

Sport and exercise psychology

The interests of the group range from elite sports motivation and performance to public health exercise and physical activity.

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Motivation and Engagement in the Physical Domain

An emphasis is placed on the motivational processes undergirding adaptive participation and performance in sport, exercise/physical activity, physical education and dance. An embedded research thrust revolves around the cognitive mechanisms by which physical activity engagement can influence health among diverse populations.

Exemplifying this theme, we have investigated the structure of the coach and peer-created motivational climates in sport and dance and their effects on young people's motivation, well-being, and their pro-social and antisocial behaviour.



A recent project is comparing an autonomy-supportive exercise consultation with standard care on physical activity and quality of life among participants referred to the Exercise on Prescription scheme. Complimentary research on individual determinants has investigated the role of automatic processes and the internet on physical activity.

Mental Skills and Physical Performance

The group also investigates the use of mental skills, particularly imagery and observational learning, by athletes, dancers, and exercisers. Research has been undertaken on the design and effectiveness of imagery interventions.



This research area also involves collaboration with colleagues in cognitive neurosciences to test the proposed mechanisms underlying the beneficial effects of imagery and observation strategies on the performance of motor skills. Recently, work has started on projects to plan, implement, and evaluate a comprehensive performance enhancement and life skills intervention package with young, elite male rugby players.

Environmental Factors and Lifestyle Physical Activity

We are also concerned with how the environment influences accumulation of activity as part of daily living. Research here has used point-of-choice interventions to change the environment and prompt stair climbing. Studies in Hong Kong revealed how climate may be a major barrier to increases in lifestyle physical activity. A new focus on worksites revealed greater responses to interventions in overweight individuals and research has tested stair climbing interventions for obesity control in Barcelona.

