

The language of leadership in high performance sport

Researchers

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Research focus

How does leadership emerge in high performance sports teams?

How can studying language use in sports teams help us understand how leadership works in high performance sports teams?

Methodology

We analyse authentic interactions between coaches and players as they go about their sporting activities in training sessions and on match days. By studying the way the team interacts we can develop an understanding of how the leaders emerge by claiming or rejecting leadership positions for themselves or others.

Key findings

- Leadership is a language game
- Leadership is performed in interactions in sports teams. It is in these team interactions where leadership and leaders emerge.
- This notion goes beyond traditional models of leadership whereby a team's leaders are those that occupy powerful roles like coach and captain.
- Instead, leadership can be distributed across teams and other players in teams can and may claim (and perform) leadership in a team's interactions.

To find out more

File, K. A. and N. Wilson (2017) [Adapting self for private and public audiences: the enactment of leadership identity by New Zealand rugby coaches in huddles and interviews](#). In D. van de Mierop, and S. Schnurr, (eds.) *Identity Struggles. Evidence from Workplaces around the World*. Amsterdam; Philadelphia: John Benjamins, pp. 321-337.

Wolfers, So., K. A. File, and S. Schnurr (2017) [Just because he's black'. Identity construction and racial humour in a German U-19 football team](#). *Journal of Pragmatics*, 112, pp 83-96.