

EXTREME SPORTS AND MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

The emerging literature on extreme context may provide a new way to explore management practices in extreme contexts. The world of extreme sports is a unique example of an extreme context. "Extreme sports contain an element of danger; are generally individualistic attempts to master an activity, often through unexpected or creative ways, with these individuals often times interested in breaking records or exceeding previous limitations of human endeavor; and are closely connected to a young and alternative subculture." [1]. This paper explores the applications of extreme sports to the practice of management and adds to the emerging literature on extreme contexts.

INTRODUCTION

While much is known about leaders and teams in traditional business settings, much less is known about the behaviors and processes of individuals and teams facing extreme situations. We see this as an important gap in the leadership literature. The purpose of research is to analyze unique and unusual examples of leaders and teams that have been successful in extreme situations. An extreme situation is defined as one that falls outside the norm; that is, the situation falls outside of the scope of daily experience.

There are numerous historic and contemporary examples of leaders and teams that have survived extreme situations. While some of these cases occurred in business settings, examples can also be found in non-business settings including the military, the arts, sports, rescue workers, and polar and mountain expeditions. Exploring a diverse set of extreme situations offers alternative lenses through which to view leaders and teams and help to better understand the factors that explain successful leadership and team behavior in extreme situations.

Companies are facing global and economic environments that fall well outside of their daily experiences. If we are to contribute to management practice, we must expand our models and theories to understand leaders and teams that exist, and thrive, in extreme situations. There are important lessons to be learned by analyzing contemporary (e.g. the Chilean miners) and historic (e.g. Ernest Shackleton and the Endurance expedition) cases of extreme leaders, extreme teams, and extreme situations. The emerging literature on extreme context may provide a new way to explore management practices in extreme contexts. It has not explored the world of extreme sports as a unique example of an extreme context. Adding extreme sports into the present stream of research on extreme contexts opens up another lens to view management practices in extreme situations. This paper will explore the many applications of extreme sports to the practice of management. This research will add to the emerging literature on extreme contexts and provide insights into the role of extreme sports in management practices.

[1] Boyer, K. *Encyclopedia of Extreme Sports*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2009.