

Sport Psychology: A Historical Perspective

Penny McCullagh
University of Colorado

This special issue of *The Sport Psychologist* is a direct outgrowth of a symposium I organized for Division 47 (Exercise & Sport Psychology) of the American Psychological Association. The occasion was the 100th anniversary of the association. I titled the symposium "Development of Research and Practice: Sport Psychology's First 100 Years" to help reflect the long-standing history of the field. This title may have surprised some individuals who thought sport psychology to be a product of the 1980s. However, my purpose was to highlight some of the historical aspects of the field.

In my position as a professor at the University of Colorado, I teach classes and conduct research in the area of sport and exercise psychology. At times I become inundated with requests from prospective students who, as neophytes, often remark "This is a brand new field, is it not?" My facetious response is, "Yes, it is relatively new. It has only been around about 100 years, and I took my first class in the area about 25 years ago." Of course, many individuals are surprised at my responses. Hopefully this special issue will shed some light on some of the early, as well as more recent, developments that have occurred.

I must caution that the papers presented here represent a fairly ethnocentric approach to the field of sport and exercise psychology because they focus almost entirely on developments within North America. Interested individuals are referred to other sources (e.g., Biddle, 1995; Salmela, 1992) for perspectives from other countries. Interested readers are also referred to some texts that have sections devoted to historical aspects of our field (e.g., Gill, 1986; Horn, 1992; LeUnes & Nation, 1989; Weinberg & Gould, 1995).

It is my intention that this special issue serve as an adjunct to current texts and supplement the historical accounts provided there. This issue is somewhat longer than the typical *TSP* issue to ensure that all of these articles can be found in one source. As I have learned, if you think you have a brand new idea for either research or practice, take a little deeper look in the literature. Chances are, someone has had a similar notion.

This issue starts with a contribution by Stephen Davis, Mathew Huss, and Angela Becker. While the title specifically highlights the early work of Norman Triplett, it also does an excellent job of covering a great deal of early research in physical education settings that examined topics such as reaction time, transfer of training, and attention. Although one might classify these topics as more germane to motor learning, many of the investigators made applications to sport settings, and the research could thus be called sport psychology. The majority of this article specifically focuses on the work of Norman Triplett, who did early work on competition in cycling and moved his research to the

Penny McCullagh is with the Department of Kinesiology at the University of Colorado, Box 354, Boulder, CO 80309.

laboratory for verification. I first encountered Triplett's work at the University of Washington when I was exploring social facilitation references for my master's thesis. Triplett makes a nice link between field and laboratory research, and I highly recommend this article, as well as the original reference for reading.

The next contribution by King, Raymond, and Simon-Thomas provides a more sociocultural view of early sport psychology by examining articles by athletes, physicians, educators, and journalists on topics related to exercise and health and women in sports. The writings covered here are not research-oriented articles; rather, they are lay articles that discussed a host of topics that we could refer to as sport psychology.

A jump to the period of the 1920s to 1940s by Gould and Pick reflects the major contributions to the field by Coleman Griffith. I believe Griffith provided a role model for the lead author of this article since Griffith devoted his career to research, teaching, and service in sport psychology. Research and practice exemplified Griffith's career, and many of his writings are still quite contemporary. A personal glimpse into the life of Coleman Griffith adds an interesting tone to this article.

Dan Landers covers the development of the field from the 1960s to the 1980s. This indeed was a period of rapid growth. Some of the early researchers in this period started out conducting research in the field of motor learning and then began to add social psychological variables such as arousal and competition to these paradigms. This work became the early foundations of the field. With the advent of academic programs that specifically focused on sport psychology and the development of a number of professional organizations and journals, the field blossomed.

Although many women have contributed in both research and practice in sport psychology, Diane Gill notes that women are often omitted from historical accounts. She reviews work by early female psychologists who challenged sexist assumptions and practices in mainstream psychology and then profiles contributions by women in the physical activity field.

We would be remiss to develop a historical account of sport psychology without specifically examining the development of research in the area of exercise. In fact recent trends indicate that many people refer to the field as exercise and sport psychology whereas others use sport psychology in its broadest sense to also include exercise (see Rejeski & Brawley, 1988). Lise Gauvin and John Spence present the results of an archival study of research published in the area of psychological factors and exercise and fitness. They illustrate that both health-related journals and physical activity journals publish this research, and they highlight some challenging issues for the future.

Jeff Simons and Mark Andersen had the task of covering the development of applied sport psychology. They chose to focus on the development of consulting and interviewed a number of prominent individuals who have been involved in applied sport psychology from a consulting perspective. By providing a wealth of direct quotations, their article shows how these particular consultants got started in the field and overcame obstacles on the way. The consultants also provide some insight through their predictions for the future. I am sure you will find interesting reading in this submission.

Finally, Brawley and Martin discuss the interface between psychology and sport psychology over the last three decades. They point to the heavy reliance of sport and exercise psychology researchers on mainstream psychology and then describe a number of research areas that illustrate the interface. They call for individuals in sport and exercise psychology to become more independent in their endeavors, and many of you may be motivated by their challenge.

I would like to thank the editor of *The Sport Psychologist*, Robin Vealey, for her support in encouraging me to put together this special issue. It took longer than anticipated,