

2018 Research Week Proposal

Title – Spiritual Development Among Collegiate Athletes at a Large Christian University

Program of Study – Psychology

Presentation Type – PowerPoint

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Category – Applied

Abstract

A phenomenological study, focused on a sample of NCAA Division I athletes at a large Christian University, examined the development of the athletes' spirituality and how the phenomenon is understood and practiced by them. The study began with a focus on the potential divergent values of spirituality and the culture of the athletic teams. Research questions explored how spirituality has been developed, been promoted or hindered, and how the culture of NCAA Division I teams has influenced athletes' spiritual development. Prior research identified athletes' religious rituals and habits that are contrary to the culture of the team as factors that impact spiritual development. Additionally, the effect of coaches' influence and other impacts from the university culture on athletic performance and spirituality were examined. Researchers attempted to differentiate between commonly used definitions in research of spirituality, faith, and religiosity.

They determined that spirituality was the most applicable term for both beliefs and practices, and thus formed the foundation of the interview guide. Semi-structured, qualitative interviews were conducted with individual team members, investigating individual perspectives regarding culture of the team, personal spirituality, and team integration of spirituality. Participants included junior and senior male and female athletes currently involved in NCAA Division I team sports. Following the interviews, the transcriptions were coded and analyzed for emerging patterns and themes. The necessary competitive culture of athletics is recognized and can be integrated with the spirituality of athletes. By gaining a more in-depth understanding of the phenomena surrounding spirituality in collegiate athletes, it may be possible to raise awareness of spirituality and its interaction with collegiate athletes.

Christian Worldview Integration

The researchers' Christian worldview influenced the creation of the current study of the phenomenon of spiritual development in collegiate NCAA Division I athletes at a large Christian university. The phenomenological study was conducted through qualitative interviews, which were semi-structured to encourage complete thoughts from each participant. The demographic questionnaire and interview guide utilized questions focused on the spiritual development of collegiate athletes at a large Christian university. Questions aimed to discover individual perspectives on the culture of the team, athletes' personal spirituality, and team integration of spirituality. The participants communicated the individual distinctions of their spirituality to provide a better understanding of each unique perspective for the researchers to analyze. The goal of communication for the study was to inform Christian colleges, coaches, and athletes of the impact on the culture of their athletic teams and to encourage increased development of spirituality. Through this

communication, the researchers anticipate a positive impact for Christ on collegiate athletic teams. The main impact of this study is to raise awareness of the integration of spirituality and athletics. Further ramifications may be an influence on teams through the analysis of the spiritual effectiveness of their programs. Individual team members will be better able to understand their teammates by evaluating how they can facilitate personal and team spiritual growth. Spiritual development is a highly valuable construct that has both temporal and eternal significance, and therefore has research value for both psychological and Christian audiences. Results of this study will help athletic teams and administration better understand themselves and the interactions that occur between athletics and spirituality.