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Peer relationships in physical activity contexts: a road less traveled in youth sport and exercise psychology research

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Abstract

Background and Purpose. While it is well established that social agents contribute to the quality of youth physical activity experiences, relatively little research has specifically explored peer relationships in physical activity settings. Rather, the bulk of research on social agents has focused on teachers, coaches, and parents. The purpose of this paper is to provide justification for pursuing youth peer relationships research and present conceptual and methodological issues of relevance to such efforts.

Methods. The existing literature base on peer relationships in physical activity contexts is overviewed, emphasizing the contribution of peers to self-perceptions, moral attitudes and behaviors, affect, and motivation.

Results and Conclusions. Promising future research directions are forwarded, focusing on (a) the possible contribution of peer relationships research to understanding self-presentational processes and developmental transitions, (b) the importance of examining the interaction of peer relationships and other social relationships in the physical activity context, and (c) the value of using the physical activity setting to promote quality peer relationships.



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Keywords

Friendship; Peer acceptance; Social relationships; Youth physical activity; Youth sport

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