

Who am I? How our perceived sporting ability influences our identity

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Amanda found that coordination and gender influenced the health of adolescents' identities differently. Credit: Sarah Harris

Are you good at sport? Do your parents think you're good at sport? And how do those perceptions influence your sense of identity? A study of 160 adolescents aged 12 to 14 in Perth found that boys with good motor coordination have healthier identities than those with lower motor coordination.

Boys with good [motor coordination](#) also had healthier identities than [girls](#) with equal motor coordination.

"Boys valued their participation in sports and physical activities, peer comparison and public performance, whereas girls perceived activities of daily living as being important for their motor competence," says Dr. Amanda Timler of the University of Notre Dame, who conducted the study for her Ph.D.

"The boys with good motor coordination also had large social networks and participated in a range of sports. Boys with low motor coordination and girls with high motor coordination experienced similar challenges to their [identity](#) health as they valued close friendships and their academic achievements more than sporting achievements.

"A girl's identity may not develop around their level of motor competence as they placed greater value towards developing close friendships. Those girls with lower motor competence seem to face the greatest challenges forming their identity as many developed new social networks and stressed about their school performance," Amanda says.

For the study, the researchers developed a self-reporting Adolescent Motor Competence Questionnaire for the adolescents to complete, which has now been culturally adapted for use in the Netherlands and Brazil.

Parents were also asked to report on their child's motor competence. An

additional finding from the study (published in the *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*) was that parents were more likely to perceive issues in lower motor coordination in boys than in girls.

Next, they plan to explore the relationship between identity and close friends in regard to an adolescent's level of motor [coordination](#).

Provided by Freshscience

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