Sport attitudes indicate a person’s enduring favorable or unfavorable evaluations and emotional feelings toward sports (Gau & Kim, 2011; Gau & Korzenny, 2009) including sport participation and sport spectatorship. The formation of the attitudes is expected to be influenced by socializing agents such as parents, teachers and peers through a process of sport socialization (Gau, 2008; Kenyon & McPherson, 1973; McPherson, 1976). Prior studies have suggested that sport attitudes might be influenced by significant others: parents, teachers and peers (Seabra, Mendonca, Thomis, Peters & Maia, 2007; Welk, Wood & Morris, 2003; Wold & Anderssen, 1992). Nevertheless, previous studies focused more on the sport participation or physical activities than the sport spectatorship. Thus, in order to fill the gap of literature, the first purpose of the current study attempted to investigate the relationships between the sport attitudes of middle-school students and those of their significant others in both sport participation and sport spectatorship settings. Second, the study sought to identify which significant agent played the most important role in affecting middle-school students’ attitudes toward sports. Further, the research design used multiple data resources. In addition to self-report data from students, data were also collected from significant others. Therefore, the third purpose of the study was to determine whether the statistical and practical relationships in the attitudes between students and significant others would have been influenced by the common method variance (CMV) (Lindell & Whitney, 2001; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee & Podsakoff, 2003; Spector, 2006).

Surveys were given in Taiwan by using self-administered questionnaires, including scales measuring sport participation attitudes (4 items: sport participation is an important, interesting, valuable activity and I like sport participation in daily lives) and sport spectatorship attitudes (4 items: sport spectatorship is an important, interesting, valuable activity and I like sport spectatorship in daily lives) (7-point scale from “1=somehow disagree” to “7=strongly agree”). Respondents also reported how many days and how long each time they participated in sport activities or exercises in a week and how long they watched sports on TV, on the Internet, read sport news in newspapers or magazines and talked about sports with others in an average week (1=0, 2=less than 15 minutes, 3=15 included-30 minutes, 4=30 included-60 minutes, 5=1 included-2 hours, 6=2 included-4 hours, 7=more than 4 included hours). In addition, respondents were asked to identify their best classmate friend in their same class to get peers data, rank the important roles of parents, teachers and peers in influencing their sport participation and spectatorship attitudes, and rate their perceived attitudes of their parents’ sport participation and spectatorship attitudes. Data collection was conducted at a large junior high school in the middle of Taiwan. Using stratified probability sampling, data were collected from 15 classes with 448 students (224 males), 312 parents, 373 peers and 15 class mentor teachers.

Descriptive analyses showed that the mean score (5.66) of sport participation attitudes among teachers was higher than students (5.36) and parents (5.11). The percentage of teachers (88%) participating in sport activities or physical exercises was higher than those of students (71%) and parents (65%). As for sport spectatorship attitudes, students had a higher mean score (4.66) than teachers (4.11) and parents (4.29) did. For the spectator sports behavior, students (2.22), parents (2.21) and teachers (2.16) were similar.

All of the relationships between students and parents in sport participation attitudes (0.31, p<.05), in sport participation behavior (0.20, p<.05), in sport spectatorship attitudes (0.25, p<.05), and in sport spectatorship behavior (0.29, p<.05) were positively significant while all relationships between students and teachers were not significant. Most relationships between students and peers were not significant except for the relationship in sport spectatorship behavior (0.18, p<.05). These results indicated that parents might play more important roles than teachers and peers in sport socialization including both participation and spectatorship.

However, when students ranked the strengths of the influences of socializing agents on their sport participation and spectatorship attitudes, peers were more likely ranked on the top one or two (participation 62%, spectatorship 55%) than parents (43%, 45%) and teachers (35%, 23%). This was not consistent with the aforementioned analyses.
of Pearson correlation coefficients using multiple data resources. One possible explanation was that the best friend in the same class might not represent peers. Another explanation was that students might underestimate their parents’ influences on their sport attitudes when they self-reported the ranking. Further research is required to clarify these inconsistent results.

In addition, the results showed that the relationships between students’ attitudes and their perceived parents’ attitudes toward sport participation (0.42, p<.05) and toward sport spectatorship (0.39, p<.05) were positively significant. These correlation coefficients were higher than those (0.31, 0.25) using multiple data resources possibly due to the inflation of correlations by common method variance (Lindell & Whitney, 2001). Cautions might be given to future research when conducting a cross-sectional survey from a single resource.