

OLYMPIC VALUES BETWEEN TRADITION AND MODERNITY

Abstract ID: EASM-2015-81/R1 - (588)

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Date submitted: 2015-03-19

Date accepted: 2015-03-28

Type: Scientific

Keywords: Olympic Games, Olympism, Olympic values, values, scale development

Category: 2: Global Sporting Events

Synopsis:

Abstract:

AIM OF THE PAPER

According to the Olympic Charter, “the goal of the Olympic Movement is to contribute to building a peaceful and better world by educating youth through sport practised in accordance with Olympism and its values” (IOC, 2013a, p. 15). Although Olympic values have been widely discussed in the literature, there is a paucity of research into what the dimensions of the Olympic values (referring to today’s Olympic Games) are. This study thus aims to develop a multi-dimensional measurement tool for Olympic values.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Today, the IOC still builds upon Pierre de Coubertin’s ideas of what the Olympic Games stand for, and what their values – that is, the general beliefs about desirable end states or behaviors –, are (IOC, 2013a). Both internal (i.e., the IOC’s perspective of what values they represent) and external approaches (i.e., the perception of values by relevant stakeholders [but not the IOC itself]) can be used to identify relevant Olympic value dimensions. Previous studies have focused on the IOC’s perspective on Olympic values (e.g., Chatziefstathiou, 2005). However, there is little research into the perception of the Olympic values by relevant stakeholders even though the Olympic Movement has recognized the importance of how different stakeholders, such as the host city population, media, and sponsors, perceive the values that are associated with the Olympic Games today. This study assesses the values from the perspective of Olympic scholars, and the dimensions of these values. Olympic scholars are persons that (at least to some degree) deal with the Olympic Games in their job after they have been received some education with respect to the Olympic Movement (e.g., attendance of International Olympic Academy seminars).

METHODS

To generate a pool of value items, 190 scholars (M = 49-years-old, 30% female; from 44 countries) were asked to state any Olympic values that come into their mind. The scholars were recruited based on an Olympic scholar database. In total, 197 values were mentioned. We also performed a review of existing human value inventories that may be applicable to and relevant for the Olympic Games to supplement the survey data. This process yielded 26 items. Next, we asked seven scholars (from five continents) to select those of the 223 values that are applicable to or relevant for the Olympic Games. We eliminated values where the majority of experts stated that they were not applicable or relevant. This left us with 158 values. To develop a more parsimonious scale capable of measuring Olympic values, we conducted another study where 364 scholars (M = 43-years-old, 43% female; from 89 countries) rated the extent to which each of the items could be used to accurately describe the Olympic values. Identification with Olympic Games athletes of one's respective nation was assessed too ($r = .85$; Wann & Branscombe, 1993). We will next report the results of this study.

RESULTS, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

An exploratory factor analysis with Promax rotation provided evidence of eight distinct factors after elimination of items with low loadings on target factors or high loadings on non-target factors and after elimination of factors that seemed too narrow (e.g., only applied to certain contexts) or too broad (e.g., lacked a well-defined common core). A total of 43 items represent the eight factors. Based on the collective meaning of the items within each factor, we labeled the eight dimensions (1) fairness/respect/tolerance, (2) consistency/capability, (3) dedication/sacrifice, (4) fun/pleasure, (5) development/responsibility, (6) achievement/effort, (7) power/success, and (8) enjoyment/beauty. A regression analysis showed that fairness/respect/tolerance ($b = .34$, $p < .001$), enjoyment/beauty ($b = .14$, $p < .05$), fun/pleasure ($b = .13$, $p = .08$), and power/success ($b = .12$, $p = .05$) influenced identification with Olympic Games athletes positively, while there was no significant effect of any of the other factors.

The dimensions perceived by Olympic scholars go beyond simple classifications provided by the IOC (2013b; excellence, friendship, and respect). As suggested by Chatziefstathiou (2005), the value perception of the Olympic Games as they are reflecting amateurism (vs. professionalism) is less relevant for today's Olympic Games. However, in contrast to what she proposed, aspects of universalism, internationalism, and multiculturalism do not form own dimensions, but underlie all values that appeared in our analysis. In forthcoming studies, the scale will be applied to different samples (across cultures). The studies will provide management implications for the IOC and its stakeholders, such as whether internal and external value perceptions differ, whether culture explains differences in value perception, and whether the values are related to success variables (e.g., host population support).

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