Perceptions of Movement Competence in Children and Adolescents from Different Cultures and Countries

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The purpose of this special issue was to present current research regarding perceptions of motor competence in children and adolescents. From a motor development perspective, it is important to be able to articulate and measure perceived motor competence. The conceptual model presented by Stodden and colleagues (2008) articulated that perceived motor competence was a mediator between actual motor skill level and physical activity participation, and that a positive spiral of engagement and perception would lead to children and adolescents having a better chance of being a healthy weight. Now some years later there is convincing evidence to support many of the aspects of this model (Robinson et al., 2015).

For this special issue we were specifically interested in research that articulated and measured perceived motor competence rather than the overarching concept of physical self-perception or other domains of the physical self, such as perceived sport or athletic competence (for a full discussion see Estevan & Barnett, 2018). There are some widely used measures of physical self-perception for children and adolescents: for example, in young children, the Pictorial Scale of Perceived Competence and Acceptance for Young Children (Harter & Pike, 1984); for older children, the Physical Self-Description Questionnaire (Marsh, 1996a, 1996b); and in adolescents and young adults, the Physical Self-Perception Profile (Fox & Corbin, 1989). While some of these instruments do have items that explicitly ask about perception in motor skills, these items are not necessarily aligned to those in tests of actual motor competence. Other instruments measure subdomains of physical self-perception, like perceived sports competence; thus, the child is being asked to report on their ability in all aspects relevant to sport (e.g., game play and rule knowledge), in addition to motor skill competence. While these broader constructs can be relevant to motor development (Goodway & Rudisill, 1997; Robinson, 2010; Weiss & Amorose, 2005), we were specifically interested in drilling down into the construct of perception of motor competence. Motor

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competence in this context is, as specified by Robinson and colleagues (2015, p. 1273), “a global term to reflect various terminologies that have been used in previous literature (i.e., motor proficiency, motor performance, fundamental movement/motor skill, motor ability, and motor coordination) to describe goal-directed human movement.”

Having said that, we also included articles that measured perceived motor confidence (McGrane, Belton, Powell, Woods, & Issartel, 2016). Confidence relates to self-esteem and self-efficacy; for instance, you may feel confident you can throw a ball. Confidence may also relate to competence, in that you may also think you throw well, but conversely, you may also perceive that while you can throw a ball, you do not throw a ball very well. Nevertheless, we believed it was important to include articles discussing perceived motor confidence, as these additions to the literature will help inform our broader view of motor perceptions. We are pleased to say that this special issue includes articles that utilize four different instruments (one of these is also in app format) designed to measure perceived motor competence and one instrument designed to measure perceived confidence.

We deliberately sought to solicit papers from a wide array of countries and different cultural settings in order to i) capture the current state of the field, and ii) add to the literature on the role of culture in competence perceptions. In the period 2000–2015, a review article found that of 124 articles on fundamental movement or motor skills, approximately three quarters came from English speaking countries and only one quarter from non-English speaking countries (Logan, Ross, Chee, Stodden, & Robinson, 2018). It is important to note that if this search was conducted using the terms ‘motor coordination’ or ‘motor ability’ we would see more articles from European countries, as these constructs of motor competence are more commonly used in Europe. Nevertheless, to understand the role of culture in the development of motor competence perceptions, it is clear that we need to have access to more studies from non-English speaking countries, particularly from low to middle income countries which are underrepresented in the research literature. When using the physical activity field as a reference point, even though 105 countries in 2013 published papers on physical activity, nearly 50% of these were from the United States, Canada, Australia, Netherlands, Spain, and the United Kingdom (International Society for Physical Activity and Health, 2018). Furthermore, the only low- or middle-income countries in the top 20 countries for research publications on physical activity and health were Brazil and China (International Society for Physical Activity and Health, 2018). We are pleased to report that this special issue includes more studies from authors where English is not the main language [i.e., Brazil (Valentini, et al., 2018), Belgium (Brian et al., 2018), China (Diao, Barnett, Estevan, Dong, & Li, 2018), Germany (Dreiskaemper, Utesch, & Tietjens, 2018), Greece (Venetsanou, Kosyvyva, Valentini, Afthentopoulou, & Barnett, 2018), Hong Kong (Chan, Ha, & Ng, 2018), Indonesia (Famelia, Tsuda, Bakhtiar, & Goodway, 2018), Italy (Masci, Schmidt, Marchetti, Vannonzi, & Pesce, 2018), Spain (Estevan et al., 2018)], and that several studies from low- to middle-income countries are included (i.e., Brazil, China, Indonesia).

In summary, measuring perceived motor competence allows us to begin to understand the role of perceived motor competence in health behaviors and