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Editorial

Advances in self-determination theory research in sport and exercise

Psychology is a fickle discipline. More than many fields that adopt a ‘scientific’ approach, psychology seems to be susceptible to the ebb and flow of trends in theory and methods of inquiry. What is ‘popular’ today may not be ‘flavour of the month’ tomorrow. Following this trend, early theories of motivation in sport and exercise psychology such as attributions (Weiner, 1986) and achievement motivation (McClelland, Atkinson, Clark, & Lowell, 1976) experienced a rapid surge in interest and intense research and then just as quickly waned. The application of self-determination theory is rather different. Researchers saw its potential relatively early (e.g., Vallerand, 1983) and, while initially rather measured, investigation using this approach has gathered considerable momentum over the years (Hagger & Chatzisarantis, 2007). As an explanation of motivation in sport and exercise, the theory has demonstrated exceptional longevity and is as relevant now to explaining motivation in the discipline as it was at its inception. Our aim in editing this special issue of *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*: ‘Advances in self-determination theory research in sport and exercise’ was to produce a collection that stands as a testament to the relevance of this approach, the diversity of its application, and its efficacy in explaining pertinent sport and exercise outcomes, most notably, behaviour.

Self-determination theory can be described as a dialectic, organismic approach to human motivation. It comprises four mini-theories, each with tenets to explain motivational processes from psychological needs as the origins of motivation and cognition to motivational processes in contexts and situations, and the environmental conditions that give rise to these processes. We will not delve any deeper into the fundamentals of the theories here. These are described with considerable skill and eloquence by the founding fathers of the theory (see Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2007) and by the authors in this special issue. We will, however, highlight the breadth of research that is on offer. The contributions herein very much represent a micro-cosmic compendium of advanced applications of self-determined approaches to motivation in sport and exercise. We are pleased that the contributions have a distinctly *European* perspective, even though the scope and relevance of the issue is very much international in nature. We are also pleased to see that the contributions explore avenues of research that have been recently proposed as ripe for future investigation (Chatzisarantis & Hagger, 2007; Ryan & Deci, 2007).

Four of the 16 contributions focus on methodological advances (Hagger et al., 2007, this issue; Mallett, Kawabata, Newcombe, & Otero-Forero, 2007, this issue), particularly the comment and debate offered by Pelletier, Vallerand, and Sarrazin (2007, this issue) and Mallett, Kawabata, and Newcombe (2007, this issue). There are contributions examining the effects of environments and contexts that support self-determination such as sports coaches' autonomy support on performance (Conroy & Coatsworth, 2007, this issue; Amorose & Anderson-Butcher, 2007, this issue), the supporting and thwarting effects of friendship and school relationships on sport motivation (Bioché & Sarrazin, 2007, this issue), and the effects of self-determined motivation in physical education on quality of life (Standage & Gillison, 2007, this issue). Research on interventions examining the effectiveness of self-determined approaches to changing exercise behaviour (Edmunds et al., 2007, this issue; Fortier, Sweet, O'Sullivan, & Williams, 2007, this issue) and integrative approaches testing the contribution of self-determined motivational constructs to other motivational approaches such as implementation intentions (Brickell & Chazisantis, 2007, this issue) and achievement goal theory (Vansteenkiste, Matos, Lens, & Soenens, 2007, this issue) are also included.

In addition, there are contributions that chart the effects of psychological need satisfaction on self-determined motivation and behaviour in exercise (Edmunds, Ntoumanis, & Duda, 2007, this issue; Vierling, Standage, & Treasure, 2007, this issue) and the complimentary nature of autonomy and relatedness with identity (Kimball, 2007, this issue). There are also articles that examine the effectiveness of self-determination theory in understanding the motivation of populations at risk from negative outcomes such as BMI, obesity, and body image (Edmunds et al., 2007, this issue; Markland & Ingledew, 2007, this issue; Vierling et al., 2007, this issue). Finally, studies are presented that examine the interplay between different levels of self-determined motivation according to Vallerand's (2007) hierarchical model (Blanchard et al., 2007, this issue; Bioché & Sarrazin, 2007, this issue). Whether you are new to self-determination theory, someone who would consider themselves a non-expert or even a skeptic, or a theorist or applied psychologist interested in the self-determination approach, we hope that you will enjoy this exceptional collection and that it will stir considerable debate and inspire future inquiry into motivation in sport and exercise from a self-determination theory perspective.

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