

“You Should be More Active”: Social Control Changes Based on Parents’ Desire

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- Given the low levels of physical activity (PA) in children (Troiano et al., 2008), parents have key role to play in promoting PA in their children (Pugliese & Tinsely, 2007)
- Social control (SC) is a regulatory influence used by one individual to prompt another to perform a desired behavior (Lewis & Butterfield, 2005)
- SC has been related to behavior and affect across a variety of health behaviors:
 - Smoking (Westmaas et al., 2002),
 - Managing diabetes (Thorpe et al., 2008)
 - Physical activity (Pugliese & Okun, 2014)
- Parents appear to use SC to prompt PA in response to a lapse by their children (Wilson & Spink, 2010, 2012)
- Parents appear to report greater intention to use SC in response to a lapse in PA with health consequences (Wilson & Spink, 2012)
- Outside of a PA lapse situation, do the same social control patterns exist?
 - Conceptually, when there needs for a ‘desired’ behavior, SC use will occur (Lewis & Butterfield, 2005)
 - When individuals have a stronger desire to have the target of the influence change, they report more SC use (Butterfield & Lewis, 2002)

Purpose

This study examined whether parents’ desire for their children to be more active would lead to parents use of social control on a week-to-week basis

Methods

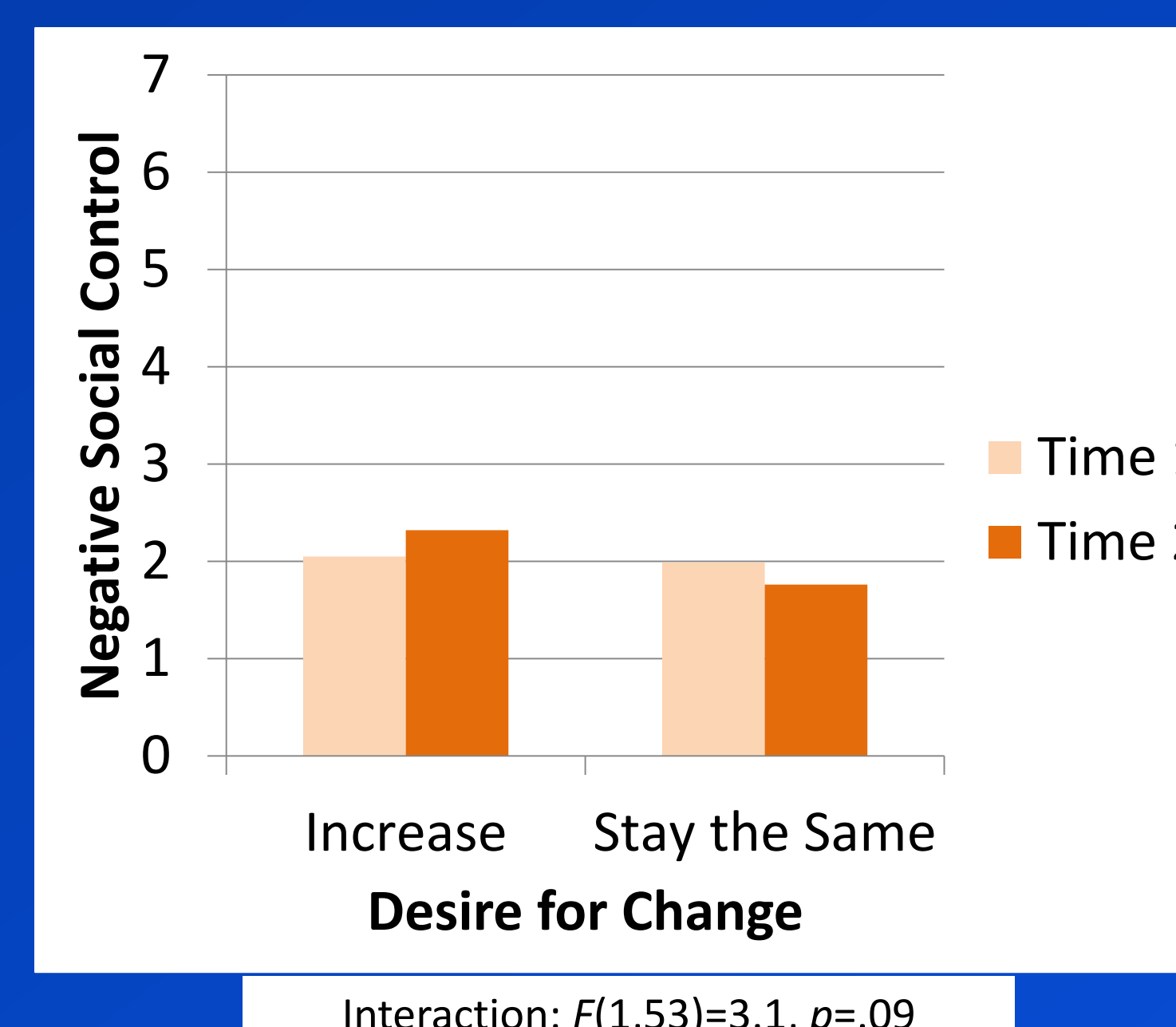
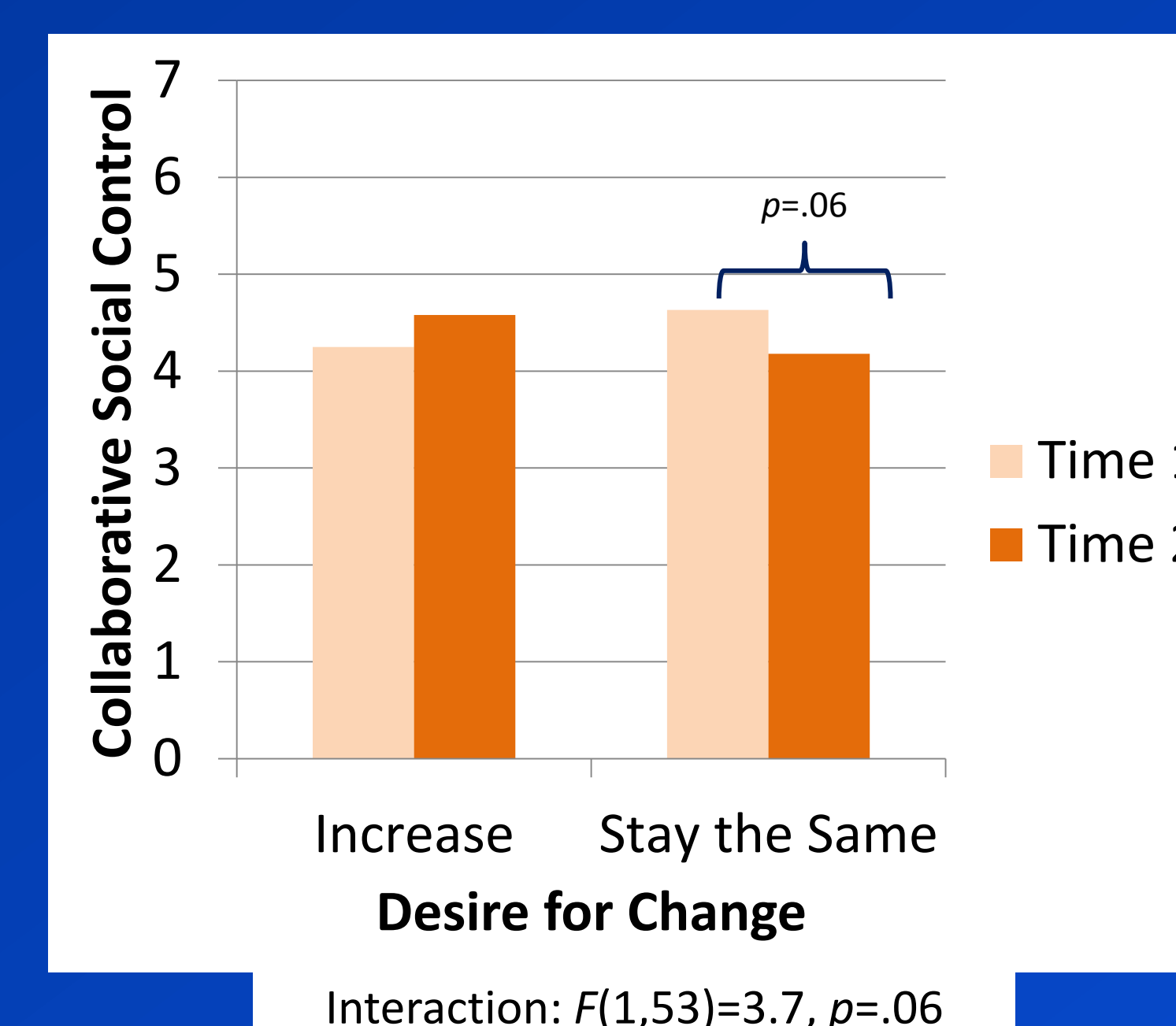
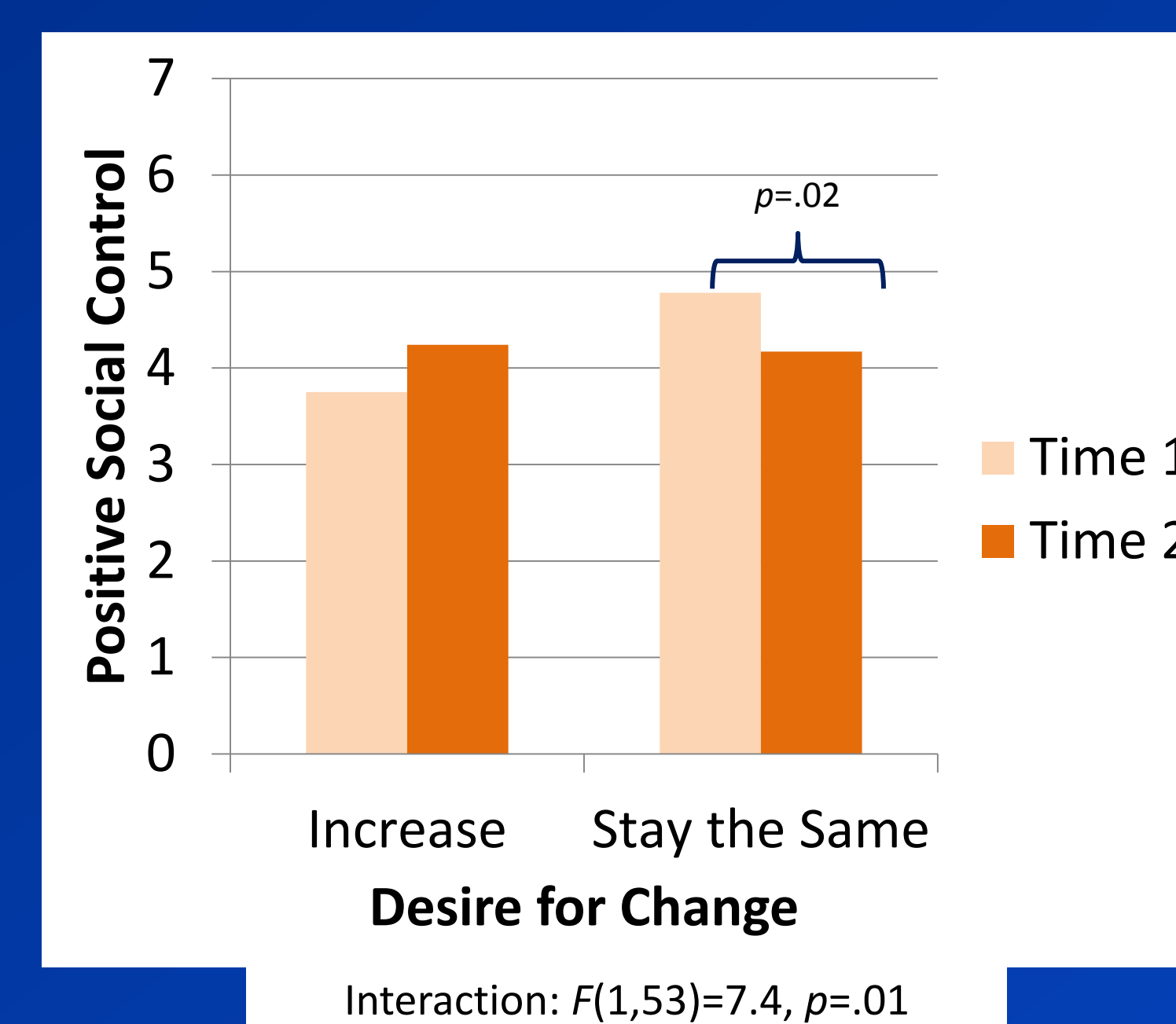
- Participants**
 - Parents (n=55) of children between the ages of 2-18
 - 49 mothers & 6 fathers
 - 22 boys & 33 girls, Mean age= 6.7 years (SD=4.3)
- Procedures**
 - Parents completed two online surveys a week apart
- Measures**
 - Social control:** 9 items assessing with 3 subscales
 - Positive SC (3 items): Encourage your child
 - Collaborative SC (4 items): Offer to be active with him/her
 - Negative SC (2 items): Nag your child
 - 1 (not at all) to 7 (very often)
 - Desire for child’s PA to change:**
 - Parents were asked if they wanted their child’s PA to increase, decrease or stay the same

Key Finding

Parents who want their child to keep the same level of physical activity appear to decrease in their use of social control especially positive and collaborative social control.

Results

- Analysis**
 - 2 (time) by 2 (desire) MANOVA was performed
 - Parents were grouped based on their desire
 - Wanted their child’s PA to increase: n=19 (boys: n=11; girls: n=8)
 - Wanted their child’s PA to stay the same: n=36 (boys: n=11; girls: n=25)
- Findings**
 - The desire by time interaction in the MANOVA approached significance ($p=.06$)
 - Positive SC: Significant interaction ($p=.01$; see graph below)
 - Desired child to stay the same → decreased SC use ($p=.02$)
 - Desired child to increase → SC use remained constant ($p=.16$)
 - Collaborative SC: Interaction approached significance ($p=.06$; see graph below)
 - Desired child to stay the same → decreased SC use ($p=.06$)
 - Desired child to increase → SC use remained constant ($p=.32$)
 - Negative SC: interaction approached significance ($p=.09$; see graph below)
 - No changes were evident in either group ($p's > .1$)



Discussion

- These findings provide support for the importance of parents’ desire for their child to perform PA
 - Supports conceptual definition of prompting a *desired* behavior (Lewis & Butterfield, 2005)
 - Supports other research that reported desire for change was associated with spouse’s use of social control (Butterfield & Lewis, 2002)
- In contrast to what was expected, those who wanted their children to increase did not significantly increase their SC use rather the difference was in those who wanted their child to stay the same
 - One might speculate that this decrease is observed as those who identified as staying the same may have been exerting a lot of SC prior to the study
 - i.e., wanted their child to increase and now no longer desires it
- Strengths**
 - Prospective design allows changes in use to be examined over time
 - Parents of a wide range of ages were included
- Limitations**
 - Unclear on influences or desires prior to these assessments
 - Did those who wanted their child to stay the same previously want their child to increase?
 - Sample size of 55 may be underpowered as MANOVA only approached significance
 - Grouping is based on parents’ perceptions and other factors (e.g., gender) associated with both desire and SC use not examined in this study must be considered
- Future Directions**
 - Explore with more diverse, larger samples (e.g., fathers)
 - Explore factors that are associated with parents desiring their child to be more active
 - Do they base it on activity level? Time of year?
 - Follow parents over a longer period of time to observe fluctuations in SC use, PA and other related constructs

