Illusions of Incompetence

Achievement characteristics of children were examined in relationship to perceived competence. Based on Harter’s competence-motivation theory, this study investigated whether children (ages 8–13) who differed in rating their ability also differed in achievement behavior. Different patterns emerged according to gender. Girls who underestimated their ability, compared to those who overestimated or accurately estimated their ability, exhibited a preference for less challenging activities, had higher competitive trait anxiety, and had a higher perception of external control over their performance outcomes. Boys who underestimated their ability differed from the other boys in that they attributed performance consequences to unknown causes. Weiss and Horn suggested that an illusion of incompetence exists in the physical domain. Children misjudge their ability, which in turn affects motivation and achievement behavior. Underestimators of performance may avoid achievement situations and be “at risk” of dropping out of sport. The child who accurately assesses his or her ability will feel more in control and seek challenging goals, which may lead to increased positive affect and continued participation.


Shattering Stereotypes of Female Coaches

Many researchers have attempted to explain the declining number of women coaches since the implementation of Title IX. Often, various gender stereotypes have been suggested to be at the heart of this issue, including those suggesting that women are less competent than men and that women are more often bound by family responsibilities than men. This study examined the validity of these stereotypes in interscholastic coaches of female athletes. Qualifications were assessed through (a) whether or not the coach had a physical education (or closely related) degree, (b) years of teaching and coaching experience, and (c) high school and collegiate playing experience. More female coaches than male coaches had a physical education degree and taught physical education; male coaches had more high school playing experience. There were no differences in collegiate playing experience. Female coaches had more experience coaching female teams, and male coaches had more experience coaching male teams. When examining family constraints, males rated “incompatibility with family life” (out of 24 possible reasons to leave coaching) more important than the female coaches. One possible conclusion from these results was that male coaches were less committed to coaching due to family responsibilities than female coaches. Although the authors suggested that this conclusion was un-
founded, it demonstrated the falsehoods underlying beliefs about female coaches.


Looking Good on Sport Psych Questionnaires

Self-report questionnaires are currently the dominant means of assessment in sport psychology. However, no one has examined the possibility of response biases due to social desirability. This study investigated the relationship between social desirability, as measured by the Marlow-Crowne Social Desirability Scale, and competitive trait anxiety, somatic state anxiety, cognitive state anxiety, and self-confidence. Results indicated that social desirability was significantly correlated with competitive trait anxiety, self-confidence, and cognitive anxiety. These findings call into question the validity of assessment research that does not control for response biases.


Wrestling with the Mind

This article explained how an assistant high school wrestling coach incorporated a theoretically sound mental-training program into his wrestling practices. The coach developed a mental-skills program (MSP) that was divided into two levels: a developmental or educational level and an intervention or correction level. The developmental level stressed the “how to’s” of handling stress in a large-group setting. The intervention level utilized small groups or was done individually to help those wrestlers whose performance was being negatively affected by anxiety and personal or motivational problems. Mental-skills training was practiced just