Advances in Sport Psychology (2nd Edition)

By Thelma Horn (Ed.). Copyright 2002 by Human Kinetics Publishers, Champaign IL (576 pp., $59.00)

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The wait for the new edition has been well worth it. The new edition is almost twice as long (562 pages vs. 306 pages), includes 13 updated chapters (nature of sport psychology, knowledge construction, personality, motivation, self-efficacy, arousal, gender, group dynamics, leadership, socialization, imagery, attention, goal setting), and four new chapters (self perceptions, moral development, flow/peak experience, athletic injury).

Like the first edition, the second is divided into four parts (with somewhat updated section headings): I. Introduction to Sport Psychology; II. Individual Differences and Sport Behavior; III. Socioenvironmental Issues, Sociocultural Issues, and Sport Behavior; IV. Psychological Skills, Intervention Techniques, and Sport Behavior. In this review, I evaluate the usefulness of the text for a graduate level research-oriented sport psychology class with particular attention to its organization, clarity of writing, and presentation of the current state of knowledge in the field.

One of the strengths of the second edition (as with the first) is the foundation provided in the first two chapters defining the scope of sport psychology and the nature of scientific inquiry in the field. The first chapter by Deborah Feltz and Anthony Kontos on “The Nature of Sport Psychology” informs the reader on the development of sport psychology as an academic discipline, identifying important maturational stages and significant philosophical and methodological paradigm shifts. The authors are insightful about the current needs for integrating applied and theoretical work, as well as knowledge from other disciplines within sport and exercise science, into our understanding of individuals and their behavior.

Robert Brustad’s chapter, “A Critical Analysis of Knowledge Construction in Sport Psychology,” is must reading for graduate students entering the field of sport psychology. Brustad takes on the difficult task of providing a primer on the historical and social influences that have shaped knowledge development in sport psychology. He explores the profound influence of the positivist research tradition, specifically the over reliance on the parent discipline of psychology, and the tendency to seek credibility through employing the methods of department colleagues in exercise physiology and biomechanics. His explanations of current critical and feminist theory should serve to encourage those in the field to be open to a diversity of approaches.

These two chapters provide an excellent basis for understanding the larger theoretical and methodological issues that have influenced the nature of research in sport psychology, particularly in terms of what and whom we have chosen to research.
The text benefits immensely from having a consistent format that provides an integrated style as well as preserving the independent voices of the separate chapter authors. Each chapter begins with an introduction defining the scope and importance of its topic. The authors set the topic within the context of prevailing research and theoretical orientations within sport psychology, provide a critical analysis of the state of knowledge in the respective area, and offer recommendations for future research.

Chapters that are particularly accessible to a graduate student audience are Robin Vealey’s chapter on personality, Kenneth Fox’s new chapter on self-perception, Maureen Weiss and Emilio Ferrer-Caja’s chapter on motivational orientations, and the chapter on group dynamics by Neil Widmeyer, Lawrence Brawley, and Albert Carron. Especially notable for their contribution to expanding the boundaries of sport psychology research are the chapters on coaching effectiveness, socialization, gender, moral development, and athletic injuries.

Thelma Horn’s “Coaching Effectiveness in the Sport Domain” chapter goes beyond the tendency of much sport psychology research to investigate the influence of individual difference and socioenvironmental factors separately. She provides a comprehensive, detailed working model of coaching effectiveness that integrates coach, socioenvironmental, and athlete factors. Excellent examples are provided to help the reader understand the dynamics of the model. For instance, to clarify how a coach’s beliefs may influence individual athlete behavior, she explores how a coach who holds homophobic beliefs may act either positively toward athletes who fit stereotypic gender expectations or negatively toward athletes who do not.

Diane Gill and Susan Greendorfer in their respective chapters meet editor Horn’s challenge to contributors “... to push at the boundaries that have defined and, in many cases, limited our field since its inception” (p. xiii). They each discuss the failure of sport psychology research to study socialization or gender adequately. Greendorfer chastises the field for rarely investigating sport socialization as a sole independent variable and for failing to understand and employ current sociological theories.

In the chapter, “Gender and Sport Behavior,” Gill provides a blunt review of the state of gender research in sport psychology. She comments, “Sport psychology research on gender is limited in all ways. We have little research. Our research questions and methods focus on differences and neglect complex gender issues and relations, and we are lacking conceptual frameworks to help us understand the complexities of gender in sport and exercise contexts” (pp. 355-356).

A welcome addition to the second edition is a chapter on moral development in sport, for any sport psychology grad student or sport psychologist must be able to articulate (sometimes daily) why sport does not necessarily build character. Maureen Weiss and Alan Smith make a worthy attempt to present the premises of the two dominant theories on moral development; however, I would like to have seen a discussion of the points of disagreement between social learning theory and structural developmental theory. Moral development is a topic that can be quite dense to explain, and at times the discussion would have benefited from more concrete sport examples.

The final section of the text on Psychological Skills, Intervention Techniques, and Sport Behavior is an excellent example of integrating theoretical and applied aspects of our field. It is particularly important for students and sport psychology