

Abstract

Baton twirling is a sport industry with a specific fan base. The fan community typically consists of parents and supporting friends of the baton twirling children. Baton twirling represents a significant socializing environment for both children and their enthusiastic parents and friends – fans. The social status and the role of fans within this community are subject to a symbolic capital in the form of experience and knowledge of “how-to-do-it”. During the training and competition period, the hierarchy is changing within the group of fans that were monitored, which provides the community members with either a dominant or, alternate, subordinate position. The changing of the “leaders” in the role of the fans’ base brings along high emotions and usually also short-term conflicts in social interactions. In other situations, a hierarchy is not created and the group members perceive each other as equal and support each other in the achievement of their common goal. The researcher has been exposed to the environment she describes and to the emotions and tensions existing therein, and she has separated her own personal perceptions, attitudes and biases with the aim to correctly reflect her experience in the research.

The ethnographic research of an athlete's group, or its fans' base, respectively, has enabled a detailed insight into the world of hierarchy, emotions and tensions existing within the social relationships amongst the fans of the sport while maintaining an ethical approach.

Key words: fans, hierarchy, emotions, conflicts, socialization, baton twirling