dilemmas in sport psychology: Discussion and recommendations for practice. *Professional Psychology: Research & Practice*, 34, 601–610.
- Orlick, T. (2008). *In pursuit of excellence: How to win in sport and life through mental training*. (4th Ed.). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Silva, J. M. (2002). The evolution of sport psychology. In J. M. Silva & D. E. Stevens (Eds.), *Psychological foundation of sport*. Toronto: Allyn and Bacon.
- Weinberg, R., & Gould, D. (2007). *Foundations of sport and exercise psychology* (4th Ed.). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Weiss, M. R. (2008). “Riding the wave”: Transforming sport and exercise psychology within an interdisciplinary vision. *Quest*, 60, 63–84.

Movies

- Fitness Information Technology Video Library
- Virtual Sport Psychology: Three Approaches to Sport Psychology Consulting
- Brief Contact Interventions in Sport Psychology

There are multiple movies that involve mental skills and selective scenes would act as appropriate case studies and discussion points. Some of these movies include:

- Billy Elliot (2000)
- Center Stage (2000)
- For the Love of the Game (1999)
- Happy Gilmore (1996)
- Rudy (1993)
- The Karate Kid (1984)
- The Natural (1984)

Websites

a. Professional Organizations

- American Psychological Association, Division 47: Sport and Exercise Psychology: <http://www.apa47.org/>
- Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology: <http://appliedsportpsych.org/>
- Australian Psychological Society: College of Sport Psychology: <http://www.groups.psychology.org.au/csp/>
- Canadian Council of University Physical Education & Kinesiology Administrators: <http://www.ccupeka.ca>
- Canadian Psychological Association (CPA): www.cpa.ca
- Canadian Society for Psychomotor Learning and Sport Psychology / Societe Canadienne Apprentissage Psychomoteur et de Psychologie du Sport (SCAPPS): <http://www.scapps.org/>
- European Federation of Sport Psychology: <http://www.fepsac.com/>
- International Society of Sport Psychology: <http://www.issponline.org/>
- International Society for Sports Psychiatry: <http://www.theissp.com/>
- North American Society for the Psychology of Sport and Physical Activity (NASPPA): <http://www.nasppa.org/>

b. Journals

- Athletic Insight (online journal): <http://www.athleticinsight.com/>
- Journal of Sport & Exercise Psychology: <http://hk.humankinetics.com/jsep/journalAbout.cfm>
- Journal of Applied Sport Psychology: <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/tf/10413200.html>
- Psychology of Sport and Exercise: http://www.elsevier.com/wps/find/journaldescription.cws_home/620792/description#description
- The Sport Psychologist: <http://hk.humankinetics.com/tsp/journalAbout.cfm>

c. Training and Certification

- The American Psychological Association: <http://www.apa.org/students/student5.html>
- Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology: <http://appliedsportpsych.org/consultants/become-certified>

d. Other important websites

- Canadian Psychological Association – Code of Ethics: <http://www.cpa.ca/cpasite/userfiles/Documents/Canadian%20Code%20of%20Ethics%20for%20Psycho.pdf>
- Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology – Code of ethics: <http://appliedsportpsych.org/governance/committees/ethics/standards.php>
- Sport psychology at the Australian Institute of Sport: <http://www.ausport.gov.au/ais>