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Motivational Influences of Social Agents in the Physical Domain: First virtual issue of
Psychology of Sport and Exercise

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Welcome to the first virtual issue of *Psychology of Sport and Exercise (PSE)*. Virtual issues are increasingly used by Elsevier (our publisher!) and other leading publishers to showcase a collection of published articles around a particular topic. We plan to produce virtual issues from time to time to highlight good examples of empirical work in topics that are both popular and important for the sport and exercise psychology field.

The first virtual issue presents 15 articles from a pool of nearly 550 published PSE articles. The common thread of the selected articles is that they examine motivational influences of various social agents (e.g., coaches, parents, peers) in the physical domain. Motivation is one of the most popular and prolific areas of research in the sport and exercise psychology field. Articles dealing with motivation-related issues are published in almost every issue of *PSE* and other leading sport and exercise psychology journals. The choice of articles for the first virtual issue was not easy. The selected articles focus on the motivational influence of the social context. Thus, articles examining personal motivation factors only are not included in this virtual issue. In our search we found *PSE* articles that dealt with similar topics (e.g., the motivational influence of sport coaches). The articles we chose are not necessarily methodologically or conceptually stronger than those that were left out. The list of included articles aims to show the breadth of published *PSE* research in the selected research area. The articles examine the motivational influence of a number of significant others (parents, coaches, physical education teachers, fitness instructors, sport peers, friends, spouses) in sport, physical education, and organised exercise programmes. These articles represent a variety of methodologies and designs (lab experiments, field experiments, interviews, cross-sectional and longitudinal surveys, reviews and a meta-analysis), conceptual frameworks and models, samples, nationalities, and groups of researchers.

In sport settings, the included studies have examined the motivational influence of coaches. Gillet, Vallerand, Amoura, and Baldes (2010) used self-determination theory (Deci

& Ryan, 1985) to provide support for a model that demonstrated coaches autonomy supportive behaviours to be predictors of objectively assessed sport performance in a sample of 101 judokas, via contextual and situational self-determined motivation toward judo. Coaches can also be influential in terms of athletes' moral functioning. Using an achievement goal theory perspective (Nicholls, 1989), Miller, Roberts, and Ommundsen (2005) showed in a sample of 705 youth football players that perceptions of a performance climate (Ames, 1992) created by the coach predicted low sport morality. In contrast, perceptions of coach mastery climate predicted more mature moral reasoning and a coach-determined moral atmosphere disproving of low moral behaviour. Poczwadowski, Barrot, and Jowett's (2006) review of research on coach-athlete relationships presents a number of suggestions for methodological and conceptual advancements in this research area in an effort to offer a more comprehensive understanding of how such relationships impact on motivation-(and non-motivation) related variables.

Besides coaches, parents and peers play an influential role in terms of shaping the quality of motivational experiences of sport participants. Lauer, Gould, Roman, and Pierce (2010) conducted semi-structured interviews of nine young adult professional tennis players, their coaches and parents, in an attempt to understand the positive and negative parental behaviours exhibited during the junior tennis years. The interviews revealed a variety of positive (e.g., offering support) and negative parental behaviours (e.g., over-pushing) that impacted on players' motivation, psychological well-being, and sport development. The study also showed that specific parental behaviours changed as a function of the stage of talent development the child experienced. In terms of peer influence, Smith, Gustafsson, and Hassmén (2010) examined the association between perceptions of peer-created motivational climate (Vazou, Ntoumanis, & Duda, 2005) and self-reported athlete burnout in 206 adolescent athletes. Their analyses indicated that intra-team conflict and lower scores on peer

emphasis on individual improvement, relatedness support, and effort were related with higher burnout scores. Other articles in the virtual issue take a more integrative approach and examine the motivational influence of coaches, parents, and peers (Keegan, Harwood, Spray, & Lavalley, 2009; Papaioannou, Ampatzoglou, Kalogiannis, & Sagovits, 2008; Slater, A., & Tiggemann, 2010), outlining the unique and shared influence of these social agents.

Some of the aforementioned work on parental influence and instructional styles has been replicated in the context of physical activity/exercise. For example, in terms of parental influence, Edwardson and Gorely (2010) provided a systematic review of 96 studies which showed factors such as parental modelling, encouragement, attitudes, and beliefs to predict physical activity levels in children and adolescents. The findings of Bray, Millena, Eidsness, and Leuzinger (2005) underscore the importance of the motivational style of exercise instructors. In a sample of 75 novice exercisers, Bray et al. showed that manipulating the instructional style to be more “motivationally-enriched” (e.g., interactive and encouraging), as opposed to “bland” (general instruction without offering encouragement), resulted in higher levels of exercise enjoyment. In a related experimental study of 99 socially physique anxious female college age students, Raedeke, Brian, Focht, and Scales (2007) showed that a manipulated instructional style of a fitness instructor emphasizing health, as opposed to appearance, resulted in stronger feelings of enjoyment and intentions to participate in similar classes in the future.

The virtual issue also includes two studies that have examined the role of significant others on overweight/obese women’s efforts to lose weight. Silva et al. (2010) investigated the long-term effects (1-year) of an obesity treatment intervention, based on self-determination theory, on structured exercise and lifestyle physical activity in a sample of 239 women. The results indicated direct effects of the intervention on moderate and vigorous

structured exercise. These effects were mediated by intrinsic motivation, as well as autonomy and competence psychological need satisfaction. The intervention also had direct effects on lifestyle physical activity which were only partially mediated by psychological needs.

Hardcastle and Hagger (2011) used semi-structured interviews to explore the experiences of 14 women who received five face-to-face counselling sessions with a physical activity specialist and registered dietician over a 6-month period. The results of this qualitative investigation underscored the importance of a client-centred counselling style that promotes autonomous forms of motivation for successful changes in physical activity and dietary behaviours. Hardcastle and Hagger also discuss how the immediate social network (e.g., family) can support or undermine efforts to lose weight.

In the context of physical education, Braithwaite, Spray, and Warburton (2011) present a meta-analysis of 22 intervention studies that aimed to promote a mastery teaching motivational climate, using achievement goal theory tenets (Ames, 1992). The results of the meta-analysis indicated an overall small positive effect of mastery climate, the size of which differed as a function of a number of moderator variables. Taylor, Ntoumanis, and Smith (2009) used a self-determination theory approach as a guiding framework to conduct semi-structured interviews of 22 physical education teachers in an effort to explain how the teaching context influences teachers' use of adaptive and maladaptive motivational strategies towards their students. The findings from the interviews indicated that cultural norms, curriculum, performance evaluations, pressure to conform to other teachers' methods, and perceptions of student motivation all played a role in influencing the motivational strategies teachers used towards their students.

We hope that you will enjoy reading (or re-reading!) the articles of the virtual issue. Each of them offers a complimentary perspective on the important role that various social

agents can play in the physical domain in terms of supporting or undermining the motivational experiences of athletes, physical education students, and exercisers.

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