VALIDATION OF THE ATHLETIC IDENTITY MEASUREMENT SCALE
WITH A HONG KONG SAMPLE

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ABSTRACT

Within athletic domains, athletic identity is a cognitive structure guiding and organizing how the person processes self-related information (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993). Being one of the domains of the self-concept, athletic identity is the “degree of importance, strength, and exclusivity attached to the athlete role that is maintained by the athletes and influenced by environment” (p. 39; Cieslak, 2005). Previous studies have shown that athletic identity is related to various psychological processes such as identity foreclosure and the emotional reactions of athletes to injuries (Grove, Lavallee, & Gordon, 1997). The Athletic Identity Measurement Scale (AIMS) is a 10-item quantitative inventory measuring the level of athletic identity (Brewer, Van Raalte, & Linder, 1993). Throughout the past decade, researchers have been examining the psychometric properties and factor structures of the AIMS with samples mainly from English-speaking societies (Brewer & Cornelius, 2001; Hale, James, & Stambulova, 1999).

This thesis consisted of two studies. The first one investigated the internal consistency and factor structure of the AIMS within a Hong Kong Chinese sample by performing confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) and Cronbach’s alphas. The author constructed a Chinese version of the AIMS and administered it to 186 Hong Kong athletes. The CFAs showed that multi-dimensional models were better fits than the original unidimensional model. The goodness-of-fit indices of three previously suggested models (and one simplified model) were either above or extremely close to acceptable levels. Considering the possible cultural influences and translation processes, the findings are substantial. In this study, the author also discusses the cultural differences in terms of each factor and overall athletic identity scores.
The second study followed up the results of the first study and further explored the construct of athletic identity through qualitative interviews. The author, who was also the interviewer, recruited 13 Hong Kong athletes for in-depth interviews exploring their life experiences of being athletes in Hong Kong. The results revealed that some contributing elements of the participants’ athletic identities seemed well represented by the AIMS items and factors, such as recognition from others (i.e., social identity), sport-related goals, dysphoric emotions associated with injury (i.e., negative affectivity), and perceived importance of sport (i.e., exclusivity). Some themes from the interviews, however, were not represented in the items or factors of the AIMS. For some participants, appearance and accoutrements, such as clothing and equipment, formed part of their overall athletic identities. Also, the author found that the participants’ fantasies about professional athletes were major features of the interviews. These results showed that various cultural characteristics in Hong Kong may influence the development of the participants’ self-identities including athletic identities. The author employed the theory of self-construals (Markus & Kitayama, 1991) and features of Hong Kong culture to explain the results. In the general discussion, the author also discussed the AIMS items, the factor structure, and their connections with Hong Kong athletes’ experiences, based on the qualitative findings. The author recommended some possible items for further development of the AIMS.
DECLARATION

I, Hin Yue Li, declare that the Doctor of Applied Psychology (Sport Psychology) thesis entitled “Validation of the Athletic Identity Measurement Scale With a Hong Kong Sample” is no more than 40,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, references, and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree of diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.

Signature: [Signature] Date: [Date]
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