

## CURRENT DIRECTIONS IN SOCIAL INFLUENCE: PARENTS AND PEERS

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**ABSTRACT:** Social influence in sport can result from a number of possible sources including parents, peers, siblings, coaches, and fans. Two of the most commonly studied social influences are parents and peers. Parental influence may occur through several different mechanisms, and may impact children in both positive and negative ways (e.g., burnout, anxiety, enjoyment). Peers are also an important source of social influence and have been found to have a significant impact on psychosocial outcomes in sport. This article reviews previous findings in these two areas of social influence in sport and provides an understanding of current and trends in has become a more popular topic in sport psychology in recent years.

**KEYWORDS:** Social influence, sport socialization, parental influence, peer influence.

### TENDENCIAS ACTUALES EN LA INFLUENCIA SOCIAL: PADRES E IGUALES

**RESUMEN:** La influencia social en el deporte puede proceder de diferentes fuentes, que pueden incluir a los padres, los iguales, los hermanos, los entrenadores y lo seguidores. Dos de las influencias sociales que han sido más estudiadas son los padres y los iguales. La influencia de los padres se puede dar a través de varios mecanismos y puede tener un impacto en los niños tanto negativo como positivo (por ejemplo, burnout, ansiedad, diversión). Los iguales también pueden suponer una influencia social importante y se ha detectado que tienen un impacto significativo en los resultados de carácter psicosocial en el deporte. Este artículo examina los resultados

encontrados en estas dos áreas de influencia social en el deporte y proporciona una perspectiva contemporánea sobre un campo que atrae mucha atención hoy en día.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Influencia social; Socialización en el deporte; Influencia de los padres; Influencia de los compañeros.

### **TENDÊNCIAS ACTUAIS NA INFLUÊNCIA SOCIAL: OS PAIS E OS COLEGAS**

**RESUMO:** A influência social no desporto pode ser exercida por várias fontes possíveis, incluindo pais, colegas, irmãos, treinadores e adeptos. Duas das influências sociais mais frequentemente estudadas são as exercidas pelos pais e pelos colegas. A influência parental pode ocorrer através de vários mecanismos diferentes e pode afetar as crianças tanto no sentido positivo como negativo (e.g., burnout, ansiedade, prazer). Os colegas são também uma importante fonte de influência social, tendo vindo a ser verificado o seu impacto significativo nos resultados psicossociais no desporto. Este artigo revê os resultados encontrados nestas duas áreas de influência social no desporto e fornece uma visão compreensiva sobre o atual conhecimento e tendências de um tópico que se tornou muito popular na psicologia do desporto nos últimos anos.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Influência social; socialização do esporte, Influência dos pais; Influência

Sport is typically considered to be a social endeavor. The presence of significant others (e.g., parents, friends, siblings, officials, fans, teammates) may have a significant influence on the sport experience. The purpose of this article is to summarize current knowledge regarding selected forms of social influence, and to discuss how these trends inform future directions in North American sport psychology. This article will focus primarily on two of the most commonly studied forms of social influence in sport: parental and peer influence. This focus on these two particular types of social influence is reflective of Lewin's (1934) conceptualizations of the importance of an individual's social environment in contributing to behavior

in combination with one's personal characteristics, and is also consistent with Bronfenbrenner's (1979, 1993) Ecological Systems Theory assertions that behavior is reflective of an interaction between a person's environment and their developmental status. Since parents and peers have particular importance to individuals as they move through developmental stages, a majority of social influence research has focused on parents, although peer influence research has more recently gained popularity (Partridge, Brustad, & Babkes Stellino, 2008). Both groups have been found to have a significant impact on psychosocial outcomes (e.g., motivation, anxiety, enjoyment, attraction to physical activity). Both parent and peer influence

research has thus far focused on younger athletes (i.e., children and adolescents); therefore, this article reflects these developmental trends.

### **Parental Influence**

The influence of parents on children and adolescents' sport experience has been a popular topic in sport psychology for several years. Parents are considered to be critical socializing agents as they are primarily responsible for socializing children into sport and physical activity during the early part of their development and have been found to have the greatest influence on children's perceptions of sport competence, particularly in childhood (Horn & Weiss, 1991). Parents may provide opportunities and means of support for their children in sport, including paying for lessons and equipment, providing transportation, giving emotional support/competence information, and indicating which activities are the most valued or important. Thus, the importance of parents in the sport experience has the potential to have a significant impact on psychosocial outcomes such as motivation, enjoyment, and anxiety (Babkes Stellino, Partridge, & Moore, 2012; Brustad, Babkes, & Smith, 2001).

In order to explain how parents influence their children in sport, several theoretical models have been utilized to explain the influence that parents have on their children's sport and physical activity behaviors (Partridge, Brustad, & Babkes Stellino, 2008). The most commonly utilized is Eccles' expectancy-

value theory (Eccles, 1993; Eccles (Parsons) et al., 1983), which suggests that parents facilitate their children's sport and physical activity behaviors through several mechanisms, including parental beliefs of the relative value of various achievement domains, parental expectancies for a child's future levels of success in an activity, gender-related stereotypes about activities, and the child's motivation to maintain their participation in various activities. Existing research has found support for Eccles' theory in the sport domain, particularly the link between parental expectancies and their child's expectancies for the child's future success in sport. Parental beliefs about competence have been linked to the child's own perceived competence (Babkes & Weiss, 1999; Fredricks & Eccles, 2002). These relationships have may be maintained even across long periods of time. A longitudinal study conducted in France by Bois, Sarrazin, Brustad, Trouilloud, and Cury (2002) found that mothers' perceptions of their child's physical competence predicted their child's own perceived physical competence one year later, independently of the child's initial level of perceived competence and actual competence on physical skill tests.

### **Parental Influence on Emotional Outcomes in Sport**

Parents have been found to be an important source of both positive and negative emotional outcomes (both positive and negative) for sport participants. It is important to note that there are many

ways that a parent's interactions with his or her child may impact that child's sport experience (Bois, Lalanne, & Delforge, 2009). Parental influence may occur through a variety of different types of interactions, such as parental pressure (e.g., a parent "pushes" their child to participate and/or win in sport, or parents may base their level/type of affection upon a specific sport outcome). There are also forms of parental influence that are based specifically upon the child's perception of the parent's actions related to their sport experience. These perceptions may include perceived parental expectations (i.e., the child's perception of what the parent expects of them), perceived parental importance (i.e., the degree to which it is important for the parents that the child perform well in sport), and perceived parental involvement (i.e., the extent to which a child perceives that a parent is invested in sport participation through provision of time, money, and opportunity).

*Parental influence leading to positive outcomes.* Many forms of parental influence have been found to influence athletes' levels of overall sport enjoyment. Specifically, youth sport participants whose parents convey beliefs in their abilities and who engage in positive reactions to their sporting efforts are more likely to experience enjoyment in sport (Babkes & Weiss, 1999; Brustad, 1988; Green & Chalip, 1997; Scanlan & Lewthwaite, 1986; Scanlan, Stein & Ravizza, 1989). Higher levels of parental support and involvement have also been supported as an important fac-

tor that may impact levels of enjoyment for young athletes (McCarthy & Jones, 2007; McCarthy, Jones, & Clark-Carter, 2008).

*Parental influence leading to negative outcomes.* Conversely, parental influence may also encourage negative emotional responses in sport participants. Research has indicated that young athletes who are concerned about receiving negative evaluations from parents report higher levels of stress and anxiety (Babkes & Weiss, 1999; Brustad, 1988; Brustad & Weiss, 1987; Lewthwaite & Scanlan, 1989; Passer, 1983). Bois et al. (2009) investigated another form of influence, parental presence, in adolescent basketball and tennis players and found that when both parents were present for competition, there was higher pre-competitive anxiety for all participants, except for male tennis players. However, the absence of both parents did not result in significantly lower anxiety, thus, it is currently unclear how much unique influence parental presence may have on pre-competitive anxiety.

Although parental influences on emotional responses have been studied more extensively than other forms of social influence in sport, many questions still remain. Holt, Tamminen, Black, Mandigo, and Fox (2009) addressed the lack of research examining more broad-based themes such as parenting styles by conducting interviews with 56 sport parents, and 34 of their female children. Results indicated that a variety of parenting practices exist in the sport

domain, and that each are linked to how children may experience anxiety in sport. Parents who engaged in behaviors that provided structure for their children and allowed them to take part in the decision-making process were termed as autonomy-supportive, and reported that they engaged in more open and bi-directional forms of communication with their children in sport. A second type of parenting style, controlling, was typified by less open communication, lowered support of the child's autonomy within sport, and less sensitivity to the child's mood. Perhaps unsurprisingly, some families reported inconsistencies in the maternal and paternal sport parenting style, and results also indicated that parents utilized different parenting styles across situations. Lastly, the results indicated that children did have some reciprocal influence on their parents' behaviors. These findings suggest that a wide variety of parenting styles may be utilized by parents in sport, and that they may be modified depending on the parent and circumstances involved.

**Parental influence in physical activity.** Parental influence has also been found to be an important determinant of the physical activity experience for children and adolescents (Edwardson & Gorely, 2010; Sallis, Prochaska, & Taylor, 2000). Specifically, parents of children have been found to influence moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MVPA), overall levels of physical activity, and leisure-time physical activity through direct involvement (e.g., providing transportation or equipment), and by being active

role models through their own active participation in physical activity. Stated simply, parents who are active tend to have more active children (Brustad, 1993). This trend seems to be particularly relevant as children move through childhood and toward early adolescence (6-11 years). For adolescents (12-18 years), parents have consistently been found to be influential to physical activity levels, but research has generally shown that parental attitudes toward physical activity, parental activity levels, transportation, and encouragement are important for maintaining physical activity (Edwardson & Gorely, 2010).

While a majority of parental influence research has examined these relationships at specific points in time, a limited amount of longitudinal research has been conducted to identify the influence of parents over time. These studies have indicated that overall levels of parental support behaviors (e.g., encouragement, modeling healthy behaviors) do predict children's organized physical activity behaviors over time. Interestingly, fathers' levels of physical activity have been found to predict adolescents' overall levels physical activity, although mothers' levels are not (Yang, Telama, & Laasko, 1996).

As stated previously, parental influence is tremendously important for shaping children's and adolescents' psychological outcomes in the physical domain; however, many avenues for future research on parental influence in sport still remain. A majority of existing parental influence research has

focused primarily on the influence that parents have on their children in sport or physical activity, but has not addressed the ways that children may also reciprocally influence their parents. Early research has indicated that parents are impacted by their child's participation in behavioral, cognitive, affective, and social ways (Dorsch, Smith, & McDonough, 2009), and therefore, this child-to-parent dynamic remains an important area for future study.

### **Peer Influence**

Although sport-specific research on peer influence has not traditionally been studied as extensively as parental influence, the understanding of the importance of peers on children's psychosocial development has grown considerably in recent years. Affiliation-related aspects of sport have been found to be salient predictors of enjoyment for competitors at all levels of sport, and include such components as interactions with teammates, creating friendships, and the existence of a social support system (Scanlan, Carpenter, Lobel, & Simons, 1993). Peers may influence participation, motivation and psychosocial outcomes in young athletes in different ways, and several different forms of peer influence have been identified and studied within achievement domains.

Peer relationships may occur in many forms, both positive and negative. Peer acceptance, friendship, friendship quality, and negative peer relationships such as victimization or relationally aggressive behaviors may all contribute to an indi-

vidual's unique peer relationship constellations, which may affect several psychosocial outcomes (e.g., motivation, enjoyment) within achievement activities. While these peer relationships have been studied extensively in educational settings, our knowledge of peer influence in sport is still a relatively new research topic. The following sections explore our current knowledge regarding specific peer relationship types (i.e., peer acceptance, friendship/friendship quality, and peer victimization/relational aggression).

### **Peer Acceptance**

Peer acceptance is conceptualized as one's status or popularity within a peer group, and the degree to which feelings of liking and acceptance are reciprocated between members of the group (Ladd, Kochenderfer, & Coleman, 1997). Conversely, a lack of status or popularity is categorized as peer rejection. Being well-liked within a group has been found to be associated with several positive psychosocial outcomes including higher levels of self-esteem, liking of school, and lower levels of school dissatisfaction (Bukowski & Hoza, 1989; Ladd et al., 1997; Parker & Asher, 1993).

In the physical domain, physical ability has been identified as a fundamental contributor to peer acceptance or rejection within the peer group (Adler, Kless, & Adler, 1992; Chase & Dummer, 1992; Evans, 1985; Xie, Li, Boucher, Hutchins, & Cairns, 2006; Weiss & Duncan, 1992). Moreover, possessing high ability at other tasks, such as academics, may not

provide children with the same degree of peer acceptance, if those domains are not highly valued by the peer group (Patrick, Ryan, Alfeld-Liro, Fredricks, Hruda, & Eccles, 1999). Moreover, it appears that gender may be a mediating variable in this relationship, as boys have consistently indicated that being successful in physical endeavors was of the highest importance for peer acceptance, whereas a weaker relationship exists between physical ability and peer acceptance for girls (Adler et al., 1992; Chase & Dummer, 1992). When children fail to achieve acceptance from their peer group (i.e., they are rejected), feelings of social isolation may result (Parker & Asher, 1993).

### **Friendships and Friendship Quality**

Friendships are a second important form of positive peer relationship consisting of a mutual, affective bond that develops between two individuals (Bukowski & Hoza, 1989). Friendships have the opportunity to provide sport participants with several important experiences (i.e., companionship, pleasant play, conflict resolution, and things in common) that increase enjoyment and commitment to sport, and are considered critical in moving a young person from a more egocentric perspective to a more other-oriented perspective by allowing him or her to take the role of another individual (i.e., the friend). This capacity is crucial to the individual's psychosocial adjustment (Sullivan, 1953). Several specific issues related to friendships (e.g., friendship quality and expecta-

tations) have been studied within both educational and sport domains and found to impact numerous developmental outcomes.

While the presence or absence of friendship is considered an important form of peer influence, the specific qualities of these friendships also play an important role in determining psychosocial outcomes in educational and physical domains. Hartup (1995) proposed that all friendships are not alike and do not all carry the same expectations or consequences for individuals, therefore, there should be a distinction made between having friends, the identity of one's friends, and the quality of friends in children and adolescents' lives. A meta-analysis of 82 research studies conducted by Newcombe and Bagwell (1996) that assessed friend vs. non-friend comparisons found that positive engagement, conflict management, task activity, and subjective properties of friendships (e.g., similarities, dominance, mutual liking, and closeness) were all found to differ significantly between friends and non-friends, with friendships providing more intense social interactions, more frequent conflict resolution, and more effective task performance.

These findings on the unique experiences of friendship quality in educational settings have also been found in the sport literature. Research in the sport domain has indicated that children and adolescents prefer a different set of friendship qualities for their friends in sport than in educational settings.

Zarbatany and colleagues (Zarbatany, Ghesquiere, & Mohr, 1992; Zarbatany, Hartmann, & Rankin, 1990) investigated children's (ages 10 to 12 years) perceptions of liked and disliked friendship behaviors when engaging in a variety of activities and found for academic activities, friends were expected to provide helping behaviors, while noncompetitive activities were expected to elicit including and accepting behaviors. In activities such as sports and games, Zarbatany and colleagues (1992) found that friends were expected to demonstrate behaviors meant to enhance positive self-evaluations (e.g., ego reinforcement and preferential treatment). This may be due to the competitive nature of these activities and the importance of maintaining a positive self-image among peers by being successful at these activities.

Further examination of friendship expectations within the sport domain by Weiss and colleagues (Weiss & Smith, 1999; 2002; Weiss, Smith, & Theeboom, 1999) provided additional insight into children's sport friendship expectations. Weiss, Smith, and Theeboom (1996) first conducted in-depth interviews with sport program participants (ages 8 to 16) to discover what characteristics these children, who were experienced in a variety of interpersonal relationship levels of success (e.g., popular compared to less well-liked), preferred to have exhibited by their best sport friend. The researchers identified a total of 12 positive higher-order themes (i.e., companionship, pleasant play/association, self-esteem enhancement, help and guidance,

prosocial behavior, intimacy, loyalty, things in common, attractive personal qualities, emotional support, absence of conflicts, and conflict resolution), while four negative friendship dimensions emerged (i.e., conflict, unattractive personal qualities, betrayal, and inaccessibility), suggesting that both positive and negative components of friendship are important for quality friendships in sport.

These findings suggest that although there are similarities between the positive friendship dimensions found in the developmental literature and those found in sport-specific situations, there are also unique dimensions to sport friendships that necessitate further exploration. For example, a positive dimension that emerged as being highly important to children in sport friendships was self-esteem enhancement. Children in the study expected their sport friends to provide them with reinforcement for favorable aspects of their sport abilities. Given the importance that children have been found to place on physical competence, it is not surprising that children expect their friends to try to facilitate self-esteem in sport activities. Failure to engage in this type of behavior could be potentially damaging to a friendship between children, particularly if a child perceives herself to be less successful in sport.

*Impact of multiple forms of peer influence.*

To date, much of the literature on social influence has focused on the impact of a specific relationship (e.g., peer acceptance) on specific outcomes. More



recently, however, the literature has begun to expand to include investigations of how multiple forms of peer relationships may work in concert to influence sport participants. Smith and colleagues have found that many of the same peer motivational profiles that exist in academic achievement domains are also present in the sport domain as well. Smith, Ullrich-French, Walker, and Hurley (2006) investigated peer relationship variables in a sport sample (including perceived friendship quality, perceived peer acceptance, perceived competence, enjoyment, anxiety, self-presentational concerns, and self-determined motivation) in a sport sample. Results indicated five separate profiles that were consistent with previous work in developmental psychology (Seidman, Chesir-Teran, Friedman, Yoshikawa, Allen, & Roberts, 1999) and were also consistent with theoretical expectations that more positive peer relationships increase psychological benefits (e.g., higher levels of perceived competence, lower anxiety, and lower self-presentational concerns) and that social factors impact motivation-related cognitions (e.g., self-determined motivation) and enjoyment. More research incorporating multiple forms of peer influence should be conducted to more fully understand how each contributes to psychosocial outcomes in sport.

### **Negative Peer Relationships**

Although the vast majority of peer relationship research in developmental sport and exercise psychology has focused on

the positive constructs of peer acceptance and friendship, a third component of the peer influence puzzle, peer victimization, has also been linked to children's psychological and social development. Peer victimization refers to a group of behaviors that can be considered to be physically and/or verbally threatening (Ladd et al., 1997). Victimization is a more active outcome of a peer relationship in which the recipient of the negative behaviors not only fails to gain acceptance (i.e., is rejected), but may be subjected to a variety of negative behaviors including: general outcomes (e.g., being picked on), physical outcomes (e.g., being pushed or hit), direct verbal victimization (e.g., having other kids say mean things to him), or indirect verbal victimization (e.g., being the target of gossip/rumors).

Research in the educational literature has found that the presence or absence of victimizing behaviors was the catalyst for future school maladjustment and avoidance behaviors (Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1996a; 1996b; 1997).

*Victimization in sport.* Outside of educational settings, evaluative activities such as structured sport have also been shown to be a relevant forum in which negative peer interactions and negative affective reactions may occur (Evans & Roberts, 1987; Kunesch, Hasbrook, & Lewthwaite, 1992; Partridge, 2003; Smith, Sampson, DeFreese, Blankenship, & Templin, 2009). Evans (1985) found that children playing in unstructured sports on school playgrounds at recess experienced negative

affect when choosing sides for games because of the inherently evaluative component. Recent research conducted by Bray and colleagues (2000) found that young competitive skiers who reported more concerns about what their fellow competitors and friends thought of their general skiing ability, as opposed to evaluation of specific performances, experienced higher levels of pre-competitive anxiety.

It is important to note that extensive research in developmental literature on peer victimization behaviors has found that victimization behaviors are frequently mediated by gender. Patterns of aggressive/victimizing behaviors in children and adolescents suggest that while both genders may exhibit aggression toward one another, females are disproportionately likely to engage in what are termed “relationally aggressive” actions wherein girls attempt to undermine or destroy another girl’s social relationships through rumors, name-calling, and social isolation in both educational (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Currie, Kelly, & Pomerantz, 2007), and playground settings (Braza, et al., 2007; Ostrov & Keating, 2004). In one of the few studies to examine these types of behaviors in sport, Kunesh, Hasbrook, and Lewthwaite (1992) conducted interviews, observations, and sociometric evaluations with eight 11- to 12-year-old girls about their peer interactions in, and affective responses to, three different physical activity settings (i.e., formal sport/physical education classes, informal activities such as tetherball at recess,

and exercise contexts. Results showed that evaluative activities provided the most consistent forum within which negative peer interactions occurred. These negative peer interactions were characterized by repeated, stable criticisms of girls’ athletic abilities, and also by casting the girls in a subordinate role to that of the males in the class. Although the authors did not directly label these behaviors as peer “victimization” behaviors, it may be considered to be a starting point for studies in sport and physical activity that address those behaviors. A recent exploratory study from Partridge, Jenkins, and Kurth (2011) suggests that adolescent female athletes do experience relationally aggressive behaviors on school sport teams (e.g., teasing, rumors, social isolation). Given the negative affect associated with peer victimization, as well as the gender specific nature of the behaviors, more knowledge is needed about how victimization behaviors can operate as a negative socialization mechanism through which adolescents (particularly girls), may be discouraged from participation altogether.

There is much that remains unknown about victimization in sport and physical activity contexts. Research is needed in this area of peer influence to better understand what impact victimization behaviors may have on youth sport athletes. Additionally, more research is necessary to better delineate how different forms of peer relationships (i.e., peer acceptance/rejection, friendship, friendship quality) may or may not impact each

other within the specific context of sport and physical activity.

### **Peer Leadership**

Although not traditionally discussed as a form of peer influence in the literature, peer leadership is another important and relevant topic in social influence. The importance of this topic is underscored by the usefulness of having qualified team members who may be capable of guiding and motivating their peers on a team to achieve success and higher levels of motivation. Early studies on peer leadership focused on identifying specific personality traits that could be used to separate peer leaders from non-leaders on a given team, and found that such identifiers as high skill level, higher levels of internal locus of control (Yukelson, Weinberg, Richardson, & Jackson, 1981), player position (Lee, Coburn, & Partridge, 1981), and greater levels of masculinity sex-role orientation (Andersen & Williams, 1987) were associated with perceptions of peer leadership. These findings have supported approaches to leadership stating that leadership effectiveness is context-specific (Chelladurai, 1990) such that the traits that may produce an effective peer leader on a volleyball team may not be concurrent with those that create effective leadership in student government.

Glenn and Horn (1993) expanded on this early research with an important study on leadership with female high school soccer athletes. Participants completed inventories on perceived competence, sex-role orientation, com-

petitive trait anxiety, and global self-worth. Actual sport competence was measured via coach ratings and leadership behavior was measured with coach, peer, and self-ratings. Results indicated that those athletes who rated themselves higher in perceived competence, femininity, and masculinity also rated themselves higher on leadership ability. Peer ratings revealed that athletes who were rated high in leadership by their peers exhibited a profile of high levels of competitive trait anxiety, masculinity, skill, and perceived competence. Finally, the coach ratings of peer leadership were associated primarily with levels of skill. Player position was also an important factor in perceptions of leadership, as athletes in central field positions were more likely to be rated high on leadership ability than those athletes in non-central field positions.

Subsequent research on leadership behavior has revealed that team leadership roles may be filled by a variety of team members (not only those identified as team “captains) (Loughead & Hardy, 2005; Loughead, Hardy, & Eys, 2006). Other researchers have found gender differences in leadership preferences. Todd and Kent (2004) asked a sample of interscholastic athletes to describe idealized peer leadership behaviors through ordinal ranking of leader characteristics. Overall the most important leadership behavior was identified to be that of “working hard in games and practice”, but interestingly, a gender difference was found in the sample. Male athletes reported that instrumental behaviors

(i.e., those concerned with completing tasks) were significantly more important, while female athletes showed no preference for either instrumental or expressive (i.e., morale and relationship development) leadership behaviors. Therefore, the effectiveness of a peer leader seems to be guided by a series of psychological and personal characteristics, while also being influenced by the gender of the athletes involved.

Moran and Weiss (2006) examined relationships between peer leadership and psychological, social and ability characteristics in 67 male and 71 female high school soccer players. Players assessed themselves on peer acceptance, friendship quality, perceived competence, instrumentality, and expressiveness for themselves, and leadership behavior for themselves and teammates and coaches assessed each participant on leadership behavior and soccer ability. Results indicated a gender difference in that for female athletes, peer acceptance, friendship quality, perceived competence, instrumentality, and expressiveness were predictive of self-ratings of leadership, but coach and teammate ratings were related to ability only. Conversely, for males, all psychosocial variables and ability were related to self-ratings and teammate ratings of peer leadership, while coaches' ratings were related primarily to ability. Peer leadership has been characterized by a variety of indicators including skill level, instrumentality, expressiveness, and perceived competence (Glenn & Horn, 1993; Moran & Weiss, 2006).] Peer leaders

have been identified by higher levels of perceived competence, peer acceptance, behavioral conduct, and intrinsic motivation, while effective leadership has been associated with players who reported greater task and social cohesion and collective efficacy (Price & Weiss, 2011). Clearly more research is needed to provide a more robust understanding of how peer leadership is cultivated and expressed in sport, and how peers may take advantage of leadership opportunities to facilitate success in sport.

*Peer relationships in physical activity/physical education.* Peer relationships and their impact specifically on physical activity and physical education behaviors have been examined less frequently than those in sport settings. Given that many children may not participate in any physical activity outside of structured physical education classes at their schools, these relationships are important to gain a greater understanding of how peers may impact emotional responses and motivation to participate. Recent work has begun to examine the impact of social relationships on psychosocial outcomes in physical education classes, and suggests that peer acceptance plays an important role in mediating the relationships among a variety of motivational and psychosocial variables. Higher levels of peer acceptance in physical education have been associated with lower levels of social physique anxiety (Cox, Ullrich-French, Madonia, & Witty, 2011). Peer relationships (along with positive teacher relationships) have also been found to be associated with more

positive physical education experiences for middle-school aged adolescents (Cox & Ullrich-French, 2010), and the presence of an unknown peer has also been found to have a positive effect on at-risk-for/overweight boys' (ages 8 to 12) physical activity behaviors (Rittenhouse, Salvy, & Barkley, 2011). Positive experiences with peers and teachers have also been found to positively influence relatedness perceptions, motivation, enjoyment and worry experienced by junior high physical education students (Cox, Duncheon, & McDavid, 2009). Greater understanding of these relationships and how they have unique or interdependent impact on children and adolescents in physical education is needed to improve our understanding of how we may improve on motivation and the emotional experience.

### **Future Directions in Parent and Peer Influence Research**

Researchers have made significant strides into understanding the influence that peers have in the sport domain, but several questions still remain. These areas for future research include increased understanding of negative peer relationships, and how these might impact psychosocial outcomes in sport and physical activity including motivation and emotional responses to participation. A second area for future research includes the utilization of different methodologies to more accurately assess these relationships. Most research on parental and peer influence has occurred within a specific, short time

frame (i.e., at one point in a competitive season). In order to more clearly understand these relationships, and the differing amounts of influence they may have on sport participants, longitudinal designs should be utilized to determine how social dynamics may fluctuate over time, and how they may be affected by factors such as team success, playing time status, and coaching style. Furthermore, the impact of multiple forms of social influence should be examined simultaneously to understand how these relationships may contribute not only individually, but in concert to lead to specific outcomes for athletes. Finally, social influence, particularly that of peers, should be studied more closely at older levels of sport. The impact of significant others for children and adolescents has been the focus of much of the research in this field; however, given that sport remains a social endeavor, more systematic study of how parents, peers, coaches, teachers, and siblings affect the experience in the physical domain should be explored.

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