

EFFECTS OF FAILURE IN COMPETITION ON THE SELF-CONFIDENCE
AND STATE ANXIETY OF BOYS IN VARIOUS TREATMENT CONDITIONS

by

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Children socially judge their own competence and self-worth in all types of activities. To children age five through adolescence, the social comparison process, by which they judge their own competence and their own self-worth (Verhoff, 1969), is critical. Of particular relevance to this social comparison process for children is the importance of being competent in physical activities. Being favorably evaluated by peers in sporting activities is very important, particularly for young boys. It has been suggested by Roberts (1977) that competence in physical skills is the major area in which young boys in our society socially compare themselves.

Robert's research (1980) suggests that subjects with high perceived ability levels are more persistent and have higher expectancies of future successes than those with low perceived abilities. Results consistently show that perceived ability levels in physical skills have an important influence on the participation and motivation of children in a sport context. Young males are very ego-involved when competing in activities that require physical competence. This clearly indicates that it is important for boys to perceive good things about themselves in order to enjoy participating in physical activity.

Perhaps the most desirable outcome of participation in sports is the development of positive self-esteem among children. If competency is not achieved, children may develop feelings of psychosocial and

physical inadequacy (Gerson, 1977). Research has already shown that young females lack confidence in their physical abilities, particularly when certain situational factors are present (Lenny, 1977; Corbin, 1980). There is little research exploring the lack of confidence in physical abilities among boys. Gerson (1977) states that children who drop out of sports feel unworthy, unwanted and unacceptable. It might be that those people who have low perceived ability levels are the ones who leave sports because of their lack of self-confidence. Perhaps the social comparison is what intimidates them or the lack of successes that they experience in sports. It is also possible that boys who lack self-confidence have the same traits as girls who lack self-confidence.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this investigation was to assess self-confidence and possible accompanying competitive stress (anxiety) levels of boys after failure in direct competition. The specific objectives of the study were as follows:

- 1) To determine whether boys of different perceived ability levels expressed different levels of self-confidence after competing and losing in a task perceived as male as opposed to neutral in orientation.
- 2) To determine whether boys of different perceived ability levels possessed different levels of state anxiety after competing and losing in a task perceived to be male as opposed to neutral in orientation.
- 3) To determine whether an interaction existed between the two independent variables studied.

Limitations of the Study

The following were considered limitations of this investigation:

- 1) There were only eight subjects in each treatment group.
- 2) Subjects were of largely middle-class families who participated in Cub Scouts of America activities.

Delimitations of the Study

The delimitations of the study will help define the boundaries of this study:

- 1) The subjects used for this study were eight to ten year old boys.
- 2) Several cub scout packs from the Midwest were used as the source to secure the subjects for the study.

Definition of the Terms

The following terms were defined in order to give the reader a better understanding of the concepts used in this thesis.

Self-confidence levels: A person's belief that he can successfully execute the behavior needed to achieve a certain outcome. This confidence is viewed as situationally specific as opposed to a global trait that accounts for overall performance optimism.

Anxiety: The term "anxiety" describes an emotionally unpleasant condition which can be characterized by feelings of tension, worry and apprehension caused by arousal of the autonomic nervous system (Speilberger, 1972).

Male task: A motor task which, based on previous studies (Nix, 1979), is perceived by children as being more appropriate for boys than girls.

Neutral task: A motor task that, based on previous studies (Nix, 1979), is perceived by children as being equally appropriate for boys and girls.

Perceived ability: An individual's perceptions of his physical ability level compared to that of others.

Sex-typed behavior: Those behaviors that are typically perceived to be more acceptable for one sex than the other.

Direct competition: A competitive situation in which an individual competes against an opponent with the desired outcome of winning.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This review of literature includes the following four sections: competition, sex-typing of activities, self-confidence, and anxiety levels of children.

Competition

In American society boys are generally expected to participate in competitive sports. They are conditioned to think that they need to do well in physical activities (Roberts, 1980). When discussing competition in this study the researcher will be referring to direct competition. Direct competition is defined as a competitive situation in which an individual competes against an opponent with the desired outcome being to win. Martens (1975) developed a model in which the process of direct competition is reviewed (see Figure 1). Martens feels that competition is an ongoing process which does not exist in only one point of time. In Martens' competitive process model the person is in the center of everything that happens. There are eight major parts of the competitive process model. The first part of the process is the objective competitive situation in which four things should occur. Those four things are as follows: 1) the individual competing will have to know the goal that can be obtained from the contest, 2) the opponent needs to also know what the goal is, 3) the goals must be mutually

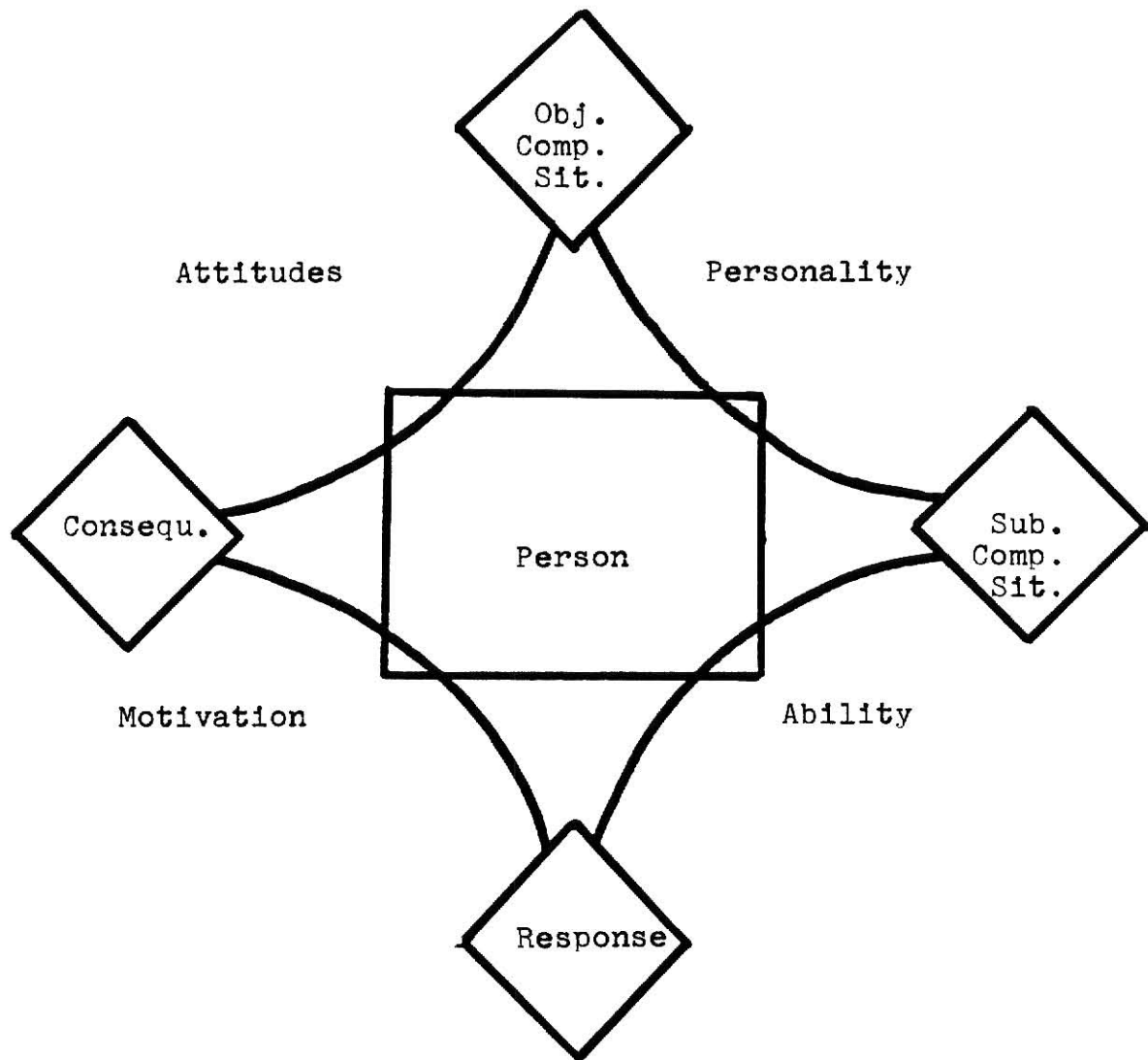


FIGURE 1

MARTENS' MODEL OF THE COMPETITIVE PROCESS

SOURCE: R. Martens, Social Psychology of Physical Activity (Harper & Row).

exclusive and 4) there must be some doubt about the outcome of the competition.

In Martens' model personality, the second factor, plays a factor in whether the person seeks out the competitive process. If an individual has a trait of being competitive he is more likely to seek out a game and/or physical activity. The third factor of Martens' competitive process is the subjective competitive situation. This is where the individual considers all the factors which are taking place and decides whether to be a part of that competitive situation or not.

Ability of the individual and his opponents, the fourth factor of the model, will also help the individual decide if he wants to get involved. The fifth part of the model is the response that the person gives to the competitive situation. The response the individual gives during the competitive process depends on what is happening to him during the contest. Motivation is included in the model because it has to do with why the individual got involved in competitive situation. The seventh factor of the competitive process that an individual will go through will be the consequences that he feels. The individual will subjectively evaluate the situation about what happened to him during the competition to help decide if he wants to get involved again. The final part of the model is the attitude that the individuals have when they have finished the competitive process. Their attitudes about future competitive situations is usually a direct reflection of how they evaluated their past experiences.

Usually competition can be defined as a means to test oneself against an opponent. It is believed by most researchers that competition is a learned behavior (Roberts, 1980). When children are

about five or six years of age they begin to learn to compete and to compare their skills with their peers. But according to Nichols (1978), children reach the age of ten to twelve years of age before they develop a mature understanding of the competitive process and are actually able to determine their competence. Children socially judge their competence and self-worth in all activities. To children age five through adolescence, the social comparison process that children are going through within this age range is the importance of being competent in physical activities. The value that significant others put on competition during these crucial stages of mental and physical development are important. Our society steers boys to compete, but not girls. It is assumed that boys will have to learn to compete. Children who believe themselves to be good in sports will be more achievement oriented than those children who do not think they are good in sports (Roberts, 1980).

In general many things can be discussed when the issue is competition and children. It has been strongly suggested that competence in physical skills is a major area in which young boys in our society socially compare themselves (Roberts, 1980). In a study by House (1974) it was found that females report a lower performance expectancy than males in a competitive situation since males are generally not assumed to be socialized to avoid competition and are more self-confident. Deaux (1974) found that people generally think that a good performance by males is attributed to skill, while when a female does just as well in the same task it is attributed to luck. Boys are taught to excel in motor tasks and to be competitive in physical activities.

Because of this type of attitude, males seem to be very ego-involved when competing in sports (Weinberg, 1979). James Michener, in his book Sports in America (1976), stated that boys would be "traumatically" effected between the ages of twelve to twenty-two if they were allowed to compete in activities with girls. In spite of this heavy statement little research has been reported concerning the responses to and consequences of cross-sex competition. Corbin (1980) investigated Michener's statement. Corbin found that all subjects, male and females, who were unsuccessful in cross-sex competition exhibited both expectations of lower success and higher A-states than those subjects who were successful. This would indicate that cross-sex competition is threatening to any individual who was not successful. When he investigated future predictions the subjects had about how they would do against the same opponent male subjects used precompetitive information about their opponents in making their predictions. Corbin (1980) goes on to state:

As contemporary authors have suggested, it does appear that cross-sex competition can be threatening for the young male. However, previously learned and socially reinforced expectations concerning the abilities of females appear to be significant in effecting the threat perceived by the male in cross-sex competition.

In a study by Corbin and Nix (1979) it has been shown that girls lack self-confidence in their abilities to perform competitive tasks and that success in cross-sex competition can enhance their self-confidence.

Studies of intrinsic motivation show that achieving high levels of successes reduces the rate of being threatened with information received from the outcome of a single competition (Weinberg, 1979). Weinberg conversely found that when an individual fails at a task it provides him with information that he is not competent and does not possess adequate

ability in the task. Boys in today's society are particularly vulnerable because most of them are constantly involved in some type of organized physical activity. Constant failure in physical activity holds a great potential for undermining the intrinsic motivation of boys in physical activity. With success so highly valued, failure, especially on the part of a male, can adversely effect his feelings of competence.

While most researchers consider competition from an adult's viewpoint Roberts (1980) feels that we need to consider competition from the point of view of the children within the experience. Children seem to be encouraged into sports by their well-meaning parents, peers, or physical educators. The harm of pushing certain individuals into these situations may be overlooked. The urge to play is natural in children. How do they become so involved in direct competition? Sherif (1976) believes that competition is a process of socialization. House (1974) found that males are expected to seek out competition and to be more self-confident than females because of a socialization process we go through in our culture. Males are also expected to perform better in physical activity than females. Findings by Corbin (1980) suggest that the successful male is simply reinforced in the notion that females lack skill.

Overall, it has been shown that there is more emphasis on males doing well in physical activity than females. Boys seem to experience more pressure to participate in physical activity, compete in organized sport and to do well. For this reason males of low perceived ability might lack confidence.

Sex-typing of Activities

Children's game preferences will help the reader understand the relationship between sex-role expectancies and movement behavior. The way children choose games is greatly influenced by the culture in which they are reared.

Montemayer (1974) found that there was a strong relationship between the sex of a child and the label that the child associated with the game he/she was participating in. Montemayer (1974) found that performance levels were higher when the children felt a game was considered sex-appropriate. Stein & Baily (1973) concluded that sex-typed labels produced larger and more consistent effects for boys than girls, probably because boys have a stronger preference for more masculine roles than girls have for feminine roles. The literature suggests that active games requiring physical contact, strength and prowess are perceived as appropriate male type activities but are not appropriate for females (Sutton-Smith, Rosenberg & Morgan, 1963).

When does the sex-typing of games and activities actually begin to happen? Sutton-Smith (1963) and others found that at the fourth grade level play preferences of girls have a tendency to be more feminine. Boys are increasing in their sex-specific awareness in the third and fourth grade and generally begin to shift towards more masculine activities that seem more masculine. It seems from the beginning of puberty on playing games and sports is predominantly a masculine phenomena in the American culture. Games and sports seem to be positively associated with men but negatively with females. Boys seem to have a clear-cut idea of what they want to participate in, but girls seem to be more diverse.

Herkowitz (1976) studied the perception of both sexes over a wide range of activities to determine how sex-typing occurs in regard to motor activities and games. She worked with subjects from the age of four to 20. Herkowitz reported that the majority of activities were perceived as boy-girl activities. The tendency to perceive the activities for both sexes was stronger with females than males. Of the seven sex-typed activities only one was sex-typed for girls while six were labeled as activities for boys. From the Herkowitz study there seemed to be five major points:

- 1) There was a tendency to perceive motor activities as appropriate for both sexes.
- 2) Discrepancies between the sexes occurred less frequently with age increase.
- 3) There were differences among age groups within sex groups.
- 4) The ordering of activities from most to least strongly sex-typed may provide future investigators with a comparison measure.
- 5) The findings of the majority of activities being perceived as male tasks shows that physical activity is still a male dominant area.

Duquin (1977) pointed out that a major factor children use in determining their aspirations, interests and future activities has to do with their socialization process. Whether activities are perceived as male or female has to do with the interpretation the children receive from the community. So while educators can generalize about what most children perceive as appropriate and inappropriate there will be those exceptions to the rule.

Self-confidence

Much of what an individual does or continues to do is because of his/her confidence levels in certain situations. Recently researchers have begun to look at how individuals feel they will do when performing specific tasks.

There are several different terms and definitions used when discussing levels of confidence. Bandura (1977) has done extensive research in the area of what he terms self-efficacy. Self-efficacy, defined by Bandura, is the conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior required to produce a certain outcome. Feltz (1982) interprets Bandura's self-efficacy definition in that it is situationally specific self-confidence, as opposed to a global trait that accounts for overall performance optimism. Harter (1978) would agree to the definition of self-efficacy by Feltz and Bandura but would go on to say that the development of self-efficacy in an individual is a much more complex process taking in a variety of factors.

Bandura (1977) feels that personal efficacy is based on four major resources of information: performance accomplishments, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion and physiological states. Of these four sources, performance accomplishments are deemed the most influential, especially if there is success. Success raises mastery expectations in a person where repeated failure lowers them, particularly if the mishaps occur early in the course of events. Bandura (1977) also shows that after strong efficacy patterns are developed through repeated successes the negative impact of an occasional failures is likely to be reduced. As a more cognitive appraisal of difficulty level of the task raises the impact of performance, accomplishments will have more of an impact on

the person's perceived self-efficacy. Social learning theorists, such as Bandura, regard defensive behavior and anxiety as coeffects of each other rather than casually linked. From Bandura's work it is seen that a person's self-efficacy or self-confidence can influence how they feel about the difficulty of the task and the degree of mastery they have in the task.

Through Lenny's (1977) research it is known that women sometimes lack self-confidence in achievement situations. Macoby and Jacklin (1974) report that self-confidence, defined in terms of both performance expectancies and self-evaluations of abilities and completed performance, is lower among women than men. Thus, it is a contention that women are clearly more likely than men to express low self-confidence in achievement situations. This sex difference has been found in many studies. Crandall (1969) asked expectancy estimates from elementary school children for their future performance at a series of novel intellectual tasks. In each case females had lower pretask expectancies than males.

What are the situational variables that influence sex differences in self-confidence? A comprehensive review of the literature done by Lenny (1977) indicates that women do not display low self-confidence in all achievement situations. In fact there appears to be at least three kinds of situation variable that influences a women's self-confidence. Those three variables are 1) nature of task, 2) the availability of clear, unambiguous information of the individual's performance, and 3) the social comparison received when performing in specific tasks.

The first situational variable, nature of the task, appears to exert an influence on women when there is some type of sex linkage.

Stein, Pohly and Miller (1971) asked sixth grade boys and girls to state the score they expected to achieve on each of the three tests. Both boys and girls expected to do best on those tests that were presented as most sex appropriate and less well on those presented as sex inappropriate. Further research done about cross-sex competition found that activity of importance for the person to do well was directly related to the perceived task (Corbin & Nix, 1979). Females chose female tasks; males chose male tasks. They (male and female) both thought a neutral task would be fun to win. Evidence does indicate that the type of tasks women are asked to perform does affect their self-confidence.

The second situational variable is the type of feedback the women receives. The literature indicates that women often have lower self-confidence than men when they are given minimal or ambiguous feedback on their abilities or performances. Many studies cited did measure expectancies without the subjects having had any information on their performance (e.g. Crandall, 1969; Feather & Simon, 1973; Montalli, 1969; Ruchlack & Eacker, 1962). Research conducted by Harter (1978) states that specific feedback given to children concerning their success or failure has several important ramifications. It immediately assists the children in deciding what is correct or incorrect, worthy or inappropriate, acceptable or unacceptable. Not receiving any type of feedback could be deemed as ambiguous and unclear information. It was found, however, in research done by Corbin and others (1981) that when the variables of the nature of task and social comparison were absent, the third factor, performance feedback, may not result in lack of confidence. It was tentatively concluded that by itself the absence of

information of self-abilities prior to performing an unfamiliar task may not result in low self-confidence. In summary, achievement situations in which ambiguous performance feedback is given might cause women to report lower self-confidence than men.

The final situation variable that seems to affect women's self-confidence is the emphasis on social cues. Women's self-confidence may be lower than males when clear feedback is lacking but also when certain social cues are emphasized in a situation. In particular, women's self-confidence is often lower than men's when there are suggestions that their work will be compared with others' or when it will be evaluated by others. There are four differing kinds of studies on the effects of women's self-confidence due to social cues. The first category consists of those studies in which, before expectancies are asked, subjects are informed of socially defined standards of performance. These studies seem to imply social comparison and social evaluation in which the women might feel threatened (Jacobson, Berger, & Millham, 1970; Feather, 1969; Feather & Simon, 1973). In the second category of studies the social environment is made salient by subjects knowledge that they will be working under the experimenter's careful supervision and they must report their expectancies out loud. Females generally reported they would perform at a lower level than males (Lenny, 1977). The third category of studies is that which subjects compete with another individual in a task. Benton's (1973) research, in which subjects participated in opposite sex pair "bartering" for a financial contract, found women expected to end up with less money and expected to be less potent and active in negotiations than men. In another study by House (1974) women were asked to work alone or against an opponent in solving

simple anagrams. Females who worked alone expected to do no worse than their male counterparts. However, whether the female competed against a male or female, females competing had lower expectancies and confidence than did females working alone or males competing. The final and fourth category of studies done with social cues is simply when females work with others. Females in that situation reported that they will do less than males in a similar position.

An interesting interpretation of the self-confidence literature might be that women's self-confidence may be more dependent than men's upon characteristics of the specific person to whom they compare themselves. The problem may be that women are lower in self-confidence due to excessive vulnerability to situational influences (Lenny, 1977).

Research done by Harter (1978) investigates a person's perceived competence and perception of control. It is argued that one's reinforcement history will not have an effect on one's motivation but on one's self-esteem or perceived competence. White (1963) expressed the general view that the roots of self-esteem lie in early competence experienced as a developing child. Rotter (1966) has argued that positive or successful encounters with one's environment leads to the belief that one is competent and self-determining. Thus positive evaluation of performance enhances a child's own feelings of competence or self-esteem. Negative evaluative statements would have the converse effect. It therefore seems reasonable to assume that high self-esteem or competence can enhance a child's feel of efficacy or confidence. Likewise the combination of low self-esteem and lack of perceived competence will decrease one's confidence level.

Even though extensive research has not been done in cross-sex competition there are some that have recently been published. Most of these studies seem to have an emphasis of female perception of competition and what the competition does to their confidence levels. Corbin and Nix (1979) have shown that girls lack self-confidence in their abilities to perform competitive motor tasks and that success in cross-sex competition can enhance their self-confidence. This, of course, is principally related to the effects of situational factors of self-confidence of girls in achievement situations. Males, in general, perceived to have greater ability in motor tasks than females. Research presented by Corbin (1980) suggests that males have some perception of threat in cross-sex competition because they are supposed to be able to beat females.

What are the implications for a women's or child's capacity to achieve if they constantly underestimate their performance or ability? Low expectancies may not only depress performance but may also adversely affect an individual's initiative. There is evidence that individuals who expect to perform poorly tend to choose not to engage in achievement activities, to select less demanding tasks and to be readily discouraged in the face of failure (Weiner, Frieze, Kukla, Reed, Rist & Rosenbaum, 1971). It has been found that children who decide to participate in physical activities are those children who feel unworthy, unwanted and unacceptable. Their self-concept has been diminished because of the belief that their value as a person depends on the ability to achieve (Gerson, 1977).

The research clearly indicated that a person's confidence level can have a large impact on their self-esteem and perceived ability levels in

activities. Those individuals who do feel competent will not seek achievement situations out and feel threatened when they do have to participate in some type of competition, especially if the nature of task, feedback or social, is seen as threatening.

Anxiety Levels of Children

Although development findings clearly indicate that sport competition is an important social process to most children, little empirical evidence exists regarding the psychological and social effects of this process on young participants (Scanlan & Passer, 1978). Keiffer (1977) found that children's responses to anxiety-arousal social situations may not necessarily be the same as adults, particularly if the anxiety-arousal situation involves the threat of evaluation judgment by their peers. With increasing age, not only do peers become agents of social reinforcement but sex-related social behavior becomes better defined. In studies of children involving anxiety measures, trait anxiety was found to be associated with performance differences and manipulated task difficulty (Keiffer, 1977).

A study by Scanlan (1977) was done to assess state anxiety for children. She used the highly reliable and valid Speilberg State Anxiety Inventory. Previous findings have indicated that comparison with peers for children at the elementary age level is a necessary ingredient to their developmental process because of the important evaluative information received. Important situational determinant of perceived threat to self is the degree of success or failure that children experience during competition (Scanlan, 1977). From Scanlan's findings the evidence clearly indicates that success-failure is an

important factor that affects the perception of threat to an individual. Her results also indicate that regardless of the perceived threat subjects select opponents equal to their own ability level.

When discussing state anxiety for elementary school age children Corbin (1979) and others indicated that losers exhibited significantly higher post-competition A-states than winners. This was found to be most evident when the subjects were involved in direct competition. Scanlan (1978) found that winning or losing the game was clearly the most powerful predictor of post-game state anxiety with losers evidencing substantially higher anxiety levels than winners. Research by Corbin (1980) indicated that subjects who were unsuccessful exhibited both expectations of lower success and higher anxiety states than those who were successful.

The literature dealing with general anxiety indicates that ability and other interpersonal factors, including various attitudes and personality disposition, are the primary determinants of stress experienced prior to or during participation in a particular situation (Hodges, 1968). These factors appear to develop from cumulative success or failure experiences in similar situations and, therefore, greatly influence threat. The primary factor related to stress experienced after participation is success or failure at the particular task (Guadry & Poole, 1972).

It is known that extensive social evaluation of motor competency during the crucial elementary school age years makes the consequences of participating in competitive sports severe enough to induce stress in some boys. Pregame competitive stress was primarily influenced by intrapersonal factors that appear to reflect a child's perceived

responses, capabilities or limitations in meeting the performance demands of the competitive situation. Individuals who were high competitive trait anxious, and low self-esteem had low performance expectancies. On the other hand, postgame competitive stress was dramatically influenced by the child's perception of his actual response in meeting the demands of the competitive situation. Winning or losing that game was clearly the most powerful predictor of postgame state anxiety levels with losers evidencing substantially higher levels of state anxiety than winners.

Summary

Direct competition is an important component of the socialization process that children go through in order to develop physically and emotionally. Different sex-role expectancies are placed on boys and girls. Because of the expectancies placed on boys, different activities are perceived as being more important for boys to do well in than for girls. Boys usually prefer to chose activities that require physical prowess, contact and strength (Nix, 1979). Boys begin at about the third grade deciding what games are masculine and which are feminine. Boys seem to be more set in which tasks are appropriate for them as opposed to girls who choose a more diverse range of activities.

Children feel threatened about their ability in physical activities when they feel they are being evaluated, especially when the evaluation is done by their peers. It is important for young boys to be accepted because of his physical competence. If a person is not accepted because of their physical skills, especially boys, it can effect his confidence. These can be done in three ways. They are type of task, social

comparison and type of feedback. We know that women seem to lack self-confidence in some achievement situation. The same could be true for men and boys who perceive themselves to be low in ability when participating in sports.

When children are being evaluated it has a tendency to increase their anxiety levels. Anxiety levels are a direct outcome of the competition that takes place. Winning or losing is the most important single factor that effects children's anxiety levels. High state anxiety is especially evident in children with low self-esteem who think their ability is inadequate. Children who have more failure than success begin to think they lack self-worth and ability.

It was the intent of this researcher to study boys of different perceived abilities and their feelings about direct competition. The researcher's primary concern was to investigate whether boys of low perceived ability experienced different confidence level than boys of high perceived ability after competition in different tasks. State anxiety levels will also be looked at to see if boys with low perceived ability experience higher scores than high perceived ability boys. It is hypothesized that boys low in perceived ability may be more likely to lack confidence and to have greater competitive stress when competing in tasks perceived as male as compared to tasks perceived to be neutral in sex orientation.

CHAPTER 3

PROCEDURES

The purpose of this study was to assess self-confidence, and possible accompanying competition stress (anxiety) levels of boys after failure in direct competition. The specific objectives of this investigation were as follows:

- 1) To determine whether boys of different perceived ability levels expressed different levels of self-confidence after competing and losing in a task perceived as male in orientation as opposed to neutral in orientation.
- 2) To determine whether boys of different perceived ability levels possessed different levels of state anxiety after competing and losing in a task perceived to be male as opposed to neutral in orientation.
- 3) To determine whether an interaction between the two independent variables occurred.

This chapter presents the procedures followed in this study. The procedures are listed under the following headings: a) selection of subjects, b) tests, c) tasks, d) research design, e) data collection, and f) design and statistics.

Selection of Subjects

Fourth, fifth, and sixth grade boys who were members of three Cub Scout packs in Manhattan, Kansas were invited to participate in this

research. The boys were asked to sign and have their parents sign an informed consent form (see Appendix A). This form included a brief statement explaining the proposed research and a permission slip to be signed by the parents indicating approval for participation by their son. All of the slips were returned to the researcher before any data were collected. From the 75 subjects in the original population, 32 were selected as subjects according to the procedures outlined in this chapter. Subjects ranged in age from eight to ten with a mean age of 8.9 years.

Tests

Three basic tests were used in this study. The first, a general questionnaire, was administered to all 75 subjects in the original sample and was used to classify subjects into high and low perceived ability groups. The questionnaire was designed by this researcher and is located in Appendix B. It consisted of seven questions concerning perceived abilities in general physical activities. A three-minute presentation was given to subjects prior to completing the questionnaire using pictures on an overhead projector. The presentation given the subjects discussed physical activity in general. The activities shown to the subjects ranged from team sports to individual sports and asked the subjects to make self-ratings of their capabilities for performing these physical activities. A total questionnaire score was determined by counting appropriate (yes or no) responses for each item and summing the response scores for all seven items.

The second test given to the subjects was to determine their self-confidence after competition and failing (see Appendix C). Subjects

were asked how they thought they would do if they competed again in the same motor task against the same opponent. They were to predict how many games out of ten they thought they would win.

The third test used was the Spielberger State Anxiety Test for Children (see Appendix D). The test was designed by Spielberger (1972) and measures the state anxiety of an individual. It is a 20-item test that uses a three-point scale. The total score of all the items determined the subject's level of state anxiety. This test was given immediately following competition.

Tasks

There were two types of motor activities used in this study. They were the "pong" game and the "bike" game. The bicycle and pong games were selected because of the need to have motor tasks that were perceived as either a male task and/or a neutral task. Nix (1979) addressed the issue of which tasks are perceived to be appropriate for males and which are perceived to be for females. Nix found that males usually thought it was more important to win at the bicycle task than the other tasks offered to them. The pong game was found to be a neutral task. Both boys and girls thought it would be fun to win at that game. The reason it was so important to use tasks such as the pong game and bicycle game was due to the ease with which the researcher could control the outcome of the competition. An essential part of this study was assuring that the true subjects would fail at the task they were performing, whether it be the "pong" or "bike" game.

A brief description of each task follows. The "pong" game is just one of the variations of T.V. games that are currently popular. This

game requires concentration with the eyes and quickness with the fingers and hand. Therefore, only small, quick muscle action is required for this activity (Nix, 1979). The game is played by turning a knob with the fingers to control the game paddle on the T.V. screen. Each opponent had his own paddle. The object of the game was to see who could get 15 points first. Figure 2 illustrates the "pong" game.

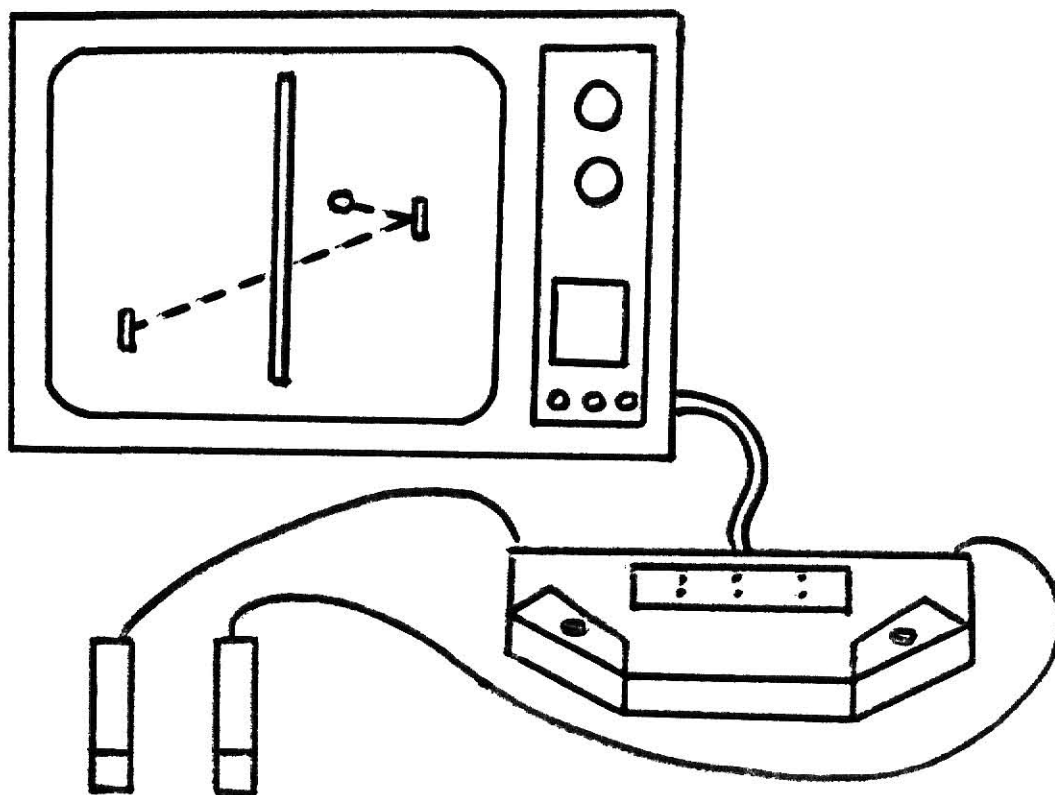


FIGURE 2

PONG GAME

The "bike" game required large muscle activity. The game required powerful leg movements, strong muscles, and speed (Nix, 1979). Thus, it was important to use maximum effort when performing this activity. The object of the game was to see who could go the farthest distance in the allotted time period. Figure 3 shows the "bicycle" game.

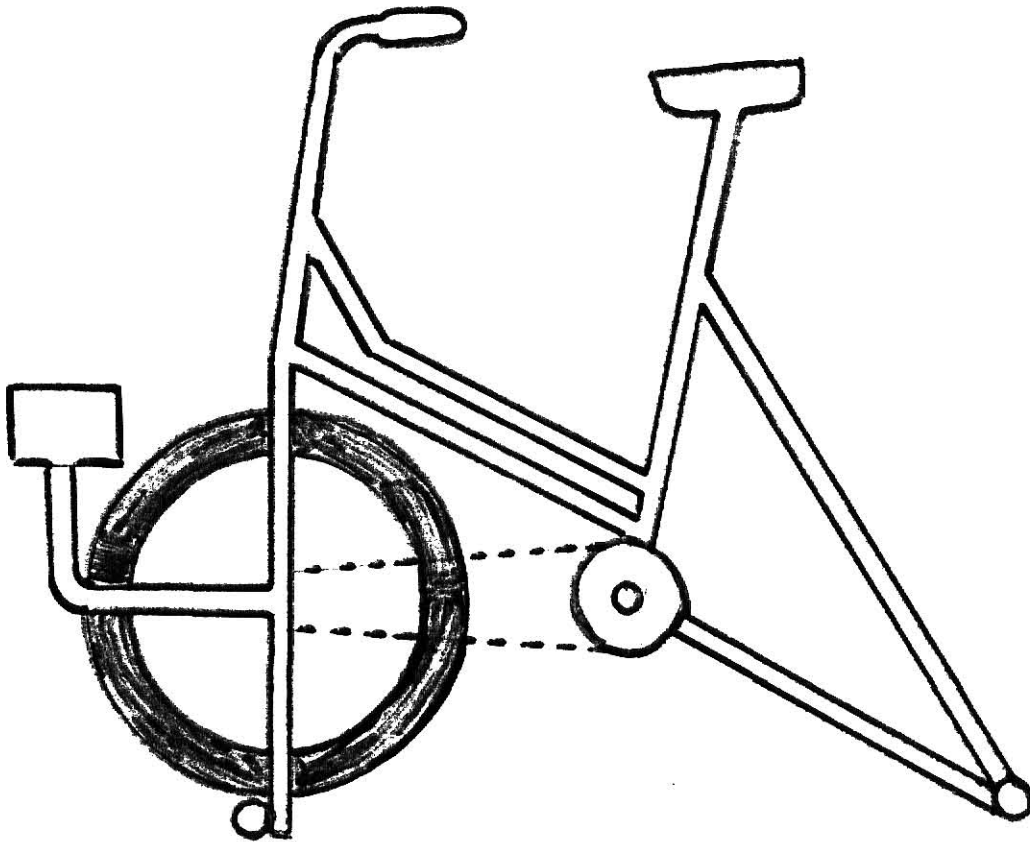


FIGURE 3
BICYCLE ERGOMETER

As stated earlier, it was important to select tasks that were perceived differently by boys and tasks for which the outcome could be controlled. It was important that all of the true subjects failed at whichever task they performed. In order to pre-determine the winner of the "bike" game, a control box was electronically hooked up to an electric PORT-A-TRON scoreboard which displayed the time allotted and the score. With the control box the score could be pre-determined before any actual riding took place.

In order to insure the subjects performing the pong task failed, an additional T.V. set was hooked up in an adjoining room to the lab. When turned on, the screen displayed the game and the scores of those

playing. The T.V. set of the subjects and confederates was also hooked up to a control box. This control box was used to manipulate the control knobs that the boys held while competing. By doing this it was insured that the true subject would fail at each game.

Research Design

From the 75 boys who returned positive permission slips, 16 were assigned to a high perceived ability group and 16 to a low perceived ability group. The pre-competition questionnaire was used for this purpose. If a subject answered all seven items on the general questionnaire with a "yes" response, it was an indicator that he could be used as part of the high perceived ability group. If the subject answered question 5 and/or 7 on the questionnaire in a negative manner, the subject could potentially be used in the low perceived ability group. Question 5 and 7 were found to be discriminatory in seeking out those individuals who felt their perceived ability levels were lower than others. None of the other questions were found to be discriminatory.

Those subjects who answered "yes" on all the questions were potential high perceived ability subjects. In order to make sure the same number of subjects came from each Cub Scout pack it was necessary to randomly select the desired amount of subjects from each pack. More than three-fourths of the original subject population answered all of the questions "yes." Out of the 75 subjects originally tested, only 16 were determined to be of the low perceived ability group. As indicated by the general questionnaire data, it was much easier to obtain high perceived ability boys than those of low perceived ability. The 16 low

perceived ability boys were all used as subjects in the study. Eight of the 16 were randomly assigned to the bike and the remaining 8 were randomly assigned to the pong game.

Since 16 low perceived ability subjects were used, 16 boys from the high perceived ability subject pool were randomly selected. These 16 were randomly assigned to a task, 8 assigned to the pong game and 8 to the bicycle game. Thus, there were 8 subjects assigned to each of the 4 cells of the experiment. The resulting design was a 2 (perceived ability level) X 2 (task) mixed factors design.

Data Collection

Permission slips were distributed to the Cub Scouts to be signed and returned so that they might take part in the study. The researcher then went to each den meeting to give a three-minute presentation concerning physical activity in general. Before the presentation was given, however, the test administrator handed out the general questionnaire to the subjects face down with a pencil. The subjects were instructed not to turn the questionnaire over until asked. The presentation included visual aids that depicted pictures of team and individual sports equipment and not of people actually playing sports. The test administrator then read the directions aloud to the subjects. They were then asked to turn the questionnaire over and to answer each question as honestly as possible. The questionnaires were then collected by the test administrator.

The questionnaires were analyzed and the subjects were assigned to the four cells of the experiment as previously described. Once group assignment was determined, each subject was called and an appointment

made for the subject to come to the Motor Development Lab at Kansas State University to be tested.

Each subject was met at a spot other than the lab to avoid a confrontation between the confederate and the true subject. The subject was brought to the lab where he and the confederate were briefed about the task they were to perform. Since the purpose of the study was to measure self-confidence and anxiety levels after losing in competition, it was pre-determined that all of the subjects would fail (losing 2 out of 2 games played). Each subject and the confederate were told that they would be competing against each other for the best two out of three games, either the bike game or the pong game.

As soon as the competition was finished the subject and confederate were taken to a table and asked to fill out the Spielberger Competitive State Anxiety Test for Children. The directions were read aloud to them to make sure they understood what they were to do. After completing the questionnaire, the subject and confederate were then asked to record how well they thought they would do if they had a chance to compete against the same opponent at the same task.

As soon as the subject finished completing the tests, the confederate was escorted from the room. The subject was then taken back to where he was originally met. The subject was telephoned at a later time. During this phone conversation the subject was asked which task he felt was important for boys to win and which task was important for girls to win. After the subject responded to the questions he was debriefed about the study.

Design and Statistics

A 2 X 2 mixed factor design (ability X task) was used. The statistical analysis used was an ANOVA for each dependent variable (self-confidence and anxiety). A chi-square analysis was also used. The a priori level of significance selected for this study was .05.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The selection of subjects and administration of testing was carried out in accordance with the procedures discussed in Chapter 3. The ANOVA and Chi-Square statistics were used to treat the data.

Specific Objective One

The first specific objective of this study was to determine whether boys of different perceived ability levels expressed different levels of self-confidence after competing and losing in a task perceived as male as opposed to neutral in orientation. Subjects were asked to write down how many matches out of ten they thought they would win against the same opponent. This was done immediately after the subject had just lost 2 of 2 games in his assigned task. The means for this variable can be seen in Table 1.

TABLE 1
MEANS OF PREDICTION CHANGES

	High Perceived Ability	Low Perceived Ability	Row
Bike	$\bar{X} = 3.63$	$\bar{X} = 3.13$	$\bar{X} = 3.38$
Pong	$\bar{X} = 5.38$	$\bar{X} = 3.13$	$\bar{X} = 4.25$
Column	$\bar{X} = 4.50$	$\bar{X} = 3.13$	$\bar{X} = 3.81$

An ANOVA was conducted to determine differences among the groups. Results of this analysis are presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2
ANOVA SUMMARY OF SELF-CONFIDENCE

Source of Variation	df	SS	MS	F	P
Perceived Ability (PA)	1	15.125	15.125	4.02	.055
Task (T)	1	6.125	6.125	1.63	.212
(PA) X (T)	1	6.125	6.125	1.63	.212
Error	28	105.5	3.76		
Total	31	132.975			

As can be seen in Table 2, there were no significant differences at the .05 level between perceived ability levels and prediction levels. Boys of high perceived abilities did not differ from those low in perceived ability in self-confidence for either task. There was no difference between task groups and no interaction occurred.

Specific Objective Two

The second specific objective was to determine whether boys of different perceived ability levels possessed different levels of anxiety after competing and losing in a task perceived to be male as opposed to neutral in orientation. This was done by giving the boys the Spielberger State Anxiety Test for Children immediately after competition. While the major objective of this study was to see whether boys of different perceived ability levels experience differences in

confidence, it was also thought, based on Bandura's (1977) work, that state anxiety differences between groups might be present. Social learning theorists regard anxiety and defensive behavior to be coeffects rather than casually linked (Bandura, 1977). Adverse experiences of a personal nature can activate some types of defensive, self-protective behavior. Without adequate coping behaviors, perceived threats to individuals can produce high emotional arousal levels and trigger defensive behavior in which the individuals attempt to reduce the negative effects of the perceived threat. It was hypothesized that boys of low perceived ability might be more anxious than boys of high perceived ability, especially in the bike or male oriented task. The means of state anxiety levels can be seen below in Table 3.

TABLE 3
MEANS OF STATE ANXIETY SCORES

	High Perceived Ability	Low Perceived Ability	Row
Bike	$\bar{X} = 30.13$	$\bar{X} = 32.00$	$\bar{X} = 31.06$
Pong	$\bar{X} = 29.60$	$\bar{X} = 30.80$	$\bar{X} = 30.25$
Column	$\bar{X} = 29.88$	$\bar{X} = 31.43$	$\bar{X} = 30.65$

Again an ANOVA was conducted to determine difference among groups. Results of the analysis are presented in Table 4.

TABLE 4
ANOVA SUMMARY OF ANXIETY

Source of Variation	df	SS	MS	F	P
Perceived Ability (PA)	1	19.53	19.53	.68	.418
Task (T)	1	5.28	5.28	.18	.672
(PA) X (T)	1	.781	.781	.03	.871
Error	28	808.6	28.88		
Total	31	333.718			

As seen in Table 4 there was no significant difference at the .05 level in A-states between perceived ability groups. There was also no significant differences in A-states between subjects performing the two different tasks. Finally, the interaction between the two independent variables was not statistically significant.

Group Differences in Perceived Ability Levels

In order to make this study viable it was necessary to assure that the boys used in the study were definitely high perceived ability and low perceived ability. Means of group differences in perceived ability levels are shown in Table 5.

TABLE 5
MEANS OF PERCEIVED ABILITIES

	High Perceived Ability	Low Perceived Ability	Row
Bike	$\bar{X} = 7.00$	$\bar{X} = 4.38$	$\bar{X} = 5.813$
Pong	$\bar{X} = 7.00$	$\bar{X} = 4.38$	$\bar{X} = 5.813$
Row	$\bar{X} = 7.00$	$\bar{X} = 4.63$	$\bar{X} = 5.813$

No differences were expected to be found between the tasks and no interaction between the two independent variables was expected. A significant main effect occurred between boys of high perceived ability and low perceived ability. The results are shown below in Table 6.

TABLE 6
ANOVA SUMMARY OF PERCEIVED ABILITIES

Source of Variation	df	SS	MS	F	P
Perceived Ability (PA)	1	45.125	45.125	71.29	0.00
Task (T)	1	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.00
(PA) X (T)	1	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.00
Error	28	17.753	.633		
Total	31	62.8			

Chi-Square Analysis

After he was tested, each subject was asked to indicate which task he thought he (a boy) would most like to win and which task he thought a girl would most like to win. This was done to see whether boys of different perceived ability levels perceived the tasks differently. The breakdown for the questions asked can be found in Table 7.

TABLE 7
SUMMARY OF QUESTION RESPONSES

Questions	High Perceived Ability		Low Perceived Ability		χ^2	P
	<u>Bike/Pong</u>		<u>Bike/Pong</u>			
1. Which one of the tasks is most important for you to win?	11	5	9	6	.028	.872
2. Which one of the tasks is most important for girls to win?	5	11	9	6	1.48	.223

There was no significant difference in the number of boys in the different perceived ability groups who felt one task was more important to win than the other. In both groups more boys felt the bike game was more important to win than the pong game. There was no significant difference in the number of boys in the different groups who perceived one task to be more important than another. There was a nearly even split between tasks in perceived importance for girls. However, high perceived ability boys perceived different tasks to be of different

importance for the two sexes. A chi-square was calculated ($\chi^2 = 3.938$, $p = .047$).

Discussion

In all cases for objectives one through three, there were no significant results. In objective one, in which it was hypothesized that boys of low perceived ability levels would express less confidence in the task they performed than boys of high perceived ability, a significant level was almost met. The mean scores followed the pattern that was expected. Because of the trends that were found, it is thought that re-analysis with a larger subject pool might find significant differences in the results. However, another way to analyze the data is to look at the perceptions the boys had about the task that they performed. Boys of high perceived ability levels seem to have traditional perceptions about what is a male oriented task and a female oriented task. This did not prove to be the same for boys of low perceived ability levels. It was hypothesized that a difference would occur because the threat of losing the male oriented task would make the subject look less masculine. With the low perceived ability boys there seemed to be no distinction as to what task was deemed male and what was female.

Because of the study design, perceptions of the task were not recorded until after the subject had actually competed in their assigned task. Perhaps if the subjects had been asked their perceptions about the task first and felt threatened to compete to begin with, the expected results might have been obtained.

The second hypothesis that boys of low perceived ability levels would feel more anxious when competing and losing than boys of high perceived ability levels, was rejected. Although the mean scores of state anxiety levels followed the expected pattern (the low perceived ability boys competing in the bike task reporting the greatest state anxiety) the difference between groups was not significant enough to warrant significant results.

The most interesting observation that can be made from the data received is the perception boys of different perceived ability levels have. The data from this study indicates a difference between the two ability levels. The boys of high perceived ability levels seem to see the tasks in a traditional sense, with a distinction as to which sex it is appropriate for; boys of low perceived ability levels might not make that distinction.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The purpose of this investigation was to assess the self-confidence and anxiety levels of boys after failure in direct competition. The specific objectives of the study were as follows:

- 1) To determine whether boys of different perceived ability levels expressed different levels of self-confidence after competing and losing in a task perceived as male as opposed to neutral in orientation.
- 2) To determine whether boys of different perceived ability levels possessed different levels of state anxiety after competing and losing in a task perceived to be male as opposed to neutral in orientation.
- 3) To determine if an interaction between the two independent variables occurred.

Boys of an average age of 8.9 served as subjects for this study. There were 16 low perceived ability boys and 16 low perceived ability boys. The subjects' perceived ability levels were determined by administering a 7-item questionnaire asking them to express their feelings about physical activity.

The boys then competed against a male confederate in the bike or pong task. All subjects failed at the task. Immediately following the

completion of their competition the subjects were tested to determine self-confidence and A-states.

Though high perceived ability and low perceived ability groups were truly different in perceived ability prior to testing, differences in confidence and A-state did not exist between groups after losing in competition. The perceptions of the sex orientation of the task among high perceived ability from the perception of low perceived boys. High perceived ability boys perceived the bike game as male and the pong being perceived as female, while similar differences were not apparent within the low perceived ability group.

Conclusions

No clear conclusions surfaced as a result of this study. Near significant results were found for the original hypothesis that boys of low perceived ability levels will lack self-confidence after failing in a motor task when compared to high perceived ability boys. Self-confidence and anxiety levels among low perceived ability and high perceived ability boys were not significantly different for subjects competing and failing at the two motor tasks.

It was found through this study that the perceptions young boys have about tasks after failing differed for groups high or low in perceived ability. Future studies should consider precompetition perceptions.

Recommendations

Further research in this area seems warranted. Some recommendations are included below:

- 1) When conducting a study of this nature, a larger sample group is needed in order to insure accurate results.
- 2) Measuring confidence changes within the perceived ability levels and between the perceived ability levels before and after direct competition may yield different results. Thus precompetition confidence measures are recommended for future studies.
- 3) The researcher needs to clearly establish task orientation with the subjects before pursuing the study further.
- 4) There is a hint that boys of different perceived ability levels might perceive tasks differently. Boys of low perceived ability might not see tasks as male or female in the way boys of high perceived ability. For this reason it is important to investigate if boys of different perceived ability levels have different perceptions about games.

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APPENDIX A
INFORMED CONSENT

Dear Parent:

During this spring semester we would like to conduct research investigating the competitive behavior of children. Your child is being asked to participate in our study. If you agree and he agrees he will be asked to indicate to us what he thinks his overall abilities in physical activities are. He will then be asked to compete in a motor activity against another child. The motor activities that will be asked to do is to play a TV game or ride a stationary bike. When the activity is finished the child will be asked to tell us, in answering a questionnaire, how he felt about competing.

We will come to you son's den meeting in order to give them the questionnaire on how they feel about physical activity. We will then contact you to set up an appointment so that we can test your son in the motor activities described earlier. The test will last approximately 30 minutes and will be scheduled at your convenience. The test will be done at Ahearn Fieldhouse at K.S.U. Your son will not experience any risk in this test and usually the children find it fun participating in it. The name of your child will not be used when recording the results of the study and all individual information will be kept confidential.

Please indicate on the form below whether you will or will not allow your son to take part in this study and return this slip in the mail as soon as possible. If you have any questions about the nature of the study please feel free to call us at 532-6379.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Charles B. Corbin, Ph.D.
Department of Health, Physical
Education and Recreation

Verneda Edwards
Department of Health, Physical
Education and Recreation

Permission Slip

_____ I will allow my child to participate.

_____ I will not allow my child to participate.

Print child's name _____

Your signature _____

Phone number _____

APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE

As you answer these questions think about them carefully. Answer them as honestly as you can. There are no right or wrong answers. Put down what you think the best answers are. The questions can be answered as follows:

YES

NO

Please put a circle around the word that best answers the question for you. If you have any questions please raise your hand and I will be glad to answer them.

- | | | |
|--|-----|----|
| 1. I feel confident I could do the same sports as other boys my age. | YES | NO |
| 2. I could perform well in any sport I really wanted to learn. | YES | NO |
| 3. I can do several sports as well as most boys my age. | YES | NO |
| 4. I feel good about myself in sport and physical activity situations. | YES | NO |
| 5. I am as good as most people my age and sex in most physical activities. | YES | NO |
| 6. I like to play in sports with other boys my age. | YES | NO |
| 7. I like to play against boys my own age in sports. | YES | NO |

Name _____

Den mother's name _____

School _____

Den meeting time _____

APPENDIX C
SELF-CONFIDENCE

Name _____

Game _____

If you played the same opponent in the same game, how many matches out of 10 do you think you could win?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

(Circle only one number)

APPENDIX D

HOW-I-FEEL QUESTIONNAIRE

Developed by C.D. Spielberger, C.D. Edwards, J. Montuori and R. Lushene

NAME _____ AGE _____ DATE _____

DIRECTIONS: A number of statements which boys and girls use to describe themselves are given below. Read each statement carefully and decide how you feel **right now**. Then put an X in the box in front of the word or phrase which best describes how you feel. There are no right or wrong answers. Do not spend too much time on any one statement. Remember, find the word or phrase which best describes how you feel right now, **at this very moment**.

- | | | | | |
|-----|--------------|-----------------|------------|----------------|
| 1. | I feel . . . | very calm | calm | not calm |
| 2. | I feel . . . | very upset | upset | not upset |
| 3. | I feel . . . | very pleasant | pleasant | not pleasant |
| 4. | I feel . . . | very nervous | nervous | not nervous |
| 5. | I feel . . . | very jittery | jittery | not jittery |
| 6. | I feel . . . | very rested | rested | not rested |
| 7. | I feel . . . | very scared | scared | not scared |
| 8. | I feel . . . | very relaxed | relaxed | not relaxed |
| 9. | I feel . . . | very worried | worried | not worried |
| 10. | I feel . . . | very satisfied | satisfied | not satisfied |
| 11. | I feel . . . | very frightened | frightened | not frightened |
| 12. | I feel . . . | very happy | happy | not happy |
| 13. | I feel . . . | very sure | sure | not sure |
| 14. | I feel . . . | very good | good | not good |
| 15. | I feel . . . | very troubled | troubled | not troubled |
| 16. | I feel . . . | very bothered | bothered | not bothered |
| 17. | I feel . . . | very nice | nice | not nice |
| 18. | I feel . . . | very terrified | terrified | not terrified |
| 19. | I feel . . . | very mixed-up | mixed-up | not mixed-up |
| 20. | I feel . . . | very cheerful | cheerful | not cheerful |

APPENDIX E

TREATMENT GROUPS

Low Ability				High Ability			
bike	pong	bike	pong	bike	pong	bike	pong

EFFECTS OF FAILURE IN COMPETITION ON THE SELF-CONFIDENCE
AND STATE ANXIETY OF BOYS IN VARIOUS TREATMENT CONDITIONS

by

VERNEDA D. EDWARDS

B.S., Kansas State University, 1978

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S THESIS

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MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Health, Physical Education and Recreation

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Manhattan, Kansas

1982

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to see if boys of different perceived ability levels expressed differences in self-confidence after failing in direct competition. In particular the study hoped to determine if boys with low perceived ability expressed different levels of self-confidence than boys of high perceived ability after failing in tasks of different sex orientation. The study also wanted to determine if boys of different perceived ability levels experience different levels of state anxiety after competing in the two tasks studied.

The subjects were eight-, nine-, and 10-year-old boys. The boys were given a questionnaire so that the researcher could determine their perceived ability levels. Depending on the treatment group, the subject was assigned to compete in a bicycle or pong game against a male confederate. All boys lost two of the two games played. Immediately after the competition the boys were asked to estimate how they thought they would do if they competed in the same task against the same opponent. The Spielberger's Short Form State Anxiety Inventory was also administered.

The results of the study showed that there were no significant differences in self-confidence of boys with different perceived ability levels. A-state scores of the subjects competing in different tasks also did not show a significant difference. Results did indicate that boys of high perceived ability might see tasks in a traditional sense where boys of low perceived ability may not.