Building cohesive groups

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SUMMARY

Groups are a ubiquitous aspect of physical activity settings, and come in a variety of forms including teams and exercise groups. Described as the social bond that unites group members, cohesion receives a great deal of attention because it is important for performance, enjoyment, and adherence. Cohesion is evident in both task and social settings, and is identified according to group members' perceptions of: (a) the closeness and bonding amongst group members; and (b) their own attractions to the group. This chapter summarizes relevant group research, with a specific focus on how leaders can use this knowledge to improve cohesion. Team building approaches are presented as the primary means of improving cohesion within sport and exercise settings. Readers will emerge from this chapter with a clear understanding of cohesion and how group principles can be used to enhance group environments.

INTRODUCTION

It figures. In a World Cup that saw the sport's top individual stars all exit by the quarterfinals – adiós, Lionel Messi; cheerio, Wayne Rooney; adeus, Kaká and Cristiano Ronaldo – Spain had to turn everything into a team affair. That included the decisive goal... Not even Rolex produces movement so coordinated and true (Wahl, 2010, para. 2–4).

The importance of group cohesion cannot be overstated. In the preceding quote, the ability of the Spanish football (soccer) team to execute their game plan in a united and cohesive manner during the 2010 World Cup is presented in contrast to other teams who potentially did not integrate their individual stars as effectively. Furthermore, Spain's ability to successfully combine the efforts of 11 talented players forced other teams to reconsider their strategies and tactics. Most notable was the change in approach taken by the Dutch team in the final game; shifting from elegant to aggressive play to try and disrupt the flow of the Spanish team. The present chapter focuses on the concept of cohesion, summarizes empirical evidence regarding its importance in sport, and briefly highlights team building suggestions designed to increase individuals' perceptions of their group's integration and their own feelings of connectedness to the team.

OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter you should be able to:

1   Discuss the importance and prevalence of groups in sport and exercise.
2   Describe cohesion, how it is measured, and its related outcomes.
3   Explain the importance of cohesion for efficient group functioning.
4   Integrate cohesion within other existing theoretical frameworks.
5   Discuss team building approaches for developing group cohesion.

## PREVALENCE OF GROUPS IN SPORT AND EXERCISE SETTINGS

Groups are vital entities within physical activity settings, as exercise and sport environments provide ample opportunities for individuals to interact with other participants (e.g., teammates). In considering some of the most popular sports in the world – such as soccer, cricket, and volleyball – participants work together as teams, and against other teams. Even in popular sports that do not involve a coordinated group *task* – such as gymnastics, swimming, and golf – individuals frequently contribute to shared objectives (e.g., team scores) and/or interact with important others including training partners, coaches, and physiotherapists.

Overall, groups are such an inherent part of everyday physical activity that 'social settings' are included as a major factor in the World Health Organization's *global recommendations on physical activity and health* (World Health Organization, 2010). In this report, social environments are promoted for physical activity considering how play, sport, and recreation all occur within the context of family and community. The report also included messages from a number of countries (i.e., Canada, Australia, United States, and the Pacific Region) that advise physical activity participants to include their friends and family, engage in exercise classes or sport teams, and use support networks to help keep them involved.

However, not all social collectives have the characteristics required to be a group, nor are all groups created 'equal'. A number of traits are required for a collection of two or more people to be considered a 'group' including mutual benefit, work on a common task, shared structured social relationships, and members defining themselves as a group (Carron & Eys, 2012). Collectively, the majority of group definitions identify one key group characteristic: interdependence. Interdependence in tasks, fates, and goals is what connects group members together, and generally refers to the degree that individuals rely on one another. More specifically, interdependence is defined as the degree that individual and group-level task performance, goal attainment, and general experiences are contingent on contributions from all group members (Johnson & Johnson, 1989).

There are a number of ways for individuals to be interdependent. *Task* interdependence is largely responsible for our current reliance on classifying sport types into team (e.g., soccer) and individual (e.g., running) categories. Team sports are those where athletes train together and compete in a collective group task, whereas individual sport team members do not work together to achieve a collective group task. Thus, it is often assumed that group processes will have greater influence in team sport because interaction is essential. However, there are a number of alternative ways that team members can be interdependent above and beyond the task. Group members can also be *outcome interdependent* through shared goals or rewards, which form
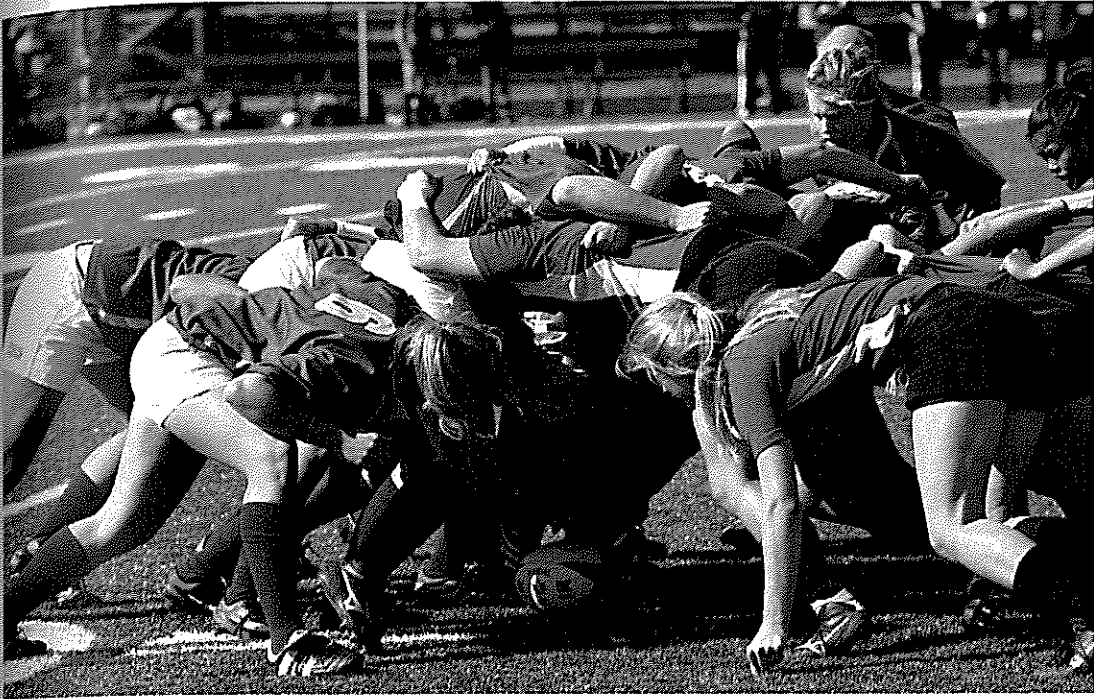
Figure 33.1 Team sports are highly interdependent environments. Photograph by Mike Whitehouse, WLU Athletics. Reprinted courtesy of Wilfrid Laurier University.

additional connections among group members. For example, a school team of tennis players may compete in events where group members' scores are aggregated and overall titles are awarded to the highest scoring teams. Individual sports may also differ in the degree that group members are required to compete against one another, such as in cross country running events. Furthermore, group members can be interdependent with respect to the allotment of resources (e.g., sharing coaches, training facilities, and equipment) and within training tasks (e.g., working together, travel, training plans). Considering the assortment of ways that group members can rely on one another, it is clear that group processes can have an important influence even when members do not work together specifically on a task. As a result, the prevalence and variety of interactive environments within sport and exercise necessitate the examination of the dynamics underlying groups.

GROUP DYNAMICS IN SPORT AND EXERCISE

'Group dynamics' refers to the "actions, processes, and changes that occur within groups and between groups" (Forsyth, 2010, p. 2) and summaries of the existing literature can be found in texts devoted to this topic in organizational psychology (e.g., Forsyth, 2010) and physical activity (e.g., Beauchamp & Eys, 2007; Carron & Eys, 2012). While it is not the purpose of the present chapter to cover each group dynamics topic in depth (other authors within this section of the book provide excellent information regarding leadership, group climate, and communication), it is worthwhile to highlight a useful conceptual framework

Figure 33.2 Team outcomes are influenced by the structure, processes, and cohesion of the group. Photograph by Mike Whitehouse, WLU Athletics. Reprinted courtesy of Wilfrid Laurier University.

(Carron & Eys, 2012) for the study of sport and exercise groups that underscores its complexity. This conceptual framework emphasizes the need to first consider aspects relating to the physical/psychological attributes of group members as well as the environment in which the group is operating. With respect to the former, for example, it is important to consider the amount, variability, and compatibility of all the requisite skills that members can contribute. In the case of the latter, the organizational needs and even physical location (i.e., playing at home vs. away) are considerations of the group's environment.

These inputs are proposed to influence a number of factors leading to both individual and group outcomes including: the structure of the group (e.g., leadership, role responsibilities, normative expectations, status hierarchies), its processes (e.g., communication, coordination, cooperation), and the degree to which the team is united with respect to task and social objectives (i.e., cohesion). It is important to consider all of the factors pertaining to group involvement in sport and exercise. However, the remainder of the chapter will focus on the concept of cohesion.

GROUP COHESION

Definition and conceptualization of cohesion

Group cohesion is defined as a "dynamic process which is reflected in the tendency for a group to stick together and remain united in the pursuit of its instrumental objectives and/or for the satisfaction of member affective needs" (Carron, Brawley, & Widmeyer, 1998, p. 213). A number of characteristics of cohesion are evident within this definition. First, Carron and colleagues suggested that cohe-

sion is *dynamic*; thus, it can change over the lifespan of a group and is amenable to improvement via intervention.

Second, Carron and colleagues proposed that the concept of cohesion is *multidimensional*. Through their initial work developing a measure of cohesion for sport, Carron, Widmeyer, and Brawley (1985) identified four distinct ways that athletes can perceive cohesion that can be distinguished according to two factors. First, cohesion can be considered with respect to task as well as social aspects of the group. For example, cohesion can be perceived during game performances (task) or between members after games (social). Cohesion is also viewed according to the perceptual orientation, as it is considered both through individuals' perceptions of their own attractions to the group as well as their perceptions regarding the degree of integration of the group as a whole.

In combination, the above distinctions yield four dimensions that are important to consider when examining group cohesion: (a) individual attractions to the group – task (i.e., members' personal attractions to task aspects of the group, ATG-T); (b) individual attractions to the group – social (i.e., members' personal attractions to social aspects of the group, ATG-S); (c) group integration – task (i.e., individuals' perceptions of how united the group is regarding task objectives, GI-T); and (d) group integration – social (i.e., individuals' perceptions of how united the group is regarding social objectives, GI-S).

Measuring cohesion

A number of measures have been developed in the attempt to gauge perceptions of cohesion. Created in conjunction with their conceptual model, Carron et al. (1985) developed what is considered to be the most widely accepted measure of cohesion in a sport environment; the Group Environment Questionnaire (GEQ). The GEQ assesses the four dimensions of cohesion discussed previously (i.e., ATG-T, ATG-S,

GI-T, and GI-S) through an 18-item inventory and the validity and reliability of this tool have been consistently demonstrated with populations for which it was designed (i.e., adult, recreational/competitive, interactive sport teams).

Carron, Brawley, and Widmeyer (2002) were clear that greater consideration needs to be made for using the GEQ as an assessment tool for other populations. As a result, a number of researchers have created measures specific to their population of interest. As examples, Estabrooks and Carron (2000) created a 21-item measure of cohesion (i.e., Physical Activity Group Environment Questionnaire) specific for an adult exercise environment, and Heuzé and Fontayne (2002) developed a questionnaire (i.e., Questionnaire sur l'Ambiance du Groupe; 18 items) that could be used with French-speaking athletes. Finally, two measures have been created for use with younger populations (i.e., youth and children). In the development of the Youth Sport Environment Questionnaire, Eys, Loughead, Bray, and Carron (2009) provided evidence that adolescent athletes (approximately 13–17 years of age) do not distinguish group versus individual level perceptions. As a result, this questionnaire assesses only task and social cohesion. This structure was also used by Martin, Carron, Eys, and Loughead (2012) for their Child Sport Cohesion Questionnaire proposed for use with children approximately 9–12 years of age.

Importance of group cohesion

As stated in the introduction to this chapter, cohesion is an incredibly important consideration within sport. First and foremost, there is strong evidence supporting the link between cohesion and team performance. Carron, Colman, Wheeler, and Stevens (2002) conducted a meta-analysis to summarize the literature pertaining to the cohesion-performance link and found a moderate to large positive relationship. This relationship was found regardless of type of cohesion (i.e., task vs.

social cohesion) or type of sport (interdependent vs. independent sport). Furthermore, there is consistent evidence that perceptions of cohesion are positively related to athletes' intentions to return to their sport team as well as their actual return (e.g., Spink, Wilson, & Odnokon, 2010).

Moving beyond these two major outcomes, there are a myriad of other factors that appear to be related to perceptions of cohesion (see Carron & Eys, 2012 for a summary of specific research studies). These include personal cognitions such as attributions for responsibility and self-handicapping, as well as athletes' emotional states including competitive state anxiety and satisfaction. Furthermore, a number of group-level variables have been positively associated with cohesion in a sport environment including athletes' perceptions of their role (e.g., role clarity), conformity to group normative expectations, and the collective efficacy of the group. While the majority of research has taken a cross-sectional/correlational approach, it can be safely assumed that a more cohesive group will generally yield more positive individual and group perceptions (although disadvantages to highly cohesive groups have been introduced; Hardy, Eys, & Carron, 2005).

The findings summarized above pertain to perceptions of cohesion within a sport environment. However, it is imperative to point out the benefits of cohesion within an exercise setting as well. Two meta-analytic reviews succinctly provide evidence of the benefits in facilitating positive group processes within exercise. First, Carron, Hausenblas, and Mack (1996) found a moderate, positive association between perceptions of task cohesion and adherence behaviors across six studies. Second, Burke, Carron, Eys, Ntoumanis, and Estabrooks (2006) noted that physical activity interventions employing group dynamics strategies (and thus facilitating cohesion) were most effective in eliciting a number of positive outcomes (compared to standard exercise group and individual oriented exercise).

Following on from the findings across physical activity settings (i.e., sport and exercise) that demonstrate the importance of cohesion in relation to other variables, the next two sections of this chapter: (a) link the concept of cohesion within larger explanatory theoretical frameworks and; finally, (b) discuss methods by which positive group processes can be facilitated.

Cohesion from the standpoint of related theories

Interventions (e.g., team building) should be developed on the basis of a theoretical understanding or modeling of how things work. Such theoretical considerations may further explain *why* and *how* cohesion varies and are thus of high practical significance since they provide frameworks for the development of diagnostic and intervention tools. In addition to existing frameworks highlighting inputs/outputs of cohesion (e.g., Carron & Spink, 1993), it may be useful to consider two perspectives of cohesion that afford links with other theories, even if these perspectives are not totally separate. One perspective of cohesion links to theories that explain how and why individuals view *commonality* with other people; for instance, shared attitudes, goals, or any other kind of shared property (e.g., similarity). Theory pertaining to the concept of structural interdependence, discussed earlier in this chapter, would have relevance from this perspective. In addition, Social Identity Theory is proposed as an additional salient theoretical approach to commonality in the subsequent paragraphs. Another perspective of cohesion addresses not only the similar properties of individuals in a group but links to theories that explain *how and why individuals relate* to each other. Finally, Balance Theory can help to understand how similarity/ uniformity and interpersonal relations work together with respect to group dynamics.

Cohesion as "something in common". Cohesive entities (e.g., a football team) occur very often with a specific amount of unifor-

mity. In psychological terms, among other things, cohesion is characterized by an explicit or implicit commonality or oneness of psychological attributes or properties. In Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1985) the individual's social identity is described as that part of an individual's self-concept derived from his/her membership in groups. The mechanism by which such a social identity is developed – and by which the extent of similarity with the group is defined – is known as the self-categorization process. Self categorization is mainly a comparison between: (a) perceived prototypical attributes and properties of a given group (i.e., the group prototype); and (b) a person's own attributes and properties. Using Social Identity Theory as a backdrop, cohesion enhancement contains two steps: characterization of a group's prototype and the individual's identification with this prototype in a self-categorization process.

The Optimal Distinctiveness Theory (ODT) by Brewer (1991) adds an interesting and meaningful consideration to social identity theory. Brewer stated that two human needs, namely the needs for assimilation and individuation, influence the individual's behavior within a group. Whereas Social Identity Theory addresses the idea of assimilation needs (e.g., belonging), ODT adds the human motivation for being and feeling unique within a group. Hence, from an ODT perspective, strategies toward the enhancement of cohesion should not only find a shared group identity but also attempt to satisfy the group members' needs for individuation; a delicate balance.

Cohesion as "positive interrelations with others". In addition to comparisons of individual attributes and the properties of group members, cohesion can also be considered via the perspective of *interpersonal relations*. More specifically, interaction and communication between group members are subjectively evaluated by the individuals who are involved, which subsequently affects how each group member interprets interpersonal relationships
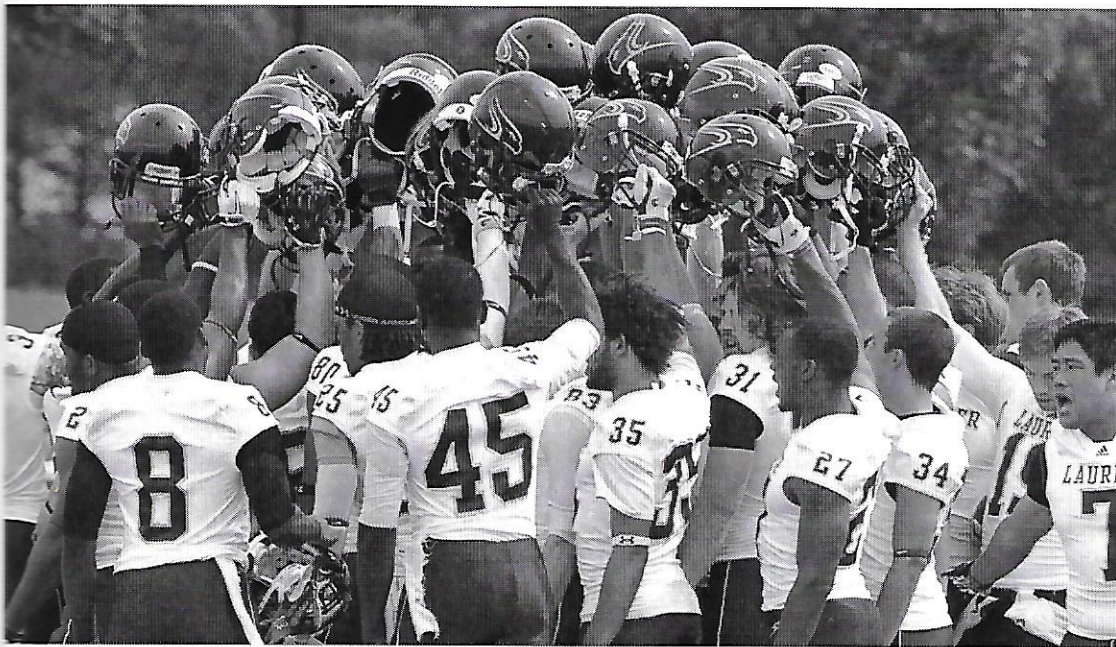
Figure 33.3 Cohesion is characterized by an explicit or implicit communality or oneness among group members. Photograph by Adam Gagnon, WLU Athletics. Reprinted courtesy of Wilfrid Laurier University.

with other members. Understanding these processes has a foundation in different social psychological theories, which mainly address relation-oriented human needs.

Humans are social and therefore strive for positive relations with others. Different theorists have defined basic, or even innate, needs to explain the human tendency of affiliation, connectedness, and bonding ("need to belong", Baumeister & Leary, 1995; "need for relatedness", Deci & Ryan, 2000). Moreover, Bowlby's attachment theory (for an overview see Hazan & Shaver, 1994) may explain how these needs interrelate with the striving for security, love, and confidence. These theoretical approaches suggest that group members' behaviors, cognitions, and affective responses are strongly connected to the satisfaction of basic and psychologically central needs. Thus, cohesion enhancement can provide group members with the expectation of the satisfaction of needs of belongingness or relatedness in future group communication or interaction.

Cohesion as "the balance of team members' relationships and task motivation". Finally, one theoretical concept provides a framework for the integration of similarity and relationship quality; Balance Theory (Heider, 1958). Heider's approach describes the interpersonal dynamic (in a dyad) as a triangle that includes the two people involved in an interaction (P and O) and any third object or person (X). If all three relations (i.e., the triangle's sides) are congruent with one another, then the interpersonal dynamic is balanced. For example, if a team member (P) and his/her partner (O) pursue the same goal in a cooperative task (X) their relationship (P-O) is positive, assuming the task is defined similarly and/or both partners allocate similar values or competencies to the task (P-X is similar to O-X). Any change in one relation has consequences on the balance of the whole figure. Thus, if one person shifts his/her approach to attaining the goal (or if the relationship between the two individuals

changes) then all three relationships will change to compensate. Balance theory explains the strong interdependence between the team members' roles and task motivation (P-X, O-X) on the one hand, and the affective and rational relationship (P-O) on the other hand. The implications of this theory with respect to developing cohesion is that attempts to foster one side of the triangle (e.g., changes in roles or competencies) may have simultaneous consequences for the other sides of the triangle (e.g., interpersonal relationship) as well as for the whole team dynamic.

Overall, the main point of the above discussion is to encourage greater integration between cohesion and existing theoretical frameworks within sport/exercise psychology as well as the broader social psychological literature. This integration is useful in explaining important links that have been demonstrated in the past (e.g., positive cohesion-performance relationship) in addition to highlighting novel strategies for facilitating positive group perceptions. The following section will discuss current approaches to developing cohesion within sport and exercise groups.

Promoting group cohesion

Given the noted importance of cohesion in sport and exercise settings, it prompts us to ask how we can develop this dynamic group construct. The psychological intervention of team building (TB) has been identified as an effective strategy to build cohesion (Burke et al., 2006; Martin, Carron, Burke, 2009). One of the attractions of TB is the steady accruement of evidence supporting the benefits associated with TB to individuals (e.g., improved confidence, individual satisfaction, exercise adherence) in addition to groups (e.g., enhanced cohesion, performance) in a number of populations including youth, young adults, and the elderly (see Table 33.1 for a summary of benefits).

Table 33.1 *Summary of the benefits of team building*

Outcomes	Example author(s), year
Enhanced cohesion	Bruner & Spink, 2010; Carron & Spink, 1993; Dunn & Holt, 2004; Newin, Bloom, & Loughead, 2008; Pain & Harwood, 2009; Senecal, Loughead, & Bloom, 2008; Spink & Carron, 1993; Watson, Martin Ginis, & Spink, 2004; Yukelson, 1997
Enhanced performance	Pain & Harwood, 2009
Improved confidence	Dunn & Holt, 2004
Builds trust	Pain & Harwood, 2009
Enhanced understanding of self and others	Dunn & Holt, 2004; Pain & Harwood, 2009
Increased individual satisfaction	Carron & Spink, 1993
Increased team satisfaction	Bruner & Spink, 2011
Increased attendance	Bruner & Spink, 2011; Watson, Martin Ginis, & Spink, 2004
Decreased lateness	Spink & Carron, 1993
Fewer drop-outs	Spink & Carron, 1993

Background and definition of TB. With its origins in the organizational development literature (see Shuffler, DiazGranados, & Salas, 2011 for a review), one of the more accepted definitions of TB put forward by Newman (1984) highlights that the central purpose of TB is to build cohesion: a group-based intervention designed to "promote a greater sense of unity and cohesiveness, and to enable the team to function more smoothly and effectively" (Newman, 1984, p. 27). The key role of cohesion within TB was further accentuated in two recent research syntheses of citation practices in TB studies in sport and exercise settings (Bruner, Eys, Beauchamp, & Côté, 2013; Bruner, Eys, McFadden, & Côté, 2009).

TB frameworks and approaches. Within the sport and exercise psychology literature, a number of TB conceptual frameworks and approaches have been developed and implemented based upon four primary approaches in the organizational development literature including the improvement of goal setting, problem solving, interpersonal relationships, and role development (Buller, 1986). Buller also noted that TB approaches rarely exist in 'pure form' in that they often involve elements from the others.

Keeping Buller's comments in mind, TB approaches in sport and exercise settings can be classified based upon two distinguishing characteristics. The first characteristic is the focus of the TB approach guiding the intervention. As highlighted above, some TB studies in sport and exercise settings focus on one of the four predominant TB approaches (e.g., goal-setting; Senecal, Loughead, & Bloom, 2008) while others have considered elements from

several approaches in their intervention (e.g., Newin, Bloom, & Loughead, 2008). A second important distinction within TB research in the sport and exercise psychology literature is the implementation strategy used. TB interventions in which the intervention specialist (e.g., sport psychology consultant) works directly with the team or group utilize a *direct* approach (e.g., Yukelson, 1997) while an *indirect* approach refers to situations in which the TB interventionist does not work directly with the team or group; rather, he/she trains the coach or exercise leader to implement the TB strategies with his/her respective team or exercise group (Carron, Spink, & Prapavessis, 1997).

Carron and Spink (1993) developed one of the most established and applied TB conceptual frameworks (Bruner et al. 2013). In this framework, cohesion within a group is viewed as an output that flows from three different categories of group characteristics including the group's environment, structure, and processes. Within each of these three catego-

ries, a number of TB factors have been identified as promoting cohesion in an exercise and sport setting including: (a) *group distinctiveness* and *togetherness* in the group environment category; (b) *role clarity* and *acceptance, leadership, group norms/conformity to standards*, as well as *individual positions* in the group structure category; and (c) *individual sacrifices, goals* and *objectives, cooperation*, as well as *communication and interaction* in the group processes category (Carron & Spink, 1993).

This TB conceptual framework is typically implemented indirectly and in four stages. The first three stages occur at a TB workshop. Stage 1 begins with the coaches or exercise leaders being introduced to the benefits of group cohesion and the TB factors within Carron and Spink's (1993) conceptual framework (e.g., distinctiveness) that are proposed to build cohesion. Stages 2 and 3 involve the coaches and exercise leaders brainstorming and then identifying practical strategies that they could use with their team or exercise club

Figure 33.4 Coaches play a vital role in team building. Photograph by Thomas Kolodziej, WLU Athletics. Reprinted courtesy of Wilfrid Laurier University.

to build cohesion (e.g., introduce a club name). The final stage involves the coaches and exercise leaders delivering the TB strategies that they had developed at the workshop to their team or exercise groups (see Table 33.2 for examples of strategies for each of the TB factors). Carron and Spink's (1993) TB conceptual framework and indirect intervention has been successfully implemented in sport and exercise settings with a number of populations including youth, young adults, and elderly populations (Bruner & Spink, 2010, 2011; Newin et al., 2008; Watson, Martin Ginis, & Spink, 2004).

In addition to Carron and Spink's TB model, there are other effective TB approaches for coaches and exercise leaders to consider implementing such as Personal Disclosure Mutual Sharing (PDMS), which builds trust and communication among its group members (Dunn & Holt, 2004), and Group Goal Setting (Senecal et al., 2008).

Recommendations. Prior to undertaking any TB intervention, it is imperative that coaches and exercise leaders: (1) carefully consider the needs of the team or exercise group; (2) define a priority list of goals; (3) select the best TB approach to build cohesion; and (4) develop strategies to evaluate the TB intervention. Furthermore, a common problem plaguing TB studies has been the lack of evaluation of the TB approaches (Bruner & Spink, 2010). Without proper evaluations (e.g., surveys, interviews) coaches and practitioners will not be able to determine what worked (and what didn't) to enhance future TB interventions.

Table 33.2 *Team building factors and examples based upon Carron and Spink's (1993) model*

Team building factor	Examples
Group environment	
Group distinctiveness	- Develop a group name - Have group music - Encourage group identity by allowing players to identify what makes them unique and distinctive - Develop a group cheer/chant - Buy group clothing (team headbands, hats, t-shirts, socks, track suits, jackets, gym bags) - Get similar hair cut/color - Create group logo, symbol or flag
Group togetherness	- Travel to games and tournaments together as a team (if travelling in separate vehicles, change participants) - Establish a common team area for athletes to meet for snack or meal breaks during tournaments or games - Organize team meals or social outings (e.g., games night, study sessions, potluck) - Train in offseason together - Prohibit cell phones and portable music players during road trips - Warm-up as a big group - Run a team fundraiser (e.g., car wash, 3 on 3 tournament) or event for charity - Make a team meal before a game/match - Arrange a team trip to an away tournament or sporting event - Engage in group counting during stretching

Table 33.2 *(continued)*

Team building factor	Examples
Group Structure	
Role clarity and acceptance	• Make sure that all team members understand how they can contribute to team success • Assign roles to each player for equipment set-up • Schedule individual player meetings with coaches to discuss roles
Leadership	• Rotate/switch participant leaders for warm-up, cool-downs, group meetings, etc. • Establish team captains and assistant captains • Allow each team member to suggest a sport-specific activity or drill for practice • Allow athletes to vote for a captain • Pair senior athletes with rookie teammates
Group norms/Conformity to standards	• Promote a strong work ethic as a group characteristic • Create a team motto • Discuss expectations for behavior on the court/field and in the community • Establish routines (pre-game/game day, on the road) • Develop a constitution or contract • Praise people for hard work • Highlight the importance of preparation and punctuality • Establish consequences for those who do not follow team standards/rules (ideally at start of season)
Individual positions	• Establish a "home" or set formation for warm-up or cool down • All group members to pick their own spot and encourage them to remain in it throughout the year
Group processes	
Individual sacrifices	• In exercise groups, ask regulars to help new people (e.g., fitness friends) • Ask older group members to select young group members to practice with during warm-up (Rotate each practice) • Ask team to miss lunch to go over game tape or strategy • Participate in team practices or games over work, concerts, or other social activities • Accept roles for the good of the team (e.g., scorer vs. grinder)
Goals and objectives	• Ask two or three people for a "team goal of the day" • Set short-term and long-term team goals and revisit them often throughout the season • Make team goals visual (e.g., on chart paper in locker room) • Set individual goals and go over them with the group for feedback and support • Announce a goal at the start of each practice (write it up on the board) • Decide which goal(s) are most important for the team

	• Write goals on a stick or ball to keep them visible • Meet with each player to discuss goals at start, middle, and end of the season • Establish rewards for achieving team goals
Cooperation	• Add cooperative drills and activities into practices (i.e., see how many times we can complete an activity as a team) • Participate in a challenging cross-training activity for the team members to work together (e.g., wall climbing, high ropes) • Allow coach(es) to periodically participate in drills
Communication and interaction	• Encourage peer/partner feedback • Pair up with different partners for every activity/drill • Make a group on Facebook

Note. Adapted from Prapavessis, H., Carron, A.V., and Spink, K.S. (1996). Team Building in Sport. *International Journal of Sport Psychology*, 27, p. 275 and Carron, A.V. & Spink, K.S. (1993). Team Building in an Exercise Setting. *The Sport Psychologist*, 7, 13.

LEARNING AIDS

1   If a collection of individuals exhibits interdependence, what does it mean for them?

Interdependence among a group of individuals means that they rely on one another in at least one way (e.g., working together on a task or sharing an outcome) and will influence how each member interacts with one another.

2   Explain why a group exercise leader should develop cohesion in their group.

Perceptions of cohesion in exercise groups are related to a number of positive individual and group outcomes. Most notably, increased perceptions of cohesion are associated with increased adherence (i.e., attendance) to exercise group sessions.

3   What is the purpose of team building?

Team building is typically conducted to foster perceptions of cohesion within group members, under the expectation that the group will feel more united and work better together as a group.

4   Identify the difference between direct and indirect team building approaches.

With a direct team building approach, the practitioner works within the team environment (e.g., directly leads group sessions). Meanwhile, with an indirect approach the practitioner teaches team building concepts and practices to group leaders, who independently implement team building strategies.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1   Describe the one key trait that distinguishes groups in "team" sport from those in "individual" sport, and discuss whether or not you feel group cohesion will *always* be more important in one sport type, over another.

2   Define cohesion and outline the original four dimensional model proposed by Carron and colleagues (1985).

3   How can other theoretical frameworks, such as social identity theory, inform our understanding of group cohesion?

4   What are five benefits (in addition to increased cohesion) that team building can provide in sport and exercise settings to the team and individual?

EXERCISES

1   Consider one group that you are, or have recently been, a member of in a sport or exercise setting. This could include a high school sport team, a structured exercise group, or an informal group of friends that meet to exercise together. In reference to this group, please:

   (a) Describe the group, and the relationships amongst group members. Specifically consider the ways that group members are/were interdependent on one another.

   (b) Provide two/three examples of aspects of the group that could be changed to promote more interdependence among group members.

   (c) Indicate how it is expected that the group's cohesion levels would change as a result of the new group structure.

2   Cohesion is important for all groups. However, the way in which physical activity researchers think about cohesion may differ from other research areas. Using your library resources, find three journal articles that focus on cohesion within another context (e.g., work, family, etc.). Briefly summarize and contrast what is presented in those articles with the information presented in the current chapter.

3   Imagine that you are a new high school teacher who has been approached by the principal to start an after-school exercise club to promote physical activity. Remembering this chapter, you recall the benefits of enhanced cohesion on an individual's physical activity adherence (e.g., increased attendance, decreased drop-out, lateness) and decide it is important to "team build" with the kids involved in the club. In pairs or small groups, select five team building factors from Carron and Spink's (1993) team building framework that you hope to target to lead to increase cohesion and ultimately improve physical activity adherence among group members. Identify two specific strategies for each of the five TB factors (10 strategies total) that you would use to build cohesion in the club. Upon completion, share the strategies amongst the different groups in the class.

ADDITIONAL READING

Bloom, G.A., Loughead, T.M. & Newin, J. (2008). Team building for youth sport. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, 70*, 44–47.

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