

EDITORIAL

EDITORIAL AT THE REQUEST OF THE EDITORIAL TEAM AT THE JOURNAL OF SPORTS PSYCHOLOGY

I am honored to receive this invitation from RPD/JSP to participate in this line of debate, opened by the Senior Editor of the journal, Professor García-Mas (2018), and continued by Professors Pablo Jodra (2018) and José Manuel Hernández (2019) in the same publication.

It would appear there is some common ground for reflection, which is rather encouraging, and that is the real existence of a “distancing” or “gap” between research and practice in the field of Sport Psychology. This state of affairs was made patently clear in both symposiums held at the Seville World Conference (held under the slogan: *Theory and Practice*), as was also reported in the previously-cited documents in this line of debate. Moreover, the fact that such reflection is taking place constitutes a starting point for rapprochement and collaboration.

There is no doubt regarding the essential and necessary contribution that scientific theory offers to furthering knowledge in the field, which, as stated by Professor García Más, is precisely the source where working professionals obtain their information. However, the widening gap alluded to earlier may not be related so much to theoretical knowledge, framed within a field of basic research, as much as it is to applied research, where the real distancing from the *field professional* becomes more evident. Therefore, it would not be knowledge of basic psychological theory that would dictate sporting behavior, and, of course, neither would the implementation of isolated techniques distance these two roles, considering the previous two aspects are easily acquired through study and dedication.

Citing propositions by Professor Hernández and Professor Jodra for identifying or justifying, in scientific terms, “why have we done things well”, it is necessary to implement *evaluation and/or assessment protocols* to determine the state of agents and sporting affairs. However, these instruments should comply not only with the methodological rigor of the scientific method, but also with the specific methodological requirements for them to be effectively transferred to professional activities. Indeed, some of the demands made by working professionals include the homogenization of concepts and variables, as well as intervention protocols (with regard to definition and operationalization), and the utilization of samples of real sport levels, as reported in the documentation of the World Conference. Furthermore, said report also states that these reasons have led such professionals to avoid these types of instruments for the purpose of assessing their work.

In this regard, a number of proposals have been presented so as to reconcile both worlds, which at no time should be understood as conflicting but rather as complementary, working together to: share databases (a practice that enriches the utilization of samples); analyze and discuss variables from both perspectives; incorporate multidisciplinary teams; and incorporate new technologies. Such relationships would make it possible for research to be conducted from the perspective of all agents and variables in the complex world of sport, while also providing homogeneity and making them more useful.

Finally, offering one final reflection, it would be worthwhile to ask ourselves if everyone can really do everything. Or, in other words, is it really feasible for the scientist and the working professional to be the same person? The wealth of knowledge (or, we might say the “knowledge baggage”) that both individuals require to expertly conduct their activity is extremely vast. The university (by default, a research center) is a point of reference for the generation of knowledge, and it is precisely the origin of most research works published in scientific forums. In addition, the personnel at these centers, such as scientists, receive a salary for researching and sharing their findings with society. The working professional is the individual who works in the world of sport, whether it be in a psychology or sport center (also receiving a salary) or fulfilling the requirements necessary to perform an independent professional activity (e.g., a fiscal license to conduct economic activities, self-employed certification, trade association membership). Having done either of the two options, this individual can then fulfill their ultimate objective, which is to engage directly in sporting activity on a daily basis. This idea, although it may seem contradictory in light of everything mentioned up to this point, is vital to understanding what we can contribute towards making progress in the discipline. Only with this understanding will all individuals be able to present their needs and demands to the other group and listen and receive the solutions necessary to carry out their work suitably.

Martens presented the idea in 1979, and Enrique Garcés de los Fayos took up the baton in 2001, “*as long as we remain to be two separate worlds and, at times, cut off from one another, it will be difficult to make progress in a discipline like ours*”. Our only alternative is to work so that in another twenty years we do not find ourselves with the same issue once again on the table. The ideas and thoughts put forth in this debate must drive us to start working together again and make breakthroughs for our discipline as a team.

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