

Osaze, J. (1980, October 4). Social, athletic and academic competitive motivation among urban children. *Journal of Psychotherapy and Behavioral Assessment*, 2, 356-369.

OVERVIEW

This comparative study attempts to disprove the belief that sport is a negative factor on competitive attitudes of children in the inner-city. Previous studies were implemented in suburban settings, and Osake was interested to see if the findings were similar.

DESIGN

The competitive nature of 384 inner-city urban children was explored within three environmental settings: a social game, an athletic event, and an academic performance. It was proposed that comparisons of performance choices (cooperation or competition) on the assessment trials for settings would reveal either a consistently cooperative (cooperation only) or a consistently competitive (competition only) behavior pattern. Cooperation and competition were measured by the Madsen cooperation board in the social setting (rewards could only be gained through total cooperation), by a free throw contest in the athletic setting, and by fourth grade mathematical word problems in the academic setting.

FINDINGS

The data support the hypothesis that urban children approach most situations with a significant degree of consistent competitiveness. However, the data also reveal that there are specific circumstances in which urban children choose consistent cooperation or choose to perform inconsistently across environmental settings. According to the study, children decide to perform in a manner that best optimizes rewards. Those who felt competent at a certain task chose competition, while those who did not chose cooperation.

CONCLUSIONS

Inconsistent performances reveal behavior patterns that associate social competition with athletic cooperation and social competition with academic cooperation. Inconsistent cross-situational performances are found to be related to different views on self-concept. Children usually compete in situations in which they feel competent. In addition to self-concept, socio-economic status and sex are found to significantly influence their choices.

IMPLICATIONS

1. This study supports the hypothesis that self-concept influences the actions of an individual.
2. Youth leaders need to help kids find areas in their lives in which they feel competent. Competency builds self-esteem, and self-esteem plays a major role in how kids handle themselves and what life offers them.
3. An attitude of cooperation needs development and regular use. Unfortunately, competition prevails. Negative competition produces negative self-esteem. Youth workers are in the business of building people, not tearing them down.

Rob Zarges cCYS