
SPORT PSYCHOLOGIST'S DIGEST

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Can Sport Build Character?

Sports enthusiasts have traditionally espoused the social benefits of participating in competitive activities. This article reports two related studies designed to examine the effects of three intervention strategies (instructions and praise, modeling, and a point system) on children's sportsmanship in a physical education class and in a recreational sport setting. From a group of 45 boys attending a summer sports program, 4 boys (identified by camp staff as poor sports) were monitored during 22 physical education softball games and 21 recreational basketball games. The softball class, held in the morning, served as the training setting, while the basketball games, held in the evening, served to test for generalization of the interventions. Study 1 (softball) employed an ABCDA reversal design involving five phases: Baseline 1, Instructions and Praise, Modeling, Point System, and Baseline 2. Sportsmanlike and unsportsmanlike behaviors were recorded during the 20 minutes of play each day. Rates of sportsmanship behavior for all subjects increased substantially during the various phases, and following a return to baseline conditions they were well above original baseline levels. Also, unsportsmanlike behavior decreased during the study. The point system intervention was the most powerful condition for 3 of the 4 subjects. Study 2 (basketball) used an ABAC reversal design to examine the generalization effects to the sport setting. The results indicated minimal generalization. That is, although sportsmanship increased and

unsportsmanlike behaviors decreased during softball games, these results were not evidenced during basketball play. The authors emphasize that learning new social skills takes time and practice, and that extrinsic rewards may help bring about acceptable changes.

Giebink, M.P., & McKenzie, T.L. (1985). Teaching sportsmanship in physical education and recreation: An analysis of interventions and generalization effects. *Journal of Teaching in Physical Education*, 4, 167-177.

Youth Sports and Children's Self-Concepts

While popular opinion suggests that sport participation is related to children's self-concept, research findings are mixed. This study examined the association between boys' and girls' participation or nonparticipation in recreational youth team sport programs and their global self-concept. A sample of 104 3rd- and 6th-grade nonparticipants were compared with the same number of youth sport participants. Athletes completed the pictorially presented Martinek-Zaichkowsky Self-Concept Scale during their regular playing season while nonathletes were given this scale in their schools. Although participants had significantly higher self-concepts than nonparticipants, this difference was not uniform across grade and sex. Discrepancies in self-concept between participants and nonparticipants were greater for 3rd-graders than for 6th-graders and did not occur for

6th-grade girls. The author points out that longitudinal research is needed to determine the impact of youth sport participation on self-concept. The design employed in the present study cannot examine the true relationship between youth sport participation and children's self-concept; nonparticipants as defined in this study may have avoided competitive programs because their self-concept was too low to support involvement, or they may even have left sports because such participation negatively affected their self-concept.

Smith, T.L. (1986). Self-concepts of youth sport participants and nonparticipants in grades 3 and 6. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, *62*, 863-866.

Resources Against Illness

Research into the relationship between stressful events and illness has recently focused on identifying different kinds of resistance resources. This study examined the resistance resources of personality hardiness, exercise, and social support on illness provoked by stressful circumstances. Male business executives ($n = 85$) identified as high in stressful events were tested for the three resistance resources. When there were none, one, two, or three resistance resources, the level of illness dropped in a regular and marked fashion. The authors suggest that these results highlight the importance of multiple resistance resources for offsetting illness in stressful environments. It appears that the more resources one has, the less likely that one will be at risk for serious illness. With respect to the differential effects of the separate sources, hardiness was easily the most powerful buffer. Hardiness is considered a personality style consisting of the inter-

related orientations of commitment, control, and challenge. Hardy persons tend to have optimistic cognitive appraisals and transform stressful events into less stressful forms. The effects of exercise and social support, although less marked than that of hardiness, also contributed to a reduction in illness.

Kobasa, S.C.O., Maddi, S.R., Pucetti, M.C., & Zola, M.A. (1985). Effectiveness of hardiness, exercise and social support as resources against illness. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, *29*, 525-533.

Exercise: Attitude Versus Behavior

Can attitudes about physical activity be used to predict exercise behavior? These authors say yes, but argue that a useful model must concern attitudes about "the consequences of *performing* a behavior (e.g., participating in active sports or vigorous physical activities) and not with attitudes about the *object* of the behavior (e.g., physical activity)." To examine this concept, the authors compared the behavioral predictive value of a traditional measure of attitude toward physical activity (Kenyon, 1968) with a personalized format of attitudes as suggested by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975). Kenyon's attitude inventory (ATPA) is general and evaluates attitudes toward an object or target without reference to the action, context, or time dimensions. Fishbein and Ajzen's approach defines attitude in terms of action, target, context, and time elements. A total of 90 subjects were randomly selected from a pool of 2,500 university employees. Fishbein and Ajzen's model variable, attitude toward the act (Aact), was related more strongly than any of the ATPA subdomains to reported immediate past exercise be-