

incongruous metaphors that rupture and transform binaried limitations.

Burke introduces the idea of intentional incongruity as a critical strategy within the comic frame. He takes a critical stance that illustrates how these cultural products offer novel schematizations as substitutes for traditional paradigms. Burke fiercely believes in humor, the "ambitious and creative nonsense" that manifests in ways accessible for all audiences (1954, p. 112). Yet humor also confirms and reinforces earlier judgments and value orientations. In order to locate a more subversive and irreparable strategy of intentional incongruity, Burke takes a step beyond humor, into the realm of the grotesque.

Going Grotesque

Although one can perceive how the apocalyptic genre functions in tragic and comic frames, this author argues that these representations push beyond these traditional linguistic and narrative frames. She suggests that the apocalyptic representational trend springs from the grotesque, subverting hierarchical linguistic codes and systems. Burke works through the notion of the oxymoronic and grotesque at play within the perspective by incongruity. The sphere of the grotesque links symbols "in 'indiscriminate' patterns that, as clusters, function as oxymorons" (1959, p. 64). These incongruous metaphors dislodge symbols from dominant binaries, resisting historical language and rescuing metaphors from traditional orientations.

The shift to the grotesque is not demarcated as easily as the border between the tragic and the comic. These frames merge and diverge in the grotesque. The nature of laughter further complicates the grotesque, which Kristeva describes as "no more comic than tragic; it is both at once, one might say that it is serious" (1980, p. 80). Even as satire, black humor, or the macabre subvert pious codes, these frames also recodify this subversion (Remshardt, 2004). None but the inappropriate laughter of the grotesque incites such enduring, unsettling emotional ambivalence. As traditional frames lose the grip on cultural imagination, creators and critics move closer to the grotesque. The grotesque is bizarre, inexplicable, and transitory – thus creating a reflection much closer to contemporary human experience, especially in times of social and political upheaval.

Categories break down regardless of how much our rational selves strive to fix and reinforce them. "The grotesque affronts our sense of established order and satisfies, or partly satisfies, our need for at least a tentative, a more flexible ordering" (O'Connor, 1962, p. 19). The grotesque resists portrayals of destabilized identities and crises as resolvable, a common thread in the tragic or comic frames. Instead, the grotesque depicts humankind as "an inextricable tangle of rationality, irrationality, love and hatred, self-improvement and self-destruction" (O'Connor, 1962, p. 18). The apocalyptic grotesque offers no resolution or clarification; instead, these representations

present the confounding meld of life and death, nature and technology, alpha and omega. From these confluences of metaphorical extremes, new meanings may finally emerge.

Much like the apocalypse, the grotesque constitutes a revolutionary force. Both dwell at the edge of the mystical and mythic in terms of destructive and creative power. The grotesque remains shocking precisely because it pushes beyond the ease of humor that mocks but ultimately upholds dominant narratives. Burke positions the grotesque as "the cult of incongruity without the laughter" (1959, p. 58). The grotesque does not diminish hierarchical constraints through laughter; it instead shatters the hierarchical structure of symbols within dominant linguistic traditions.

The incongruous grotesque and apocalyptic representations do not emerge simply to disturb the security of everyday existence, but rather to unearth new notions of symbolism and meaning (Burke 1954). These grotesque representations tear holes in our linguistic traditions of pious rationality. The apocalyptic grotesque holds a significant cultural function because it upends oversimplifications and analogical metaphors, offering instead a possibility of revolutionary incongruity. The apocalyptic grotesque holds an integral purpose, "merging things which common sense had divided and dividing things which common sense had merged" (p. 113). This opens up wildly new vistas for creative and cultural expressions that reject normative orientations. The apocalyptic trend is a grotesque strategy that lights the fuse of tradition, while subsequently ensuring new meaning emerges from the ashes.

When culture offers a perspective or product as unique, anomalous, or revolutionary, this breaks previously accepted classifying ground. Subsequently, this perspective or product has the potential to completely transform profound valuative or ethical categories. According to Burke (1954), these images and ideas challenge our cultural devotion to traditional symbols of hierarchical authority. Our socio-political allegiances of faith, values, and ethics are subject to the revolutionary force of the grotesque. As the apocalyptic representational trend simultaneously offers empowerment and resistance from the status quo, the genre plays within that world of the grotesque. In a reflective wake of the apocalyptic trend, the shift in cultural expectations and ethical allegiances merges empowerment and resistance, destruction and creation, and nature and technology.

Desiring the Apocalyptic Grotesque

The perspective by incongruity shatters even Burke's binary of acceptance and rejection, as we both desire and resist depictions of the apocalyptic grotesque. When confronted with the possibilities of both the apocalypse and the grotesque, we vacillate between the need to look and the need to look away. If we accept and reject the apocalyptic grotesque in this perpetual fluctuation, does it rupture our lin-

guistic security as spectators? Can we glimpse the sublime that delights and terrifies us through its revelation of forces beyond the security of language?

Burke's grotesque seeks to fulfill a deficiency; however, this deficiency remains despite symbolic attempts to fill it and thus generates further desire. This motivates us as a culture toward the excessive consumption of substance. This is exemplified by insatiable desire in the representation of the apocalyptic grotesque. The apocalyptic grotesque, similar to the desiring subject, attempts to compensate for a missing other through an "excessive assertion of self" (Remshardt, 2004, p. 235). The Lacanian *Hommelette* operates as the apocalyptic grotesque might in pursuit of desire for constant lack: the *Hommelette* is a specific site or object that works as a space for desire (Lacan, 1977; Clement, 1983). The apocalyptic grotesque functions in excessive self-fulfillment as desire does not seek out the subject but instead the object for which desire is felt. Our desire does not seek we-the-living but rather the grotesque sublime of apocalyptic death and destruction, rebirth and creation for which desire is felt.

The incongruous images of the apocalyptic grotesque haunt us through their concrete, instantaneous appearances in the visual and their residual haunting of our rhetorical imagination (Remshardt, 2004). The immediate and lingering impact on audiences and readers of the apocalypse genre confirms the power of the dominant narrative that rejects these representations. The juxtaposition of desire and disgust experienced regarding the apocalypse suggests that "our debunkings require their own countermyths" (Gross, 1992, p. 49). Perhaps this desire and disgust is reconciled in the realization that something sublime and inexplicable shadows our insatiable consumption and creation of an apocalyptic grotesque.

Revealing the Sublime

The apocalyptic grotesque "performs metaphorically" (Remshardt, 2004, p. 10), dancing with incongruous meanings to rhetorically puzzle, delight, and enrage us. Perhaps the apocalyptic trend tempts and revolts us because it represents a site of sublime and inexplicable truth. Yet the cost of the sublime at the edges of the grotesque is the linguistic and visual breakdown of representations, much as the cost of apocalyptic rebirth is the breakdown of all existence as we know it. This reinforces why grotesque or incongruous truth remains largely ignored or feared. "However complex the problem of identifying the constraints that limit the constructive power of language, we avoid it at our peril" (Wess, 1996, p. 6). Our linguistic codes and symbolic systems shroud the sublime. The apocalyptic grotesque terrifies because its incongruity alerts us to the strange truth masked by dominant narratives and classical frames.

The apocalyptic grotesque, a rational creation masquerading as irrational, fully illustrates "the irrationality of human nature and the

ways in which our actions are determined by forces beyond our control" (O'Connor, 1962, p. 6). While satire might gently erode the space between tragedy and comedy, the apocalyptic grotesque completely obliterates this illusory division. Only once this border vanishes may we begin to comprehend the possibility of an apocalyptic sublime within the grotesque. The apocalyptic grotesque jars our sensibilities of language, yet helps reveal the truth of human nature. This grotesque genre thus plays upon our irrational fears and desires about all unyielding forces that language cannot control or contain.

For Burke, delight emerges as a pleasure marked by the negative; similarly, the apocalypse as ultimate negative incorporates a desire for the sublime with a fear that it will destroy us. The sublime specter behind, beyond, and beneath language haunts every word with a whispered "sense of awe...a sort of tranquility shadowed with horror" (Burke, 1990, p. 32). As the apocalyptic grotesque reveals the sublime, we can understand why we need the apocalyptic grotesque to confront us with the unrepresentable, if only to remind us that the unrepresentable actually exists (Lyotard, 1986).

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FORUM PIECE

Does “Coming to Jesus” Do More Harm Than Good? Exploring the Psychological Capital of Forensics Competitors

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Abstract: Forensic literature on the subjects of motivation and discipline is surprisingly small and has yet to fully consider the wider scholarly literature on these subjects. This article attempts to further that objective by applying the work of Fred Luthans, Carolyn Youssef, and Bruce Avolio (2007), creators of management theory of psychological capital as it applies to the world of forensics. This article examines experiences with “come to Jesus” meetings and reflections on those experiences through the lens of psychological capital. Hopefully the conclusions of this article will provide coaches with insight into how to better motivate and manage their students.

Introduction

As coaches we are often faced with the difficult task of motivating and disciplining our teams. One common technique for both motivating and disciplining students is the “come to Jesus” meeting. The idiom “come to Jesus” is used widely in popular culture and for the purposes of this article, I define it as: a gathering where by authority figures attempt to motivate organizational members through the use of primarily negative reinforcement. These meetings can serve as important turning points for forensic programs, but they can also have potentially harmful results as well.

Forensic literature on the subjects of motivation and discipline is surprisingly small and has yet to fully tap into the wider scholarly literature on these subjects. This article attempts to further that objective by applying the work of Fred Luthans, Carolyn Youssef, and Bruce Avolio (2007) creators of the ground breaking management theory of psychological capital [*Psych Cap*] to the world of forensics. The theory has thus far received acclaim in the field of management and has even been put into use by major companies like the Gallup Corporation and the Boeing Corporation. Interestingly *Psych Cap* specifically advises against “come to Jesus” meetings and any form of punish-

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ment as motivation.

Any experienced forensics coach is likely to immediately question the validity of any advice that forbids negative reinforcement or punishment. While a great deal has been written about the theory of psychological capital, the practicality of this aspect of it has yet to be examined. This article will examine my experiences with "come to Jesus" meetings and my reflections on those experiences through the lens of psychological capital. Hopefully the conclusions of this article will provide coaches with insight into how to better motivate and manage their students.

Psychological Capital

The theory of *Psychological Capital* operates from the premise that it is the last frontier for organizational development. Resources such as economic, physical, and human capital have all been developed and examined, and the most under-utilized resource we have left is what is inside the minds of employees, or in this case students. This article relies primarily on Luthans et al.'s (2007) book *Psychological Capital*. The book takes a positive psychological approach to managing people. Positive psychology broadens the psychological perspective beyond what is wrong with people toward optimal functioning, flourishing, and reaching human potential.

There are four components of *Psych Cap*: efficacy, hope, optimism, and resiliency. Luthans et al define efficacy as having confidence to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at a challenging task. The confidence in their ability to succeed is essential to individuals' success. The second component of *Psych Cap* is hope. Hope is an individual's ability to persevere toward goals and, when necessary, redirecting paths to goals in order to succeed. In the face of challenges it is important that individuals believe they can still succeed and that they can make the necessary adjustments to succeed. The next component of *Psych Cap* is optimism, which while similar to hope is a unique and important component of the theory. Optimism is defined as making positive attributions about succeeding now and in the future. It is important for individuals to have both short-term and long-term belief in their ability to accomplish their goals. The final key to *Psych Cap* is resiliency. Resiliency means that when beset by problems and adversity, individuals are capable of sustaining and bouncing back, even beyond previous benchmarks, to attain success.

Psychological capital also has strong guidelines against negative feedback. The authors' negative views towards punishment is based on the work of Pierce, Kostova, and Dicks (2003) who found that punishment and negative feedback increase resentment, decrease hope and optimism, make subjects less resilient, and reduce levels of personal efficacy. According to this research students on a forensics teams subject to "come to Jesus" meetings will be more likely to quit, less likely to work hard, and will have fewer positive feelings towards the

group and coaches than students who do not experience this form of punishment.

Instead of bringing students to Jesus, Luthans et al. advises coaches to ignore negative behavior. Unless the behavior is dangerous or directly interfering with the ability of others to do their jobs, the best way to deal with problem behavior is to simply ignore it. In addition, to ignoring the bad, it is also important to praise the good. Luthans et al argue that individuals' desire to seek positive behavior will exceed their desire to be ignored and this will result in positive behavioral changes.

Psychological Capital in the World of Forensics

Forensics in many ways enforces the basic tenets of psychological capital. For example, we hold award ceremonies praising students and events that we believe are exemplars of the way the events should be preformed. We also avoid publicly admonishing those students who perform poorly. We do not also announce the worst performers in events at award ceremonies, rather those whose performances are deemed unacceptable to advance to final rounds are simply ignored. This behavior is perfectly in line with the tenets of *Psych Cap*. As a community we believe students' desires to gain praise for their performances will cause them to improve, and that it is unnecessary and possibly detrimental to harp on their unsatisfactory performances. Additionally, when done appropriately, ballots frame feedback in constructive and positive ways and encourage students, enhancing both their hope and personal efficacy.

At the same time forensics also deviates from some of the practices advised by psychological capital. For example, all students in speech rounds are ranked and students receiving lower ranks are aware of their ranking. In debate rounds wins and loses are awarded in each round and students are made aware of their losses. Additionally, while the best judges provide constructive criticism on ballots, there also many judges who provide only negative criticism or who simply provide little to no criticism at all.

Ethnographic reflections and anecdotal evidence

My own tenure as both an assistant and head coach has provided me with numerous experiences to reflect upon concerning the effectiveness of psychological capital. In this section I discuss my own attempts to have a "come to Jesus" meeting and reflect on the results of this experience.

Coming to Jesus and blaming the coaches

The first "come to Jesus" meeting I ever held came in my first year as a director of forensics. During that year the team was failing to meet my expectations and most concern of all to me was that they

failed to improve from week to week. Students were repeatedly going overtime in their events, as well as showing up to tournaments with events that were both unpracticed and unmemorized. After several weeks of this behavior, I had enough and decided to call my first "come to Jesus" meeting. The meeting focused on the students failure to meet objectives, violations of team policies, and the coaches' overall disappointment with the performance of the team thus far.

After the team meeting the students held a student only meeting to discuss the situation. At first I was delighted by this result, feeling that the team was finally changing and students were willing to take ownership of the team. My feeling quickly changed, however, when it became clear to me that the theme of this meeting was not that students needed to change their behavior but rather the coaching staff was wrong and there was no need to worry. Particularly concerning was the explicit statements of seniors who informed younger members of the squad not to worry and not to change because they knew more than the coaches. As one can imagine the results of both the team meeting and student meeting were not positive for student-coach relations. Feelings of anger and resentment increased on both sides. While the team did eventually turn around, this occurred much later in the semester than was desired and I do not believe the changes were aided by this meeting. If anything the "come to Jesus" meeting may have delayed the eventual turnaround.

In subsequent years I have been reluctant to hold these types of meetings. I have also often wondered why this meeting failed and what I could have done differently. The work of Luthans et al. helps to shed light on why many "come to Jesus" meetings do more harm than good. One important question that needs to be asked before holding this type of meeting is: "Who are the meetings for?" Luthans et al. contend that such meetings help managers and coaches feel needed but are rarely productive. Do we as coaches feel the need to meet, yell, scream, lament, only as a way of expressing control over our teams? Veteran coach Craig Brown (2008) explains that sometimes we want to feel that we are doing something as coaches, earning our paycheck. Luthans et al. diagnosis a similar phenomenon which they call managers who needs to manage. Coaches who need to coach and managers who need to manage are afflicted with the belief that because they can they ought to exert control whenever possible, failing to realize some of the problems they experience are the result of their own management and coaching practices.

I also propose my own question that I believe needs to be answered before having this type of a meeting: what is the cause of the negative results we are experiencing? Coaches need to evaluate themselves and their teams to determine the root causes of the negative outcomes they are experiencing and decide if the results are caused by bad behavior in need of discipline or by external factors, such as natural ability, talent, poor coaching, lack of resource, or even bad luck. If students perceive themselves to be working hard but are still subjected

to negative feedback their resiliency and optimism will be harmed. It is likely that students will begin to believe that they lack both the pathways to success and the ability to succeed.

Conclusion

Psych Cap is a theory that needs more explanation and more application to the field of forensics. This theory has great potential to help coaches become better managers and motivators. Greater utilization of this theory by forensic coaches, with regards to both "come to Jesus" meetings, and to motivation and management in general is needed. Specifically, we as coaches need to consider the potential downsides that can result from over use of negative forms reinforcement and these types of meetings. We need to carefully consider the purpose of the meetings and the causes of the problems we seek to address before to deciding to "bring our students to Jesus."

While forensic coaches have a lot to learn from theories such as psychological capital, I also contend that researchers and theorists have an equal amount to learn from our activity. In this case I believe that the laboratory of competitive forensics highlights several key theoretical areas of importance with regards to *Psych Cap*. First, Luthans et al. research is based in corporate settings and fails to consider the possibilities the theory holds and how it might change for voluntary organizations. Inherent in employment is an economic incentive to succeed that provides powerful external motivation that is typically lacking in the world of collegiate forensics. Greater research into voluntary organizations would help strengthen this theory and make it more generalizable. Second, the authors of this theory assume that there are no organizational members that you would want to lose. Here they fail to realize that the potential of addition by subtraction. As a coach I have encountered students whose participation is determinantal to the collective psyche of the team. The removal of these types of individuals can produce positive organizational outcomes. This issue is closely linked to another potential concern. The authors of *Psych Cap* assume that individuals' behaviors can be isolated and do not interact with the overall team. Here they seem to neglect the element of culture. Any competent coach recognizes the vital role of organizational culture in producing positive outcomes for their team. Individuals' behaviors may in certain cases only impact their events but more likely they contribute to culture. Culture is important to all organizations but is even more so important teams. The team aspect of forensics makes it unique from the typical organizations for which psychological capital has been thus far applied to and provide even more reason to continue the application of this theory to our field.

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